



# ***KNOWLEDGE***

*By James D Connolly*

# *Knowledge*

**James D Connolly**

Copyright © 2021 James D Connolly.

All rights reserved, Copyright, intellectual property, and other.

This book may be used in part, within Copyright Law.

Any commercial use, or larger part use by individuals or groups, requires the permission of  
the author.

[jdcotruth@gmail.com](mailto:jdcotruth@gmail.com)

Re-Edited 2022

# CONTENTS

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| PREFACE.....              | 5   |
| ALIVE.....                | 6   |
| New.....                  | 8   |
| Firesides.....            | 25  |
| Surf's Up.....            | 56  |
| VISITORS.....             | 78  |
| Friends.....              | 81  |
| Enemies.....              | 104 |
| Purpose.....              | 132 |
| VOIDS.....                | 154 |
| Hunting.....              | 159 |
| Surfing.....              | 186 |
| Engines.....              | 216 |
| STRIVING.....             | 240 |
| Building.....             | 245 |
| Resistance.....           | 272 |
| Love.....                 | 292 |
| AITHOR'S OTHER BOOKS..... | 306 |
| ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....     | 311 |
| REFERENCES and LINKS..... | 312 |

# PREFACE

Welcome to the first book of *The Knowledge Trilogy*. This trilogy stands on its own, as do the others before it, but it also makes up the last three books of the *Department of Truth Series*. This first book, *Knowledge*, seeks to look at the evolving ferment of society, what our participation in its evolution might look like, and what truly oppresses us. The second book, *Volition*, addresses some important aspects of the nature of human will, as well as aspects of relationships and family life. The third book, *Justice*, looks at the demise of usurpers of power, and the evolution of unity. These books cannot reach the depths required to do real justice to such wide and essential themes, but they seek to explore some important aspects of these subjects. It is my hope that all readers may enjoy them; from teens to older souls. They are stories to be enjoyed and adventure in, with much meaning to ponder.

This first book, *Knowledge*, is a story about straight talking, honesty, and the nature of tact and respect in the sharing of ideas. It asks us to talk honestly, yet with respect, in a shared exploration about what ails us as a society. We are responsible to open our minds to exploration and for more open communication in an increasingly ideologically tribal world. The book also challenges the clichés of apathy, while showing how a small group of people can take part in community building, no matter their age or outlook, or how seemingly ordinary. It also takes a good hard look at the world through common day to day eyes, as well as spiritual ones, and seeks to find what truly oppresses us. It explores how we have the power of initiative, and how we can utilise growth engines to transform lives and communities. The story seeks to create a picture of the power available to small groups, and how it feels.

I hope that the whole *Department of Truth Series* provides some inspiration and cause for self-reflection, as I wrote these books to that end. *The Knowledge Trilogy* certainly finishes off the books that came before them and completes them as a true series. I also hope that even the nature of writing and storytelling can be gleaned from the whole series, as these last three books, while attending to important themes, were just as much about exploring storytelling. My greatest hope is that you may simply enjoy the adventure and gather some meaning; but also, that the stories may create more exploration and meaningful conversations.

So, as in all my books, this is my dance with you; my own perceptions, inspired by life and The Baha'i Faith. This book, just as the others I write, cannot seek, and do not seek, to represent my Faith. The depth and breadth of it is far beyond my words; and my symbolism and adventurousness, well, just wander as they do. I suppose what it seeks to be mostly is something to enjoy, and something to mull over, or to reflect on.

I hope you enjoy *Knowledge*. I hope you are inspired by the small band of gentle folk. I hope you see potential in all of us, and I hope you enjoy the other two books, *Volition*, and *Justice*.

# *Alive*

Jack Johnston woke in the grass. The warm sun greeted his being like an old friend, but when he realised where he had found himself *once again*, he cried out with all the rage he could muster. His cry reverberated through the *deeper places*, as well as through the high green valley he lay in. He swore at The Creator and damned Him for what He had done to him, and for what He *continued* to do to him. Once again, he had found himself lying in the grass of his back paddock, and *all his being* refused to be part of whatever plan was now in store for him; he was *more* than done with the endless wandering. *He would acquiesce no longer.*

His journeys, short and long, had been just that; *endless* it seemed. His being now revolted at that thought, and at the memory of loved ones being torn away from him *too* many times. Each time his heart had been smashed on the rocks of grief from these separations, and he had had to start all over again. There had been *hundreds* of these journeys now, seeming lives and other small experiences; these cycles within cycles, since his first wanderings. He

had had to surrender so many times to the Will of God for him since then, and for a long time he *had* accepted his Travelling reality; feeling very fortunate, and appreciative of all the learning found in the myriad and rich experiences that he had been granted. He had even, over time, simply become expectant of these various cycles suddenly ending, and *very accepting* of The Creator's will for him; but *not now, and no longer*, it seemed.

Jack Johnston was *much more* than just weary; especially after his last challenging trip into an *Other Place*, where he had suffered the torture of a hidden creature, and the fact that in many of his recent journeys he had travelled alone; separated from the woman he loved. There seemed only challenge, very little love, and voids of loneliness. Even though he was in the company of others on his travels, these others came and went so quickly, as did his stay in various places, Deeper Places, and Other Places. He was tired and alone and could no longer bear living. To him *it was no longer living*, and he just couldn't stand the thought that these wanderings would *never* end. All his pain surged out of him again, up into the physical heavens above him, and also into *Deepest*, then beyond that, to the heart of All Things, as he cursed the Creator out loud and refused His Will.

The answer came *quickly*; as such answers are wont to come. His violent prayer's answer was a secondary, immediate, and massive heart attack. But to Jack its pain was like the dewy air of a new day and sweet honeyed water on his thirsty tongue; the promise of death a balm for his struggling heart. He revelled in its promise of release from these seemingly endless cycles and challenging places, and from never knowing when he would be moved from one place to another. As he now convulsed in this terrible physical pain, he smiled, and thanked The All Merciful; the very One he had cursed only seconds before.

# *New*

*Jack walked into a room in an old Queenslander, a wooden house with wooden walls, high ceilings and a corrugated tin roof. It sat up on stumps and had a veranda all around it; both these, to keep it cool in the northern summers. He knew this was a dream. He felt at ease in that, as it was definitely not another journey 'deeper'. To him this was a place on the way to the next life; the second life.*

*There in front of him was a long wide wooden table. The Queen's Mother and Thomas sat on either side of it. They were looking straight ahead, not speaking; not even turning when he came into their presence. These two had been part of a great recurring challenge that he had long since forgotten. It was in a Garden so many journeys ago, and what now seemed like a thousand cycles ago. He had grown much over all his travelling, and like an old man looking back on his life as a younger man, he was only curious about the meaning of this dream.*

*There were others at the table too, and he could feel the sweet strength of community there; he could feel love. He took a seat at the table while just now realising that Words were being spoken by one of the other people in the room. A young lady read from a glowing Book. The Words she read spoke of struggle and victory, and the nature of what was required to*

*bring on the advancement of the world. The last phrase of those words rang loud to Jack, while not actually louder in the dream. He could not believe the realisation that came from them. He had walked in so many worlds and endured endless cycles of learning, but somehow had missed this aspect, or more so, only now realised the depth of its importance.*

*But is not the soul's journey one of discovery and relearning, and things of the spirit, ever continuing and eternal? He was humbled, like so many times before, as he mouthed the words...*

***“...conquer the citadels of the hearts of men.”<sup>1</sup>***

*Jack had always sought more knowledge; how to free his soul, how to love more, and even how to grow new civilisations, but this small phrase was still a revelation to him. It seemed that he had been so busy seeking knowledge that this small but sublime piece had eluded him. The Writing made it vividly clear, to him, in this place, that the heart was the centre of the life of the human soul and that it was the ground spring of all intention; that it was here that people lived, no matter their ideas or their personality. It was not only that the mind needed to be informed, or the soul advanced, as much as it was that the heart needed to be freed if any soul truly wished to advance, or any kind sought a future.*

*But mostly he saw in this, and from his many experiences, that only a life of truthfulness and genuine love, an outward spiritual life that mirrored a truly changed soul within, would change the light that shone from our being. Only this would open the deep fortress of people's hearts, and only pure love could truly unite family, community, country,*

*or world. Only hearts freed, hearts united, our intentions then soaring, could bring on a greater civilisation.*

*The heart needs be of a greater love to know and serve what is true; a greater love, a greater truth, for there is much beyond us. If this love itself does not knock at the gates of the fortress which defends a person's being and wellbeing, and if we do not see someone's heart as we call out with a selfless love at its ramparts, how can we hope for it to open to greater knowledge.*

*Knowledge was now changed again, for Jack; as knowledge must of course. Its nature was now as much about love as anything else. He knew that through the Great Gateways our love for the Creator opened the flow of true love and understanding into our beings, then out through the channel of our hearts to others. It was a crowning understanding, and quite fitting after so many deeper journeys. But as fate would have it, and as the answer to Jack's desperate prayer had made it, this dream was to fall away; conscious knowledge of this great realisation was to leave him, unremembered, along with all memory of his myriad journeys. As the room now faded from sight, and as he felt a great love within his heart, Jack was taken to unconsciousness.*

JACK CAME AROUND IN A HOSPITAL BED. There was a lady in the room; his neighbour Rouha, who he had known many times on his journeys, but only talked to once in the physical world. His new neighbours had only moved in recently and he had wanted to have little to do with them. He was even frustrated trying to pronounce their names. But thankfully, her husband Farhang had found him in the paddock. They had heard his screams and curses, so went to see if he was okay. When Farhang found him lying there unconscious he had immediately called for an ambulance.

“*You’re awake,*” now said Rouha excitedly, as Jack opened his eyes.

“I am. I am,” said Jack, in a muffle. Dazed, but waking.

“You have had a heart attack,” explained Rouha, now more slowly and gently.

Just then, Jack’s sister walked in, and seeing her brother awake she began to cry just a little. She came over to him, and said, “Hey, Jack. *Boy,* you had us *scared.*”

“Mmm,” was all he could muster right then.

“Lucky you have good neighbours,” said his sister, as she rubbed his arm. “Rouha’s husband found you, and they’ve been visiting you these last few days,” she explained. She was the oldest sibling and had a motherly instinct as well as a sisterly one toward him.

Jack looked across at Rouha, and said weakly, “Are you my neighbour?”

“We are new, but we have talked once,” offered Rouha, a little confused as it was only a short time ago.

“I don’t know you. I’m sorry,” said Jack, feeling a little lost in himself, but coming around slowly.

“You *do* remember *me, right?*” quizzed Jack’s sister.

“How could I forget *you, Judy,*” he said, gently and lovingly, but with just a little cheek.

Judy felt good, as her brother not only knew her, he was healthy enough to try to be a little bit funny; a good sign.

“I had better leave,” said Rouha, feeling more than a little out of place; especially as Jack did not seem to remember her at all.

“No,” said Judy, strongly. “You and your husband have helped my brother. We can’t repay you for finding him and getting him here.”

Jack then added, a bit breathlessly, “I can see you’re a good soul, and you’re both my friends now; *like it or not.*”

Judy looked at Jack strangely. She knew her brother, and this was not him; not him at all. Her brother would have very much appreciated the help these people had given, and certainly been kind; but he would have been more guarded and not so ready to pal up. He would not have talked the way he did or used those particular words. She wondered if the heart attack had changed his mind a little, along with the loss of some recent memory. She had seen others change after a stroke; their personality at least, but it was almost like he was a totally different man.

“Thank you, Jack, but this is a time to be with family,” said Rouha.

“I want to thank Farhad at least, before you go,” requested Jack.

“His name is Farhang, but you can call him Frank if that makes it easier for you?”

“Farhang. No, that’s fine. I believe that calling someone by their *real* name is respectful.”

Rouha smiled, feeling more at ease, but wondered at how easily he pronounced those names and how he knew the other Persian name.

Judy was just as puzzled, but Jack was oblivious to his knowledge of these names and the change his sister saw in his character. This *was not* her brother. *Mate* was a good name for *anyone* to her brother, and usually the *only* one that the Jack she knew used before today; including women. This was not the knock about bloke or the ‘*too plain talking man*’ she

knew. He was not the man who always said ‘Harden up’ to someone who was struggling. He had always been a strong man and could not understand why people whinged so much. The man lying in the bed was a more sensitive, caring, and far more refined man. It was mostly in the spirit of *how* he had talked and in the particular words he used that made her see all this. In any case, she thought that she would check to see if her brother was still in there somewhere.

“So, Jack?” asked Judy.

“Yep,” said Jack, in reply.

“Harden up!”

Jack just smiled gently, and Judy was now sure that this was not her brother; at the very least he would have had a good laugh or told her to ‘Back it up a bit’. He *had* changed.

“Who the hell *are* you?” she then asked out loud.

They were a very plain talking family; they had plenty of love, but were more, *say it how it is, call it how it is, and get on with it*, kind of people. Their ethos was about honesty and growing a strong character. Integrity was very important to them, and even though very plain talking, they were quite courteous and kind; often going to great lengths to help someone they deemed as deserving. Some found them a bit confronting at times, but at least they knew where they stood with them and who these people were. People liked them because of these things, and because of their personal integrity.

With Judy particularly though, there was actually *quite a lot* she didn’t say outwardly, even though she too expressed her thoughts very honestly. She *was* honest but held her tongue when she needed to be strong for others, or when she didn’t want to burden them with what she plainly saw. She was a giver and did plenty for others, even if it was hard. The lady

had an unhealthy heart, and even though her friends and family knew it they still asked a lot of her. We allow ourselves to be overburdened for good reasons and bad, and we can also be less than honest to others and to ourselves for good reasons and bad. But, sadly, whichever hers was, Judy's heart was breaking. She was struggling desperately inside herself but would never show it outwardly to all and sundry.

"I'm *your brother*," Jack answered, smiling.

"No, you're *not*," challenged Judy, curtly.

"*How so?*"

"You're not as tough as you usually are."

"*Mate*, I'm as tough as I've *always* have been. Cut me some slack. I've just had a *bloody heart attack*. Maybe I'll get up *tomorrow...if that's okay with you*," argued Jack, waving all the wires and tubes attached to him for effect.

Judy smiled, "*That's* more like it."

They all had a laugh at the exchange, with even Rouha feeling a little more at ease with his last response. This was more like the man she and her husband had talked to, and the man who had done his best to ignore them since they became neighbours. She had thought that the experience of nearly dying had changed him a little by his kind words today; but *maybe* not really, as she could now see that there was more to him than just his adamant ways. She had witnessed the deep family love between these two and had now felt the kindness in this family, so she knew they were not quite as rough and tough as they both seemed.

*A dark force had seen Jack lying there, hidden away in the Mists of Unbelief. It had watched this Traveller as he came awake in the material world; this world of form. It had lost the grip it had gained on this Traveller when he had been suddenly removed from this Other Place. There was a new boundary now within Jack that it could not ford. The creature screamed, as it had lost an opportunity that it craved more than anything; to gather form. Jack's release from this Other Place, and his loss of memory, had saved him from this creature. But this phantom would bide its time, as it carried on its work that dark Place. It would have form if it was the last thing it did.*

*Suddenly, this empty Dark Mist found light amidst it. It reeled at the shock of it and shot off into far darker places in this Other Place. All that could be heard from a distance as the dark creature frantically escaped the onrushing light was the deep rumble of an engine, and a woman swearing loud and hard at the dark creature she hunted.*

JACK ROSE EARLY. It had now been three months since his heart attack, and his heart and body were now well on the way back to health. Farhang's quick action had saved his heart musculature to a large degree, and he was quite fortunate that he had recovered so well; especially considering the level of the heart attack. His recovery was also enhanced because his heart was strong, as he had worked physically hard and played sport as a youth and always liked to keep fit. He now thought that he may even start running a little, as it made his body feel good. Running also cleared his mind, making it more vibrant and strong. Today he was finally feeling his full strength again, and *it felt great.*

He had been back at work, although only partially, and had been doing just a little mucking around in his small paddock while he was steadily getting stronger. He now sat himself down in the sun with a cup of tea as he looked out at his small paddock. He realised

that he had had this parcel of land for a while but had really done nothing with it. He just mowed it and kept the fences in good repair, and as he sat there looking out, he thought about growing some fruit trees and maybe setting up a veggie patch.

He didn't have any interest in growing trees before today; this small parcel of grassland being more like a green buffer between him and the world, and a place to be outside in on the weekend and after work. Pottering around the place more recently and having more time to muck around in his shed made him feel good, and this new idea of growing fruit trees made him feel a little fuller inside.

He smiled as he thought about the fruit that he might grow, deciding that it would have to be trees that could look after themselves mostly, and ones he could get fruit from within the first year. He thought of passionfruit, cherry tomatoes, grafted grape plants, bananas, and grafted citrus trees. He didn't know *how he knew* that these would fit the bill, as his mind then naturally wandered to even more knowledge about how to best feed citrus trees. He was confused at this knowledge, and where it came from, but then thought that he must have learnt it from someone sometime and had just forgotten. Also, that maybe his mind still needed to catch up with him a bit, as his memory had been a bit erratic. He was not over-concerned about this disconnect though, because he had now regained memory of his neighbours before his attack and felt quite clear mentally.

His sister Judy had been driving him a little nuts though; about his mind, and him being changed somehow. But he believed he *was* himself. He didn't think he was different at all, and had in the end, made that *very* clear; also expressing often that he was *more than a bit* over her accusations. To him, he was definitely the '*tell it how it is*' bloke who just had a heart attack, and as far as he was concerned, that was *not* about to change.

He now walked around a part of his paddock, planning out, and stepping out, the orchard he wanted to plant. It felt natural; like he was an old hand. He wondered why he hadn't taken this on before as he now experienced how natural and fulfilling it was. It was then that he saw his neighbours sitting in their back patio with a friend.

Rouha called out, "Hi, Jack. *Lovely day.*"

"*Glorious* day, Rouha. Hello, Farhang."

"Hello, *Mr Jack,*" called Farhang, as addressing him this way had for some reason become a rolling joke between them.

"*Mr A'Jack, to you mate,*" he shot back, with Jack's now thankfully somewhat dissipated ignorance of these two souls, and they both laughed. As he smiled some words came to him unbidden. '*Difference in culture can become an enjoyable bridge, or a terrible wall, depending on the intentions of ego or love.*'

The thought was beautiful, and his own, but again he did not remember where he had gathered it. It sure didn't sound like him at all, even though he was *way* more okay with his foreign neighbours now. He explored his memory to find out where it came from when some words interrupted his thoughts.

"*Bloody whitefella's,*" then called out his neighbour's guest.

That got Jack's attention, and not being a shrinking violet, thought he might just stand up the '*bloody smart Alec*' who said it.

As he came over to the fence, he saw a man smiling wide. He was half Islander and half Aborigine, and as Jack realised who it was, he said "How black *are you, mate?*"

Rouha and Farhad were shocked; as much with their guest's comment as they were with Jack's, and it made them very uncomfortable. There was only a laugh from Brig though. This man had been a mate of Jack's in Cunnamulla about ten years ago now. He had gotten a job in a bank there, *as he always said he would*, and then been transferred to Brisbane, *as he always said he would*. When the manager of the branch in Brisbane had found out that an aboriginal lad was being transferred to his branch, he had asked the manager in Cunnamulla, "How black is he?" Jack had not been happy when Brig told him about it at the time, while Brig had just laughed at the man's ignorance, saying that it was no drama to him; he would show him *just who he was* when he got there. He had now apparently been transferred to Jack's town after some years there. Jack had no clue he was here, as they had lost touch over time as some old friends do. But old friendships, good friendships, never die.

Jack climbed through the wire fence as Brig came over. He found himself a bit teary, and was not at all comfortable with them, but gave his brother Brig his hand and then naturally a man hug ensued.

"It's good to see you, mate. *Real good*," said Brig, in his gentle way, but Jack could see the greater man that his mate had grown into in his eyes and bearing.

"Great to see you too, mate."

"They tell me you had a heart scare."

"Yeah, Brig," answered Jack, tearing a little more still. Then explaining it away, saying, "And I think it got a *little soft* from the shock."

"Hell, Jacko, *it's all good*," responded Brig, with a chuckle.

He had a gentle Islander smile, and it beamed today, as it did all those years back. Brig was a very gentle and heartfelt man, and Jack always saw him as a thoughtful lad who

only said what he needed too. He was happy in his own skin, and it showed, even when he was young. Jack on the other hand had been a wild thing when he was out west, almost completely lost in his being and just out for fun. Like a puppy let off the leash he had had a lot to form within himself back then, and a lot more than that to learn.

“I *knew* you were a softie, the way you *always* stuck up for me,” added Brig.

“*God! Not you too.* My sister says that I’m *as soft as*, and I just *don’t* see it. I think I’m just still getting over the shock of nearly dying. Maybe it changed me a bit, but I’m *not bloody comfortable* with this *emotions* stuff, so they *won’t* be staying.”

Brig laughed out loud as Farhang asked Jack to join them for some morning tea. But strangely Jack just stood there losing it a little more emotionally. He just stood there, still; tears welling up and now falling easily. Jack was simply feeling the joy and warm embrace of friendship and community; something he had shunned so hard and for such a long time before his heart attack. He never knew it could be *so good*, and it was affecting him strongly right now. His solitary life was *no life*, and he now *more* than realised that. And unbeknownst to him, it had also been very solitary for a good while on his journeys to other worlds and deeper.

“Are you okay, Jack?” asked Farhang.

“Better than I was, mate; better than I could have *imagined* really,” he answered, still a little lost, but happy at some of his deeper humanity finally rising up to breathe again.

“Please sit down,” offered Rouha, more as a physical safety measure, while at the same time wondering at her neighbour’s amazing changes. She could never have known that this was under the surface of her previously unfriendly neighbour.

“It’s not physical, Rouha. Its *bloody strange*, but it’s not physical,” explained Jack, to calm Rouha’s obvious concerns about his health; while finally realising that Judy *was* right about him, as he sat down to enjoy the morning with friends; old and new.

THEY WERE IN THE LOUNGE ROOM WAITING FOR ANOTHER GUEST. It was now a week later, as Rouha had invited the two old friends back for dinner tonight after that lovely day of catching up and getting to know each other. There had been a lot of good stories about young lads running wild in Western Queensland that day, and some real interest in Farhang and Rouha’s journey from their homeland to Australia. That morning tea had turned into lunch and then into dinner, and Jack had returned home feeling very energised, satisfied somehow, and alive.

“Naomi,” sprouted Jack, like he knew the lady who now entered the lounge room, and it was as natural as the way he had greeted Brig the week before; like an old friend. He then realised that he did not know this woman at all.

She was an Islander lady with striking green eyes, and she was a bit lost in his odd greeting too. Jack continued, then saying, “Sorry, I must have had you mixed up with someone else.”

He was now feeling very confused and wondering who that someone else was. He didn’t know any Islander women and no memory of any Naomi. He looked up from his embarrassment to find the rest of them staring at him; all a little dumbstruck.

“Her name *is* Naomi, Jack,” said Brig smiling, wondering what the hell was happening with his mate, but finding a good deal of joy in it.

Naomi laughed, though a little unsure said, “You must be psychic.”

“Psych-*o*, more like it,” said Jack, a little concerned.

They all laughed, and relaxed a bit, as Rouha told Naomi about Jack’s recent health scare.

“I know Jack from out west Naomi, he did chase girls, but he didn’t stalk’em. So, you should be safe,” explained Brig, for Naomi’s comfort.

They all had a chuckle, while Jack just looked embarrassed. Naomi was taken by the man’s humility right now, mainly because she had been told what hard case he was. She could see a childlike quality in him, and right now, a real lack of assurance.

She then sat down on the chair next to him, and said, “You are an *interesting* man, Jack Johnston.”

“Mmm,” said Jack, “Tell me about it.”

“What do you do Jack?”

“I’ve got a pump shop; just a small one. You know, selling ‘em and fixin’ ‘em. It keeps me out of trouble. Not as tough *teaching* or anything.”

The whole room then stopped in silence and stares, and Brig smiled again.

“What?!” said Jack, worried that he had said something wrong, but not seeing how.

“I’m a teacher, Jack,” explained Naomi, with a smile; with a little wonder in it.

“Noo, *nooo*. I just said that to show how my job wasn’t real complicated. *That’s all*.”

“*I don’t know*, Jack,” offered Brig, still smiling.

“It’s *amazing*,” said Rouha, and Farhang nodded.

Jack looked at Naomi, trying to smile and fob it off, as the background around her changed to a beach...to a small classroom...then to a strange great hall with burnished steel supports. They came flicking in and out in his mind's eye, followed by the feeling of a deep spirit entering his being; like part of himself had been returned, and he, quite strangely, accepted it easily. He even sat at more peace in himself.

Naomi saw his eyes change; and not being sure if Jack was really with it, shot a look at Rouha.

“Are you okay, Jack?” asked Rouha, *for* her.

Jack was about to say that he was now very much at ease, but *knew* it was best not to mention it, and just said, “Maybe we should take the focus off me, and just enjoy the evening.”

“Good idea,” said Brig, quite comfortable because he knew Jack's character implicitly, and in any case, he was not afraid of anything that walked the Earth. He was a very deepened soul.

Naomi though, was a little unsure about this man. She had seen broken minds before, and it seemed to her that this man's was a little disordered. His heart attack had not taken his life, but it must have had a deep effect on his mind as far as she was concerned. She decided to be kind and just enjoy the evening. She would show him all grace, but the safety boundary that had instantly risen in her at first contact would stay for now. She trusted her inner questions and if she was wrong it would bear out in time.

It was not that this woman was not caring or in any way over-fearful. She was just being discerning and would never judge someone on a disability. The fact that Brig was at ease, and that Rouha and Farhang were okay with him too, made her okay for now. It is not

wrong to protect oneself from harm. Compassion is not really sacrificed just because a woman, or anyone, seeks basic safety. All human souls have their choices though.

As the night went on, the conversation was mainly about the state of the world and the true nobility of man. These people were all of the same Faith; one that was new to Jack, but not foreign in its content. He agreed with it all, as he simply let the others talk. After a while though, Naomi said to him, “Do we bore you, Jack? Are we a bit too religious?”

“No. It’s fine,” he said gently.

“What do you think about what we have been talking about, Jack?” asked Brig, with a smile, not really sure what Jack’s beliefs were.

“Well, I believe you should take more time to get to know my reality before you pour yours all over it. You could also be straight up about sharing your message. You were a little practised; you know, *less real*. Your words were less your own too, and even though they were from your hearts, a little too much about selling me something.”

“Okay,” responded Naomi, a little surprised at the level of discernment in someone she thought was a little loose in the mind. “Our words were not our own? What did you mean by that?”

“Well, to me, you have to take in what you believe, test it, and consider it, and make your own language for it. Make it a part of you; so much so that your words are *you*, and even if not they’re your words, delivered from the heart. Not just some ordered words or imitated mumblings.”

Brig and Naomi laughed. Farhang and Rouha smiled. Here they were learning from someone who did not seem quite right in the head and getting a lesson about how to share knowledge from him.

“But, saying all that, the quotes *were* beautiful and powerful, and to me, most of what you talked about is self-evident,” added Jack, with a small, old man, smile.

Naomi and Brig were very aware of what they saw in Jack’s face; Rouha and Farhang not so much. It was not that Jack’s neighbours did not have the vision; it was more about a stronger cultural acquaintance to his manner at that moment.

“Any *more* advice, Jack,” said Brig, now chuckling a little.

“That’s all I got, mate,” said Jack, a little bit cheeky, poised and at peace.

“Oh, you have *more than that*,” claimed Naomi, now a little more curious, than concerned.

“I *really* don’t,” said Jack, quite plainly, and believing it.

She just looked at him, and then to Brig with a smile, tilting her head just a little as she made the ‘*What is all this?*’ eyes.

## *Firesides*

“That’s just the usual lack of moral consistency that’s growing out there,” charged Jack.

“Well, that’s what *I think* about the situation over there,” replied the man, very sure of his right to say so and adding that assertion out loud to the group as well.

“Yep, it *is* your right, and a lot of what you say is true, but you still aren’t being very responsible,” added Jack.

“Where do you get off telling me what to think? I thought this was an accepting place, and everyone respected.”

“It is, Bob. Jack, could you please not make your views personally pointed? We’re not here to judge each other,” requested Naomi.

“Sure, *sorry* mate, but what I see quite a lot, no matter what the subject of discussion is, is people saying one thing is *right and good* if *their* tribe loves it; and a lot of times that whatever another political, cultural, or religious persuasion sees as all *right and good*, as some kind of evil. They seem to need to take the opposite view if another crew sees it a certain way, instead of thinking for themselves on *each* particular situation. It tends to create

no consistency in their views, just a jumbled collection ideas and slogans that can never belong together.”

“My comments *are* consistent.”

“Look, I want to keep in the spirit of this meeting. So, I won’t say any more.”

“*I can hear* what you have to say about my comments on racial discrimination over there. I would be interested to know what you mean,” said Bob, now genuinely allowing an exploration.

“Okay,” said Jack, shaking his head, and Brig and Naomi held their breath. “Here it is, straight up, there seems to be two sets of rules for racial bias and exclusion, explicit in your comments. Which set of rules apply all seem to depend upon the person’s skin colour and their economic reality; so, it’s immediately racist and bigoted, and definitely prejudging people. You can’t fight discrimination *with discrimination*. There is no true moral consistency there, even though I know *for sure* that there’s a lack of opportunity and bias against some for their skin colour and economic reality, and even though I know the big end of town can be very destructive.”

“Well, *we agree on the last part*,” stated Bob, smiling, but Jack just saw a man still blind to his bias, and just being self-protective. It annoyed Jack when people debated so they looked good and did not want to address *all* of what was plainly evident.

“What I am saying is there are so many people out there with inconsistent jumble of ideas that can’t truly fit together, intellectually, or morally. It’s kind of like everyone is Dr Frankenstein and making their own pieced together monster. I talked to a person the other day who was disgusted with any thought of the death penalty for murderous crimes but was okay with abortion. It blew my mind, but I hear things like this every day. The only way to

the truth of a matter is a *passion for the truth*; with humility, and effort, searched *out* together; dispassionately.”

Brig smiled wide, and Naomi’s eyes shined a little.

“I don’t believe I have a bias at all,” said Bob, confidently.

“All I can say is, that especially in my recent experience, I’m seeing that most people, of *all* persuasions, like to select their facts and exclude others, and that sometimes even the ‘facts’ they back their view up with are hearsay and theory.”

“I’m hearing *that*, Jack.”

“But like most people, Bob, people only question the hearsay of people who don’t see things as they do. People seem blind to their own tribe’s theories too. I’ve been making a lot of people uncomfortable lately with facts they don’t want to see. I had certainly stopped caring before my heart attack. I just ignored people’s talk. Just saw it as talk.”

“Well, that’s your view and your problem, Jack,” commented Bob.

With that Jack decided to back away as he believed that this man was closed, realising that any more straight talking would only do harm. He had just wanted to help widen his perspective but was now concerned that he had been too forthright, *or had he*. He had *never* been uncomfortable with *telling it how he saw it*, but he *had been* more so lately. As far as he was concerned this man was just following his tribal line mindlessly on the subject. At his shop he talked to people from across the spectrum, from spiritualists to flat Earther’s, from Muslim haters to environmentalists, Christians to atheists, different nationalities, and people of all the different political bents, and they all had their tribal line; to him, just repeating mindlessly the particular scripture of their group and not seeking a wider view. To Jack, they

were seemingly *safe* somehow in their world view, and other views or evidence only threatened them when he challenged them a little.

“I think the clash of ideas is very healthy,” said Naomi, seeking to moderate the situation.

“For sure,” said Jack, and very much meaning it, but Bob stayed silent.

“In our Faith we’re asked to see everyone as our equals and be filled with love for all religionists and nationalities. Not to pollute our tongues by speaking disparagingly of others. Everyone sees things differently, and yet a lot the same, in a way. We don’t have to agree to respect each other, as like all conversations and explorations people take away what they do. Humility creates the best soil in which things can grow,” added Brig.

Bob liked that, and Jack saw a little more than he did before. He felt the deep humility and spirit in what Brig had shared, as well as some balance and a deeper conciliation in what Naomi had said.

Naomi had invited Jack to this meeting; what she called a fireside. It was where they shared some of the nature and ideas of their Faith with those who were interested to learn about it or discuss its Writings. A fireside could take any form, from a cup of coffee with a friend to a more formal sharing and discussion. Tonight, was the latter, and after the formal sharing and discussion, conversations tended to move freely through various ideas and wander by the comments of those who came along.

Jack had gone home on the night he had first met Naomi and found himself a bit lost. He had wondered who the hell he was, and more especially, because he was so strangely calm about it. It was really odd to be inside him. He was confused and curious, just like Naomi had been, but still at ease. He had sat on his veranda until late trying to allow his

divergent thoughts, or even these different ways of being within himself, find a new middle ground. As he had attended to his gentle confusion, he found that he didn't mind this new creature stirring inside him, as it *was* him. It did not seem foreign at all, but he *sure as hell* was not giving up being who he was and would keep it *real* as he always had; well, Jack's definition of *real* that was. There are certainly as many definitions of that word as there are world views and opinions in the world.

His comments on lack of vision, just now, had actually been the first time he had spoken in the discussion tonight. It had felt quite natural for him to sit back. He seemed to be watching the conversation as well as his own internal thoughts and reactions. He had even found himself with less of a will to confront anyone's thinking or chase down inconsistencies in what people said. *At least*, to the measure that he used to.

*"I just had to point out the inconsistency,"* he now thought, as he reflected while the others talked on, and Bob opened up again. He now decided that he liked this new tension within him and was happy to let it all integrate in its own time. This new part of him was patient, yet still passionate, and it was very much later in the evening before he opened his mouth again.

"Life is so cruel. Hard to believe there is a loving Creator," he commented, joining in without thinking. His mind had wandered elsewhere for a short while and just came back to hear Naomi talking about a friend of hers who was struggling with a long-term illness.

Brig looked a little confused, and he asked, "So you don't believe in God, Jack?"

"I just gave up on Him. Didn't think He'd allow the cruelty that exists in this world if He really did exist. I just decided that Jesus was just a great human being; that he was someone to emulate, and that I would just live life as it came to me."

“If there’s no God, then it is all just man’s injustice to man and the cruelty of life, Jack. Either way, we’re responsible; for ourselves, to each other, and to the future,” offered Brig.

“Sure, Brig,” agreed Jack, now feeling a strong mental dissonance, a rising level of this new tension within him, on the subject. It was some confusion about his actual take on this subject.

“You really don’t believe in God?” asked Naomi, a little incredulous at this revelation; especially as Jack had seemed so on board with them the other evening.

“Well, maybe, maybe not. I’m feeling the same essence as Jesus and what he asked of people quite alive in your Faith’s Writings. You lot seem to try and live it, too; not that others don’t, but your Faith allows for easy discussion on the nature of things, and I believe a true religion would have to allow that. So, it seems I’m opening up the question of God again,” answered Jack, but then remaining silent to deal with a growing confusion in himself.

He *had* given up on God, but now, he also found it impossible *not* to believe in the existence of a Greater Being. Right now, he was two people, or more so, one person with two varied and reasonably divergent life experiences. It was then that he mused that one’s life experience, environment, and learning, were more consequential than a person’s natural makeup. He always believed that our nature, and what we believed was right and wrong, were the strongest influences. His makeup and upbringing definitely made him act a certain way and make certain decisions, but now he also saw, that at the least, he could be a very different human being from a differing environment and education, a differing life experience.

He sat there smiling inwardly at himself, while strangely relaxing in this seemingly new insight; *knowing* somehow that it was part of a process he was in, and not at all afraid for his sanity. He had the others in the room still guessing where he really stood on the question of God, but that would have to be okay, because this strange integration would have to take the time it required whether the others were comfortable or not. He also felt another very strong *knowing*, which seemed to come from a *particular* unremembered experience, which warned him that to open up about his inner process and confusion would definitely not be helpful to him; or to them.

None the less, Naomi and Brig were thinking the exact opposite, and after tonight they both wanted to spend more time with Jack. They were now clearly messaging each other with their eyes that they needed to have their curiosity about Jack satiated.

Bob wasn't curious *at all*. He thought that he had carried himself quite well through the evening and had had his say. When it came time to leave, he decided that he would not be coming back. Naomi and Brig were good company, and the ideas of their Faith were quite high minded, but he had seen enough to know that he was on the right track. He didn't need religion, as although this Faith had good ideas he could not intellectually come to a belief in a God. There was simply not enough evidence for him; like in the other belief system he had looked into. He had attended about five of these nights, and that was enough. "*That Jack guy irks me anyway,*" he thought, as he now walked down the stairs out of Brig's home.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, I SHOULD BE VEGETARIAN?" asked Jack, very gently.

He had enjoyed the readings shared tonight and had listened to the other souls attending this open night. They had discussed each Writing that was shared; listening as they

were read and expressing their thoughts on them one by one, for an hour or so now. Jack had found again that he naturally wanted to sit back; not finding the compulsion, or even need, to share his thoughts until now.

It was the second fireside that Naomi had invited him too. Her community did it once a month here. Naomi and Brig acted as a team doing them, and they held these firesides at Naomi's place mainly; just sometimes, at Brig's. Tonight, it was at her house. Naomi's husband joined them sometimes, but not a lot, according to her. He was not of her Faith, but they were very much together. Jack had not met him, but when he heard that he was a surfer something about it triggered his interest to meet this guy one day.

Naomi had chased Jack up between the firesides to talk more, one to one, but failed due to Jack wanting time to reflect and let his mind come together. Brig had rung a few times though, just talking about all sorts of things like friends do. When he was invited to the second fireside, he had commented to Brig that it might not be a good idea. He was concerned that when it came to it, he would have to have his say and maybe turn people off Brig's Faith by him doing so. But Brig had said to him, "We all put into the exploration, Jack. It makes it richer that way, but maybe just don't get personal, and use a little bit of tact."

Jack knew what tact was but had little experience with it, so when he had naturally promised to *try* to use it, his friend had laughed loud over the phone.

"Because we are naturally vegetarian, and we should be kind to animals. It is in line with the rest of what we've discussed so far. We *should* be vegetarian."

"But why *should I* be vegetarian?" he asked, very gently again, knowing that he was eating way less meat after his heart attack. He enjoyed the greater variation of meals, but still felt like he needed to have meals with meat to keep him going well.

“Well, you *should*.”

“Isn’t it *my* business, what I eat?” asked Jack, again gently, with a very clear demeanour of exploration, not attack.

“Well, yes, but we *all* need to, even if just for the planet and the animals. Good stewards of the Earth,” explained the man.

“You should become Baha’i,” then stated Jack, quite forthrightly.

Naomi and Brig did not know how to react, concerned that Jack was about to ‘*real*’ this man out their door.

“But I’m just looking into it, yet.”

“You *should*. It will be good for you, and others. Good for the future, animals, *and* the planet. Brig and Naomi’s faith takes kindness to animals and stewardship of the planet *very* seriously, and you could help spread its peace-loving spirit around the world.”

“Well, that’s up *to you* to decide, for *you*,” answered the man, feeling a little threatened.

“I was only trying to make the point,” then admitted Jack, with smiling eyes and a steady tone, “that all of us need to seek the truth of things ourselves. It’s not up to me to tell you what you should do, and we are best not assuming that everyone *needs* to be what *we are*. I’m hearing a rising plethora of group mindsets in people, which like telling other people what they *should* think or *should* do, so I am a little resistant to it.”

“It’s mostly just people being passionate about what they see as beneficial,” offered Brig.

“Sure. But as soon as you tell someone they *should* be something or *think something* you’re crossing the line of courtesy; and stepping into a fundamentalist attitude. This kind of societal talk has actually gone way beyond passion, and a lot of it now become a screaming hatred. Enforcement *never* works. It just naturally, in time, creates an equal and opposite reaction.”

“I was just saying...”

“Were you, mate?” cut in Jack.

“Well, I suppose I do think that *we all* should do it.”

Jack sat back, and said in resigned tones, “A lot of people have been preaching from various ideological pulpits since the void of meaninglessness hit our world in the mid part of the last century. The amount of these new preachers, and their volume, is growing as time goes on, even though we have seen the resultant human carnage of what they profess. To me, no one in these days, where we can all mostly read and seek out our own knowledge, needs these endless secular *priests* telling us what is good, and what isn’t.”

“I was mostly just saying that it was valuable, and true to me.”

“Then match your language with your intent. Better still, clearly understand your *true* intent,” he responded, in the clothes of kindness. “Understand that no one can in reality force another anywhere; *not truly*. It seems to me that societal truth tends to just be what is yelled the loudest and the longest. The media even seems to want to *create* the world, not report on it, and endless comment and debate is not enough to find answers anyway. Passion of opinion or world view needs be replaced by a *passion, effort, to seek the truth together*. It would yield far better results.

I feel strongly that we need to stop *telling* each other; *challenge* each other, and *inspire* each other to action, but not just *tell* each other. If you want to inspire others to become vegetarian or vegan, or anything else, then *live* it. A lot of these screamers don't even live to their words, and they certainly don't live their ideals when it suits them not to.

My life experience tells me clearly that even for the *highest* aims, people certainly won't be encouraged or inspired to action by those who only talk over them or lay their code on them; especially when they have no clue about, or respect for, the individual they are talking to. Many just throw out the usual '*speak*'; the words and slogans they *imagine* are products unassailable knowledge. It should be about humility and learning, and for all you know, I *am* vegetarian."

"Okay, I get you, Jack," said the man, in a gently considered way. He had been taken aback at first by the challenge but was now more at ease, not only by Jack's words, but the kindness in which they were couched. The man actually felt a little inspired too.

"Are you vegetarian?"

"No mate, I am nearly. I don't think I will ever stop eating meat, but I don't crave it as much anymore. But really, to me, I think moderation, variety, freshness, and having more whole foods is just as helpful for health. The body seems to know what it needs, so I follow its lead more."

"Sure, it's good to feel what you need," agreed the man.

"I think this crazy over-thinking stressful world we are creating is more a danger to our health. The negativity is sucking the life out of us."

"Sure, our emotional concerns and negative thoughts produce consequences, but the food we put in our bodies counts; especially too much heavily fried foods."

“Yeah, sure. I could be more vegetarian. If I need any recipes, I know who to ask.”

“I would help *gladly*, Jack.”

“*Now I’m feeling ya*’, mate,” said Jack, smiling.

The man smiled too, and Naomi felt a little relieved as Jack looked at Brig and shrugged his shoulders; putting on a face that said to him, ‘I told you I might not be able to keep quiet, but I did my best’.

“Maybe the focus on exercise and diet, and other small things, in our country, is a little secondary in the reality of many on the planet who struggle to even get *one* meal a day, and to me, there are many deeper and more important problems out there that need attention before these things,” commented Naomi; followed by nods all around.

As the night wound down Naomi asked Jack and Brig to stay. Usually, it would just be Brig. The two of them would reflect over the night together and see where and how they could make things better. Anyway, as Naomi was seeing the others away Brig came back into the lounge room.

“Would you like a cuppa’, Jack?”

“Sure, black with two, mate. Thanks.”

As Brig went to get the beverages for them all, Naomi returned and sat down across from Jack. She asked, “Have you read books on our Faith?”

“No, just discussions with you lot, so far.”

“Your thinking seems so aligned with it. I mean, definitely not that *all* you think and say is, but you *seem* to be a little more than most.”

“I don’t know. Don’t you all have your own personal perception of your Faith?”

“In one way, *definitely*, but in the core beliefs and general understanding...*definitely not*. We even seek unity of thought, but it’s not an imposed unity. It’s more especially that you seem to know about one of our core principles; about the shared search for the truth of a matter.”

“I don’t know what to say, Naomi.”

“Talk to me, Jack. Brig and I are friends. You can trust us.”

Jack wasn’t sure but allowed the feeling of trust open him up. “Well Naomi, I just know stuff; stuff that seems to be mine, but I have no memory of where, or how, I gained it. It’s the strangest bloody thing.”

“That *is* strange, but *please* go on,” she said, a little afraid Jack would clam up.

“The only way I can really explain it is that there is another Jack with his own understanding of things inside me now; as well as me. It’s just since my heart attack. I find myself happily in agreement with, and even inspired by, some thoughts that come out of me that I don’t believe ever even occurred to me before. Things I can’t even remember thinking about before. I am the Jack I am, and I am this other Jack too, not that I’ve got *multiple personalities* or anything.”

Naomi laughed a little, and so did Jack, and she said, “That *is* strange, but it certainly fits the way you’ve been acting. Do you think you should see someone?”

“*Are you serious? Geeze* lady, we’ve *just met*.”

“I’m sorry, *of course*. It’s not my place,” said Naomi, a little embarrassed.

“Am I comin’ across...as *that weird?*” asked Jack, with an odd-looking face, knowing what he was explaining was not in any way normal.

“It’s just strange for me; probably because I don’t know you so well yet, but it’s the things you come out with.”

“Well...When I think something needs to be challenged, I just put it out there. I always have. My honesty usually serves me well, and people know exactly who I am and where they stand with me. They can trust it, and therefore me. There are so many liars and actors out there, and they don’t grow strong because they’re hiding. They’re hiding because they want something, or they’re scared of things. Actors make my skin crawl, so people mostly get *all of me*, or nothin’.”

“No, I don’t mean *that particular* Jack; although *he is* a little challenging to people.”

“So, you mean this mysterious *other*, Jack?”

“He’s definitely *wiser*.”

“Hey, *steady up*, I’m wise too. I mean *it is me*.”

“*Sure*, you’re wise, Jack,” chimed in Brig, as he put down a cuppa’ for Naomi and Jack on the small table between them. He had a little chuckle as he did; one that grew as Jack’s did.

But then Jack felt some strong dissonance inside him and started feeling very uncomfortable; even a bit sick in the gut. “I don’t like talking about *this* and *that Jack*. I know I explained it that way, but I’m me. It’s *all* me. I just have to get used to it, and really, no one can do it for me.”

It was then that Owen, Naomi's husband, walked in. He had shoulder length blonde hair, and a deep bronze tan. He had boardies on, a light blue t-shirt.

"Hey, dude," he said in greeting, as he looked to Jack and went to shake his hand. "I'm Owen." Then added, with a wry smile to Jack, as he shook his hand firmly, "Did ya' get through the fire, Jack?"

Naomi just gave her husband a woman stare, while Jack had another attack of changing backgrounds, this time behind Owen.

JACK WAS SITTING BACK WATCHING A CURRENT AFFAIRS SHOW. He hardly watched them these days; just bits to keep up. Over recent years he had felt so disaffected by it all; the news as well. He had found that it was all the same old story day after day usually, or just gossip and sniping, and most of it unbalanced at best and propaganda at worst. They were all at it, no matter what social ideology they obviously favoured. For some it was about following, and kowtowing to, the social mood to keep up their revenue, while most new programmes played to emotion and the lowest common denominator.

It all just brought his energies low, like the murder shows were recently. He had stopped watching them altogether since his heart problem. He used to really enjoy them. A good deal of what he liked and disliked doing had changed now.

*"Oh, for cryin' out loud,"* he boomed, as he got up and walked away from the television for a while. *"Bloody idiots,"* he commented...well, cursed...as he walked into the kitchen to start to cook his dinner.

He had been watching a presenter interview another journalist who was part of the same channel. "They even bring in their own reporters to interview now. That's sad," he had

growled out loud to himself earlier. He had only endured the sad and total bias of the piece he had just watched because he had been waiting on another story. The story he was waiting on was about, what he saw as, the thin end of the wedge; a wedge that would be hammered in to break down the rights of people of religious belief in his country.

He could not believe it had come to this, but also wondered why he was thinking this way. He had given up on religion; even seeing it as a bit of a joke. He totally understood why people didn't believe in God, and why they began to throw off religion in the mid-twentieth century. But still, a strong oppressive feeling came over him as he thought about the nature of this new bold social threat to belief.

He could not shake the foreboding feeling of being pushed down and controlled. He then felt a deep darkness inside himself, and saw the flash of a dark mist, which even seemed to look at him. It then disappeared as light hit it, and Jack heard the sound of an engine and someone swearing. He wondered what they all had to do with each other. *"It must mean something,"* he thought, but it was a glimpse of an ongoing game of cat and mouse deeper in an Other Place.

*"It sure is weird to be you these days, Jack,"* he thought, as he eventually gave up trying to work it out, but the foreboding that came with this flash only grew as he now watched the story that he had waited for.

He had seen the rise of new 'preachers'; atheist ideologues, and those who saw various religious beliefs getting in the way of what they wanted. They were now right at the gates of religion and had the battering rams out. As he now watched on, he saw that they wouldn't even accept compromise, or a place of tolerance of difference, and were pushing their fundamentalist social agenda forward with an *ironically* blind religious zeal.

He saw now how this particular and recent societal fire, built over time slowly by a singular special interest group, would in time reshape wider societal thinking, and to him, change in unhealthy ways what people considered normal. It was not intolerance, as to him, every person made their own choices, and he accepted that right; it was more so a concern about how such thinking, societally enforced as religion had sometimes, would lead to more confusion in the minds of youths in the throes of adolescence, and worse, to the sexualisation of our children.

He knew, that when this particular Pandora's Box was actually opened fully on his society, its attending chaotic influence would grow, empower far more gender confusion, and wreak havoc on many individual lives, emotionally, psychologically, and physically, as well as add to the growingly incoherent social fabric. There had been other Pandora's Boxes opened too, lines crossed in the name of personal freedom, that were symptoms of a decaying moral structure; even though he could also see that some old and quite destructive or unjust cultural norms had been cast away too in this seemingly experimental age. Change can be constructive or destructive, and even in good things there is a best measure. But zealots do not know measure, nor wish to hear criticism of their 'religion'.

As he sat on the couch watching the rest of the story, he noticed a 'nodder', behind and to the side of each of the politicians who had been interviewed on this growing issue. He found that he could not stand the sad ridiculousness of such constructed images, and the stupidity of any 'nodder', let alone the weakness of the speakers themselves. It was underhanded, and stupid, but it seemed people didn't see things these days. "*Fools and propaganda in plain sight,*" he thought.

As the report unfolded, he only saw the sad apologies of one party and the aggressive pontificating of another; fearful weakness on one side, and righteous rage on the other. He

saw people with very little vision, but still *very* sure about what they saw. He knew now for certain that the societal system had sold out to people's lower nature, as more and more groups and individuals screamed like children to be fed, and politicians and business followed gladly the flow of their want. To him, and many others, politics had lost integrity, as had other institutions, so had no real power to bring healthy change.

He saw clearly right then that politics and the varied and growing ideologies now very apparent in his society could not fill the void of religion, no matter how hard they had tried. The media was the media, politics was politics, and religion was religion. They all had their role to play, just as science did. He could see now that religion had its own reality. It was a deeper power and a far greater essence than its many new usurpers thought it was; it was a higher calling to the soul of man. "*History has proven it,*" he now thought, remembering various religions lasting long beyond any empire, ideology, or thought form. He then shook his head at his own thoughts. They were *so* different now.

As he got up to finish cooking dinner, he knew he could not bear the constraints of *the new world according to every clever fool on the planet*. Even the old Jack had struggled with that. He *was* thankful though that the form of government here was probably the best system current in the world, and that it should be supported; challenged at times, when need be, but supported. There seemed to be too much childish nit picking inside and outside government. He also knew that any order was far better than none, even though he could see that this combative system would not stand the long ravages of the changes of time, and it would never be enough for a mature humanity. It would have to evolve somehow.

He smiled then, thinking of a mature humanity. People were both magnificent and flawed, and as he put a pot on the stove, he said out loud, "*Humanity...bloody amazing and bloody hopeless.*"

“Yes, they are,” said a man, now sitting on his couch.

Jack looked across the kitchen bench of his open plan house and was strangely at ease. He walked over, grabbed the man by the shirt, dragged him to the door, and ejected him from his home. The man was laughing all the way, which didn't concern Jack. His home was sacred, and *nobody* just wandered in like that.

He closed the door thinking the guy was obviously a loony, and that he should ring Farhang and Rouha so they could lock up their house. As he turned around the smiling man was sitting on his couch again.

“Boy. I remember a far gentler creature. What *happened to you?*” asked the man.

Jack stopped and stood there looking at him. He now wasn't sure if he was seeing things, or sure about anything else right now. Maybe *he* was the loony in the room. He just stood there, still staring at the man.

“You are creeping me out, Jack,” commented the man.

“You're creeping *me out*, mate,” retorted Jack, deciding to call Farhang so he could test something out.

He rang Farhang, and then sat down on a soft chair almost opposite the apparition as he continued to stare at it.

“Trying to shift me, are you? I *am* shift, I *am* movement, so don't *waste* your time.” The man then seemed to try and see into Jack's mind, wondering why he did not know him.

“You *don't* know me, do you? I thought you might just be angry with me because I've broken our agreement; but *you don't know me.*”

“Keep *talkin'*, mate.”

Just then there was a knock at the door. Jack called out to come in, and Farhang soon walked into the living room. “So, what is it, Jack?”

“Hey, can you just sit on that part of the couch, and tell me if you feel a spring coming through. It’s only small, but it’s annoying, and this couch cost me a bloody good dollar or two.”

“Really!” said the man on the couch, “Are we going to play *this* game? He can’t see me, *you idiot.*”

Farhang sat down on top of him, well, more through him; the apparition appearing to be part of him for the brief time he was sitting there. As Jack’s neighbour got up off the cushion the man’s apparel changed into a very weird outfit.

“It seems okay, Jack. You never struck me as that pedantic.”

“Yeah, I know, *a bit silly.* Thanks mate. I won’t annoy you again.”

“Are you *alright*, Jack?”

Jack just blew out a big ‘*phew*’, and said, “Not sure yet. Things have been a bit odd since I woke up in my paddock. Just time needed I suppose.”

“Sure. Anything you need, my friend.”

“Thanks mate. I really appreciate it.”

“Have a good night,” wished Farhang, as he walked toward the door and Jack saw him out.

He then closed the door and simply walked into the kitchen to continue cooking. He figured that there was nothing he could do for now, just carry on with life.

“You’re just going to *ignore* me then?”

“I’m gonna’ try, old mate.”

“Change is here, Jack, and you know it. You can’t ignore me for long. The Robes have come through...well...as they are always wont to do, but they’re multiplying faster than they should, and the forces of the re-order can’t keep up with them. ‘*Noddors*’, as you call them, are not your world’s biggest problem.”

Jack really didn’t have a clue how to react or what to say to that. He just stared blankly at the man, wondering how the hell he would dream up a guy in an Apollo space suit; and *why*.

JACK WAS FEELING HIS ONE GREAT ENEMY IN THE ROOM. It was not a person; it was what he now termed *The Oppressor*. He had found this *lack of truth* in places he had lived, in closed minds and arrogant people, in situations with greedy people, and he had found it in places he had worked at times. He had come to know the feeling that it engendered even though he did not understand what he was feeling for a very long time.

Truth be known it was the combined animal nature in humans and humanity taking more precedence in the motivations of the people of the world, casting the human kingdom into a place of loss, and in time, maybe even chaos. This Emptiness, the insatiable hunger for more of endless things, was born from *a forgetting* of the higher soul and people replacing higher intentions within them. People actually cast happiness aside, seeking joy in lesser and lesser things. That it could not be found in these lesser things, and definitely not sustained by them, for more than a moment here and there did not matter, people still wanted happiness to be *there*. People could feel *The Oppressor*’s foul energy in daily life, and could feel its awful

intensity growing, as well as the depression and anxiety it produced, but still fell more to only material wants, to the lower nature's charms and their animal ego distracting them from the nobility inherent within them.

Recently Jack had felt this terrible energy growing in intensity almost exponentially, and its nature and presence had become even more apparent to him. He had thought it was just closed minds, and while it was, it had far wider effect beyond the minds driving it. His new awareness, or the other Jack, had now put a name to this dark foreboding cloud, this terrible intensity, and he was now seeing it as one force with many tentacles. It was not a number of issues, but one force; one that was driven by fear and want, and even feeding on the ignorance and apathy of good people.

He felt its weight where and when thoughts contrary to certain viewpoints were demonised, where people were dehumanised with labels. He saw it existent in people of all ideologies, and in cultural barbs. He also saw it where words took people away from their high human destiny and nobility, or where omissions and bias created only *one* picture for people to see; in these he saw this *Oppressor*. It also seemed that it was existent in the mad rush of life somehow. He could not stand it, wherever it arose, and, well, Jack saw the beast raise its putrid head in the fireside, so things were about to get interesting.

He looked across at Brig, and Brig looked a bit concerned, figuring what was coming from the little bit guilty, but *'I just have to say something'* look on Jack's face.

Jack now, quite fortunately, didn't see the people who sprouted this darkness as the oppressive force itself. Once he would have just told them what they were, but while they provided the soil and helped spread this disease through the body of humanity, there was no judgement in him. He just saw willing or unknowing dupes; this *Great Omission's* malevolent force and many varied influences within them; and in their words. He knew

people were open to suggestion, and that we are all learning creatures, so he now challenged the ignorance, not the person. It was like he was trying to remove this evil creature from people's minds and help them get away from its limiting influence.

A new couple had joined them over the last month, and had portrayed strongly, *to him*, the personality of one of the many new the groups; competing groups that sprouted their particular brand of societal wisdom, each with their own vocabulary and language. There were many groups, many brands, out there, and their number was growing. It was getting so that anyone who even *seemed* to speak against any of these groups was called some name or another, and if someone talked louder against any small aspect of their way of seeing things, especially in more public arenas, the mobs and the pitch forks came out. Sadly, the lack of communication it created was only leading to more extreme words, more polarity, and more violent acts.

Jack had seen these seemingly varied ideologies lately as manifestations of The Oppressor, and sadly, even well-meaning people and groups seemed to be taking on its spirit more. He saw it grow through people becoming more extremely intent only on their own needs only, their particular life view, or group affiliation. It loved opposition, anger, ego, fear, ignorance, and arrogance, as these helped it grow stronger, and as want grew stronger, people became more incensed and fearful. They were far more distracted and oppressed than they realised, it seemed to him. They could all feel the Dark Creature but looked away from themselves to the sins of others, while continuing to feed it.

People saw various demons in other people and groups in society, lashing out more as the fear and argument among the many sides rose; seeking release through more and more emotional debate. These adamant voices seemed to be housed in two main camps, which continually pushed harder at the battle lines and returned fire ever more brutally. Some

though, maybe many, just stayed silent and looked to what must come; some not sure what to say, others afraid to speak their own mind, or not wanting the howling down that would surely come if they ventured an opinion. Some just could not be bothered and hoped the fire would burn itself out as people eventually learned that they weren't as clever as they imagined.

Jack knew that this couple's particular ideology, and the many others he considered part of the dark force, were also about people searching to put meaning and justice back in their lives and of their fellow man. Many of those who sprouted the tenets their own particular '*new order*' were very often well meaning. But Jack was not about to sit back and have the night be a further proliferation of this particular childish manifestation of The Oppressor.

"This is a religion, not another social movement," challenged Jack.

"It seems reasonably aligned with my thoughts on justice, even if it isn't on this particular issue, but it seems genuinely compassionate. It certainly seems more like a social movement to me, and very much part of the change we see enlightening the world. I am sure as it evolves it will take on a lot of what is now being, reasonably, rationally, and socially accepted," said the man gently, yet with sense of intellectual authority.

"We are a *spiritual* Cause," responded Naomi. "Our quest is to the re-spiritualisation of humanity. This is what we are essentially, and we follow the Guidance brought down to us. We don't change our stance on certain core beliefs, no matter what the current social norm is." Then adding, "We believe it is the Unerring Balance."

"So, you don't evolve?"

“We are constantly evolving. It is a living Faith. But you must understand that the Message is a *particular* tree, and can’t be *another* tree,” added Brig.

“So, you don’t see this issue as an individual right, and you never will?” asked the man.

“No, we see a growing *over-emphasis* on sex and sexuality as destructive to souls, and a detriment to the progress of the greater human soul, in *any* of its extremes; even excesses *within marriage*,” explained Naomi.

“That’s not *your business*, is it? It’s *all* just *bigotry* to me,” charged the man, now quite incensed.

“It’s not bigotry,” argued Jack. “It’s not like us fighting racial prejudice, and not at all akin to advancing the empowerment of women, like it’s constantly made out to be by the growing propaganda.”

“These two high aims that Jack just mentioned are very much part of *who* we are,” added Naomi, gently.

“To me,” argued Jack, “this issue is just another societal enforcement; another tentacle of a creature that wants to bring a certain ideology to ascendancy in our society; one I sure as hell don’t want lording it over me.”

“We don’t judge, and we don’t take sides,” waded in Naomi, desperately not wanting things to get political, or to cause division. “In my Faith we don’t put our morality on others, and we don’t stop showing all courtesy and love to *anyone* because of our own beliefs.”

“Well, *he* doesn’t like my politics!” said the man, of Jack.

“Jack is speaking for himself. He’s just looking into our Faith, like you,” explained Naomi. “*We are who we are*, we believe in tolerance and love for all souls, and we know that there is so much more to a person other than *just this one* aspect.”

“So, you will never accept it as normal and natural?” asked the man.

“No, we don’t accept it. But, like I said, it is only one aspect of a whole human being, and we believe people are generally too focused on sexuality.”

“Well, I didn’t expect *intolerance* from such a tolerant belief system,” accused the lady.

“We are *totally* tolerant,” explained Naomi, gently but passionately. “Like I said, it’s not our place to force our Faith’s moral code on anyone, and we see *all* human beings as creations of God.”

“But you don’t accept it as normal. You’re biased against these people and their right to be as they are.”

“We believe *many* things are spiritually destructive to the soul, and we believe there is more to these things. We don’t judge or seek to be *against* people; but we cannot be *supporters* of this, or of what we see as other misguided notions,” explained Naomi more.

“We don’t judge, *we love*. And we are *only* responsible for our *own* actions,” added Brig.

“Sounds like a convenient answer to me,” responded the man.

“All we can do is be honest with you about this Faith,” said Brig, speaking slowly. “We are to *love* first, and judge *no one*, as we believe only God can see any soul truly. We

are to be understanding, and kind and loving to *all* people; but still uncompromising and immovable in our belief.”

“Well, that’s *enough* for me,” said the man, seeing a look of sadness in Brig’s eyes as he said it. “I *won’t* sit around here and be okay with this. You’re just *bigoted* and *intolerant*; just another religion trying to *rule over* people with your *narrow puritan rubbish*.”

Jack just exploded, feeling this man trying to *rule over* them, “*What’s wrong some purity* in this *grime-ridden* world anyway? *What’s wrong* with some moderation in this ever-sinking mire? People are giving in more and more to their lesser appetites, and it’s all made out to be adult and mature; or even more *ludicrously* as us *evolving*. *What a joke!* Movies, television shows, and the internet are rife with base behaviours, endless voyeurism, and violence, and we think it’s *evolved*. We’re *so lost* in the dark that we just can’t see how *pathetic* all that is anymore. There are *endless* manifestations of this race to the bottom.”

“*What* manifestations then?” challenged the man.

“Well, to the current societal mindset, we believe that women should be empowered and be able to do anything they want basically.”

“Yes, *of course*, you can’t *argue* with *that*,” stated the man.

“I believe in the *empowerment* of women, but this ‘*new church*’ is also teaching young women that there are no life consequences. They can get drunk, be sexually active, dress as they like to, and still somehow expect to be respected,” charged Jack.

“It’s their right,” debated the man’s wife, a little angry at Jack, especially him being a man and saying so.

“I’ve talked with many young ladies over the years,” offered Naomi, “and they’ve told me that all this *so-called* freedom just allows them entry into dark places, and they don’t get respected *at all*.”

“Well, men shouldn’t attack them anyway.”

“For sure, and they aren’t punished *hard enough*,” agreed Jack. “But it isn’t about women just being attacked; it’s this *whole* particular *new normal*. It’s that this so-called *freedom* sends these young women down *very dark* streets, all the while telling them to have a good life. Freedom of this kind can’t produce a good life, strong women, or a healthy society. I understand your intent, but all this *can’t* empower them. You *know* it can’t. A dark street *is not*, and *never will be*, a lush meadow.”

“No. I suppose not,” agreed the lady, thoughtfully.

“Drugs are also rampant down those dark streets, and they’re almost becoming normal; in this *new nirvana* that people believe they’re creating.”

“I don’t know. That’s a separate issue really,” argued the man.

“It’s not separate. *Life is not separate from life*; it’s all part of the same dysfunction, another manifestation of the spiritual oppression of humanity.”

“Spiritual oppression?”

“It’s the heavy weight of the endless meaninglessness that a singular material focus, and these new social norms, are producing, pushing down on us; all this *‘freedom’*, the dash for money and good times. Society has to *protect* its young ones and it is *not* doing so. It is *not* empowering these young ladies *or* asking more of its young men either. It is telling every child of our society that deviancy is normal, that alcohol, and sex without any healthy

boundaries, is okay. I'm sorry, but I find this current mindset destructive and *oppressive* for these young hearts. It is not at all calling them to their nobility or high destiny."

Even Jack was taken aback by his last words and wondered where the hell they were coming from. Naomi and Brig smiled at each other and the two new souls attending tonight looked a little more thoughtful and reflective now.

"What do you mean...nobility, and high destiny?" asked the man, after a short time.

"To me, we're generally forgetting that we're spiritual beings, and failing dismally in any *real, hands on*, caring for each other. We praise personality and make excuses for lack of character. We're failing to have, and value, humility, too," explained Jack, listening to himself, and wondering where he was going with this, just like the others were. "We mostly seem to be adding to the growing noise of endless difference, fear, and ego. We're failing to work together, to sacrifice for each other; even to learn in some humility together as human beings. There is less and less nobility in the world. How will our children know what they are, or can be, if society no longer values these higher things?"

"But it does," argued the man.

"No. It *screams*, look after *you*. Just do whatever you *like*. You have all rights and *no* responsibilities. Judge others, *dehumanise* them, attack them, and *whole* lot more," challenged Jack.

The woman sat there, considering a little. She was seeing the care, and some truth, beyond the obvious passion in Jack's words. The man was about to speak up when she put her hand on the back of his.

“What about children? Do you think we should go back to the old days of physical discipline?” asked the lady, probing his mind deeper to see if Jack was genuinely caring, and also to see how Naomi and Brig’s Faith saw this aspect of life.

She had been physically and emotionally abused as a child, but never wore it on her sleeve. She had a hard life as a young adult too, because of the emotional scars of her abuse and also from living within this growing ‘freedom’ of the modern world that Jack was talking about. She had known first-hand all the dangers there but had been fortunate. She was also very aware that the dangers for the young adults, and even children, were only growing. She wanted to know if Jack was just another throwback to the old days, and good with words; or something more.

“No, *no way*,” answered Jack.

“To us, they shouldn’t even be chided or vilified. We all need some adversity to grow strong, but they should *never* be beaten down, *even* with words. To oppress children by attacking them, neglecting them, *or even* by making life too easy for them, are crimes against them, to me. I’ve seen over-coddled boys turn into monsters; bashed kids become mean and abused girls turned into angry or broken creatures. No strain of violence can nurture a child,” explained Brig.

“Discipline your children with a feather, is one phrase of *our* belief about children,” added Naomi.

“But also, that it is good to accustom them to hardship,” reiterated Brig.

“What Brig means is that we believe that they shouldn’t get everything they want because it stunts their character and weakens their resilience. But *definitely* not abused; just

allowed to be challenged by life and made responsible to take part in the day-to-day work of their family and community. To be of service,” added Naomi.

The man nodded, and the lady said, “I think we will stay.”

*A fully covered white robed creature which looked like a monk with his hood on, and not visible to anyone there, had been watching and seen what had transpired.*

*These were the words that were heard, in a loud high-pitched scream, as it rushed away from the light of unity in that room, and back into the darkness...*

*“There is only one Way!”*

*“There is only one Way!”*

*“The enemy rises!”*

## *Surf's Up*

Jack liked Owen. He liked straight up humans, and Naomi's husband was definitely one of those. Owen had come into Jack's business to get a repair sorted for his home's water pump during the week. He and Naomi lived just outside town, so were on tank water and needed a pressure pump for all their water needs. The two men had talked that day about what was wrong with the pump, then a bit about the firesides and life in general. Eventually the discussion came around to surfing. Owen had surfed since he was a kid and there was something about the beach that drew Jack too. Not that there were many people who were immune from its charms.

At the time, he had asked Owen if he could teach him how to surf. Jack had explained that he loved to body surf, but really didn't get down the beach enough. He thought that maybe learning to surf might change that; give him more of a reason to go. Owen had not been super keen, as he liked to just get out there on the weekends and blow the world off for a while. But he liked Jack and didn't seem *all voodooed up* on the *God* thing too much. He also liked his straightforward nature, almost knowing Jack wouldn't crumble when learning to ride got a bit hard. He knew he would be responsible for his own learning and could take a knock, so Owen had acquiesced.

They were now walking down the sand pathway through the trees to the beach. Jack was feeling great about today. Before his heart thing he would have thought that it was just some yuppie idea, and that he would be better off getting exercise by getting some work done. He didn't like the coffee crowd before that either but now found himself down at The Mountain Stop Cafe on most weekends. The drive down to the small town to the south of his hometown had become his weekly get away. They made really good coffee there and he was becoming a coffee snob, that's for sure. So much had changed since that fateful day.

They broke out of the tree line with their boards under their arms. The surf was good, but a little bit ripped up, and Owen just said, "Gnarly."

He had given Jack one of his old boards to practise on so he could see if he liked surfing first, and if he gashed it bad, it wouldn't be a big problem. Owen had a few old boards; keeping them mainly for memory's sake.

"Looks good, Jack man," he added, as he watched the swell some more.

"*Thrilling, Dude,*" said Jack, mimicking comedic '*surfer dude talk*', and they both had a good chuckle.

It took about forty-five minutes to get to the beach, as they lived inland a bit and up the coast from Owen's favourite spot, so they had had a good old chinwag and quite a few laughs with the whole surfer dude talk by the time they got here. Jack had asked Owen why he had not got into Naomi's Faith, as it was, *radical man*. He had answered after a chuckle that maybe he would; one day. He had said, "I like it. *It's real*, but I also *like to do as I like to do, Dude.*"

"So, how do you see life then? I mean if something is real, it's real. I would really have no choice if it was me."

“I see life as just *here*, man, even though I see Naomi’s thing has got a lot to give. *I don’t know*. I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it, *dude*.”

“But that’s like saying, I’ll build a house, but I’ll just hang on the beach and surf until then.”

“*Maybe*. All I can say is that I just kind’a live between it and the freedom of the beach, you know.”

Jack let it go, as somehow, strangely, he knew all was in its place right now. They then attached their leg ropes and Owen started his instruction.

“You’re a bit of a thinkin’ man, Jack. But turn it off, *‘cause your head will dump you every time. Let it go, and feel the flow, Dude*.”

OWEN WAS GOBSMACKED. He now sat on the beach smiling at Jack going at it on the waves. He had expected a long annoying morning trying to teach Jack how to get up on a board, and stay up once, maybe. But he was a natural, so Owen had just gone out surfing as he usually did after just half an hour of instruction. Sometimes Jack would get a bit stiff, but mostly he was at ease and fluid. Owen knew that his new surfing mate was thinking too much when he fell off, but he had *real* form sometimes. He would see him stiffen up at times and the roll of the wave would, like an annoyed spouse, toss him off the board; then dump on him for good measure.

He loved watching him come up like a drowned rat with a confused look on his face, and he had more than a few chuckles from the beach as well. While he had been out doing his own *thang* on the water, he had shared a bit of knowledge and a few tips with Jack here and there. It was a real pleasure watching his new mate get better and better, and hell of a lot of

fun watching him get dumped. Getting dumped was always funny when they came up okay. Otherwise, it was a terrible thing. But that was part of the nature of surfing the waves.

Owen now found himself thinking about that, and about life, as his mind wandered. He liked to just sit on the beach and let his body recover for a while, sometimes a long while, and let his thoughts just roll. He had his own life ethos, as we all do, no matter our beliefs. This Sunday morning ritual of his was every Sunday for Owen; even in winter. It was like washing the mud of any negative energy off his soul and out of his mind when he came here. He could almost not live without it.

As he mused about surfing and life, he saw the world was getting a lot more selfish and more and more complicated, no matter what work you were in. There were always new laws and new courses, and growing government stipulations and regulations. It seemed to him that people were trying to control every outcome instead of flowing more with the waves of life; even beyond the workplace. No one even wanted to get salty water in their mouth, let alone get dumped. Insurance implications now seemed to rule so many decisions; so much so, that many good community events didn't even happen anymore. It was getting crazy, but he had Naomi, who he loved more than himself, and he had the beach; both freed his heart from the negativity of the world.

Jack now walked out of the surf and Owen could see the excitement in the way he bounced out of it and up the beach.

*“Gnarly, Jack man.”*

*“Gnarly, Dude,”* replied Jack, getting right into it.

He had a huge smile on his face, as he put down the board and picked up his towel. “*Man*, that was great! A *lot* easier than I thought. That advice about not thinking sure was solid, mate.”

“You’re a natural, Jack. Actually, I’ve never seen anyone take to it that quickly. Are you sure you haven’t done it before?”

“*Not at all*, mate. I’m a bushy, well a small-town man, anyway. You know, football and working cattle as a kid. Since then, small business and a bit of running as an adult. We did have some time down the beach as a kid, and I loved it, but I’ve never been a *surfer dude*.”

“Not until *now*, man.”

Jack threw two thumbs in the air as he stood on the sand and pretended to surf, yelling out, “Gnarly, man!” with deep satisfaction.

Owen laughed as Jack put his towel down and sat down to look out to the ocean with him. The air was warm now and both men invigorated and refreshed. The sun was the only thing in the blue sky, the ocean rolled, and the seagulls did their *thang*. The two men just sat there, not talking anymore. It seemed natural to both of them, and Owen was really thankful for that. “*Me and Jack will get on just fine*,” he thought, as he realised had found a new friend and a new surfing brother.

JACK HAD PLANTED HIS SMALL ORCHARD. He had planted bananas on a raised bed in his backyard and they had grown quickly. The grapes he had started training onto some wire tied between star pickets that he hammered in down below the water tank, at the back of the house. One was a black cardinal and the other a seedless green grape variety; fortunately,

too, he had been given what the lady called a local Muscat grape plant. It was not grafted so would take a couple of years to fruit, and even then, better left for another year for it to become more robust. He had even decided to grow some pawpaw and had planted three trees, two females and a male. They were in a nice sunny spot; right up against his shed to protect them from the frost a little when it came.

He was watering some young plants today; ones he had planted with plenty of manure. There were two apple varieties and a good number of grafted citrus trees of all kinds. These trees were all in his back paddock, and as he finished watering, he looked up to see a *White Robed Creature* sitting on Rouha's back porch. She was just coming out with some juice drinks and cups; Farhang following with a tray of biscuits, fruit, and chocolates. Jack could feel the creature's negative energy and was not happy as he watched it. Things had been okay for a number of months now, since his last hallucination. He was quite disappointed that they were back, but he couldn't help but stare at the creature.

As his neighbours put the food and drink down on the table, and settled in, the robed creature seemed to fade away, leaving a young lady sitting there. She pointed to Jack. His friends looked and smiled, and then waved him over. Jack was seemingly staring at her, so it had concerned the lady a little; and truth be told, entertained her just a little. To her, he seemed to be staring off into space as well as looking in her direction, so she did not feel preyed upon. She knew the look in the eyes of men with lower intent, though sometimes they could be tricky, and be so for a long time before they showed their true colours. She knew women could be the same, but in any case, she let it go as Jack came over.

"How are you, Jack?" asked Rouha, as Jack turned off the hose near the fence and climbed through the plain wire strands that made up part of the fence.

“Feet on the ground, and head in the clouds, Rouha,” said Jack, wondering where the hell that came from. He shook his head, and added, “That’s a new one, eh,” trying to make it seem natural.

He was keeping anything strange to himself for now, as he still just *knew* that it would not be good to open up. He had not shared anything more than he did with Naomi and Brig on the fireside night, and he knew Farhang and Rouha were looking out for him a little. Anyway, opening it all up might make it their problem too, and he did not want that.

“No, that doesn’t sound like you at all, Jack. *Harden up*, is more your saying, eh,” offered Farhang.

“Yep,” said Jack, glad for the deflection.

“This is Jennifer, Jack. Jennifer, this is Jack.”

As he nodded and said hello, his heart jumped. He was really trying hard with all these strange things happening to keep his body language under wraps, but it leaked out to Jennifer. Then something leaked out of her; something she had been trying to keep in check since she saw Jack’s face clearly. He was the one from her vivid dream; and she had felt extremely strong love for him in that dream, as some dreams can engender.

“I thought you were all spiritual people,” questioned Jennifer, referring to the *‘harden up’* comment, as she looked to Rouha to try and stem her emotional leakage.

“It *is* spiritual,” said Jack, and she looked back at him, failing dismally to look normal.

“How so?” she challenged him, realising the focus on this subject was helping her away from her feelings.

“It’s a call to acceptance, *and contentment*; to resilience as they like to say these days. We get focused down when we’re in pain and can get a bit sorry for ourselves. Even if we’re in real pain, for real reasons, we need to refocus up to the spirit, or just get on with life; both really. I suppose the saying comes from people who just knew that intuitively. They just knew it helped to pull people out of a negative thought loop, *you know*.”

“Calls them to their character, and to get on with things,” mused Jennifer. “I get that, sure.”

“And an acceptance of hardship as part of life,” added Farhang.

“Wow, I never saw all that, in that saying,” admitted Rouha. “I just thought it was mean and uncaring.”

“There is a good deal of wisdom in a lot of sayings. Even though that particular one *can* be used badly, it isn’t wrong,” finished Jack, now realising that he was staring at Jennifer again.

She blushed and looked away, and Rouha asked Farhang to come and help her with the rest of the morning tea. He looked confused as he looked to the small outdoor table almost covered with food, then got up and hesitantly followed her into the house, leaving the two *love birds* to themselves for a short time. They both sat there feeling a whole lot of love for a person they did not know. Let’s just say that it was a bit ridiculous and very awkward, until Jack realised, he was staring again.

“Look, I’m sorry I’m staring. I don’t know what’s come over me. For some reason I am getting a bit swamped with feelings.”

“Thanks, Jack,” she said, very thankful for his straight up way.

The pressure broke away a little with their words, and a lot more when Jack added, “I am just gonna’ enjoy the feelin’, because I’ve had enough stress lately.”

Jennifer laughed; appreciative that it seemed to be the same feeling as hers, and her laugh allowed Jack to laugh too. Then Rouha came out and piled on.

“We had to leave, it was *embarrassing*,” she said, and they continued to laugh with some relief. But Farhang just looked confused.

“Better to be honest and keep it real. I don’t like people who slither around you, even if it is to try and be nice. Nice is okay, but *real* is way better sometimes,” said Jack.

“I like that, Jack,” agreed Jennifer.

“*I like* to be kind,” then said Rouha, plainly.

“*Sure* Rouha, you’re a rose, and I’m a *thorn*,” offered Jack.

“You are a rose too, Jack; an *odd* rose, but still a rose.”

“Enough of the *flower* stuff, Rouha,” said Jack, for fun.

“Yes, we need to be real, but I think we can be kind *and honest*. Seeing ourselves and situations as they *really are*, are important, or we don’t grow, and bad or complicated thoughts in us can’t be challenged and remedied,” offered Farhang, finally feeling like he was part of the conversation.

“Yep, honesty is sometimes a thorn, but the bloom of the rose is worth it,” said Jennifer.

Jack just looked at her, as Rouha said, “*Wow, Jennifer. Nice.*”

“Yep, *fully blown*,” added Jack.

“*Fully blown?*” asked Rouha.

“It’s slang for a fully bored out car motor with good exhaust extraction, I think. But it means, *really powerful.*”

“I didn’t know I would be doing *powerful* today,” said Jennifer, with a humorous face.

They all had a laugh as Rouha started pouring the juice.

IT WAS ANOTHER EARLY SUNDAY MORNING. The two men walked out onto the beach. They were keen to get into the water. Jack took his purple cotton shirt off to put on his rashie; a swimming shirt that stopped the sand embedded wax on the surfboard from scratching the hell out your chest, protecting inside your shoulders and top of your arms as well.

“Hell, bro. You been workin’ out?”

“Yeah,” answered Jack. “I wanted to be stronger for paddling,” adding a lie.

“You look a little bit purple too. I thought it was a reflection from your purple T-shirt on your face, in the car. You are definitely purple,” finished Owen, with a laugh.

“Yep, new sheets and pillowcases. Should’a washed em’ first.”

“You’re *ripped* man.”

“Yeah, *right’eo peaches,*” responded Jack, in a very manly voice, to give Owen a hard time and definitely to shut him up so he didn’t have to lie any more about these things.

“Let’s get out there,” said Owen.

“Yep,” agreed Jack, happy for the waves for more reasons today.

He was getting a bit tired of all these odd happenings, and was a little bit cut by the fact he had to lie to his friends even though his intention was to save them from his concerns. In any case, he knew he had to take this latest strange hiccup on the chin as well, as wisdom required it. He had to fight this strange battle himself, and he was intent to win.

This latest strangeness had come upon him two nights ago. Jack had slept soundly after a hard week at the pump shop and had woken feeling a whole lot better. Before that morning he thought that he had fully physically recovered, but on Saturday morning he felt so strong that he was jumping out of his skin. His heart felt more than strong. He actually felt a great ease there now too, like some deep inner burden had also been lifted during the night. He always had a shower to wake him up, no matter the day, and when had he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror, he thought that he was losing it. He was bigger, toned up, and his skin was a bit purple; just a moderate hue, but certainly noticeable.

He actually felt *really good*, and liked the fact he was suddenly so fit, but was also very creeped out by his overnight transformation. Things were getting really crazy, but he had decided to just have a shower; that maybe it was another hallucination. But the shower did not change anything, and even after drying himself he did not lose the very light purple hue on his skin. It stayed because it *was* his skin. He could see that as he had looked harder at it on his arm.

He then considered not going surfing the next day. But he really wanted to be out on the waves, as surfing was becoming a wonderful addiction. He had finally decided after some inner to and fro that he didn't care what Owen thought, but mostly that he was going because Sundays had been blowing away any tension from work, life, and all the strangeness. In time he hoped that the colour would fade and his natural pigment return, but he had to work out a

story for his purple skin, and so, had thought up the *new sheets* thing. He didn't like doing it, but as he hit the water, he was glad he had decided to come.

He now thought how even more addictive surfing would become over time. He had always loved to run or walk in the bush when it wasn't footy season. He definitely thought that he wouldn't play footy again, but this sudden new fitness was telling him something very different right now. Anyway, other than this latest mystery, Jack felt great as he turned his board around on the light swell beyond the waves.

The two of them were out in the surf for a while, and Jack stayed out a little longer this time. He knew that Owen liked some time on the beach with his own thoughts and did not want to crowd him. He felt *really* great today anyway; and with his stronger musculature and increased fitness he was killing the paddle back out after a good run or the odd wipe-out. Before he took the last wave in, he decided to sit on his board; on the gently rolling swell outside the sets for a while. He had been more of a land creature and loved being out on the road running in the early morning. He loved the places he ran and walked, reckoning that he would grow to love this place too. It was a very cool place to be, differently beautiful every day, especially in the early morning.

He zoned out with the rhythm of the water underneath him, and was looking toward the beach, when he caught glimpses of other beaches; *one that was empty, another with a young slim aboriginal man diving into the water, and one with a black car and two men in long black pants and white shirts leaning on the front of it. He then felt something to his left and caught a flash of Owen and Jennifer, sitting on boards, beyond the waves nearby.* They were just strobe like flashes, and they each came once, and went away.

Then a flash of *monstrous waves all around him shot through his eyes*, and he fell off his board. Then another *finding himself underwater, feeling great strain in his lungs*

*suddenly; like you do when you have been under too long or have dived too deep, and are striving for the surface. He saw a flash of sunlight from deep in dark water as he strove for the surface.* The flashes stopped as suddenly as they had begun, and he breathed deeply and thankfully, now getting back on his board again.

He soon relaxed again, as he accepted the gentle roll of the water back into his consciousness. He sat there and rested from life and all the craziness for a while. He was happy for this bit of *soj*, a word that to him denoted small enjoyments and well-earned respites from the strains of life. He had run into some Buddhists at some local occasion once, and they had called the chocolate biscuits, *soj*; pronounced sodge. He had never heard the word before, and now thought that it might not even have been a Buddhist word, but it represented little things, and moments like this, that gave the body some relief and enjoyment, things so beneficial to one's spirits. At least, that's how he had translated it. He may have even got the word wrong, and it was his own spelling, but real word or not, he had made it his own, as it really *said it* for him.

"*Soj*," he thought, smiling, and he stayed out there for a good while because we all need a little *soj*.

HE WAS LATE FINISHING UP AT THE SHOP. It had been a big day with a lot of people to keep happy. He wasn't in love with the work, but he did get a real sense of satisfaction fixing a pump or sorting out a problem that someone had. There were always the very few people, and pumps, that were really challenging, but they were okay too. He knew that people were people, and that you could not expect some kind of perfection. They were just the waves they were. Situations were like waves too, and all of us sometimes don't choose to accept them as a challenge, have too high expectations of something or someone, or have some old

demons that we have not shifted pop up; all these can fire us up. You never know what someone else is going through any particular day either. He just tried to make their day a little better.

Since his heart failure he was more tolerant and understanding. He tended to judge a lot less and so his days were easier, and *way* less stressful. He was now getting into his car in the back carpark, when he saw someone on the ground, and the tall figure of a man bending over the prone form. He got out of the car and walked purposefully towards the man. He was thinking that there was something going on one way or another, and Jack was not a man to shirk responsibility. The tall man was bending down and seemed to be whispering in the ear of another man lying on his back on the bitumen surface.

The standing man looked up; then was suddenly gone. Jack didn't know how he could have done that. He then ran over and looked around the corner of a building close by, before attending to the man on the ground. The perpetrator, or whoever he was, was nowhere to be seen. Jack found a strong drive in him to go after the runner but stayed to see if the man on the ground was alright. His movements, his decisions, and his clear purpose in walking towards trouble, were a *little* new to him, as this was not a normal situation. He had been very confident and focused, but he knew himself, and this was not him. He was usually more cautious, rather than confident, around violence. It was like the surfing; like he knew how to ride these waves too.

The man opened his eyes, and said, "What the hell!"

"Some bloke was here standing over you. He bolted when I came towards you. Are you okay, Mate?" asked Jack, now on his haunches down beside him.

“I don’t know. I feel okay. This guy came up to me, and that’s all I remember...oh yeah...and...I heard these words...“*The way is closed*”. Weird, eh.”

“Yep. *That’s weird*,” agreed Jack, chuckling a bit.

“I’m not nuts, you know. I was just comin’ ta pick up my car,” said the man, as he sat up.

“Sure,” said Jack, totally relating to the ‘not nuts’ comment. “It’s all good. I was only agreeing to make light of it all. Are you good to drive?”

“Yep, sure. *Thanks*. A lot of people *run* from things like this these days.”

“Yeah, they do. They don’t realise the strength of numbers. We’re weak on our own, in so many ways, and people are separating themselves at fever pitch these days.”

The man got up and didn’t seem to have any wobbles. He checked himself for injury and for his phone and wallet. “It’s all there, and I haven’t got any knocks. That sure was weird.”

“It’s a mystery, eh, but all’s well now,” offered Jack, in support.

“Yeah, it is.”

“What’s your name?”

“Jack.”

“Mines Pete, Jack. Thanks, and mighty good to meet ya’.”

“Sure, Pete. How about you just sit in your car for a bit, and we can have a yarn while you make sure you’re good to go, eh?”

“Thanks, Jack. This is above and beyond, bloke.”

“It *shouldn't* be. It should be *normal*. I do small kindnesses in my shop, and here and there outside it, and people fall all over themselves to say thanks. They're overwhelmed, but it's that things've become so much more self-focused, so we've got lower expectations of people. Our society has lost the understanding that by looking after each other we gain real joy and satisfaction. It's seeing *our* future in future of others around us, eh.”

“Yes, *it is*, isn't it, Jack. That *really* rings true.”

“Yep, it's a *fact*,” stated Jack, as he felt a strong surge of surety fill his being.

“*It is*,” agreed the man, shaking his head, like these words were waking him from a walking dream.

It is quite satisfying to see someone wake up a little from the dreams that lull us, and also when we suddenly see things more clearly ourselves.

“So, what do you do Jack?”

“Got the pump shop. Down the street there.”

“Yeah, okay. If I ever need a pump, or I hear anyone who does, I will send 'em your way.”

“Thanks, I appreciate it. Things are getting a bit harder these days; harder to make a living.”

“Yeah, with the internet, and all.”

“Yeah, it's the future coming, so can't really complain. If you're serious you just have to rework your business to more online, but you can't compete with the big guys and the bargain kings online. You know, we rely on customers who want some real knowledge and good gear; people who want to talk to a person, not a queue on the phone or a trained monkey

in a huge corporation. Actually, it's also people who know that spending locally keeps the town well; you know keeps the common wealth flowing around here."

"Yep, there's greed large and small. Big business wants a bigger and bigger share all the time, and most people just want a bargain; and yesterday, not today. If we keep going this way there's going to be fewer jobs, less quality, and less backup on what's sold," offered Pete.

"Sure, and a lot more landfill. To me it's almost like we're digging the rich local soil up and taking it, barrow by barrow, to the conveyor belt that goes to the big centres. What's worse, is that because there's not enough money around here, less soil for things to grow, there are less job possibilities, and with no university we have to put our kids on that damned conveyor too."

"*Yeeaah. We do.* We're sending our future away on that belt."

"Yep, as sure as eggs."

"I hadn't seen it that clearly. It's a bloody shame, eh."

"It can be turned around. But it takes unity. If we fight this as every man for himself, or herself, then we're already beaten. United we stand, divided we fall."

"*Hell yeah.* I see that, Jack, but we're a bit powerless to change things."

"We aren't powerless, Pete. There are special things in each one of us and if we were humble enough to unite in one purpose as a town, or even in small groups to start with, we'd thrive again. We could work on our future and maybe even turn that conveyor around, or build one that goes more both ways, like it should."

"You should run for council, or even parliament, Jack."

“No mate, that’s not for me. There are some good people in it with real good intentions, but it’s lost its character and its soul a bit. A lot of confusion and drama in all that stuff. Not my speed, mate. Any real change is going to come from the ground up, anyway; not the other way around. You see, we all kinda’ let this all happen. We farmed off our responsibility and our future to politicians, the media, big business, unions, and we whinge like a child on the economic teat if the milk stops flowing in our life. We have to take back the responsibility of our own lives, families, neighbourhoods, and communities, *and we can, mate. Sure as you and I are standing here, we can*, but it takes effort and humility.”

“Effort, I get. But...humility?”

“Humility, so we can work together. So, we can work out what we want to do together. So, we can learn. Unity’s the prime requisite; and it, and consultation, can’t happen unless we’re humble, mate; unless we all muck in and all learn together as we go, instead of debating endlessly and getting nothing done. We’re past the strong leader rubbish too; we need to do it as a group. We’re evolving, and we’ve gotta’ take on the change; and the sooner the better.”

“So how do we start?” asked Pete.

“Look mate, take my number. If you’re still keen in a week’s time, get in touch. It all starts with two people who have the will, and I got some skills to start us off,” finished Jack, realising that his thoughts were from his being a small business owner and from talking with so many people about things day to day, but the *whole community development thing* was rising from the change in him; from *other* knowledge and experience.

“*Great*, Jack. I’ll have to go. My wife will be wondering where I am.”

“If you think you’re okay?”

“Yep, I’m good to go. Actually, mate, I feel a whole lot better after talking with you. Even better than I did before that joker stung me.”

“Great, Pete. Maybe we’ve started something.”

“Yeah, *for sure*, see’ya, Jack,” he agreed, as he nodded, closed his door and started the car.

Jack nodded back and stood away for him to drive off.

IT HAD BEEN ANOTHER GLORIOUS DAY; a perfect morning in the early spring. Owen and Jack sat on the sand in the late morning sun. They had been chewing the fat and joking with each other as they sat there. Blokes just getting all the joy out of anything they could; a lot of them important, but seeing the lighter side to life and people, most especially themselves. They had then fallen silent and sat there; just enjoying being there.

There is something about real friendship that allows you to give your friend a hard time, or tell them just how you see it, without them gettin’ all shirty. It’s real trust, and an unconditional love; not that blokes are okay with that *particular* word when it comes to their mates, but all true relationships are built on love, trust, and honesty.

“Queensland. Beautiful one day, perfect the next, eh,” commented Jack, after a time, and still looking out to the ocean expanse.

“*For sure*, Jack. Great place to live.”

“Listen, I’ve got a bit of a small, but rather daunting, problem.”

“And today was goin’ *so well*,” commented Owen.

They both laughed, and Jack just went on, “It’s like I’m seeing some things; all kinds of things, and even thinking differently about things since my heart attack. I get flashes of things, and all sorts of new ideas; most that are really great. But...”

“So, what are you lookin’ for, Jack? Peace of mind? A man doesn’t just come out of something like that unscathed.”

“Yeah, sure, but it’s like I’m seeing a lot of odd things, they’re all over the place, different and disjointed, but they’re showing me something that I just can’t see; or I am struggling to understand how they fit together, I suppose.”

“Maybe you’re too transfixed on things on the foreground, man; looking at too many details.”

“*Sure...of course.* I need to scope out.”

“Yep, like lookin’ at the trees and the houses, and the pathways, and the beach, from your board. Sit back and look *on* it. Don’t try and work it all out. Just see it.”

“Thanks, Owen. That’s really helpful.”

“What are all these thoughts and things?”

“Oh, weird stuff, and cool stuff; you know. Something I have ta’ work out, and I suppose I’m getting there; *with a little help from my friends, eh.*”

“That’s good, *dude,*” said Owen, with a smile.

The two sat there again for a good time, before Owen said, “You know, it just might be like seeing through the fog too. You know; when it’s thick in the morning. But it always shifts, *bro man.* The sun always comes out.”

“Yes, it always passes,” he agreed, and then said, “*Many are the veils which cloud the eyes of men,*” before he realised that he was saying it.

“*Duuude, that’s cool.* Where did you get *that* from?”

“That’s one of those weird things.”

“That’s *good, weird.* There’s more to those words than meets the eye; worth musin’ on.”

“Yeah, I s’pose so,” agreed Jack, as both of them naturally settled into silence and contemplation, again.

Jack then thought of a blog he recently read about veils, well, it was not actually about veils, but it seemed to lend itself to the subject. It was not an answer to his internal confusion, but he found he needed to follow the wisdom of the words that had just popped out of him. He grabbed his phone and searched to read it again...

## **I WONDER**

June 9, 2020

*I do wonder if we did not judge a situation at face value, but considered the whole story...*

*I wonder if we pushed aside the constructs of racial difference in our minds, and saw only other people...If we just saw another human, and came to their aid in ways small and large...*

*I wonder if instead of fear and emotion, we saw things through the clear vision of justice and good...If we sought a justice that was not biased, and passionately sought the whole truth of a matter...*

*I wonder if we sought to build something good, rather than destroy what we see as evil...If we took responsibility for our own actions, rather than blame another...*

*I wonder if the bias of our minds was pulled away, so the truth would become apparent...If truth, and the passionate search for the full picture of something, could free us from our various conditions...*

*I wonder if we were brave enough to have a real conversation.  
I wonder if we were brave enough to seek answers together.*

*I wonder if we were brave enough to put our hearts behind the remedy found, and make the effort required.*

*I wonder if we were brave enough to be vulnerable.*

*I wonder if we were brave enough not to judge.*

*I wonder if we were brave enough to care for another and sacrifice a little for them.*

*To change, we have to be honest about ourselves.*

*To change, we have to see with eyes not afraid to see all the realities of a situation.*

*...Not just what we want to see.*

*To be free we need seek the truth with passion, rather than any other passion.*

*To no longer cloud the truth with emotion, ego, bias, blindness, violence, anger, hatred, an unwillingness for wider vision, or just more ignorance.*

*The truth will set us free... if we are not afraid to see all of it...*

*if we are not afraid to see all of it.*

# *Visitors*

The man walked towards Jack in the car park. He was definitely intent on him. The light was still strong, thankfully, as he knew it was the same man who had run off the other night. Well, disappeared. Jack's body moved instinctively into a self-protective stance.

“No need for that,” called the man, in a strong Russian accent but with solid English, reading Jack's body language as he came closer.

“I think *I'll* decide that,” responded Jack plainly, with his chin to the side just a little, and a particular look in his eyes.

“You don't have to be concerned, Jack.”

“How do you know my name?”

“It’s my job to know your name, especially while I am working your town.”

“*Workin’ my town?*”

“Workin’ it,” said Yuri Orlov, as he came up to Jack. “*Funny*, I would have figured you were a smaller man, and a little *weaker*. *No offence*.”

“None taken, mate. *State your purpose*,” said Jack, with the same stance and serious look on his face yet wondering where those last three words came from. He didn’t know it of course, but his stance and words came from training on another world; also, from some action on a good number of others in service to the forces of order.

The man knew those words well, and answered, “I’m Department, Mr Johnston, well, I am now. I was Agency, but I’ve been seconded to Department work.”

“What *the hell*, are you *bloody takin’ about*, mate.”

“You are Jack Johnston; *right?*”

“Yeah, that’s me.”

“Well, I thought you’d be up on all this. I was told you might be able to back me up here.”

“You must have the *wrong* Jack Johnston. I’ve never worked for law enforcement, *or government*.”

Yuri stood back. He knew this was the right man, but he was very different to what he had expected. He had not known Jack, but when he reported his last kill with the usual recording that he sent through channels, someone had recognised Jack on the periphery. Orlov had then been informed about him by someone Deeper; someone who had known Jack from his missing memories.

He seemed to genuinely not have a clue. Yuri looked at him, trying to work out what he should do, but could not gather any solid way forward from here.

“I think I am wasting my time here. I apologise for disturbing you, but if you see any Black or White Robed individuals, be in touch,” as he handed Jack a card, with a phone number on one side and a small saying on the other.

“Black or White Robes?” asked Jack, remembering the apparition he had seen covering Jennifer.

“Yep. Much more than troublesome creatures. If you see one, just whisper this in the person’s ear,” he said, pointing to the saying on the back of the small card. It said...

***“O SON OF SPIRIT!***

***Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.”<sup>2</sup>***

“Get back to me; when and if you want, or when you *get a clue*,” explained Yuri, with a wry smile, and Russian eyes, as he then turned and left Jack standing there now quite a bit more lost, beside his car.

## *Friends*

It was month after the car park incident with the Russian stranger, and Jack had been invited over to Farhang's for dinner. He had been so busy and his weekends so full; mainly with the time he needed to let all this new stuff wash over him. He was definitely taking Owen's advice though, trying to see some wider order in all this *stuff*, while just allowing it to be what it was more. He knew that the man he met in the car park was a real person, so that had at least grounded things out a little; but also ramped up the confusion in the mysteries around him. He could not have imagined working in law enforcement, but then remembered back to him throwing that strange spacesuit man out of his house, *really easily*, like he *was* trained.

He knew it was all connected and realised that the only way forward now was to flip it all on its head, change his attitude towards it, and just embrace it. He would just enjoy the understandings that came to him, as he was sick of feeling fearful. He was also *really tired* of over-thinking things, deciding he had to *act*, and maybe get some answers. The man from the car park was going to be the first port of call; *when he was ready*. He then chuckled to himself, as he thought that he would never really be ready; now sure from deep inside himself that with this kind of thing, as with life really, it was, have a go, and learn as you go. "*I have*

*to act to see, but all will be in its own time. Trust the flow of life,*” he now found himself saying to himself.

Tonight, he would see Jennifer again. He had thought about her more than just a little bit since the day they met. He had enjoyed her company very much, but he had just left it be since then. It was mainly because he was not your *average* joker; and he had needed to get a bead on what was happening to him first. He wanted to be stable if there was more there, and he most definitely did not want to risk coming off as nuts. Truth be known, we are all a bit nuts, different and quirky, even though we don't think so, or see ourselves fully. We worry what people think of us, but the reality is all of us have demons to cast off, and the great beauty of close relationships are that they can clear much of those out of us; if we stick at it and fight them together with the two great powers of honesty and love. Connection is powerful in these and many other things.

He now chuckled to himself...which he was doing a little too often lately...knowing that crazy or not, he could no longer stay away. This was *all* going to be a *learn as he went* and *as it unfolds* kind of thing, and he knew now that life had called time for his building a connection with this lady. “*So much for my resolve to wait,*” he thought, as he rang the doorbell. Anticipation rose strongly from his emotional centre as he did, and he allowed himself to enjoy it. Thankfully, this older influence inside him had long since passed the test of letting emotions and drives think for him. He found in that moment that he could now just enjoy the feelings, and so more fully appreciate his time with Jennifer.

“Jack!” said Rouha, as she opened the door, with a particular knowing and celebratory smile on her face.

“Thanks for inviting me, Rouha,” he said, and as he came in, he whispered to her, “But you are *not helping.*”

Rouha smiled wider, as Jack walked into the room and saw her. His smile was bigger and a little more ridiculous than Rouha's at meeting Jennifer again. "*And I was worried how I would come off,*" he thought, shaking his head inside. It seemed that his emotions were fighting back.

"Hi, Jack," said Jennifer, smiling, but more easily so.

"Hey, Jennifer. Hey, Farhang. Thanks for having me over."

"Our pleasure, Jack."

The usual small talk and the getting of beverages took place and they eventually settled outside on the patio. Rouha had commented that the nights of spring were especially lovely, so had decided to make use of them. She had added that there was only a week of this beautiful season left; that spring and autumn were gentle seasons, and more to her taste.

The evening rolled on as they all got to know each other better. Rouha had only invited Jennifer over the one time; now months ago. She had come across Jennifer a few weeks before that day at a local community event. Jennifer had attended it due to a friend who had a strong interest in the women's issues that it attended to. She and Rouha had hit it off, as they knew the empowerment of women was very important, but they certainly did not see it as the only empowerment required.

It seemed that she was a wide view kind of soul, and Jack liked people with vision. He liked people who focused hard too, bringing about great inventions, and driving movement forward in particular fields; but he liked to see more of the whole picture, no matter how complex. Life *was* complex to him, it could never be narrowed down to a slogan, or a sentence, or any particular wisdom.

The conversation had wound around, here and there, as they chatted on the patio, when Jack commented, “That gets me.”

“What gets you?” asked Jennifer, gently and easily.

“Well, the shutdown I see everywhere. People seem to be able to shut down the conversation so easily these days. People are really touchy, and don’t want to hear ideas they don’t subscribe to.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, there are endless slogans that cut off any flow of different views, and a growing number of labels that shut conversations down by dehumanising people. Both sides of the media are at it, and people feel shut down, so they don’t speak up. Only the loud and the aggressive tend to be heard. Silencing the societal conversation is not winning. It’s just allowing pressure to build, that will pop eventually.”

“I’m sorry I don’t see what you mean. We have a strong conversation in this country,” commented Jennifer, as Jack saw a White Robe begin to form around her. It was see-through, but it was like she was wearing the creature, or they were in the same space for now.

“I don’t know your usual haunts, Jennifer, but in my shop, I hear people saying every day that they don’t feel they can say a lot of things. The majority of ‘em are just normal people, feeling shut down.”

“I don’t feel that, at all.”

Jack looked at Jennifer, as the White Robe became more prominent, to the point now, that he could not see her at all; just the creature.

*“There is only one way,”* were the words that were heard.

Jack was strangely calm at the apparition and its oppressive energy. “So, you respect *all views* then, Jennifer?” he asked, watching The White Robe.

“No, I don’t. I don’t like ignorance. I see our society as *very* progressive. So much is coming out into the light, and I think we’re learning.”

The creature then faded again, just a little.

“So, who do you talk about things with?”

“Mostly work colleagues. I’m a teacher.”

“Do you talk with people on the other side of the political spectrum to you?”

“Oh, I don’t dislike anyone, but I find a good deal of ignorance there, and especially in strong religious people.”

“So, you don’t have a conversation with them at all?”

“I just don’t have the time to immerse myself in ignorance. I know who I am, and I go about life living to the highest I can.”

“This is going to sound strange, and maybe a little harsh, but why are you so sure you don’t have an endless amount to learn?”

“Well, tell me Jack, do *you* like ignorant people? You don’t strike me that way. I am sure there are plenty of folk who you would not waste your time on.”

“Actually, I do find closed minded people very uncomfortable, but I always afford anyone their view. If I come up against extreme ignorance, I don’t bother to keep the conversation going, and I certainly have some tell it how it is moments and I challenge people a bit, but I have a conversation. I don’t see myself as greater than others like I did

once, because I know all too well my own sins and blindness, and I try not to put people in a certain box or dismiss them as lesser anymore.”

“I just don’t bother. Who has the energy to deal with ignorance?”

“Isn’t that relative to your beliefs, and if there is no conversation between the *‘knowledgeable’* like you and me and those *‘poor ignorant’* others, how do we move forward as a people?”

Jennifer, looked at Jack, and The Robe form blocked his view of her altogether now as it screamed the words that were heard, “*There is only one way.*”

“I am *not* comfortable with this conversation. You have baited me, and you’re *twisting* my words. I saw a greater creature in you than this.”

The Robe began to pulse with power, as the conversation shut down; just what these particular creatures required to gain more power. There was nothing *really* wrong with what she had shared, and he *had* baited her, and put words in her mouth. He just needed to make some points; points that were very valid. Yet now a white hood had even taken up the periphery of his own vision; around his own head. It was not a good feeling.

“*There is only one way,*” were the words that were heard.

He sat back allowing the experience, seeing that *any* stealth, no matter how useful to point out a higher way, or indeed *any* judgement of another soul, even if justified, would lead to breakdown in communication. This small conversation had hit a wall by his arrogance in trying to make a point. He had done just what he judged her to be doing; perpetrating the very behaviour he was arguing against. He had seen Jennifer as someone who he needed to educate, and he now shuddered at the cold energy rising in his being.

“I’m sorry, Jen. I created the very thing I was arguing against. Boy talk about needing to *‘look to yourself first’*. Actually, there’s a saying that a man shared with me recently that I now see more clearly, it was...

***“O SON OF SPIRIT!***

***Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.”<sup>2</sup>***

There’s something humbling about it, and it calls you up. I suppose in the end we just have to call ourselves up, and act that way.”

“Yes. It is lovely. Thanks, Jack. I accept your apology,” said Jennifer, but now very disappointed by the man she had hoped a great deal about recently.

She was not happy that Jack seemed religious as well, not that Jack really knew what he believed at the moment, and she was also about to realise that her new friend Rouha was religious too. She had seen them as good grounded intelligent people, and a bit spiritual; a club she would say that she belonged to. Rouha and Farhang were never in people’s faces about their beliefs; they would only share their beliefs with gentleness and humility when someone was interested. Although they very much wanted to share their great love, they believed it was in showing friendship and in living their Faith that the gift could reach the heart of another soul.

“That saying is from our Faith,” commented Rouha, to Jack. “Did Brig share it with you?”

“No,” answered Jack, relieved that the Robe that had come upon him had disappeared; but unfortunately, the quote’s power had seemed to wane quickly on Jennifer, and the other Robe was now fully enveloping her.

He thought that strange, as her acceptance of his apology was genuine. It was just that she now saw herself in the company of religious people, so her guard was up. Her experiences had not been good in the past, so it was understandable. People of Faith must know moderation as well as having fire. So many souls are burned in a zealot’s fire, or in childish ideas they hold, before they have the chance to see the beauty of something. Even the zealot is unaware of the true nature of faith, and blindness is blindness, no matter what someone knows or believes.

Jack knew that he had brought the Robes here and had helped them grow stronger. He was responsible, and he was not happy. Truth be known, it was both his and Jennifer’s doing, as even though the flow of love can be stilled by one, we all choose to shut off its flow into this place. It is us who choose to don our own robes, stemming the flow of love into the atmosphere of present company through the channel of our hearts; us stemming its flow out into the human system.

There was a pall over the place now, and the White Robe who had covered Jennifer was pulsing with power. Jack had fed the creature that now held her, so thought if he removed himself things might get better. He got up, and said, “I apologise again. I think I will leave you folks be to have a good night together.”

“No, Jack,” said Rouha, “You are just passionate; a little discourteous, but that was not your intent.”

“No. Please, stay. You’re human, just like anyone else,” offered Jennifer, yet still not really wanting to be in the enclosed atmosphere of a group of religious people. She still wanted to get to know him for some reason, and that was really why she spoke up.

The Robe seemed to flicker, and Jack’s hopes rose, but a Black Robe then mixed with the white one. It was quite see-through, but it was there.

*“This is the way,”* were the words he heard.

Jack just looked pained. He did not want to see these creatures, as he now knew in the depths of him what they were. He felt it. He had come across these creatures before, and even though he had no memory of them, he understood clearly the nature of their synthesis.

“Stay, Jack,” said Rouha, seeing that he was struggling.

“I *have* to go. Please, enjoy your evening. I have things I have to sort out,” he said, taking the blame on himself for the comfort of the others. “Please don’t think that it was only our discussion. I just have to go.”

He then smiled seriously, saying he would see his way out, and that his neighbours should stay with their guest. As he walked from the house, he turned his gaze upward within him. He *just did it*, as if it was totally natural. He liked this new part of him; a part of him that seemed to be slowly growing in influence. This particular new aspect, or natural skill, gave him a freedom and strength he had not known before. He had found this small habit, this resetting of his being, or refocusing it in a higher place, happening quite a lot over the months since his heart attack.

He now realised that he could have stayed for dinner and simply let this thing kick in. He even wished that he had been more in this state right from the start of the evening. He

would seek this freedom more often from now on, and maybe even live from this gentle assured place within.

He shook his head as he walked around the corner towards his home, now thinking that Jennifer had just been a mirage. We see what we want to see in people sometimes, especially people we are attracted to. We are often surprised when there is someone different, or a more complicated person, than we thought, even though it has to be true, as we do not know them. He still had the strong feelings for her but saw the gap of life view there; one that was too great. He was now *very* interested in spiritual endeavours, and she was not a lover of religion. “*We could be friends, maybe,*” he thought.

“What’s with him?”

“He had a heart attack, and it seemed to have changed his mind a little,” offered Rouha.

“Oh, is that why he was *so* rude, and a bit lost?” said Jennifer, disliking her words as they came out, and becoming overwhelmed by strong feelings of compassion and love for Jack.

“He is a bit lost, but it was actually why he *wasn’t rude* in the end. He was a very hard man when we first got here; very closed, and sure of his own mind. Now, not as much...I mean, he is still very forthright, but he also surprises us so often with deep insight.”

“I wouldn’t call our discussion tonight deep insight,” she said, and again her words pained her. The ugliness and arrogance of judgement were so suddenly clear now, especially before the kind beauty in this couple.

“He *does* see a lack of tolerance and connection in the world, and the polarisation of thought, and he is very concerned about it. There *are* many people who feel voiceless out

there and moderation seems to be a lost art. He went about bringing it to your attention the wrong way, but it exists. It was this new deeper creature he seems to be finding inside him who could not accept his own discourteous behaviour. He is graced somehow.”

“I just see a confused man, and leaving like that, a bit childish too,” she stated, yet the pain of her words struck her so deep and hard that she was rocked. “*What is happening!?*” she almost screamed inside, as she felt something heavy on her heart, and a sudden deep pain in her head.

“Yes, *maybe so,*” said Rouha.

“Maybe it was honourable,” offered Farhang. “I think he didn’t want to burden us with his confusion. There can be many reasons for particular behaviour, and knowing him a little, I would say it was kindness.”

Jennifer caught a scent of the truth in Farhang’s words on Jack’s behaviour, and in a simply high pure moment she did not open her mouth to cast more judgement. She could not have stood the pain of any more argument right now anyway, the physical pain in her head not passing. Her silence was a choice, as our responses always are, and the White Robe who had *again* taken the place of the Black robe, disappeared screaming.

“You are very kind people...”

“*Welcome. You come, of a sudden. There is confusion in you?*”

“Yes,” replied Jennifer, looking around at the see-through nature of things in this place she now found herself. Gentle hues sublimely flavoured things in differing intensities. It was like they were in a cloud, as there was no ground; somehow.

*“What is it you wish of me?” asked the lady; with such deep and strangely tangible love that Jennifer was taken immediately to tears and total honesty.*

*“I want to be more, so very suddenly. It is like I am fractured by something and can’t stand to be unkind. It’s all new ground. I’m suddenly here in this strange place, and with all this I too find myself with deep feelings for a man I do not know. I don’t like him almost, but he feels special.”*

*“Ahh, Jack. He is most certainly special, just, as it seems, are you. You are a Traveller, only the second of your kind. You are even a mystery to us, yet not to the All-Compelling.”*

*“A Traveller?”*

*“Yes. One’s who wander freely in the worlds of meaning.”*

*“I’m used to science, and my material being. Yet I do feel very much at ease in this place strangely enough, and the love here is so powerful and wonderful, but I need to understand where I am.”*

*The lady who glowed with a jade green hue, smiled, and said, “You are here. These words will put you in good stead as you travel. Our brother, Jack, has told me that this helped him more than anything.”*

*“Sure, that’s a little relieving, but I need some understanding of this,” as she waved her hand around at all that was about her, “and my relation to it. My mind is in awe, but I still need to understand.”*

*“Yes, of course. Be still. Close your eyes.”*

*“Okay.”*

*“His creation has always existed. It has been changed, and changes in form, but it has always existed, and will always exist. The creation of the universe, which you see as real, came from the heat of an active force on a recipient material; material and a force that had always existed.”*

*“Okay.”*

*“Your makeup is truly though, of a deeper reality; it is made solely of the deeper spirit that underpins material existence. You are now wandering in this deeper being; in its world. Time and space do not exist here, meaning is a place here, and creative influence may be considered as time, but it is not really. You see, time and space are a construct in which meaning, love, and the creative force may teach you for a time. These things flow like currents through the time and space of your physical experience, intersecting here and there. In reality, time and space are just tools for meaning to connect, in cycles of learning. So much is cyclical in the deeper reality of things, and less linear. It more so, simply is, is more connected, and is more collective, as it is a wider deeper construct. Yet all realities have laws which bind them.”*

*“I don’t know if understand all that, but it helps a little.”*

*“Be here, and simply be within it. It is no different to new experiences in the physical life.”*

*Jennifer did; and as she allowed it, it was a little more than wonderful. As she sat at ease, she received knowledge; knowledge that seemed a part the love that now flowed through her, or really it was clearer understanding of what she had already learned in her life; new awareness of how things really sat within the wider nature of things. She cried a little as she experienced this flow, and at times she nearly dissipated with joy. She realised*

*that love flows through us, and bonds us; yet no matter how violent our constriction, that it somehow, it must ever flow.*

*After some time, or after some meaning in this place, she asked about Jack. The Lady then seemed to ask permission before sharing the nature of Jack's current state; at least, his current state in the world of matter.*

*"He is in another cycle of learning; one with many smaller cycles within it. His memory has been taken from him because the pain of bearing it was now far too great for him. He now struggles with his acquired knowledge, knowledge he has no memory of gaining, but for now he seems quite poised. We all need challenges; to keep us growing, and opening ever wider in us, the channel of spirit."*

*"Did he do something wrong to have this struggle?"*

*"No. The Creator is ever creating us, as we interact with Him. All is Him, all is grace, and all is ever advancing. Jack was just given mercy and relief, but also another opportunity to receive more understanding, more meaning."*

*"So, his struggle is a kindness, and a gift, from the Creator?"*

*"As, is all. As, all is. He is ever-loving. You are feeling The Creator's love here now. It is always available to you; the more you live in the spirit the more you may experience it anywhere. It is the power of life and movement within all things in the material realm too, just less apparent there. It sustains all."*

*"This all makes too much sense to me, and yet, a dream, and almost fanciful. I have never been a person of faith."*

*The Lady smiled with such love and respect, that Jennifer nearly started weeping; such was its intensity. “Science, when proven, is truth. Religion, when proven, is truth. Truth is truth. Science has evolved, and so has religion. They are requirements, and need be respected, no matter those who may use them to destroy life, or to keep others ignorant. Both forces are valid and essential if seen as they truly are.”*

*“Science is evident. It isn’t relative.”*

*“It is relative, as all moves on. Some is most certainly evident, yet so much of it developing theories and models. You see humanity was a child once and could only know so much of science or of God. Knowledge is relative to humankind’s state. But it is now coming to adulthood it is so much more able to gather deeper knowledge of these things. In this youthful time, the last two hundred years, humanity is discovering more, and at a greater and greater in intensity each day. How can science not be relative? A tree still grows, more is seen; what was once many Gods, then Great Spirit, then Heavenly Father, is now The Unknowable. The laws of religion and level of spiritual insight given in each age is like the child going through its developing education. Deeper realities and deeper views are only relatively revealed as the human race’s relative powers of intellect develop.*

*So, knowledge, science and religion, need be relative over time. It cannot be another way, and this has always been so in the nature of both these great wings of humanity. Knowledge flows wider at each new age, released when the Revelators grace the Earth. Knowledge is also made available in the deeper flows of human perception through Their Message. It is right to look to all truth; that is, we should ever search for truth no matter where it resides.”*

*“Jennifer...Jennifer...Are you okay?”*

“Yes. I’m okay. I’m *really* okay,” she said, coming out of the blank stare that she had seemed to be stuck in for a while. Her head still hurt a little from before, but not so much, and she broke down crying from the beauty of that place more than anything. It was so strange how it had released her from something very heavy that was on her; something she had not noticed before. She did not realise she had felt this...oppression...was all she could call it. “I saw some other place. *Not this place*, for a while.”

“O man of two visions,” quoted Farhang, smiling.

Rouha shook her head, thinking that they had another one. She had lived in Australia for some years, from the age of ten, but she was wondering if these Australians might all be a little unhinged. Such is the nature of the dark shadow of difference; such is the ignorant darkness of cultural bias. There was no malice in her, and only love, but we all may carry a little of this shadow within us. But in her defence, even though she knew that the world of spirit existed, she could not *really* know whether Jack and Jennifer were a both a bit lost, or not.

Jennifer saw her own ignorance of Jack’s words very clearly now. She still saw his ignorance of *her* too, but did not want to, as the attending feeling made her sick to her stomach now. She was really quite changed and confused. She felt like a fool right now, almost melting down in front of her new friends; just wanting to go home and get herself together. Jack had done the same. He was a Traveller, and he was struggling too. She could now *see* him and his struggle.

“This is all *too* quick. This is all *too much*,” she cried gently, now feeling the pain of dissonance within her and realising that she was a mess. Only Jack would be able to relate to her right now. She wished he had stayed.

Rouha and Farhang were not sure what to do; at all.

IT WAS THE WEEKEND, some weeks after Jennifer's experience of deeper places. Jack was sitting back watching the first cricket test against India. The Aussies were not doing well, but it was good to just sit and enjoy the game. It was something normal, something grounding, and a bit of *soj* for Jack.

It was early December and cricket was a real summer pastime for him, even though he had disliked it when he was young. He had thought it was boring until his father had taken him to a big live match. There he had felt its spirit, loved the larrikin behaviour of some in the crowd, and had fallen in love with it. He was never to be good at it, or even play it hardly at all, but he loved it. He enjoyed watching it on television, with all its particular culture, silly comments, and the presenters having a go at each other. It was part of the feel of summer to him.

He had worked hard for his father in the summer holidays as a youth, well *every* holiday, so it was only later in life that he had found the time to watch it. He had a very active childhood; a very wholesome one for a lad, and he wouldn't have had it any other way. But now that he was a man December meant a couple of weeks off work, at the end of it anyway, Christmas with the family and cricket. Most years his family played backyard cricket on Christmas day. It was a lovely time of year. He always looked forward to it, and now that he was surfing, he was sure that summer would take on even more meaning.

"You got to throw off *the man* and be *free*. That's just the new *Colosseum*, man. Meant to *keep you busy*," said the strange man, who had turned up in Jack's house again. He seemed to be referring to the cricket match.

This time he was wearing a wildly colourful 1960's outfit, which did not suit the summer weather at all. He had long groovy pants with flairs, a purple shirt, and winter vest. He wore round sunglasses, and now sported a curly blonde afro, with a bandana, just to top it off.

“It's *just a pastime*, mate,” said Jack, not happy that this idiot should turn up now. He just wanted to watch the cricket and wind down.

“It's just another distraction for the masses,” said the apparition, as he got up and walked around the couch with a placard, shouting the conversation through a megaphone. “You all fiddle, while Rome burns, man. Feel your power, man. It's *keepin' you down*. Say *no to war, maannn!*” called out the hippy, then plonking back down on the couch as a full stop on his carrying on.

Jack did not want to take part in his own delusion but thinking he may get some insight into this apparition of his mind if he did. He had decided to engage these strange occurrences anyway, so he said, “I'll *play your silly game*. Who *are you?*”

“*Jack, man, that's not groovy.*”

“Just *tell me who you are, ya' bloody rabbit.*”

A bloody rabbit then sat there on the couch where the hippie had sat, yes, literally a rabbit with blood on it. It wriggled its nose and slowly made its way along the couch. Jack now thought he had definitely lost it. He was certain he needed help, and was feeling a bit broken, when the man reappeared where the rabbit was.

“Just thought I'd try it...*for a change*. Get it...*for a chaaange,*” said the man with a wide smile, waiting for Jack to react.

But he didn't react at all. He just stared past the man, now wondering if his idea to engage with all this stuff was a good one.

“Boy, you have *really lost* your sense of humour, Jack. You were a *fun* guy once upon a time.”

Jack had had enough, and said strongly, “*Tell me who, or what, you're supposed to be?*”

The creature then rose up, seeming to fill even the sky, he was so big. He had grown through the roof that no longer seemed to be there, actually the whole house was not apparent, as he was so large. Strangely then Jack could see him filling the whole world, as he said in a mighty voice, “*I am Change. I am always.*”

He shrunk back down to the couch, waiting for the usual excited response, but he got nothing, and said, in very disappointed tones, “That's *not cool either*, man.”

Jack just turned his attention back to the cricket, trying to gather some internal ground again, wishing he had not interacted with the man at all.

“You *can't* ignore me, *Jack*. Plenty have *tried*, but *all* have failed. *I am always*,” he said, and with that, he disappeared again.

Jack just tried to disappear into the game.

IT WAS A FEW DAYS LATER. Jack was not sure what he was doing, but he finally got up the courage to phone the number that the man in the car park gave him. The trouble with Jennifer had pushed him along a bit, but more so, the apparitions; the Robes and that *Change* guy.

He now had to go for broke, and this man Yuri was the only tangible link; besides that, he had used the words in the back of his card on the Robes and they had *not* worked. Little did Jack know that they *had* worked in a way. The words did not really affect her, because he had not whispered them into her ear, and she was adamant not to let some religious quote affect her at the time. They were deflected in a sense. But, like a prayer, they were heard deeper, and her heart heard them. Her mind and heart being so at odds had fractured her reality and sent her Deeper for the first time.

Yuri answered the phone, and the two men decided to meet. They met at a cafe, in a small town that Jack never really visited, just to the north. As Yuri came in and sat down, he smiled.

“So, you do not know yourself.”

This was not a question, as he had been in touch with some people deeper and found that the nature of this man’s experience was ever-changing, and was informed that he just had to go with whatever state Jack was in.

“*I do*, mate. But it also seems that I don’t.”

“It would be a mind blower, Jack. I have been there, da. Things got crazy degree by degree for me. Thankfully it was a slow cycle of change, but even then, I sometimes couldn’t get a bead on what was real.”

“So, who am I?”

“You are Jack Johnston.”

“I know *that*.”

“You’re a Traveller. An anomaly, maybe.”

“Traveller? Travel where?”

“Anywhere, anytime, no time...place, no place; and as far as my main source of information is concerned, you’re travelling is just a pain in the butt for those who work in service of order.”

“But you said I was law man myself?”

“It was for a time, here and there; *apparently*. My source explained that you aren’t something they were able to work out fully. The thing about that is, that your chances of getting to know yourself when *you* don’t know yourself...Well, you aren’t likely to have a win...to understand, da.”

“Okay,” said Jack, “So I travel, and I just have to accept I see things?”

“Sure, seems like your being skips across dimensions and worlds; sometimes travels there, or bridges them. So, basically, *anything* could happen, I suppose. I have seen some amazing crazy things since I signed up, but we all just have to work on what’s in front of us, da.”

“Yep, sure,” said Jack, deciding that he may as well just enter this other world now, boots and all. “So, what about these Robes?”

“You’ve seen some?”

“I see ‘em come and go in people. I had to chase one out of myself. *That was weird.*”

“It’s not weird really, anyone can fall to them. They are here most of the time; it’s just that they’re too prolific at the moment on this world. This place may eventually even need to fall to a chaotic state to evolve, but it’s *too* early. Only when the new structure has been put in place enough can that happen; only when the building on the ground is taken on by enough

souls here. I have been sent here to thin the Robes out a little. I usually light them up, and then whisper the Creative Word in their ear.”

“Light, em up?”

“My, pulse stick. They don’t like light, and it stuns the person just nice, so they take the words into their unconscious mind. It doesn’t hurt ‘dem, but takes them out of their robes,” he explained, as he tossed a pulse stick to Jack.

Jack caught it, threw it up, caught it again and waved it around a little like he was naturally seeking its balance. Then he looked it over, and asked, “Their robes?”

“They are the robes of thought and emotion that block our vision and keep us cloistered. But if you challenge people’s thoughts enough, or more so their hearts enough, they’ll throw them off themselves. The Robes grow from these materially focused or intellectually arrogant thoughts, and they can’t stand people that think for themselves. They hold back unity, and the evolution of this world.”

“Yes, I gathered their essence recently...from old experiences it seems.”

“Sure, but anyway, there are just too many of ‘dem at the moment.”

“I know this weapon. It tracks things too,” said Jack, which had Yuri a bit happier.

He had tossed it to Jack, to see if it could jog his memory, and he already knew Jack’s muscle memory from Agency work was intact from the way he had reacted at their first meeting.

“Memories, comin’ back?”

“No mate, but the knowledge is there.”

“Same thing.”

“No, it isn’t mate; *believe me, it definitely isn’t.*”

“Mmm, I don’t know,” disagreed Yuri.

“So, you’re an Agent...Is that what you call it?”

“Like I said, I’m Department for now. They work from *real* deep. I work for them at Agency level,” explained Yuri. “They did give me one of these though,” and he whistled. “Even though I can use the portals if I need to, they said something about not upsetting the bonds growing in the portals on this planet, as every strand of love will count.”

“Well that just went straight over *my head*, mate,” responded Jack, as he saw the carpet come in the air towards Yuri.

Jack’s heart jumped, and the carpet raced over to him and wrapped itself around him.

“You must have a lot of love in you, *droog moy*,” commented Yuri, now laughing, as the carpet did not seem to want to let go. “They respond to love. They move by love. Some believe they are love. I must say ‘det I love flying them. It has taught me to love more, especially if I gather from the Words and contemplate the Images stitched into them.”

Jack just didn’t know what to do. He wanted to be annoyed, but something inside him liked carpets a great deal, and the carpet was only responding to the knowledge deep in him. These words then came...*True knowledge increases love. True love increases knowledge.*

# *Enemies*

He walked toward the cafe at the foot of the mountain. It was early Saturday morning and Jack was down for a coffee and some reflection time. He saw someone waving excitedly as he came closer.

Sadly, for Jack, it was Change. Change had been a friend of his in one of his previous cycles, if one could say such a limited thing of Change. In that cycle, that experience, many journeys ago, he had interacted with Change and some other *core essences of life*. It had been a great honour for Jack, but in the end, he had asked them all to leave him be, and let him live a normal life. They had all kept their word, and never bothered him again in any of his myriad journeys, deeper and away, since then, but Change, being Change, just couldn't help himself.

“I just can't *help* myself, Jack. *I just can't,*” he called out.

Jack was in no way embarrassed, because no one else could see the Essence; that was until he saw Jennifer sitting at one of the tables. She was looking straight at Change and laughing.

Jack made a beeline for her, and she asked, “Who is your *friend?*”

He sat down beside her and held her shoulder, saying very quietly, “No one else can see him or hear him, so umm.”

Jennifer went white.

“Wow! Reverse embarrassment. I’m really touched, Jen,” commented Change, very cheerily, as he came over and sat down at the table with them.

Jack got up, and said, would you like a coffee.

“Yes, thank you. *Is it safe?*”

“Yeah, he’s just little bunny rabbit,” said Jack, and Change smiled a knowing smile, and turned into a rabbit on the seat.

The rabbit called after him, saying, “Nice to have you back on the team, Jack,”

Jennifer just sat there with wide eyes, not knowing whether to laugh or cry.

Jack ordered and returned in a short time, by which time Change was in his Apollo space suit and thrilling Jennifer with his winning repartee. But he did not understand why she was not in fits and was thinking that he was losing his celestial mojo.

“Am I losing my mojo?”

“You never *had* mojo, mate.”

He was up and boxing in his Victorian pugilist togs, bouncing around Jack, pretending to threaten him with his punches. He shadow-boxed for a while, and then sat down. He was all puffed out and taking deep breaths, as he said, “You shouldn’t do that to your friends, Jack. *Baiting people* isn’t very nice,” with a knowing look to Jennifer.

“*Oh, low blow, mate,*” responded Jack. “I am still *so* sorry about that, Jennifer. Are you okay?”

“I am better than I might have been. You see, I had a deep experience, *or a wonderful delusion*, that was *very* meaningful. I’ve been spending time alone trying to come to terms with it. I thought of calling you, but just couldn’t.”

“Reflecting alone and sorting out our mind is definitely the way to go until you calm the waves and see some land, but after a certain time, or in some situations, being alone can be an enemy,” offered Jack, from a deeper place within him, and with learning from his own recent experience.

“You never have to be alone with *me* around, Jack,” said Change. “Actually, I dance quite often around you. Just can’t *help myself* around you.”

“Yeah, well *slow* it down a bit, will ya’.”

Change looked at Jennifer, and said, with a funny look on his face, “Just buds, joshin’, *you know how it is.*”

Jennifer laughed, as Jack shook his head. It was just all too crazy. At first, she had been afraid to respond to Change, this *law* of life, because others couldn’t see him, but with Jack here now, and all the carrying on, she had just let go; surrendering to the moment.

“It’s funny, but it’s *not* funny,” she said, feeling very oddly free.

“Yep,” agreed Jack.

“Are you two on drugs or something? It’s *one*, or the *other*, you know,” commented Change, with big eyes that inferred clearly that he was the only sane person in present company.

Jack was worried about Jennifer, and said to Change, “*Surely*, that’s enough of *you* for one day. Give her some *time*.”

“*She* didn’t come with me today, bud,” answered Change, referring to Time herself. It seemed that Change and Time were deep soul mates, and quite in love.

“What?” queried Jack and Jennifer in unison, wondering what the hell he meant.

“Time’s my love. And you are right Jack, she is great to do reflection, and regather, with. She allows me to dance and do my work on endless worlds. She puts everything in perspective. *You remember Cas.*”

“Mate, I don’t know you; at least not before the other day. I have *some* knowledge, from where the hell I don’t know, but no memory. You’re *new* to me.”

“*Wow, cool,*” said Change, suddenly looking all sixties groovier again. “So, what you *been on?* Did you finally have a psychological break, or did you upset *The Man?*”

“I don’t know, mate.”

“I do,” said Jennifer.

“*Mind blowing!*” cheered Change, just loving all the movement with these two.

“You’re being challenged in a new way it seems. He loves you, so He’s helping you reach for more.”

“Nothin’ new *there*, Jen. Hate to blow *your bubble*, but He does that with everyone, *all the time*,” explained Change, with a dumb look on his face.

“How do you know that, Jennifer?” asked Jack.

“A glowing lady, in a glowing place, a beautiful place, told me,” answered Jennifer, trying to keep going despite Change’s comments. “She seemed to know. She said that you and I are Travellers; the first of our kind. We are able to travel here and there, and to deeper realities, apparently.”

“That fits with what Yuri said, crazy as it is. It makes *some* sense of all this,” said Jack, indicating Change.

“*Oh, all this, is it! Thanks,*” pouted Change as he crossed his arms and looked away like a child would when they get upset. He then started giggling to himself, because he knew he was in all this change up to his eyeballs. He certainly *was* changeable.

“Nice to have some confirmation from a real person,” commented Jennifer.

“You seem to be keeping pretty good balance considering all this weirdness is so new,” offered Jack, while wondering why that fruitcake Change was now giggling.

“Yes, and no, Jack.”

“At least *I’ve* had time to gather some ground, and you being able to see this fool is *sure* helping me too. *I hope* that I’m helping you?”

“Enough of the *fool* thing. I am *Change*. *Do not* underestimate me,” said Change, with a now serious face.

“I’m doing okay,” said Jennifer. “I just have to go with things. *Your* struggle has steadied me; you know, knowing someone else was on this journey too, and especially today with us sharing our new friend. I don’t feel *so* alone or abnormal right now. But it’ll take a long time for me to really gather my senses in amongst all this massive change.”

“Massive! *That’s me*. I am *very* challenging at times,” explained Change, now sitting in a large comfy psychologist’s chair, writing notes down in a notebook. He then looked up through small wire framed glasses and asked in a German accent, “So, Jennifer, when did you start having these feelings?”

Jack just shook his head at this jester and gave Jennifer the face. She just laughed out loud at the antics, and very happy that she was not alone. Change can be hard, but he has some humour in him. It is good to reach for it when he asks a lot of you.

IT WAS FIRESIDE NIGHT. Jack had invited Jennifer along, as they had spent some more time together and worked on plans to seek answers, and some ground, together. They had decided to leave the feelings and emotions they felt for each other, just be, for a while. They needed to be friends right now, all be that *not quite*, and see their way forward. It was certainly more of an adventure now that there were two of them.

Naomi now opened the door.

*“Giddy, Naomi. This is Jennifer.”*

“Welcome,” said Naomi, smiling at Jack, but strangely not looking at Jennifer at all.

*“Thanks,” answered Jennifer.*

Brig was there, as well as the lady and her husband who had come before, and another man. The night began with a prayer and then a small reading from a document called The Promise of World Peace. It began a very strong discussion on the nature of life, humankind, and the possibilities of the future. About thirty minutes in, after reading another two parts of

this small tome and discussing it, this Faith's vision of the future was very clear to all who sat there; well, in this particular aspect.

The new man, Dave, asked, "Do you suppose all this will come about through your religion; that it will gain a supremacy over other ways, and bring all this about?"

Naomi answered that, *as she saw it*, the unity of man was inevitable in itself, as this was the time for it to come. "We believe we are to aid its birth, but we also believe that there is wisdom and a structure held within our Writings for the future benefit of mankind," she explained. She then went on to say that they had been building the structure for a long time, and that they strove to live to the wisdom in The Writings, but was then at pains to explain that their belief does not seek supremacy over other Faiths, or even over those who don't believe in God. She said that they believed in the inclusion and participation of all people in the future of humanity. "We work for the betterment of the world and exclude no one. We actually seek to activate people in working for this better future, and their own future, no matter their beliefs."

Dave had liked that, as had the others there, but said that he did not think this could ever happen, as there were always those who sought power. That they always wormed their way into it, causing harm, no matter the original cause. History was full of such people, and he could not see the future being any different.

"Doesn't that just make you apathetic then?" challenged Jack.

"Hey, I am only one person. What can I do? And people are flawed, so it will always be a bit crazy. We're only human."

"*Awww!*" said Jack, "Did you know you just over-clichéd yourself out of a future, and out of responsibility to the future?"

“They aren’t clichés. They’re facts.”

“They’re rolled out every day, touted and spoken by endless people as wisdom and somehow unassailable, but they’re not reality *at all*. These little sayings have *some* truth to them, and can be powerful in certain instances, no doubt, but the way they’re mostly used by people these days creates apathy. They just form blockages of spirit, energy, will, and effort, toward evolution into a better future. I would posit that they are just another enemy,” argued Jack, thoughtfully. Then realising he had used the word posit. He had never used that word before and just hoped he had used it correctly.

“But it *is the way it is*,” said Dave.

“*And that’s another one*. If that’s ‘*the way it is*’, then that’s the way it will *always* be; if we continue to hold it as a core truth. A bloody self-fulfilling prophesy. Things *are as they are*, and acceptance *is* a good thing, but when such words just create *apathy* and slow down our efforts and stifle creativity toward a better future, then they are *not true* and *not helpful*.”

“People don’t change. That’s *just a fact*. Better not to dream about something that can’t happen,” argued Dave.

“Keep saying that and it *definitely* will not come, and people *do change*. They *can* grow. People are very capable, and even small acts change the world. But with all these *stupid* sentences, these limiting clichés, in people’s heads, nothing can change. We all need to *challenge* what we say to ourselves, to each other, and start doing *what we can*.”

“When Naomi read that peace was *inevitable*, I must say, I did feel that,” admitted Dave. “Part of me did believe it, but I still can’t see it happening.”

“Why only bring a negative outlook to the table then?”

“It’s *realism*.”

“It’s *not* mate. In the wash up, it’s *apathy*. I would rather stand up, fight, and lose, than give in before the game’s begun.”

Naomi then interjected gently and took the discussion to what people in her Faith were doing on the ground in the world, and the fact that a huge number of people who took part in the work of community building with them weren’t even of their Faith. Words are useful, but the results of action are far more proof of something. She then showed a small video on an place in Africa, where community, and something far beyond even peace, was growing; even to the point that it was beginning to effect change more widely. Actually, it had created societal change, as before these activities grew women were not to speak in public forums there; only men. Now they did, and even ran them.

They were all impressed and uplifted, but Dave commented that such development of things would not happen in Australia because we were well off and didn’t need each other like those people did. To which, Naomi answered, that there were neighbourhoods and areas in Australia where this was definitely beginning. She added that it was not to the level of places in Africa or India, only because we in *Australia* were *not* as developed yet. This surprised Dave; that these other places would be more developed in something was not normal to him.

Naomi had then explained that it was slow here, but it *was* happening, and actually the change in the last twenty-five years had been extremely significant. People in this country, and other Western nations, were seeking meaning and connection again, and wanted their children and youth strong; so, allowed them to take part. People wanted a more meaningful and fulfilling reality in their neighbourhoods, and for their children’s future, so

things were growing. She had admitted that efforts here were a bit mechanical at the moment, but that with enough love and effort they would become organic movements in time.

“We are far behind Africa, India, and South America, but we continue to develop,” added Brig. “We believe there is great nobility in all people, and a real will in them to act on their own behalf; we foster this and build capacity through courses we run. We believe in the future, in people, and our ability to create a far better world,”

JACK LAY BACK ON THE SAND. He enjoyed his time down at the beach, more and more, and now that Jennifer and he were comrades in arms in their exploration of their strange new reality he felt way more grounded. He lay there thinking of her and the discussion in the fireside the night before. He then realised he had forgotten her as the night went on and could not remember her leaving. It was strange, but strange was almost normal for him now. He had really enjoyed the discussion and had got some real clarity of what Naomi and Brig’s Faith was about. True or not, it was *sure* working on the ground and changing lives.

It was almost a polar opposite to the way the societies were heading, with somewhat aggressive or apathetic mindsets growing in them; distrust and suspicion rising daily. These people though had great optimism and belief in people, and they weren’t afraid of certain cultures or the great religions; they just seemed to celebrate them all. But they were of their own Faith; but the Human family was first, seeking the truth was first, and that was the power in this belief system. Unity was its powerful core element.

He was very aware now that disunity rattled the peoples of the world; that it somehow was *the* enemy. He could see from the current reality of the world and these new insights; that until there was love, and we all decided to build together, that the chaos would continue to

grow. It seemed that unity was not just a lovely word; it was a necessary reality of life. “*Even if we got it all wrong together, it would be better than all this fracture; this endless debate and drama,*” he thought.

“Hey, that was great surf today,” commented Owen. He had been off in his own world, sitting up on his towel, and had come out of his reflection now.

“Yep, it was great. The place is a picture this morning. Gotta’ love early summertime, mate. It’s like the heat of summer calls you to life, eh.”

“Yeah, but it’s a picture *every* day, and any season; endless moods, and light; different clouds and wind. Just *love it*. If I didn’t love surfin’ so much, and had more time, I reckon I’d be a painter.”

“You still could, or later in life; who knows,” offered Jack.

“Yep, it would sure be better than a lot of the stuff that passes for art these days. I mean there are some cool meaningful pieces and some abstract stuff that I could stare at all day because of the sublime imperfection in them, but so much is rubbish or meaningless, to my way of thinking.”

“I don’t get art at all, and a lot of the music these days isn’t even creative. They just seem either dumbed down, or generic, somehow. It’s like they are *trying* to be musicians instead of just being one.”

“There’s probably a lot of good music out there we don’t hear, but it seems these artists are selling out to a formula, and visual artists seem to be just trying to be clever or shocking,” offered Owen.

“You know it’s just less real meaning, and bit made up to be something. I don’t know,” mused Jack.

“Yep, seems to be,” said Owen, just watching waves.

“Television shows are getting really creative, but mostly don’t put across anything meaningful; well except for what the new thought police want us to think is meaningful.”

“Yep, they’re over doing it, but it is harmless, and maybe still helpful. Things are changing in the world of women, and inspiring young ladies with strong women characters is a good thing. The race thing is valuable too; in that they are increasing the racial mix in the roles,” added Owen.

“Look, for sure, but in *every* movie. I mean it is for entertainment. I feel like I’m being preached too every day as it is, and there are other groups pushing their propaganda through movies and television shows all the time too. There is a new high church, and I don’t like it.”

“It’s all relative I suppose. Some see it all as good.”

“Well, all I can do is talk for myself, and think for myself. Not just follow this new social construct blindly, said Jack. “There *is* definite good in some of these things, but it’s being taken to dangerous and distracting extremes; to the point that all sorts of low behaviours are also glorified along with the empowerment stuff.”

“I s’pose. I don’t know, Jack.”

“I just see all the violence, deviancy, and people with no moral fibre being portrayed as the oppressed and as heroes continually. I reckon there are whole generations lost in a

media fog, all racing like hell toward a glorious future when in fact they're racing toward a cliff; lemmings spurring each other on."

Owen burst out laughing. "Duuuude! *Man*, you need *to relax*, and just enjoy the day," as he lay back on his towel and closed his eyes.

Jack chuckled, and said, "Sure. But I can do both."

Suddenly there was a man beside Jack, and he got a fright.

"Ha! *Gotcha'*, *big man*," said Change, in his best 1960's surfer gear. There was even a great long board dug into the sand standing up beside him. "Havin' trouble with your world, eh? Don't like my work, eh?"

Jack just turned and looked at Change, with the face that said, well of course I don't like what I see in the world, but now thought, "*There has been a lot of good change too.*"

"Yes. There is *both*, *surfer dude.*"

Jack just smiled, trying not to laugh at Change's get up, or to disturb Owen. He then just regarded this great essence of life; somehow knowing the high privilege of conversing with him.

"Thanks, man. I am very glad you understand. You know, a great many of your adventures ago, you actually asked me and my compatriots to leave you alone and let you have a *normal* life. We *couldn't* believe it. Did you know that you knew *Time*, and even *Civilisation* himself?"

"*Really*," thought Jack.

“*Really*, and do you know what civilisation would tell you about all your concerns, even though you do need to be interested and engaged in the struggles and challenges of your time?”

“*What?*” thought Jack, now humble, curious, and feeling even more honoured.

“It’s all tumbling down because it has to. You are seeing all the stupidity of the human world’s adolescence, as well as its genuine passionate search for meaning that can fit its now higher intellectual and more mature abilities. There is much experimentation, but they will realise their lack of wisdom in certain things and learn in the process. You are seeking to heal it magically, but it all has to *happen*. Chaos is part of the remaking of the system. Adulthood only comes when youth has fallen.”

“*Okay*,” thought Jack.

“It *all* matters because you *all* have to learn. Your *effort* within the exigencies of this age; your *own effort* to help assuage the fury of the fall, is all you can do. Well, to be clearer, to fight against the tide of life is *impossible*, but to *build* new things *with* this force of change is essential and powerful. Steady the old boat, but effort needs mainly be in building the new one.

The storms and breakdown are all to help yourself and others learn, and to build the adult humanity through experience of light and darkness. Youth must die, but the adult is surely growing within the youth. *Build* the adult. *Build* the new society. You can’t save the decay that needs to come; that must come to outworn ways that are no longer useful, including some of these sad new experiments and the follies of youth.”

“*Sure. That’s really clear.*”

“The institutions of the world won’t hold back the great tides of human populations seeking a future amidst this chaos. It is part of the mixing, part of the change, because humanity failed at the appointed time to heed the Call to human unity. Humanity chose the hard way.”

“*I didn’t,*” thought Jack, plainly.

“Well, in any case, you will all need to act now, have greater compassion now, and build now. Only love and unity will hold back the rising tide of chaos. You need to build this new civilisation with the power of moderation, humility, and sacrificial striving, in your own community, your own neighbourhood. People are capable of great change without me, but mostly I have to prod them. All they have to do is change themselves, and their small part of the world; be together, and care about each other. New life rises from the soil, from the ground upwards, even though the water of Spirit and the power of Light comes from the sky,” finished Change, as he lay back on his towel, closed his eyes, and sighed to go off to sleep.

Jack then lay back and closed his eyes, letting his mind wander. He knew that there was lot of good, kindness, and love out there as well as the breakdown. These things had not died away, even though he could also see the darkness was growing, and with it, a rising tide of ignorance and selfishness that was breaking down communities, and breaking bonds of love. It is a strange thing too though, that struggle, and disaster can also reconnect and strengthen bonds of love in families, and communities, and create more of a will to pitch in and even help strangers. There is a lot of good in people and struggle can remind us of our higher selves; our nobility. Yet also, some sadly not. “*It all comes down to individual choices; self or love, ignorance or knowledge,*” he now thought, as he dozed off.

Change then opened his eyes, and chuckled, as change never *really* sleeps.

IT HAD BEEN A BIG DAY AT WORK and Jack saw that he had a half an hour to go. There seemed to be people coming from everywhere to buy pumps or get them fixed this week. It was Friday afternoon, and he was waning a bit. He was happy for the income though because things had been a bit tougher lately. The internet, bigger suppliers, and a downturn in the economy had left trade in his small business on the borderline for over two years now. It was actually a nice boost before a two week break that he always took off over the Christmas New Year period.

Many of the regional areas in his home state of Queensland were struggling, as it seemed people and money flowed into the larger centres more and more. People did not want to live in small towns; they seemed to want the city or beach life, so less people ventured out into the country. Drought too, had taken its toll on the central west especially, and towns out there were struggling to even survive. There was a real tide of change that communities could not ignore, and they had to get creative to band together to keep local services and bring tourists to their door. Farm stays and camping, to statues and small museums on historical icons had developed there.

In some towns the people had banded together as a town and bought out businesses that were going broke. They made them into cooperative stores that served the community, and they used the profits to develop other small and large services for the local community. People out there were taking part in their own future, as business and government seemed unable or unwilling to help them. Truth be known, and once upon a time, all people took care of their community and were responsible in volunteering to serve. Even local government was unpaid, or councillors just a small stipend. So, Change was on the job, and these folk

were beginning to gather from the talents and abilities of each of the locals, developing their own future.

Jack had just looked down from the clock when David came in; the man from the last fireside.

“Hey, Jack. Good to see you. I enjoyed our tussle recently. Pity it isn’t a weekly thing.”

“Did you? That’s good. We all learn something, eh.”

“Yep. I don’t think I need religion, but still enjoy the openness of the conversation on those nights. It’s challenging, but respectful.”

“Yeah, Naomi and Brig are good people. They seem to know how to build bridges and make what they do pretty clear. That film on that place in Africa was quite compelling.”

“Yeah, but *we don’t need it here*. I just think you just have to be a good responsible person, and not hurt anyone, you know.”

“I reckon we need to think *beyond* that now, Dave. I don’t think it’s *enough* anymore, and probably why we’ve farmed off our responsibilities to business and government. Not that it’s bad generally, and not that it hasn’t been and will be very useful, but there seems to be no one at the tiller. I don’t think they get it, or the nature of the times; especially for smaller towns like this.”

“All I can do is *look after my own*,” said David.

“Mate, you are *really riddled* with these *so-called* wisdoms.”

“Hey steady, I came here to buy a pump from you.”

“What’s that got to do with our conversation?”

“I’m not feelin’ the love, Jack, so I might not want to spend my money here.”

“Dave; I get that, but mate, what I’m saying is *all about love* and looking after each other. We need to *care* about each other and maybe sacrifice a little to help each other, and help this community grow; instead of letting it shrink away because we want to buy something cheaper, or because we don’t want to put effort into a community project of some kind. The big fellas are not helping us, and even if the government might want to, the majority are giving their attention to big urban concerns.”

“Yeah well, I don’t see that. *I’m doin’ okay*, and we live in the luckiest country on Earth.”

“Look sure. There’s *no* doubt about that, but it is losing its heart. And how long will we be lucky if we don’t stand up and make an effort? Manufacturing’s fallen away here because we wanted too much, and so a lot of the country’s income has gone. We sell our ore, but the jobs are dissipating. I love the ‘*she’ll be right*’ laid back Aussie way, and I use it when it’s real to use it, but we have to use the ‘*shoulder to shoulder*’ Aussie way too. Hard work and struggle made the wealth that we’re now tossing away; because we want to do *less*, *have* more, and have it *right now*.”

“Yeah, I see that people don’t want to make an effort, but there’s less and less meaning in our jobs. It’s all paperwork and computers, no matter what you do these days.”

“Yep, and *there it is. Meaning*. I reckon if we make an effort we’ll get some meaning back into our lives, and the best way is reconnection and shared purpose. Going at things together, instead of this ‘individual’ overkill; well, that and this phantom ‘ease of lifestyle’

grasp for happiness. No one will ever be happy just pleasing themselves, and I think it's getting that bad that we'll *have to* turn this around in time anyway."

"Maybe *we should be as smart as animals are*. They just go about their business."

"You know what I see? I see that you have been educated by *societal talk*. All these notions are the enemy to us having a better future. I'm not an *animal*, and we're *a lot* smarter, and we run far deeper. It's just that we're mostly choosing immediate animal and emotional comfort, over longer term spiritually aspirational endeavour. Tell me which of those two make you feel noble?"

"I don't go with the spiritual, *hoodoo guru stuff*, like you, Jack."

"You are *killin'* me, mate. You are *killin' me dead* with these *limiting* sentences. These notions only stop people growing and stop us seeking a higher expression of society. Spiritual, to me, is how I treat you; how positive and motivated I am, and that I will sacrifice for others. It's real, and not *hoodoo bloody anything*. Do you just go to that night with Naomi for *entertainment* or something?"

"Well. No, not really. I was lookin' a bit. It's got some great things goin' on, but mate I won't stop havin' a social drink for anyone, and I don't think I should have to."

"Well, maybe if you allow yourself to see more of the vision they're presenting to us, and start feeding your soul on it, even making an effort to be of service, you won't want or need your social drink."

"*Maybe*, but I can't see it."

"Yep, I hear that a lot. No *meaning* in a bottle, mate."

"It works for me."

Jack wanted to shake his head, but he didn't. "Keep goin' to things, Dave. At least it will give you *some* meaning; other than your family, of course."

"Yep. It does make me feel good. That is why I go, I suppose. So, listen, you want'a sell me a pump."

Jack chuckled, "Sure, mate. I get a little carried away these days."

"*A little!* You sound like Brig's mates."

"Brig's mates?"

"You know, *his* mob; they'll never stop whinging."

"You mean *like you are now*, Dave," commented Jack, with a cheeky smile, but seeing very clearly the enemy of a bright future deeply embedded in this man's thinking.

He didn't believe for a moment that Dave was an enemy. He was a good man, but he was quite ill-informed. Jack was kind to everyone; challenging and forthright, but also kind. He knew the only way to unity was to take people with you. Respect for the potential of their nobility, and their right to see things as they do; but also, being clear how you see it. Love and respect were the only things that would really make '*us*' out of '*them*', and eventually bring forth the '*we*' out of '*me*', no matter how passionate or right we are.

JACK WAS A BIT TAKEN ABACK WHEN HE ENTERED NAOMI'S. He was late, and David wasn't there. He had his phone number from the invoice for the pump that he ended up selling him, so he would give him a call and find out if he had put him off. He decided then that he would forgo these firesides if he had to, so Dave would feel okay coming along. He was, right now at least, starting to feel uncomfortable with his '*tell it how it is*' nature.

He had no way of telling what David's reasons were for not coming right now, but he could clearly see his own deficiencies. It was strange for him, but he knew now he would *have to* be milder in what he shared and maybe think a little more about the actual person he was talking to. Burdening people with stuff that they cannot accept yet, was probably not helpful. It was hard for him as he was used to going hard against ignorance. But even though he might still do that, it seemed he had to calm it down a bit or he would just chase people away from the process of change.

He then felt like he was on a battlefield with his sword now taken from him, and even one hand tied behind his back. How the hell was he going to do this? He felt held back, but he had to explore this New Way of doing things. He then saw that this was not a war. *He saw a hammer in his hand, and in the far distance, a gleaming city.*

“I said, hello, Jack,” said Brig, smiling. “Where are ya’ wanderin’, mate?”

*“In all the potential of the future, Brother.”*

“Sounds like a nice place,” commented Brig, with a smile. He enjoyed these lucid moments his friend had, as he now started the night off with a prayer.

Jack was not big on prayer. He had been brought up religious but had never been really good at it, even though he had been influenced deeply by The Messenger of the Faith of his birth. There was once though; when prayer had definitely proven itself to him. He had prayed regularly for a while with deep belief in its power. It was prayers for someone he knew, and it had not let him down. Yet later in life he had walked away from his Faith; mainly because there seemed to be a spiritual apathy there. A lot of people who went on with life however they liked; only really believing that going to church on Sunday was just to make you a little more conscious of how to be. Now looking back, he could see that part of

the reason he let it go was that he also wanted his “freedom”, and that he genuinely didn’t know those who were real adherents and who sought to live the life. Maybe he had not understood it well enough too. Or maybe he just needed more and would not give his obedience to *just anything* at that time. Maybe it was all of those things.

He could feel the spirit of the Words of the prayers that were recited at these fireside nights, and certainly liked how it felt. These prayers, and the quotes they discussed, were like beautiful food and took him to the spirit; the higher part of him and connected him to what they called the Abha Realm. He was missing Jennifer again tonight though and had missed her recently. *She had gone off to an old auntie’s, to spend some time away from here, and be in a place where she felt supported; to let this new reality wash over her for a while. She also wanted her auntie’s counsel, as she trusted it.*

Anyway, the night went on as usual, and there was some very heartfelt sharing of ideas. Tonight, seemed less adversarial for Jack, but it was probably because he no longer saw the use in it. His change in behaviour was very clear to Naomi, and also very welcome.

The conversation wandered as it usually did, when Jack commented, “It makes you wonder about all the drama in the world.”

“What does your Faith see as the cause of all this drama?” asked Cynthia, a friend of Brig’s who had now started to come along.

“A lack of meaning,” said Brig plainly. “Our Messenger told us that people would be searching for *meaning* as religion fell away. He told us that people would walk away from religion, but that they would eventually realise that they needed it, and return. People don’t realise that they need to be *connected* and *purposed*; that they need more than material happiness, and that the path to *self* only leads into nothingness.”

“There *are* people with *real* problems, so not *all* people’s drama is self-pity,” offered Naomi.

“Sure; nothing’s *absolute*, but meaning is a big part of the picture, to me,” replied Brig.

“We are all mostly better off *looking to ourselves* to make the world a better place; being of value to people and society. Creating, rather than wasting energy judging others, and adding to the negativity,” added Naomi.

“That’s refreshing to hear,” said Cynthia.

“Yes, it is. Cynthia,” agreed Jack. “We’re responsible for the energy we run with, and what we put out into the world.”

“What do you mean *energy*? I hear that a lot these days,” asked Cynthia.

Jack laughed, “Yep, it sounds all hippie, eh. I suppose that knowing we are a spiritual creature, and that positive and negative energy comes out of *us* into the human reality through our words and actions. This pall we are feeling, this oppression, is the negative energy we’re all generating. Gossip is king, whinging rules, and drama is off the leash, because we don’t know that we are essentially spiritual creatures and that we are all responsible for the destructive energies in our world.”

“To walk gently in the spirit,” added Brig.

“Yes, I’ve met some elevated people. They are gentler and not rushed somehow. They make you feel good even being in their company,” agreed Cynthia.

“You know there was an old Irishman, who told me that The Troubles in Ireland was not so much about religion as it was about a lot of young men with nothing to do,” shared

Jack. “They didn’t know they were spiritual beings and that they could build things and help people in their community. They didn’t know their own power, but they reached out for meaning by being in gangs and fighting for something they believed in, even though it wasn’t positive, and very destructive. I think people need to feel alive, and meaning gives us that, even if it is negative and destructive. I think the drama is rising because people have lost meaning in their lives, have little real purpose, and they need to feel alive.”

“I believe there is a kind of spiritual oppression; an omission of our spiritual nature in the psyche of society. It seems there is a constant distraction away from our higher nature out there,” explained Brig.

“And the politics of difference helps it all along,” added Cynthia.

“We need to see ourselves as one human family,” commented Naomi. “It is a foundational creed of our Faith.”

“So, are you all UN supporters then?” asked Cynthia, which seemed to be a testing question for her of the group’s ethos; at least from her body language.

“If you look at it historically it is one *hell* of a step for humanity,” put in Jack. “I relate to the initial intention of it, and the grand notion it served at a time when such things were foreign; you know, that we *are* one human race. It does some real and genuine good, and keeps dialogue open between countries, but I think it has some big flaws.”

“Our Faith has consultative status at the UN. We believe it is responsible to take part, and that humanity will be one properly federated family in time,” added Naomi.

“My belief in one humanity is mine at my core and isn’t dependent on any institution or ideology. It just *is, no matter,*” stated Jack.

“We *all* have an ideology,” commented Cynthia.

“Mine is simply an awareness of our higher humanity; and finding freedom in real knowledge. I’ll fight for that.”

“That’s very relative still, a very open idea that could mean anything.”

“To me it isn’t, Cynthia. What is *definitely good* is very clear. The truth and benefit, the destructiveness, or even the mix, of anything, can be searched out. The *will* is just not there, due to self-interest, closed ideologies, and things like nationalism before all. People have been brainwashed by their respective beliefs and mindsets and can’t see beyond the boundary lines these set for them; or they choose their own comfort, or particular addictions, over what is *definitely good*, and over exploration of the *whole* nature and reality of a matter. It’s that simple to me,” explained Jack.

“Well, I can’t stand all this political correctness and a new love for personal freedom that goes way beyond what’s healthy.”

“Who *can* stand it, if you’re not brainwashed.” Jack shuddered at a flash of *some automatons that would not deviate from their language or parameters and were holding up important work because they were so intent on certain words. They repeated them over and over with great surety and made the people who worked with them sick, or they expelled the human units as faulty when they did not use the words or follow the plan.* It was so real that he felt it was something he must have once experienced. “Its intentions *are* good, and it *has* and *can* do some *great* good. It’s just that it seems there is an over preponderance of *societal force* in its language now, and its *separating* people rather than connecting them. It was made to build respect, but it is so militant now that it’s building separation and hate. It will not stop repeating its words and slogans and people just want to throw up, let alone having watch

various lesser interests using it to justify their low intent and push their own particular agenda,” offered Jack.

“I feel oppressed by it. I decided to come to these nights because this Faith seems to hold to family values and human decency like a rock. In this falling apart world it’s a breath of fresh air.”

“You two seem interested in knowing more about the nature of our Faith. We have study groups which help people investigate more, create insights, and teach skills for building community from the ground up. Would you like to join us for some?” asked Naomi.

“*Sure*. I was only talking about helping the local community with a fella called Pete a little while ago now,” said Jack. “You know, working on regrowing community and a sense of it. We were keen to do something, and he finally came in to see me a couple of weeks ago. We’re a bit over our town slowly dying, the big guys taking over, and the drain of young people due to certain realities they face. We both felt the need to act, instead all the useless incessant talk.”

“It’s good you haven’t quite started yet Jack. We’ve found from our experience all over the world, that it takes spiritual foundations or an understanding of our spiritual reality and nobility to really bond and act together into the future,” explained Brig. “We might even be able to do whatever you want to do with you. See how we go, eh.”

“I don’t see that. I mean the *spirit* thing,” challenged Cynthia.

“To me, Spirit is first Cynthia,” explained Brig. “No group can live and grow without it. Look at our spiritless world, communities, and neighbourhoods. There is a deep misunderstanding growing in our perception of our own nature and the nature of life, and it’s

creating dysfunction in our lives. People separated and self-absorbed. Self is the opposite of Spirit, and it is suffocating our communities.”

“Self, sure is, but what is spirit to you, Brig?”

“Bonds of real affection and shared meaningful purpose; courage, kindness, compassion, and all the rest. Spirit is very tangible to me, and in how we treat each other day to day, but it also rises from my belief in the Higher Being, the Heavenly Father and Creator. To me, these are all intrinsic to life, and it is a power source that creates far more life than secular mindsets can cobble together.”

“Yep. If we don’t believe in something beyond ourselves, then there is no meaning to me. It’s pretty clear what kind of world the notion of *self* is building. It’s destroying this one; no love coming through, just unfounded intellectual imagination, and ridiculous emotional overkill; prideful and selfish,” said Jack, but even this, a little more gently than he would once.

He now definitely wanted to see what could be done and do whatever he could. He could now clearly see the waste in his endless words, and in battling other folks. *Positive action* was the way to safeguard and build a future. As these realisations came a small group of words flowed to his inner ears...*The immovable object will be eroded away like all things which do not move. Have acceptance, hold patience, and do good things. This is the irresistible force.*

“So, if you want to, we can meet each week and study together. Who knows what can come of it. Who knows what we can build with the skills, and who knows what spiritual insights we can gather as we go,” offered Naomi.

“I would love to,” said Cynthia, far more on board and curious than she was before.

“Yep, sounds good,” said Jack, getting a flash of *a giant doorway with running men carved into the metal surrounding it*; then saying that he would bring his new mate along too.

Naomi explained that it would be weekly, and with the agreement, Brig got up to get the tea, coffee, biscuits, and fruit ready; or was that *soj*. They always had a cuppa and a chat after the discussion.

“So, Jack, you’re not one of this lot?”

“No Cynthia, but I’m resonating with what I’m hearing. Seems to fit my core really well. *We’ll see.*” Jack could now see a glimmer of a black robe about her face, and immediately began to recite the saying Yuri had given him, “I really love the saying, *Noble I have created you...*”

As he finished the quote, the creature screamed.

“*The way is closed. The enemy rises. The way must be opened,*” were the words that were heard, as the Black Robe disappeared.

# *Purpose*

Jack and Pete had been racking their brains trying to work out a way to help the local community; a social or economic project, or both. It was not as simple in Australia as the immediate problems of water and food, or even power production, were all sorted. The basics like medical and even literacy was more than covered. They had ideas of teaching older primary school kids basic budgeting and saving as a skill for life, and Pete liked the idea of teaching struggling kids a skill, or a number of basic skills, in wood working or small engine maintenance.

What they realised from their conversation, and their own reflection, was that they could do any number of things and so just had to decide. Also, that maybe they needed more heads in the pie to work out what they *would* actually do. They asked around among the people they worked with, and Pete asked all the members of his family. One suggestion was singing, or basic art skills, for struggling kids. There were a lot of suggestions but not many takers to help them do these things sadly. People didn't have the time or believe that they needed to do anything. It was then that Jack told Pete about the courses that Naomi's Faith held. He told him they were about developing community and that maybe they could get more ideas there.

Pete had said, “Maybe this mob can help us with how to encourage people to get on board with us. It’s hard to talk to people about this stuff, and I get lost in my words because I’m not sure what I am doing myself, or what we’ll actually do.”

“Brig told me the second book in the course could help with skills of visiting and talking with people, as well as presenting ideas. Maybe we just have to be surer about what we are going to do too, eh,” suggested Jack.

“I think maybe one course would be all I could wait for. I’m feeling a bit lost in what to do right at the moment, but *really keen* to act on something soon. I’d like to get into it, so the motivation and momentum don’t fade.”

“*Me too*. Feels good just even *trying* to give back, eh. Exciting.”

“Yep, didn’t think it would feel *this* good. I feel alive, mate.”

“Me too.”

YURI HAD ANSWERED THE PHONE WHEN JACK FINALLY CALLED.

“Hey, Jack.”

“How did you know it was me?”

“You’re the only person I know here, Jack.”

“*I’ll bet, eh*,” Jack had commented, with a chuckle, before he and Yuri had made arrangements to meet up straight away.

It was sure weird meeting up with some Robe-slayer for Jack as he now drove to the place they had agreed upon. As he thought about zapping Robes *there was a sudden flash of a*

*number of bright lights, and the engine sound again. The lights were like floodlights and there were a number of them. As the engine revved up the lights grew suddenly more intense;* so much so, that it blew him out of this inner glimpse. It was good it was just a glimpse, as he was driving and found himself a little off track when it passed, and also just as he came upon the meeting place, and the Russian.

The man was leaning back on his car on the side of the road. He had a confident bearing as he now straightened up and moved slowly from the vehicle.

Jack parked his car, turned off the engine, and said, “Here we go.” He got out and walked up to the larger man. He was a tall man and looked Jack deep in the eyes as they shook hands.

“So, you want to *prikhodite na okhotu s Yuriyem?*”

“I don’t know your language; from *wherever the hell* you come from,” responded Jack.

“It’s Russian. I said... *So, you want to come hunting with Yuri?*”

Jack laughed, and said, “Some information might be helpful first, mate. This stuff is *way* out of my league.”

“So, you have not regained any memory?”

“No, and I want *some* idea, and *definitely* some training if I’m going to help out. I’ve managed to dissolve a couple of those Robes with those words you gave me though. I’ve memorised them.”

“Maybe you did, and maybe you just sent them packing for now. There’s a big difference. They live in the voids, so you not only have to chase them out, you also have to

help people fill the void in themselves with light to keep dem out, da. Those words can do that, but in time, there needs to be somewhere meaningful for them to hang out, and more purposeful things for them to do. Otherwise, they just fade back into the mist, and they're easy prey in the fog; for all sorts of nasties."

"You mean there are *other things*?"

"What's the matter Jack; you faint of heart or something?"

"*Ohhhh, goin' there are we?*"

"Da, *went there*. You *scared*, big man? Maybe your *woman* will hunt with me then."

Jack just burst out laughing, and Yuri's face brightened, but only a little.

"You know, she just *may* like that idea," said Jack, and with a very serious face he added, "You girls might even like to do your nails after the hunt or sumthin' hey, *Russia*."

Yuri laughed at the game, and said, "You're going to have to do much better than that, *Australia*. Russians are no strangers to real pain. Girly words don't affect, Yuri."

"Yeah. You're *the man*, Yuri," said Jack, really enjoying the banter. "Let's just get on with some training."

Yuri just nodded and kept measuring Jack with his eyes. He needed to know who was going into the mist with.

"HI, I'M SUE."

"S U E or S I O U X?" asked Jack, without thinking.

Sue smiled, and said, “*Both*; you see my great grandfather was from one of the clans that were associated with the Sioux Nation. The associations are not as demarcated as the European mind likes. A clan can associate with different Nations, and different Nations are sometimes used as a way of explaining greater associations to people. My forebears were what is generally called Omaha Sioux; and were of The Bird Clan; water people.”

Naomi shook her head, and said, “*Again!*” with big eyes.

Sue had a question on her face, that Brig decided to answer. “Jack has some inner vision goin’ on, or something. He knew Naomi was a teacher too.”

“*No, I didn’t!*” said Jack in his defence. “And no disrespect to your family, Sue.”

“You knew Naomi’s *name*,” accused Brig smiling, and winking to Pete that he had Jack on the run.

Pete smiled, as Jack said, “Someone must have mentioned her name before she turned up in that night.”

“*Yeah, right, Jack,*” added Brig, just for a little more fun.

Cynthia, who had also joined them, was enjoying the banter. She wanted to be here but was not quite sure why. In any case she was very glad to be in joyful and open-minded company. She was more than over close-minded ways of thinking, and even though she thought that there were probably some in this group, she was more hopeful from her experience so far with this lot.

“A bit psychic, Jack?” asked Pete.

“No mate,” answered Jack; again, thinking that it was the least of his problems.

As well as all the other crazy stuff, he was now going to hunt dark things in the void; or *here*, he wasn't sure. It seemed that these two realities existed in the one space, and the darker it got the more you were in the fog, or the void, as Yuri called it. He had taken Jack around and into what he called the darker places to show him the nature of the environment they would work in. It was a crazy night, and just a bit scary. The strange thing was, that *strange* was now quite normal in a way, and he could feel that this other part of him was at home in all that; as well as somewhat comfortable with the work he would do with his Russian cohort. Jack now had a good deal more understanding and respect for the adaptive power of human beings, considering the constant and challenging changes battering him since he woke up in the hospital.

“So, let's begin,” said Sue, simply, but skilfully, bringing the small group's attention to the study. “We start with a prayer in most things that we do. We believe in paying respect to God, and it helps us leave the world behind and reorient ourselves in the spirit to study. This is a spiritual exercise first, and then intellectual one.”

Sue then signalled to Naomi with just a glance, and she read a prayer out loud. Jack put his head down, and Sue and Brigg had their eyes closed so Pete and Cynthia followed suit. There was some silent time after the prayer, and Pete opened his eyes twice before they all came out. He was not at all religious but liked the way he felt and the respect the others gave the experience by not rushing out of silence to chatter.

They took turns reading a little about how the course worked, and what the three units of the book were about. Pete didn't understand what the themes had to do with doing a community project, but he let it roll. It was not until he read the first quote that he gathered his first gem.

They were asked to read the tiny quote over a number of times and get to know it; to see the words in the context of the quote itself; to glean what *actually said*. Then they were set to consider what it might apply to in their actual life, and what implications these words had in the world. After a short while Sue asked if anyone would like to comment on the quote or put a question to the group if something was not clear to them.

“*Can*; that’s the *big* word in there, for me,” expressed Pete, quite excitedly. “It gives me hope, *right from the start, before* we start, that we *can* accomplish what we set out to do, because we’re trying to do something *good* out there. *Can*, be accomplished, talks to me.”

“But, accomplished through what? The answer is in the quote,” asked Sue.

“Through pure and goodly deeds, and commendable and seemly conduct,” answered Pete.

“*That’s us, mate,*” said Jack, with a cheeky smile, and Pete laughed a little like they were the bad kids in the classroom.

“What are you accomplishing?”

“The betterment of the world,” answered Cynthia, which had Pete smiling, because he was now realising the great measure of even small acts; the power of small acts.

“Good intent creates valuable change,” offered Brig.

“Being good men as we go about it, will attract others to come in with us, eh,” put in Jack. He wasn’t excluding the women, because as far as he could see right now it was just he and Pete getting training to do their project.

“Being a *gentleman* always helps,” offered Cynthia.

Pete nodded, and then Naomi agreed with her own thoughts on the quote, “People can smell purity of intent. I think purity of intent is something that is getting so rare. When it shows up in a person’s actions, people are surprised, and inspired.”

“We can *inspire*?” asked Pete, getting more animated.

“*Of course*, you can, Pete,” commented Brig, “just by doing something valuable.”

Pete felt a deep feeling in his chest and was feeling empowered already. He nodded and smiled at Jack, and they both sat up a little. They could now see from just the first page of the course how it could power up their effort. The group then wandered on through its pages for another hour or so until they started to discuss the power of these simple quotes.

“You know,” said Brig, “the first time I did this course, I realised that I had been reading the words of my Faith for years but not really seeing them.”

“Just wandering past them,” offered Cynthia, quietly enjoying the spirit of the night.

“Not just passing. They effected my actions, but when you stop and really try to understand them and get them into you, it’s powerful; it changes you, and I *really* see how I’m acting by having them as a marker, or a guide.”

“I sure get that they power you up,” agreed Pete, now definitely not just there with Jack, but wanting to be there himself. The words were inspiring him, not *just* making him less afraid to act. He knew that the first quote would continue to make him feel more sure and able to do what they were going to do.

“We believe these words are *creative words*; that they *transform* and renew each soul, and can *inspire* a new civilisation,” explained Sue, as an explanation to help Jack and Pete

understand the study more, and therefore gain even more from their interaction with the words.

“I get that!” said Pete, knowing what they were doing to him.

“We believe,” added Naomi, “and I stress that, *we* believe, that true knowledge comes through The Divine Messengers, and that all is best weighed using their Testament. We believe in science as a source of knowledge, if it’s not controlled by vested interest, and well proven, but we see human guidance needs be from The Creator.”

Then Naomi quoted from her Faith’s Writings...

***“Know verily that Knowledge is of two kinds: Divine and Satanic. The one welleteth out from the fountain of divine inspiration; the other is but a reflection of vain and obscure thoughts.”<sup>3</sup>***

And He goes on to say about the latter of those two kinds of knowledge, that,

***“The tree of such teachings can yield no result except iniquity and rebellion, and beareth no fruit but hatred and envy. Its fruit is deadly poison; its shadow a consuming fire.”<sup>4</sup>***

Brig saw that he needed to frame these words, so that those who were attending would see them in context, and added, “These are strong words, but a chaos of misinformation is growing out there, from the forces of insatiable greed, vested interest, bigotry, separation, and

fundamentalism. And like the quote says they're full of hatred and envy. They are polarising people.

People are searching for order and meaning and are grabbing anything that someone portrays as solid. But, *for me*, we humans need the *Physician's hand*; what we call *The Creative Word*. I believe that what we call the *Unerring Balance* of His Writings can bring love and order to human society."

"We believe that we still need guidance from The Great Spirit; The Kind Father," added Sue, mainly to Pete.

"We need humility to reach this *Knowledge* though," added Naomi. "We need to have the will to learn, and we really don't know its full measure yet. Knowledge has so many enemies that want it kept in the dark, but reality and time will always bear its child. You see, *we* believe that humanity *will* reach maturity and that we are inexorably in the grasp of His greater plan for us."

"On Earth as it is in Heaven," said Jack, quoting The Lord's Prayer without thinking.

Sue smiled, but Pete was not real sure. Brig was not particularly happy that they had been so forthright, as Pete was still very new to all this.

"I didn't come here for all this heavy stuff. Don't get me wrong, I'm *absolutely* lovin' this study, and I get it about all the anger out there, but I'm *not* here for signing up or anything," said Pete.

"I came here for the whole shootin' match, but Pete is here for the skills and getting some ideas, guys. I think they were just trying to put things in perspective for you, Pete," offered Jack. "Showing us where the quotes are comin' from."

“Sure,” said Sue, smiling gently and giving Pete a reassuring look. “I’m sorry if we burdened you. Usually if someone comes to study this book they’re searching more. We’ll try and be gentler, just be patient, and please keep being honest with us. We don’t force people anywhere.”

“Yep, that’s *for sure*, mate,” said Brig, as more reassurance.

“I’m sure that this study will be more than helpful to your efforts to do a project,” added Sue, “and maybe all of us can help out; even if it’s just to help with ideas, as an active element of this study?”

Cynthia indicated a ‘maybe’; Brig and Naomi, a ‘yes’.

“Yeah, *great*. Could use all the help we can get. We need a sounding board at least,” responded Pete.

“So, let’s just keep going on with this for now,” added Sue.

“Sure,” said Pete, feeling at ease, a little more respected and a lot more supported.

Jack then saw a flash of words before his eyes...

***"Even as it hath been said: "Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it."***<sup>5</sup>

He didn’t know where those words came from, but he gathered their wisdom from what had just taken place. The strange thing that occurred to him about the situation was that

even though things had seemed to get a little too strong, it had actually ended up resetting the boundaries, people had communicated, and the offer to be of support in their project had naturally come out of it. He shook his head, seeing that even while tact is wise, clear communication is powerful too, and good things will always come out of its struggle if people's intent is pure enough.

IT WAS JACK'S FIRST NIGHT OUT ON THE BEAT. Yuri had taught him some skills; skills it seemed he already had, and he felt confident, even though he thought that he definitely should not be. It was still a little weird to be in his psyche right now.

Yuri had supplied Jack with his own carpet which he had also taken to with great ease. He was quite adept, and Yuri was happy enough with him, but warned him that he could not rely on *himself* on the hunt. He had to be in his *spirit*; humble, and watchful. This was not a game, and he should not rely on his own power, or even the power of the carpet, as at times they may not be enough.

Jack had explained again that he felt confident as he had had some dealings with the robes. But his new Russian friend had told him that a greater force, one which seemed to feed the Robes, sometimes came into play. "...one of those other things hidden in the mist of the voids in people's hearts," he had finished.

"In people's hearts?!"

"Where else would the void be? Get with it, moy brat."

A memory then rose in Jack's mind. It was of a saying. *The words were...*

*“...conquer the citadels of the hearts of men.”<sup>1</sup>*

He was buoyed by this *memory*, as it was not a flash like the others. He then tried to reach further into it, but the way beyond it was barred. It was disappointing, but he was still hopeful that other memories may now come. But that *too* was not to be. He had reset his course when he had called out his prayer while lying in the grass of his back paddock. Jack Johnston of planet Earth was who he would be. Even his work in the Void would soon wane, to be forgotten. There was so much The Fashioner now hoped for Jack’s soul. A normal life, the first life, is a crucial time for all souls, and it would be a pivotal time for Jack as well.

“Because people live *in their hearts*,” Jack had then stated, returning his attention to the conversation with Yuri.

“Da, moy brat. It is where we all live deystvitei’no. We have to take great care what and who we allow entry there.”

*“What we allow entry?”*

“People, things, hopes, beliefs, wants. It’s an endless list. We bow the knee to them, and they become our gods.”

“Sure, okay, yep. I have seen that. It can be *anything*.”

That conversation had Jack reflecting as they walked in the night; seeing in his own life experience the manifestation of this particular reality in himself and others. Some things can become so obvious suddenly.

They now entered a misty place, and Jack knew they were entering the void, and asked, “So, this force that feeds the Robes?”

“It has no form, or a life of its own, so needs to live in the hearts and thoughts of people. It is not new to any world, or any soul, and it is quite mindless. It distracts, blinds vision, misinforms, and fires up the weak minded. It is always present. Always in the shadows, feeding the Robes and oppressing human souls.”

“The Oppressor,” said Jack.

“That is a good name for it. It seeks to hold souls down in the material, so that *it* may *be something*. By keeping its victims in a deep material focus, through emotional linkage to material things and fundamentalist thinking, it feeds the Robes and keeps itself in power. It keeps its existence; if it can be said to exist. All the Robes are a manifestation of it, as they all do the same thing; they take a soul away from knowing its high nobility or understanding that it is a spiritual creature.”

“The Whites, too.”

“The White’s influence is to all accounts, ideological fundamentalism, religious or secular, but all Robes take people from their nobility and blind them to their true spiritual nature. Even the religious Robes move people to praise themselves, their hatreds, and their own thoughts, not The Creator as they imagine.”

“How can this creature be nothing, or have no form, but be a force?”

“People give it form. It springs from them. They bring it in, entertain it, and its influence spreads.”

“I kinda’ get what you’re saying.”

“It is an elemental reality that may grow in the nature of such creatures as us. We are not animals, but our lower drives call on us. It lives there, in the negativity, want, and fear, not in the light of our spiritual nature. Our choices to give into the lower nature give it form.”

“Okay, Yuri. I get it, and I don’t get it. But either way, I want me a piece of some of these creatures.”

“Ahhh, *khorosho. Good. Now you’re sounding like the man I have been told about. You see, the faint hearted or foolish cannot fight The Oppressor; only inspired souls, who have no compunction to sacrifice for a better future.*”

“We all gotta’ stand, *at least,*” agreed Jack, while a part of him shook his head at himself and wondered what kind of mad crazy thing he was into. This whole thing had been a real mind warper. At every step, his earthbound self, had to accept what was presenting to him; and that was still in process. He was just thankful that this other knowledge calmed him and gave him some strength while he now learned to get on with things in this deeper reality.

“Just remember. *Not your own power; and humility and watchfulness, da. Your ego will work against you always in the mist. It may also draw other dark influences,*” finally warned Yuri, as they headed deeper into the void.

IT WAS NICE TO BE SITTING IN A ROOM WITH THESE PEOPLE. He was at the study circle again of the first training book, called, *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*. It was very apt, and it had been quite helpful for Jack in his other work with Yuri. The Creative Word had kept him more focused as he went out hunting. He had gone out twice more with him now, but was very happy to be with others on the ground right now; not with Yuri, or in his own slightly confused mind.

The ground of reality was a comforting place for him. For now, he had friends and connection which gave him sustenance and made him feel somewhat normal. He liked these study circle nights and hanging with Pete and the others. He still did his Sunday morning surf with Owen too. Life is a mixture, and we receive sustenance from many varied sources. He had not been able to contact Jennifer now for a good while, though. It was a bit of a mystery to him why she was not in contact. Maybe she was finding solace with her Aunty and just needed to be there. It hurt a little, but he wanted to leave her be so she could find whatever ground *she* needed.

“Are you kidding?” asked Pete. “Nobody could do that.”

“I couldn’t say that I would myself,” added Cynthia, who had two grown children and three grandchildren.

“We are asked to set the bar high, and we believe that we are spiritual creatures and eternal in essence. We believe in more than this material world, and we are asked to focus our beings and our lives towards our wider reality; making *this* life better for all,” offered Sue.

“But that quote is asking you to let your children starve,” argued Pete.

Brig laughed, “Mate, there is very little chance of that happening in this country.”

“But what about poorer places where food is scarce?”

“Poorer places actually share more easily. Scarcity and struggle make for far less greed in most. We don’t know we’re alive in Australia, I reckon.”

The writing they were studying was asking for a high state of justice. It said roughly that a person should not steal, even from a vile man, even if their children were starving.

“To me, the quote is making clear the high sense of justice that is required for us, and that is spiritually powerful,” offered Naomi.

“It would be impossible for me,” said Cynthia.

“Each of us has our own experience with each of the quotes, so it’s all fine. *We don’t have to agree*, and quotes like this really get the discussion and exploration juices flowing,” said Sue.

“Yep, I think I get it,” said Jack.

“Well, please share with us, Jack.”

“Okay, um...it’s hard to put into words, but it is like this quote is part of an essence which is pure and beautiful. It is about seeing ourselves as spiritual creatures and not denying our nobility by the act of theft, and it is also underpinning order; I would venture it actually calls for a society in which children and families would actually thrive. If this was a foundational norm of a society, there would actually be no chance that a child *would* starve. That kind of society would be too spiritually enlightened to allow starvation.”

“Of course,” said Cynthia, seeing what he was saying very clearly.

Pete on the other hand was trying to get to it. He was still not okay with it, but he respected Jack’s view of things. In the end, he said, “I’d rob him.”

Brig laughed, and said, “Good on you, Pete. But let what Jack saw wander through your being a bit over the next week. See the wider picture of its *implications* too, like Sue explained at the beginning of the study. See its spirit and scope it out a little.”

“Yep, sure, I will. But I’m unlikely to change my view of *that*.”

They all had a good chuckle at that.

“These quotes are indications of the high spiritual destiny man can attain, to me,” added Sue, as the group then moved onto the next section.

It was only the second night, and the group were taking *responsibility for the study* on themselves. While Sue served the process a little, she was a participant too. These people had taken that understanding and the responsibility to heart and did not see anyone as an expert; just people studying on an equal footing.

At the end of the night, when they sat and had some refreshments together, they did some honest consultation and brainstorming on what they might do for their first project. Naomi, Sue, and Brig had made it clear they were in for all of it, which really buoyed Pete and Jack. It got very animated and exciting as each put in their ideas and then let them go to the process. They were all exploring together, and as they did Cynthia was starting to feel less concerned and began wanting to take part too.

At one point, though, they got so confused about what they should actually do, that they decided to go around the room asking each person what their talents or abilities were, and what they loved. Sue had some butcher paper and they listed them down. At the end, they allowed each person to say what they thought the community *really needed*, from the list of skills and loves they had developed. The brainstorming and key ideas animated the small group and when the flower bloomed in front of them, they were really feeling inspired.

Cynthia was quite surprised from this discussion that the members of this small group had a large cross-section of skills, becoming quite aware that any small group of people do; even more so, that they can learn a whole lot more. She was also very happy from the way people were talking, that her teaching youth basic cooking, which she loved doing, could be her *whole* effort if she wished. She felt good about being able to pick the level of her part in things, as she was not young. The possibilities, she, Jack, Pete, and the others saw were quite

amazing; both in what abilities they had as a unified group and in what they could learn from each other. It eventually became very clear to all of them the power already existent in any small and willing group.

In the end though, they actually decided *not to decide* for now. Naomi had suggested that they let their exploration wash over them over the coming week for when they got together next time. They had certainly seen in the bloom what they would probably do but allowed time to see if it still held water by the time they met again. Jack also put it out there that humility had helped them *no end* tonight, and that it would be powerful if it became a core attitude as they continued through the process. Sue's face was radiant at his comments, and all wholeheartedly agreed. They were all happy at the sense of unity and respect they all had for each other too. They could feel things were happening, and it felt great.

Meaningful connection and purpose always inspire the soul to action and feed it deeply.

*JENNIFER WANDERED IN A MIDDLE EASTERN STREET. It seemed that no one there could see her. She saw a light high on a mountain that seemed to crown this place. The street sellers and shops, some that were seemingly just doorways, were shut for the night, but the late evening diners in the eating places were still relaxing into the evening. She wandered here smelling the new smells and listening to the people talk in what seemed to be many different languages, including English.*

*It was a joyful feeling as she walked along. She looked into places and saw people about their work, and people out in front of eating places trying to draw passers-by to their particular fare. It was so rich, as she had not travelled in any earthly way other than once*

*across the ditch to New Zealand as a young girl. That had been very special, but this was far more.*

*The light on the mountain kept drawing her attention even though the lights and activity of this place were alluring to her. She decided to go up the mountain, as she simply wanted to. She realised that she had to just flow in such an experience rather than decide all the time, or control it; trusting what she felt, and allowing it. Jack's fallback, just be here, also helped, but she knew that there was much more than that attitude that she could adopt. That included, joy and adventurousness, trust, and acceptance, knowing that all had its meaning and its gifts even if it was to be difficult getting there.*

*The greatest of Jennifer's gifts was courage, and she was also a quick learner. She had these in spades, and they would serve her well on her travels, as although she would remember her life until now, she would mostly forget where she had been when she travelled. It was just something about Jennifer; a quirk of her early travel, but thankfully it would not always be so. On a special mission to another planet, she would by chance, or maybe by design, be granted the freedom of retaining the memory of her further travels. Maybe this memory loss early in her travels was a mercy, and maybe it was a challenge that the Great Spirit had provided for her to grow. Who knows these things? Who knows the Great Mystery?*

*By the time Jennifer had reached the light she was tired. She now saw a building behind the light, but she could only make out a golden dome above some tall thin windows. The light then shined brighter, and a figure could be seen within it. She went to enter, but her feet were stuck to the ground. She panicked and turned to try and release herself. She thankfully found that she could, so she turned to the light again, and again she went to enter, but her feet stayed where they were and again, and would not budge.*

*"This is not a place for you to enter," came a gentle voice.*

*“I figured that out. It would have been courteous for you to tell me.”*

*“Experience is always best. Words are less. Learning comes best from experience.”*

*“Where am I?”*

*“You are on the Mountain of God.”*

*“Why have I been brought here?”*

*“You have travelled here because you are searching for something.”*

*“What?”*

*“What is the great question in your heart?”*

*“I don’t know.”*

*“Sit on the steps below a while and seek it.”*

*Jennifer sat on the steps looking out over a darkened bay. It was beyond the long straight row of streetlights along the street where the eating places were, straight out in front of her. She thought of Jack, and Rouha, and was sad to not be with them; or more so that they were not here to enjoy this place with her. She was not concerned about getting back to Auntie, but she found that she was missing these new friends. There was still a bit of a wall in her, where religion was concerned...It was then that her heart’s question became clear, and she asked, “How do I know that religion is real? Or which is real?”*

*“All that I can share with you is from the words of Isaiah...*

***"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The***

*Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."*<sup>6</sup>

*"How does that help me?"*

*"All truth needs be searched for. You will know Him by what I have shared."*

*"It's not enough. How can I prove that anyone fits that description or speaks for God?"*

*"The proof of the Great One's is Themselves; Their Words and earthly life. Seek out the quote I shared with you. This is all I may give you. You are graced to be allowed even this. It is a gift, do not forget it."*

*Her heart then drew her home again, and she woke from what she knew was more than a dream. She now felt surer and was more open to exploring that religion with Jack, and to unfold the mystery of the prophesy she was gifted. She also felt a little more purposed as well. She didn't know if it was this recent experience or that time for reflection away from things and talks with Auntie Thelma had come to their natural conclusion within her. Maybe it was both. Again, who knows these things.*

# *Voids*

Jack had been so busy over the months after his recovery that he had forgotten his sister Judy a little as a result; or more so, thought of her, but could not find the time or energy. We can tend to forget or be tardy with our family at times. At least in Jack's culture it was becoming more prevalent with the incessant drive toward the primacy of the individual, as well as the fact that families did not live in the same town so much these days. In any case, Jack was now at his sister's door because he had been slack in keeping up. She had done *so* much for him, especially while he was getting better.

"Hello stranger," said Judy, with that really annoying look in her eyes. The one that says, 'What do *you* want?', making it clear to Jack that anyone wanting her company always seemed to want something; and that maybe he was just another of those people.

*"Hey, I can go."*

“Okay, bye,” said Judy, lightly.

“Why are you so *flamin’* angry all the time?”

“Because I give, and I give, and I wear down, and people just keep asking for more.”

Judy’s heart condition always put her in danger in a way, but would always help out family, older friends, and do anything for her boys. She wanted her boys to do singing, drama, and learn a musical instrument, as they grew, so she did the yards required, as well as all her other motherly duties. They were farmers, and she loved sitting out on her veranda at night and to be *left the hell alone*. She needed some time out of life’s struggle; a place to recharge away from the incessant babble of the modern world, and clear her own sometimes, as we all do.

Judy had found herself in a rut and was quite angry at the world; what she saw as endless stupidity. She enjoyed the company of good friends, but had little time, and only so much energy due to her heart. She was mostly happy to sit on her veranda, so, as she would put it, she would not have to listen to the endless mindless drivel that people saw as wisdom these days. She had even had a gutful of religion and was regularly giving society and God a not so positive hand sign from her high veranda lookout.

“You’re the only one who can change that. You are allowed to say *no* sometimes. *Some* boundaries are good,” offered Jack.

“Come out onto my *boundary*. I have a cup of tea that I was drinking,” she said with a cheeky smile.

They walked through the house and settled down on the veranda.

“So, how’ve you been?”

“*Don’t ask*. I have *too* much to whinge about.”

“You need to get out of this hole you’re in. You sure as hell won’t get any happier diggin’ it deeper.”

“What do you *suggest, Jack?*” she pronounced, in a way that made it a warning shot across his bow; and not a question at all.

“Your spirit needs a refresh, and your mind needs to be opened up to the positive in things; that’s just for starters,” said Jack, plainly anyway. “You need to hunt down every wayward negative thought, and shut it down, or swap it for a good one; a positive one.”

“Don’t give me any of that hoodoo religion, or self-help rubbish. I had enough of all that talk last month when you rang. I didn’t need it then, and I don’t need to go to any meetings.”

“I just thought you might gather some good stuff there; some *up energy* to help swing things upwards. They are good people, and we explore things together, although I have been a little too *tell ‘em how it is*, Jack style.”

“Yeah. I can relate to how they might feel,” commented Judy, with a particular look.

Jack returned the look, and said, “Anyway, you *definitely* need to reset your boundaries, and *not* just have this *one*,” referring to the veranda. “You’re a good and giving person, but you are doing this *all backwards*.”

“I am glad *you think so*,” she replied, making it clear that she wasn’t. She then bunched up and wouldn’t look at him at all. It was clear that he was no longer welcome, and that he would now just burden her by staying.

“The world is not creating this void, Jude; *you are*,” said Jack, as he got up to walk away along the veranda.

He loved her, so he would not stay, but also because he loved her, he had to open his mouth too. He didn’t do it because he always thought he was right, or because he had his back up; he did it because it was time for some cement. He had to get through to her.

The strange thing was that all her kindness and patience for people had not helped her, which was sad. She was okay *in a way*, but he could also see that she was dying inside, and he knew, that the body follows our spirit, our emotions, and our thoughts. He knew that the void she sat in would only continue to make her more and more unhappy and bring on more ill-health.

He saw his sister like most people. Good at heart but misunderstanding that they are also spiritual creatures; just like him before he fell down in his paddock, in his very own void. He now knew that there were more positive ways of being, and of seeing everything from that higher inner seat; one fed by The Creative Word, not some ungrounded generic spiritualism, or the new secular societal religion that says anything goes. “*All is good in the spirit; all*,” he thought, amazed at the further rising of understanding from the forgotten places of his past.

“*That’s right*. Just walk away like everyone else.”

“You know better than to feel sorry for yourself,” he turned and said, knowing that he could not reach her with any deeper spiritual understanding. “Don’t sit in this bloody void; do something about it, change your life, sort out your boundaries, change your thinking, and look to the good in life and others. This negativity will kill you dead, Jude.”

It's always easy to tell someone their life as *we* are not them and *we* don't have to do the work that comes along with the changes required, and he knew that. But he also knew that we have all needed to be told some home truths by those who really care about us from time to time. Not that this was making him feel good right now. His heart was breaking, but he kept walking. His compassion and kindness over a good number of years had not helped his sister; he now just hoped that she could see that, and maybe they could have a *real* conversation one day soon.

As he kept walking, he knew that she was too tender and defensive, as well as being tough and strong, and he had almost never been able to get through to her when they saw things differently. Maybe it was because he was a younger sibling and she saw herself more as mother, or that she felt weak if someone helped her. Maybe that came from her just never feeling respected enough; especially by the people in her life that she really sought it from. We are a mixture of many things, life occurrences, concerns, wounds, expectations, thoughts, our nature, our beliefs and loves, and Jack could not get through her defences.

Judy had kept strong and kept on, but even having strength is not enough in the end, because it will always run out. There will always be stronger storms, and if you are holding too heavy a load for too long and you don't do anything about it, it will defeat you. We have to lower our loads, lower the weight, or get humble and get some help to lift it. We all need love and support. To understand our powerlessness and surrender to deeper wisdom, a Greater Power, also helps reorient our spirit and lighten our load. Our own strength is never enough for our life. It is just not enough.

# *Hunting*

Jack and Yuri were out and about again. The Robes had been thick tonight. They were strange creatures, and if the Robes weren't strange enough, there were also biting beasts and putrid parasites a plenty. They seemed to weaken people so the Robes could take them more easily, or the parasites at least seemed to be a way for the Robes to attach themselves more securely. It was not a very joyful experience hunting these things. It was murky and smelly and awful, and the strange energy of the Robes was quite sickening in itself.

Jack had thrown up a number of times on the first night out, and just now, let the contents of his stomach fly free again.

“You are a great disappointment, Jack.”

“And you're Russian, *Russia*,” said Jack still bent over, then spitting out the last of what sat in his mouth after bringing up the mother lode.

Yuri had a good gentle laugh at that. He enjoyed some company, as doing this work was far worse alone. He knew Jack was doing his best, and that he did not have a racist outlook. It was all bravado and a bit of fun; banter between honourable warriors.

“So, what *are* all these other things?”

“They’re just the creatures of the void that I told you about. They don’t exist either, but people’s thoughts make them real.”

“Why don’t we take them out too?”

“They are for these souls to deal with themselves. It is their pathway of growing. The pain of these dark things brings on motivation to seek them out, and change; hopefully. We are responsible for our own thoughts and emotions, and so we must learn to be free, even by sometimes being a captive of our own issues.”

“So, they’re people’s issues?”

“Da, or bad thought sentences, or expectations, or old pain; these are the things that make us turn on others like an animal. These are *some* of the things that bring us down. Pain shows they are present, and pain asks us to grow.”

“*Some* of the things?”

“There are other things that bring us down to be controlled by our lower self; addictions, wanting too much the good times, wanting too much the women; there are endless creatures in the void, some far worse than others.”

Now as he looked back on what had already occurred tonight, he recalled many open weeping emotional sores and felt the sad and enslaving thoughts choking people just beyond the mist. The beasts were hidden from them it seemed.

“Man! I did not want to see all this.”

“Take a look at *yourself*, moy brat. Air the stink that is inside of you first; hunt out what lies in the void inside your heart and mind. It is much harder to deal with than the diseases of others, and it is our work. You will be of more use to me if you do.”

“*Geeze*, I don’t know mate, I’ve come across people with pretty big issues and expectations; some of them could kill you dead. They can be a lot harder than shiftin’ my own.”

“You felt theirs, *and your own*, Jack. They interact. But your reaction to others is all *you*, in the end. So, get to know yourself, and look for them inside you when others offend you.”

“I don’t reckon I have any issues; or big ones at least. *And expectations*, I’m pretty easy rollin’.”

“You probably have done okay, but you aren’t throwing up for nothing. There is more to do yet, my friend.”

Jack thought about that. He knew he had to grow, and with this new knowledge bubbling around in him he had more than an inkling that it was an eternal process, but he couldn’t imagine having any of these creatures stinging him or sucking the life out of him. He was not happy about that *at all*, and he thought he would watch himself a little more closely for a while.

Yuri smiled, as he saw the concentration on Jack’s face.

“There are many things that make us react strongly; some *so* well hidden that they seem to *be* others, but they *are not*. If you can be honest when they rise up, if you can be *humble* enough, you will see them, da; you will feel them in your discomfort, and then you can hunt them down and cast them out of your thoughts, your soul, forever.”

“Just gotta sit back and watch your thoughts, eh.”

“And your reactions, and even tightness or discomfort in your gut.”

Yuri hit the ground suddenly, and Jack followed. A dark force raced over the top of them, just missing Jack. The Agent then rose and blasted it, as it shot away. Jack joined in, but it was a bit late.

“You need more training. You are *terrible*, at this.”

Jack didn't really hear him, he was just wondering what *the hell that thing was*, as a new noise came to their ears. It was an engine. It was far away, and far deeper in the void. He looked at Yuri, but there were only questions on his face too.

IT WAS STUDY CIRCLE NIGHT AGAIN AND JACK WAS TIRED. He had spent two more nights out with Yuri and two other nights in training; both of which, he now realised, would be continual. There was a lot to learn, and it was a messy business. He much preferred the positive action of this small group. It seemed to him that building the new, rather than slowing the decay of the old, was a better use of his energy.

It was great that Jennifer was back and had finally got in touch. He was now wondering why she hadn't turned up yet. She had been very keen to join them when Jack explained how it was. He didn't really know why, but her attitude was very different. *Little did Jack know that it was only in a place between sleep and consciousness that he had really talked to her. Little did she know what had happened to her, and that she was unaware of what was really now happening to her.*

The group had started, and Cynthia was reading the first quote of the night...

***“A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the foundation of the light of wisdom and understanding...”<sup>7</sup>***

“That is beautiful,” she commented, after reading it.

“And so true, eh. I sure know about *that one*. I’ve been a bit of the old *cat amongst the pigeons*, because I get too powered up,” admitted, Jack, and now also thinking of how he had been with Judy, but still believing that maybe sometimes being really forthright was required.

“Really! *You*. Too powered up. *Never noticed it*, Jack,” said Brig with a chuckle, with the others, and Jack, joining in.

“It’s only when I say things that I think are important to people. Maybe it’s too hard for some, but I like being honest. I like *bein’ real*.”

***“Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty.”<sup>8</sup>***

...quoted Sue from an earlier section in the study, which made Jack feel a little better about his big mouth and his visit to his sister.

“You know it would be beneficial to the aims of this unit if we read over the quotes from this unit in the morning and at night. If we can remember their essence *at least*, we can *use* them in our lives. They’re little treasures,” added Sue.

“To me, memorizing them is far better,” offered Naomi, “because you can gather more of the essence and meaning that’s intended, rather than a mixed or paraphrased version of your own perception. It keeps them pure and more powerful; to me.”

“We could say some of them in the morning and others at night, eh,” offered Brig. “This course is like going out on a hunt or gathering food, and if we just leave it lying on the ground, it will just rot away there. If we’re gathering meaning here, we should take it home, cook it and eat it. Get all the goodness we can out of it.”

Pete and Jack had a laugh at that, but it *sure* made it clear to them the waste if they didn’t use what they were learning, or to make it part of them. Cynthia liked what Brig had to say, this simple metaphor, and something occurred to her.

“When we get back to working on what we will do for a community project, maybe we can use these words on honesty and kindness to power how we communicate our service to others.”

“That’s great!” said Sue.

“Didn’t see that,” admitted Pete.

“Great work Cynthia,” commented Jack.

“Let’s just reflect on that for a few minutes alone. Then we can move on,” offered Sue.

The night wound on as the group learned more, came to see more, and got to know each other more. It was interesting to share ideas with people that you may never have even talked to in life; across cultures, age, and socio economic lines. It showed them all very clearly that these lines weren't lines at all. They were old boundaries, which now, in this time, had to change. Even the cultural boundaries had to be forded as *the future had called out*. Now was the time. The various cultures would always be there and evolve, but each needed be the flowers of a *single garden*; a Garden that held the hearts of people even more so than the particular flowers of our culture.

The group were getting on and had just read out one quote a number of times. It was now Pete's turn to read it out loud. He had been a little uncomfortable at first, doing this, even though he liked the quotes; but now he just did it, and gathered what he did.

***"... backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul."***<sup>9</sup>

"To me, taking this destroyer out of my own behaviour is a *core* element in creating a new future," offered Naomi.

"*Good luck with that,*" pronounced Cynthia, and Pete and Jack agreed.

"It's a very powerful quote if you look at," said Sue, bringing the attention of the participants back the quote itself.

"Okay," said Jack, as they all looked at the quote again. "Wow, I don't like what I am feeling about myself right now. I see the sadness and hardness in the negative talk out there too, and it kills you inside. *Backbiting?*"

“There are a lot of walkin’ dead out there if that quote is true,” said Pete. “That’s *all* people talk about. *Other people*. It’s all whinging, and never about anything good from my experience.”

“That’s gossip,” said Cynthia. “The quote is on backbiting.”

“I think it’s both,” said Pete.

“I suppose,” commented Brig. “They’re both in the mix and destructive, but backbiting is a poison all its own, and we need to see it, and watch what it does, and how it makes you feel. Personally, I can’t stand it now, because these words have made me aware of the dark void it can cause. My heart is repulsed by it now; especially in myself. I feel sick when I do it because I am so conscious of it.”

“If it has free reign, it can darken a whole community; poison it, and I can’t be there in amongst it either. It’s like breathing in toxic fumes to me; I get all flighty, and feel like I can’t breathe,” added Naomi.

“*Really*. It’s just *talk*, and *people* talk,” put in Pete.

“I can tell you, that even if you don’t realise it, it’s taking your spiritual life away and petrifying your heart. Maybe we should just read *this* quote morning and night over the next week and see how much backbiting manifests in our day to day. See how backbiting and gossip makes us feel, especially if we take part in it,” suggested Brig.

“We can also exercise our soul powers and work out ways how not to be part of it, too,” offered Sue.

“Sounds good to me,” said Jack.

“Soul powers?” asked Pete.

“Honesty. A kindly tongue. Virtues like compassion.”

“So, *real things*.”

“Soul powers *are*, and others like good manners and courtesy,” offered Cynthia. “It will be a very interesting experiment.”

“For sure; change is an active thing. It’s like taking the quotes out for a spin in life,” added Naomi.

“Yep, *proof’s in the pudding*, but trying to stay out of negative talk can be socially hazardous. I have a business, and I can’t afford to lose customers,” expressed Jack.

“Well, we will be interested to see what you’ve learned over the next week,” said Brig smiling.

“Thanks for the *backup*, mate,” retorted Jack, thinking how hard this was going to be.

“Don’t try and work it out ahead of time. Have the quote in your head for the day by reading it a few times in the morning, and just watch as your day goes on.”

“Yep, having just having the experience, positive or negative, will *blow your mind*,” added Naomi.

“Wait until tomorrow mate, you will not believe how much negativity destroys things, and how it holds back a good future,” put in Brig.

“Even the truthfulness thing is going to be hard,” said Pete. “It’s like I’m learning life all over again. You know...how to interact socially.”

“I like the kindness quote too. I think I will read those three quotes all week and see what I see, and how I am,” said Cynthia.

“You are old enough to let things go a bit, Cynthia,” commented Pete, referring to the privileges of older age.

“You keep learning all the way to the grave, Pete. And believe me, we’re all just big children in a way, so still learning,” stated Cynthia.

“I’m a bit of a kid,” admitted Pete.

“We see the whole of humanity like a child; one who needs guidance,” offered Naomi.

“We see *ourselves* as part of that child too,” put in Sue. “It’s not like we believe that we hold all knowledge and virtue because we believe in this New Cause, or that everyone else is ignorant. We believe that *we* need to be accountable to a higher force to grow our spiritual abilities and help renew community. We see action on these Words we’ve studied as necessary to create a structure that can hold humanity in peace and security; to nurture and protect our young, and to carry forward a higher civilisation. Mortar and clay, gold, and money, are not the treasures of humanity. What is high within us is. It creates unity and impels us forward,” explained Sue.

“So, these words are like from a parent?” asked Pete.

“We believe the Manifestation of God brings us The Creator’s wishes and guidance, in each new age; and yes, we see God like a loving father.”

“So, who is *your* dude?” asked Pete.

“His name is Baha’u’llah. It means The Glory of God in Arabic.”

“So, you guys are Muslim?”

“No, that would be like saying, Jesus and his followers were Jewish. It’s a whole new religion. We come from many Faiths and backgrounds, but the Blessed Beauty was Persian.”

“So, what was His story?” asked Pete.

“Well, He was born on November 12, 1817, in Tehran. His father was a renowned and respected government minister. But, even with all the wealth and comfort at his disposal, Baha’u’llah chose to champion the cause of justice; to work for the redemption of humanity from hate, malice, and disunity. He declared to the world that he was the Promised One of all ages in 1863, after several years of exile, privations, and incarcerations. He was in prison and exile the rest of his life.

I like a particular quote that talks about peace on a very elemental level, and it is what we are all about with these courses and community development. It now seems propitious that I have copied it out for you all. Take a copy home, but only if you wish. I believe it’s *more* than worth reflecting on, and *really* worth acting on...

***“If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty, and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure.”<sup>10</sup>***

“HEY JEN,” said Change, suddenly appearing beside her in a cosmonaut suit, at a local coffee shop near her Auntie’s house. He looked at her with the young face of Yuri Gagarin.

Jennifer was thankful that she was not holding a cup or drinking at the time, as she got a terrible fright when he had appeared suddenly.

*“You are rude!”*

“Change *is*, Baby,” he retorted, now back in his groovy sixties garb.

Jennifer couldn't help but laugh, as Change was always a little disarming. She then remembered that others there could not see him, so decided to try and ignore him like Jack did. She did not want to look like she was unhinged.

“Jack's *yesterday's news*, young lady,” he said, as he changed from his groovy duds and into Abraham Lincoln.

Jennifer couldn't help but feel that she should sit up in his presence, even though she knew it was just Change. *“Just Change!”* she then suddenly thought, as she started to realise how a powerful and amazing essence was actually sitting across from her. The thought of that sent a great feeling through her body, and she was about to give voice to a thousand questions when Abraham put up his hand.

She sat up more, now knowing what it was a gift to be around this emanation of The All, and also loving it that he should embody President Lincoln, as he was one of her great historical heroes. Of course, there would not be many on the planet for who he wasn't.

“This meeting is not about that young man, my dear,” said Change, in the earthiness, eloquence, and the voice of Lincoln himself. “It is that change has come upon you. As no matter what we seek to do, the tides of change will do as they do.”

“I am at a loss, as to what you mean?”

Change rubbed that iconic bearded chin, and said, “Jack is no longer to travel. He is still dabbling a little in Other Places, but this *too* will pass. His is *soon to be returned* to the limits of time and space, to inner vision and the powers of the soul, just as any other human

soul in the physical realm. He will have to make the best of it, as do all. A normal life's mine is immeasurably rich though because the soul *is so much* in potential. But you, *my dear*, have just begun your journeys deeper," he finished off in rousing tones.

"So, you know I've had an experience? I mean beyond seeing you, that is."

"Was it a *change*?"

"*Of course*, okay," realised Jennifer, as she then gathered even greater sight of this essence of life.

She could now really feel his power and reach, and she could feel that Change was like music, or a particular instrument; a strain of music among others, that was conducted by The Great and The Loving. The feeling of love she then felt from The Creator hit her like a strong wave at the beach, and she began to cry at the sheer beauty and complete nurture of it.

As she looked up from this deep experience, the coffee shop disappeared around her.

"*What's happening?*"

"You didn't visit your Auntie. You're in a coma, and it's your time to Travel...well, you have already been Travelling; as well as linking a bit with Jack in deeper consciousness. You and that Jack are a joy to me because you're different and new; sweet little strains that evolved within the music of the creation."

"*I'm in a coma!*"

"Yes. I allowed you to see me *before* it all happened, so *now* would be easier for you."

Jennifer cried, for so many reasons; in thanks to Change, in the grief of leaving her family and friends suddenly, and without a goodbye; as well as in appreciation for the deep nurture she felt in this place.

“But, why?”

“My dear,” he said, now talking as Lincoln, “I sought long and hard to keep the Union, but the tide of war was to be. I felt the forces of change as I sought with great effort to keep the states together peaceably. But it seemed that no matter what I did, war simply was to be. I was not a religious man, but I must admit that I felt the great tide of life and my impotence before fate itself in that time *so* strongly. I understood my place, as I saw the inevitable movement of the times was beyond my power to redirect.”

Change changed into current western clothing, and said, “Change comes *always*. Do you want to return home, or do you want to travel?”

“You mean I have a *choice*?”

“We *always* have a choice in *such* things.”

Jennifer did not understand, how she actually *did understand* that, and could not believe what she was going through. She was certainly relieved that she could be set free from the coma; but she hesitated. She thought a little, or more so in *this* place, *felt* for understanding and awaited answers. It did not take long, and in the end, she chose to Travel.

There was something *right* about it, something that was *written*, and needed *to be* for the balance of things; not that she had ever thought that way before, but she certainly did *here*. It was like a light mist between places, a void, but one of light and love, not emptiness. She opened her mouth, and the words came out, and so it was to be.

“Very good, young lady,” said Change, like he was proud of her. “So few listen to their inner voice; so many live in fear of what its wisdom might ask them to risk or lose in the physical world. Some don’t even hear it. Many are so focused outside and busy in the thoughts of others that it can’t even reach their consciousness. It is good that you can hear it, and it is good you trust it.”

Then Jennifer asked, “Yes, it’s *just right*; you know.”

“Yes,” agreed Change, who then changed into a businessman in a suit, sitting behind a desk.

“Oh,” said Jennifer. “What’s the price?”

“You will forget many of the places that you travel to after you move on from them, but there *will* be a few you retain memory as you Travel.”

“Okay.”

“In some places you travel to you will also have only partial memory, or no memory *at all*; of anything before today, even though the deep knowledge of learning from your experiences and deeper feelings will be retained. In some of those places you will even just believe that you have *always* lived there; it is all a quirk of your illness and your soul-brain connection.”

“It sounds very confusing.”

“The challenge of the journey through meaning *is*, but things will become known and even the challenge itself creates more understanding and meaning within us. This is especially so *early on* in *all* our varied pathways, and as The Creator is infinite and change eternal, there is always, *always* more.”

“So, I will just forget all the time. What use is that? I decided to do this to learn. I have given up my life, remember.”

“At a major crossroads on your winding flightpath, if that is even a satisfactory word to describe what the nature of your travels will be like, you will once again begin to retain memory and always remain aware of your unfolding travels.”

“When my brain heals enough?”

“Yes, in a place of transition, when love is remembered.”

“I don’t get that.”

“It will become apparent when The Fashioner wills it.”

She would now wander the universe, Places Deeper, and Other Places. As her physical brain was so damaged that its link would be intermittent and changeable. Many memories would gather in the soul but not be recalled. Even when she finally regained her memory she would sometimes get so lost in dark places, and dire dangers strain her so greatly, that all her memories would be lost for a time. One of these dark places would be an Other Place in which she would suffer the darkness of Ideologue.

It would catch her in its widening, yet strangely closed, influence. This great ignorance could stand for no knowledge but its own, so sought to hide all individual memory and personal experience in those it took to itself. Yet, somehow, and again strangely, it had many varied forms, as there were many small places within it. Each of these, with its captives held to a particular view of life, and each, crazily, far different than the many others also in its grasp. Each small place within its great labyrinth held different fundamental views from

the other small places; hiding small groups of its victims from each other; from each *other* part if itself.

It deflected all history of the pathway of humankind too, only allowing certain truths, or slogans based on a narrow version of events that backed each small group's beliefs; all to keep its power, and to hold the wills of its victims easily to it. Keeping them in those small places where the light of a wider view and *other* knowledge could not be seen. *Ignorance* was its great power, and the only thing that could keep its various parts together, its power alive, and its destructive influence growing.

At other times her conscious memory would even seek her out as she wandered in places that she believed were just her normal life. Such is the mystery of Travellers, and maybe of Jennifer in particular.

“When will I come back home? Will I *ever* come back home?”

“Your soul may let you wander to constructs of it, for some continuity and peace, but your link with Jack is now severed. It was a mercy given you early in your experience. You will only truly go home when you eventually wake fully from your physical coma. *So*, are you *sure* of your choice?”

“I want to Travel,” she said, as she felt she just had to, no matter the cost. It was like part of her knew something. It was an intuitive knowledge.

“Yes...*Courage*; that essence that you hold *so* much of, but now you'll also need to build *acceptance* and *trust* in the flow of His design. You will need *reliance* on the All-Knowing and build it stronger each day. You are a *spiritual being*; you *are* eternal, and you have nothing to truly fear except your own weakness. *Life is a victory, and today is your life.*”

These words then wafted past her...

***“O SON OF SPIRIT!***

***Burst thy cage asunder, and even as the phoenix of love soar into the firmament of holiness. Renounce thyself and, filled with the spirit of mercy, abide in the realm of celestial sanctity.”<sup>11</sup>***

JACK WAS IN FOR THE NIGHT. He was enjoying rest away from all the things in his life. He had called Jennifer a couple of times in the last week, but she did not pick up either time, or even text back. He thought that she must have still needed more time and space, so decided to leave her be for now. He did think it was a little strange though, as she had seemed quite happy to work on things with him when they talked. Maybe she was not as ready as she thought she was, but he figured it was still her life and her call. All this Traveller stuff was hard enough on him, so why not her too.

What *did* he know anyway? He didn't *really* know her, even though deep in him he felt that *he did*. She was new in his life, but it still felt like she had almost *always* been there. He thought that maybe she didn't feel as strongly as he did about their connection, especially with her wanting to go and visit her Auntie Thelma. He really believed they could help each other best because they both Travelled. He also thought that there was something there to build on and had wanted more of a chance to go through all this crazy stuff with her. He now shook his head, telling himself to relax; that she most probably would be back in touch soon.

He sat back and looked up to the ceiling. He wondered about her, and somehow through a feeling of deep love a thread of knowledge came; again, not a memory, but a thread of knowledge. He followed it, tracing it deeper into its meaning. He hunted it down, and eventually it turned into a trickling brook. He followed the brook as it entered a creek, which entered a river. In time he found himself sitting by a great ocean; joyous in all his being to be right on its *very shore* and somehow feeling that he would never want to leave. It was then he felt a great flow of the hidden knowledge, though still no memories, like he could now finally, consciously, gather the knowledge of that other Jack. It broke loose from its shackles and flowed into his current consciousness.

He sat right there on that shore all night and into the next morning as he allowed it to become part of him and who he was. He felt like he could be there forever and never tire of it, when a phone call from his shop finally brought him out of that place; a place simply in his own thoughts. It was a lady who worked for him wondering if he was okay. Jack had been brought up with a strong work ethic and was always at work earlier than the people who worked for him, or more so, earlier than the *friends* he worked *with*. He was calm and energised as he now came out of that place; his mind was crystal clear and his heart oozing love. So much so, that Zoe could feel it at the other end.

She was not used to this at all. He was a kind boss who always had time for those who worked for him. But *openly loving* was not this man's way. He had been different after his heart scare, but this was *even more* odd; lovely, but odd. She knew it was not amorous in any way and felt warm in her heart. It was very strange.

“I won't be in today, Zoe. I have somewhere else to be.”

“But what about the repairs, and we were going to do the books up today.”

“I trust that you can handle it all, Zoe. Call Jim in, he can handle the repairs today. Thanks.”

“Sure okay,” replied Zoe, happy that he trusted her and clearly showing her that he saw her capability. “Are you okay?”

“Yes, I am. Thanks, Zoe,” he replied, now slowly becoming more earthbound again.

He hung up the phone and sat down a while, knowing, that while he held these new understandings and that they were earned somehow, that he was still just the bloke he was. He felt good about that, as he knew that humility and normalness were a very real place to live. He was glad for the knowledge, but also knew there would still be much to learn, so came to a good place within himself. He then instinctively got up and walked out the door; heading over to Judy’s place.

On the drive over he did not think of what to say, or practice anything. He just let love take him there, *like it did on a carpet*. It was not about him; it was only about love. He would take some love there, and that was all he was concerned about.

It wasn’t long before he got there, and as love was the only thing in his heart, he walked straight onto his sisters back veranda. He knew she would be there.

“Hey, Jack; didn’t think I would see you for a while.”

“Hey Jude. I didn’t think so either, but here I am.”

“Yep, here you are. *Thanks* for coming. I’m sorry I was so hard on you.”

“It’s all good, Jude, I don’t care about myself. I was worried about you. I was worried you were being too hard on *yourself*. You have to *champion* yourself girl, and not let this world make you bitter.”

“What choice do I have? I see the world. I hear all the rubbish. I see fools at every turn, and I have people who really don’t care about me at all. They just use me.”

“You need to get out of that void.”

“*What void?*” she asked, knowing full well she was in one.

“You know, this *hidey hole* of yours. There’s so much anxiety in the world; people trying so hard to control their reality that they hide away in small spaces like this. I think anxiety only grows in these small spaces. Don’t get me wrong, I love my veranda too, and they can be *very* healthy. But you have to be out in the rough and tumble and be able to stand there with self-respect and reasonable boundaries; honesty too.”

“People would not like my honesty. Believe me.”

“Honesty’s the only way. You stopped lettin’ people know who and how you are. Let them see you, let them see you’re human and vulnerable too. Let them see to their own needs, they’re adults, and then let them please themselves whether they’re *really* your friends. Being too passive, and then angry because of it, is no place to live.”

“It’s not just that, I *just can’t stand* the thoughts out there, and the *endless mindless whinging.*”

“Then tell people what you see and help them *break free*. All this negativity pouring out of people is only creating more unhappy people. Don’t be one of them. Help turn the tide.”

“*Let it all fall.* Let them learn the *hard* way. I’m *staying here.*”

“You don’t mean that.”

“Oh, *I do.*”

“There’s way better ways, Jude. Just *love* ’em. Do *Jude*. Do what you can. Say what you think, and *love* ‘em. Don’t judge, because you don’t know their whole story, or what state their being is really in; just like they don’t know yours.”

“No, they don’t. They wouldn’t have a clue.”

“Tell them who you are. Say what you see in life, and then see who hangs around.”

This was old Jack advice. The knowledge that was now consciously part of him had changed him. He now even wished that he could introduce her to the transforming power of The Creative Word, the pure crystal waters of love, and knowing that all that counts is love and the soul’s lessons here. He knew now clearly that these were a higher knowledge; and Revelation deep Knowledge that was ignored for myriad reasons and for many lesser ideas. He knew that only the Light can chase the darkness, not more darkness, and that *moderation* of word and action created civilised people; certainly not all the drama, dramatic language, and excess out there.

But if he talked religion, he would lose her for sure. It broke his heart because the width and depth of the *true understanding* within it was certainly more than a remedy for what ailed her.

“They couldn’t take it.”

“Being kind and strong for others, and then angry behind it all because you just feel used, is useless. Lighten up, just have some fun with people and enjoy their company for a while. We can tend to create our own pain.”

“It’s the *stupid* senseless *world* creating my pain.”

“Well, *change it, or let it go*. Maybe letting it go so you’ve got the energy to change your small part of it is more the way. But being angry and not doing anything about it is the *worst* mix. It’s a void that will eat away at you and slowly draw the life out of you.”

“The world’s on fire, Jack,” she shot back, seemingly unaware of what Jack had just said. “I *know* you see it. The only ones who don’t see it are the ones pouring on the petrol. There are endless strains of ‘*I know better*’ growing stronger out there. I really don’t care to be amongst it all.”

“*People* have told *people* what to think, since Adam was in short pants,” knowing that came from the knowledge gained in his other experiences, because until today he would never have said that. Once, he would have just agreed with her, and even pile on.

“*Sure*, but in this country, those groups who believe they are the ‘*knowers of all things*’ are growing. The line of respect is being crossed more each day as each group tells us all what we are allowed to think. The news last night had a segment on *how* to have your Christmas break, how you *should act*, how your behaviour should be over those days. The media’s not our mother; I mean, *how ridiculous* they are, and they don’t even know it.”

“Yep. Sure. But if you focus on *that*, then *that’s* all you’ll get, and *that’s* how you’ll feel. I *love* you Jude, and you are probably *not wrong*, but the only way out of your prison is love. *Love* people. *Speak your mind* but *love* them. Judging people, and concentrating on the darkness, is a heart and soul killer, and no amount of argument will change this pathway of learning the human race is on.”

“*But...*”

“*But nothing...Being right* is killing them *and* you. You know we’re puny in the larger process that’s unfolding here, and we’re just learning like everyone else. Stop *holding up the world* and make *your small part of it* better.”

“*How?*”

“*Love first*, and just *do* good things. Take each day at a time and enjoy it. Take the days as they come and care for yourself so that you can enjoy people. It’s *okay* to care for yourself. Your heart problem is a *big deal*, and very *real* problem.”

“My heart is a constant worry for me, Jack. It wears me down.”

“Sure. *Of course*, it does. I never really *got that* until now. I mean, how it would have affected you after all these years. *Sorry*, Jude. We can be *so* blind to even those close to us,” finished Jack, now seeing his sister’s world a little better.

“It acts up when I am stressed, so I don’t want to address all this stuff. I have to protect myself.”

“I just didn’t see this. Maybe you need to tell people, Judy.”

“Yes, but I even struggled to tell you.”

“I *should* have known, but you have to get on with life even if it is hard for you to share your struggle. Stoic is good sometimes and destructive others. Actually, I don’t know where I heard this saying, but it goes, “*...life is a victory...today is your life...*” Having life itself is a miracle by any standards and today is where we live it; don’t waste it, appreciate it, and be happy.”

“Yes. But life’s not just *all happy*.”

“Sure, but when it isn’t, it’s usually meaningful. It’s teaching you something. Get some joy out of that too; there’s good things in any situation.”

Judy now realised that she had to do some wholesale change and was even happy to have humbled up a bit. It was the love and understanding that he showed that had broken through the walls around her heart, and people need to be seen, and heard, and understood. She now realised the size of the mountain in front of her. A mountain of negative thoughts to sift through and throw away, and she said, “I have a big load of heavy thoughts. How the hell do I start?”

“I remember Dad saying, “One foot in front of the other, Sonny” when things were too big, or I was struggling.”

“Yes, he did. I miss him.”

“Yeah, me too. He always said “just tinker at the edges” too. You don’t have to jump boots and all.”

“That helps a lot. We had a great father.”

“Yep, for sure.”

“I understand, but how do I do it?”

“I suppose, just make each day a little better than the one before, and if you fall back some days just accept it and keep on. It’s all any of us can do. We can’t know everything suddenly or make life perfect; we just have to *strive* in life and enjoy the exercise of it. It’s honourable just to take part no matter our struggles.”

“But, my mind is full of..”

“Yeah, *I know it is*,” said Jack, with some humour, and Judy smiled. “Take on higher thoughts, Jude. Take a positive stance inside yourself and in your life. Have a laugh. You know, darkness brings darkness even if you’re right about it, so concentrate on the light and bring it into your life. It’s a decision, and you’ll probably enjoy the process.”

“Sure, I get that. That’s good, *a process*.”

He let her be with her own thoughts for a time, as he had definitely talked enough. As he sat there, he thought that she needed to relink to The Creator too. She had loved Him once, but she was now just angry and incensed with Him because she blamed Him for her deep life struggles, as well as letting the world fall into this sad state. Jack wanted to help her see that renewing that link would be powerfully healing and far more effective than the thought changes alone.

There was a greater sustenance and energy in the connection with the Unknowable than just thought changes. The Creative Word lifts the soul, or reorients it to the spiritual; communion with God lifts us to a higher reality, our deeper essence, and connects us with *true understanding* from which all good things flow. It is being reminded of love too, standing in this state within us, and spurring us on to use it more.

Pain only comes from focus on, and want of, the physical, even though long-term illness is certainly a great test. The hardships of the world “plough deep the soil of our hearts” so we may grow spiritually. Knowing that and appreciating the gifts of understanding that the hardest things bring is spiritual understanding. The big ones change us, and there is no pain, no negativity in the spirit, if our focus is truly there. We move with a different intent in the world and use a different power source when we move and live in the light of the spirit.

He could see more now with the knowledge that was now so accessible. He was feeling higher feelings within its reality when an inkling of something now came to him, and like a flash, was gone. It seemed to be the thoughts of the other Jack on something in The Creative Word that he had gathered on his Travels deeper. It made it clear that a search across the whole universe for peace, *true understanding*, or more so, fulfilment, would be in vain until finding humbleness before The Great Spirit.

Judy now looked up at him from across the outdoor table. His whole being wanted to suggest renewing a loving connection to The Creator, but he said, “You have to open your heart to be free, and *you...decide...what you think. Watch* your thoughts, or just *feel* it when your gut tightens. Hunt those sick thoughts down mercilessly, see how they destroy you, and change them for positive ones, but *real* ones. When you feel discomfort, or your gut tightens it will be negative emotions rising from some thought or attitude that you need to shift. Well, that or some *psycho* you may need to move away from,” he added, with a chuckle.

“I’m getting that feeling *right now*,” commented Judy.

Jack pretended to be hurt, and they both laughed out loud.

# *Surfing*

He wandered out on the beach and sat down on the shore of the ocean, but this time it was not in his thoughts. He had told Owen that he would meet him here today instead of driving down with him. He had visited Judy on Friday, caught up on what was happening at the shop, and had visited Brig on Saturday. He just went where he felt to go, following the flow, and Brig had been happy to sit back, and chat, and chuckle. They had done very little of just simply hanging out since meeting up again; only meeting at the course nights and the firesides.

They had talked about a lot of things on Saturday, and Brig could see the bigger change in Jack as they sat and talked. He was no longer a cement truck. He was more kind and considered, even hardly joking in comparison to how he usually did. He seemed a little less passionate too. Brig was not so happy about that particular change because he had liked the forthright passion in his mate. In any case, he had sat back and watched the unfoldment of this new soul in front of him.

“A lack of patience, and expecting that all things need to be as we wish they were, is growing too strong out there,” offered Jack, in the conversation with Brig.

“Yes, very little contentment.”

“*Most* seem lost in a void of fear and gossip.”

“But it is all part of the process, I suppose. Has to get worse before it gets better; the youth coming through can power a change,” offered Brig.

“*No generation* should be at ease, and *none particularly* holds the wisdom, they all simply hold responsibility for their time and place in the work of the human future; their part in the relay of life,” said Jack, and very gently, like an older person sharing the wisdom of experience.

“Sure,” said Brig, thoroughly enjoying sharing insights with this little more heightened soul.

But just then the cement truck rolled into the driveway of their conversation, and Brig realised that the Jack he knew and loved was still in there somewhere.

“I saw some school kids the other day going on strike for the planet. Yet their generation are the greatest users of electricity and consumers of the planet’s resources in all its history. It *is* good to see them wanting to make the future better, and to safeguard it, but we all need to look to our own behaviour and *its* full implications first.”

“Yes, but the fire’s there, and vested interest and rampant human greed has definitely brought the environment low and destroyed much. So why not?”

“Protest is not acting for change. It doesn’t *build* anything. Real healthy change takes time and sacrifice; actions, not just words. The most effective way to bring something into the world is to build it, not throw stones at what’s already there.”

“Sure. That is so true, but doesn’t it all help?”

“I don’t know what I think of the current science of climate change, as some understanding of long-term historical weather cycles of the planet hold me back. I am genuinely still on the fence, unlike most people who seem passionately one way or the other. One thing for sure though is that the natural world needs our mature stewardship, not more words, and certainly not more drama; it needs money where your mouth is action, grass roots, and personal change. Some humility and sacrifice, not more anger.”

“Protest has its place if it’s peaceful and passionate. Change has to start somewhere, and teenagers need to feel they are part of the community and be empowered to make the future better,” offered Brig.

Jack now came out of his thoughts to the sight of the wide glorious ocean and taking a deep breath in while recalling the rest of the conversation. There was always the need for transition to new ways, for each new generation’s tree to grow, but he also knew that you needed *hands*, not words, to plant a new tree; to prune, train, and nurture it. It also needed good regular nutrient to produce real fruit; healthy fruit. Walking around a plant with placards would change nothing. It would take effort, longer term efforts and solutions, not just events, debates, more angry words, and tearing down. Change came from the ground up for sure, but in what we *do*; from hard work, and even sacrifice, in our day to day lives. He then let the subject go easily from his thoughts as he felt the two differing ways and life experiences within him forming a healthier balance.

His thoughts then went to his fruit trees and how they were coming on. He was learning quite a lot about them. He was also surprised to hear a name rise out of him when he was out there pruning one day. It was Garran Gardiner. “*Or was it that Garran was a gardener,*” he now thought, feeling that it was something to do with plants and growth.

He sat there on the beach wondering about his own views, most especially on the future of the planet. He loved nature and could see greed destroying it on many levels and in endless ways. He loved it that people fought for it, especially enjoying those exploits of eco-warriors who wanted to put a stop to whaling. Part of him even had wanted to join them when he was younger. Strangely though he had never been *green* so to speak, mostly despising the pontificating environmentalists, but he now knew most certainly that we all hold a high responsibility to the planet. He loved the cause of a cleaner and nurtured environment but did still did not like the arrogance and narrow view of certain groups; at least the line expressed mostly in the media.

He knew that only a change in culture, with a reasonable and measured transition in many aspects of the way people lived would help. He saw the urgency that many others did for wholesale change, and he knew that only a high spiritual motive could bring that kind of change. Not religious pulpits or political ones, no ideological or generational ones, were enough; as they had not been enough. A completely new Breeze needed to waft across and regenerate souls of humanity, to regenerate good intent, and renew society. Only then would things change. *“And only then will Mother breathe free again, and other world problems fall to considered solutions,”* he thought.

He could see the void growing in people, as well as in the disrespect for the natural world, and knew that only spiritual regeneration and unified effort would bring beneficial and long-term change to anything; anywhere, at any time. It was much more than the environment it was many aspects of life and humanity. Thought and words *could not*, and *had not*, created real change; it required a *change of heart*, and *unity of purpose*. He knew there was a process required for all this, and that any steps help, just as Brig had pointed out, but it should not leave us apathetic. We needed to act together and sacrifice a little, or the damage of the

natural world and the great chaos that was rising in the human system would eventually require even greater sacrifice.

There is a feeling of powerlessness when confronted with the wider challenges of life, but there is also our striving nature and the deeper powers within us that can rise from our actions and transform our world; or at least our small part of it. To Jack's view now, humanity's future was in a surrender to Greater Knowledge and attention to the Divine Physician. He also knew that surrender was a decision at the level of each soul, as we each have our own souls to see to. He just had to surrender himself, because only his surrender was in his power, and he *knew* intimately now that Reliance on God and the use of heavenly power could do more, and provide more, for humanity's transformation.

He then contemplated the verities of transformation as he felt the breeze off the ocean cooling him. There was something else soothing him too. It was the slow beats and a constant low roar of the incoming waves, which sat in a beautiful balance and perfection, as it made its way through his ears and into his being. As he wandered on internally, he came to seeing a difference in the likes of detachment and compassion, up against action and justice. Each had their place and measure, and in good balance these too were truly powerful. A balanced dynamic in these was just as perfect and beautiful as the sounds of the ocean; alone, none of these human powers were enough; alone, none of them was the ocean. He then breathed it in deeply, and just realised that he was only *thinking* about these things too. It humbled him a little.

It *definitely* humbled him as he looked at the immensity of the travails of humanity. His mind was still open on the real cause of climate change, or the nature of the longer-term historical pattern of weather on this terrestrial globe. But from documentaries he had seen on the planets, he knew the *great miracle* of such a world as Earth, and our tentative grip on life,

on this tiny rock within the great void of space, he was sure that humanity needed to move on to cleaner forms of power production; to end the great forest clearings, the rampant expansion of cities, as well as the destruction of habitat and whole animal species. He most particularly despised the destruction of water sources; from the Ok Tedi and Fly rivers in PNG, to the gas mining of the Great Artesian Basin in Australia. He shook his head at the stupidity and greed. Maybe he did not know the science of fracking well enough, but it was somehow very concerning to him. Water on this dry continent was too precious and the underwater aquifers too priceless. Expedience, money, and short-term thinking seemed to rule these situations, to him. People *did* need to work and eat, but there were far less destructive ways. Many problems like plastic infestation would require a worldwide effort; a mature united humanity working mindfully through the process, not angry words, or unthinking emotional action, and definitely reigning in destructive greed and plunder too.

Jack then thought, *“It doesn’t matter what I know or think I know, I just have to do my small part, as I see it, and keep learning.”*

In truth, that’s all any of us can do.

“Hey, Jack,” said Owen, as he came out of the trees. “Why aren’t you out on the waves? *Look at them; they’re perfect.*”

“They *are* perfect,” said Jack, coming out of his thoughts.

“Well, why aren’t you in there?”

“Things have changed for me a little, lately; needed some time to just sit and let it roll through the old noggin, you know.”

“Is Naomi talking you into her Faith, mate?”

“She doesn’t need to talk me into it, Owen. I can see its relevance for us all; especially for today’s problems. It’s far more solid than anything I’ve come across.”

“Well, that’s *your call*, dude. I like it too, but *religion*, and *all those rules*.”

“Yeah, I hear plenty of people sayin’ that, Owen.”

“I think religion’s still falling away anyway, and it will probably keep fallin’ away. It’s created a lot of pain and suffering over history.”

“Yeah, I hear plenty of people sayin’ that too; just another cliché that gives people excuse for apathy.”

“It has created a lot of pain and war.”

“It’s created a lot of order and abundance too, mate, but people don’t want to see that. There have also been plenty of plunderers, empire builders, and ideologies that have caused far more destruction. You know, your wife’s religion even says, that if religion is destructive or doesn’t produce love, then better it didn’t exist.”

“*Really*,” she never told me that one. “It *doesn’t* matter anyway, she knows I live on the beach, and she visits me here between all her efforts; if you get my drift, Jack.”

“Sure,” responded Jack.

“I mean, I feel the beauty of it, and I *love her*, but I’m just not that guy. And honestly, like I said, I think religion’s days are numbered.”

Jack laughed. “Good *luck* with that, mate. Good luck trying to get rid of religion. I think that kind of view comes from a misunderstanding of its progressive nature, and ignorance of dual nature of man,” challenged Jack, realising that this must have come with the recent new flow of knowledge into his conscious knowledge. He was still getting used to

it, but really appreciated the degrees of change he was going through. Too much at once would have been way too much.

“Naomi’s told me about those two concepts a lot; seems like it’s her standard argument.”

“Seems to me it’s that you don’t want to know. I know I didn’t, or even want to try to understand its reality before my heart attack. Her Messenger sure has a compelling story to tell.”

“Religion’s *done*, Jack, even if her Man has put forward really good things.”

“It’s a force of change that has shaped humanity since we became self-aware, even though the various Messages may have lost some integrity here and there, and over time; even though massive idiots have taken the reins at times. But with its renewal it is still a great force in any age. We are even on its new wave of change now.”

“How do you *know* that, Jack?” challenged Owen, with a distasteful look on his face.

“I see it *clearly*, and I also *know it in my bones* that we won’t *surf* our way out of this huge void we’re in.”

“What void?”

“The *void of character*; that, and the *drought of considered thought*. The surf’s gonna’ get wilder, and I reckon we’ll find we need spiritual poise and a lot more unity to survive the size and chop of the sea. We’ll need a common Cause to bring us together. Anything that attacks others, or other groups, won’t survive in the chaos, they will just go down in amongst it all. Division will not stand, because the power of the chaos will require unity of us. Unity and love is the only remedy that’ll hold.”

Owen just looked at Jack. “Maybe you’re over-reacting. The world’s not *that* lost,” offered Owen, but still knowing that small things even like basic kindness had been on the downslide over his lifetime, and that so much had happened since the turn of the century. He now just looked out to the waves in silence. He didn’t want to see *any* of this. He just wanted to *surf*.

JENNIFER HAD BEEN TRAVELLING AGAIN and was very aware of it now. She had been to a number of places; the memories of them leaving her, except thankfully the full memory of one place. But she could feel the new knowledge and attitudes that had formed within her after each cycle. It was all very strange at first, but she had now accepted and appreciated the changes as she surfed the *Deeper Realities* and *Other Places*. She was becoming more, and just had to put effort into what came to her each time. Faith and acceptance were definitely growing in her; mainly because they *had to*.

There was no home for her it seemed, just another place; and another. Time too, was of no account as her soul travelled from one place of meaning to the next; yet each time and place provided the building of this inner understanding. She had not found a particular reality to return to, a home place, yet, as Change had promised; just another leap into the next place so far. It was more so that she became aware of the next place as she landed there, and simply *knew* she had been to others. Well not always, as the quirks of her condition even took all memory of her real life away completely in some places.

She now felt herself leaving another place deeper. She felt very tired, and a great need for a home of any kind took hold of her heart. She was so weary that she fell asleep, in that place *in between*, and into a dream.

*As she fell into the dream, she found some knowledge within her; that it is us who bring love to the human system. She knew it was learning from the last place she visited, now suddenly, as the many others, forgotten. She tried to remember more of the place she had just been to by using this realisation about love as a window to it, but all she could gather was, "Don't ask 'Where is the love?'... just bring it though."*

*"Yes, just bring it through, daughter."*

*"Any small act, eh, Auntie."*

*"Anything at all; even a smile. How are you darlin'?"*

*"I'm in a coma."*

*"Yes, I know. How are you going though?"*

*"It scares me, but I'm growing."*

*"You'll come out of it, Jen darlin'. A matter o' time, eh."*

*"Sure. So where is this?"*

*"You're in my dreams, Jennie."*

*"Nice to be here, Auntie; so nice, and great to see you again. Sorry I didn't make it to see you. I really wanted to spend time with you."*

*"Wha'da'ya' mean...you're spendin' time with me now," commented Thelma, with a smile, and as if it didn't make any difference at all where they met.*

*It was then that they were on a beach in the night, with the Milky Way cast across the sky and over the sea. They were sitting by a fire, and Thelma picked up a Coolamon. She began grinding some small berries down, and said, "A woman's work is never done, eh."*

*“That’s a bit demeaning, Auntie.”*

*“Listen to the words again, Jennie...A woman’s work is never done, eh.”*

*Jennifer heard the words, this time, and they were made clear to her.*

*“You know, men have been dominant in most cultures through the history of many tribes and peoples over a long long time. But women have had some power within them though the law, family, raising children right, and there have been big women too; ones that knew it was not good enough to accept society’s view of their place and charged ahead.”*

*Jennifer wasn’t so sure about the power part and was about to make it clear when she realised from her Auntie’s demeanour that it was time to listen.*

*“Due to all that science, those machines and computers, a woman is as strong as man now, maybe stronger from their sacrifice. Da’ sisters are being empowered more and more. Well, in some cultures hardly, but the floodgates ‘ave opened, and this big river’s power is comin’ off a mountain; it won’t be denied as it floods the whole world, little sister.”*

*“Sure, the change has begun.”*

*“Male dominance served its purpose in the violent childhood of humanity; yet there’s still too much violence in the black tribes, white tribes, and all the others. It’s a shame, its’ shameful. Physical strength was required for protection of women and children, and provision of the food for life; and men’s thinking was needed...just like woman’s was though, and it had its own power. Each has been needed.*

*But now’s the time for more equality, and while we should advance it, we need to remember that the tree of humanity, as it grows, becomes different. It has moved through different stages, and needed different things at each stage, as well as the same things. The*

*people of any time are not generally blameworthy, as they lived in their time, and future peoples may also have plenty to say even about the blindness of our generations. Hopefully they will think of us kindly and see what we did provide for them.*

*Knowledge grows like a tree through time, and the fruit is coming. We can't blame them past one's for not pickin' fruit that wasn't even there yet."*

*"Yes, sure. It's just growing in its time."*

*"Yes, little Jennie."*

*Jennifer loved that term of endearment, and she loved her Auntie Thelma. They both sat the by the fire quiet for a while as Thelma continued cooking for them. Jennifer naturally joined in the preparations.*

*"We gather and cook the food of the season," added Thelma.*

*"But the men can do that for a while now, eh, Auntie."*

*"Sure, but we're not going to stop being women you know, and there are two big challenges growing in the new fruit of the woman tree."*

*Jennifer, sat back, and waited for what was to come. The older woman waited for her to do that, and allowed a small gap to empower her words, showing Jennifer their importance.*

*"In this new equality, we will see how well women will wield their new freedom and use the power they are given. The other is the question of how men will also be emancipated by this new way in the world.*

*People will more become people, and as it is said, men and women will naturally take on more of each other's qualities. Equality of opportunity will provide whatever will*

*naturally come in this new balance; this new and natural equilibrium. To try and enforce a balance that seems to fit what we believe is just now, will only harm the fruit that will naturally come, and make the fruiting take longer. In the end there must, as now, be a balance.”*

*“So, men and women taking on each other’s traits more, eh.”*

*“Yes, but not some homogenised state for both sexes. Differences in individuals, or even cultural background, brings more difference, varied talents, and differing experiences to the table of the human family; both the man and woman energy should be seen as valuable. Men don’t want’a be forced away from being men, or even more so, not being gentlemen; motherhood too, needs be more cherished than it is right now. But the fruit will grow how it grows.”*

*“It is a time for these things, Auntie,” said Jennifer, showing respect for her words.*

*“Women haven’t gotta chase the men away; they just gotta learn to use their new power well. It’s new, and we need to learn how to wield it with purity, and some wisdom. Like the women Elders and the wisdom of the future would have us do. We will have to overcome the beasts that men have had to overcome; the beasts that many of them didn’t.”*

*She fell silent, and just then stoked the fire a little. Her husband Selwyn came with some more wood for the fire, and Jennifer cried as she jumped up to hug him. She loved this gentle old man who they had lost in her teens. It was a wonderful gift to see him and hold him again. He sat down and worked on the fire while they talked of family things and ate together.*

OWEN HAD SEEN SOME MEASURE OF WISDOM. He had seen some measure of insight and vision too, in Jack's words. He could also feel this deeper understanding in him which he had not noticed before. But it did not matter. Owen was who he was, and he just wanted to do life as he saw it.

“I'm hearin' you, duuude, but I don't have any will to take any of this stuff on. I remember being in my teens, and seeing all the stupidity around me, and I got angry. I put out the realities that I saw for people to see as best I could for them to see, but as I grew older, I saw I was powerless up against the social construct of the time; now it is even more so. No matter what people think, they disregard things because they hold whatever they hold to be true; their particular mental construct, and they are not at all flexible. I would rather just surf, and know my mind, and watch the process of how society evolves. I don't want to engage, man. I just need the freedom of my higher mind, and the surf.”

Jack could see more of Owen now too, and his journey, and he understood all too well why he decided to step aside from the struggle. “Yep, there is our particular mental construct. Then what we want; like social acceptance, position, income, our belief system, our own comfort, or even a possession. Even the love we hold for our own family, or culture, over others. There are a hell of a lot of reasons not to have an open mind. Our ego's another, and its fears more so, I reckon.”

“Yeah, Jack,” said Owen, almost falling to Jack's words, but not giving in.

It was years ago that he had accepted that he just couldn't be bothered with ignorance any longer, and most especially ignorance in those who should know better. He knew it was apathy on his part, and maybe some over-sensitivity, but he had fought hard and long with no real support in his own efforts to help people see things, and simply could no longer bear the load of aiding the rise of a greater awareness.

“Aren’t you being closed minded though too now, mate?”

“No mate. You are just *beginning* to fight for people to be free. I’ve *run* that race. So...your turn, *Jack man*,” he said as he tagged Jack, like a wrestler in a tag team match.

Jack sat back a while, and let it be. It was not his job to chase Owen down; that was Owen’s. He could see now why this man and Naomi were together. They held the same wider hopes, but Owen just stopped believing, and could not see how religion was the answer. Like so many before him he had only seen the outworn cultural ideas that he could not change; including the dogma of religions. These problems loomed so large in the vision of most that they failed to see the nature of religion’s *essence*, and its necessity, more especially its very *relative* historical evolution.

The really sad thing to Jack was that Owen and so many millions of others stood at the threshold of this great power. They were people who clearly saw the need for evolution, but who had given up the search, or become worn out on their journey there. Either way, to Jack, these people too, were blind to the wide-open gates that stood in front of them; like starving masses not being able to see past their own construct to a mighty feast set out there for them.

“I have a mate who came into the shop a while ago now,” said Jack, following his thoughts. “His name is Kev. He is a lovely soul, and a naturally good man. He said to me that he was really concerned about something in particular that he’d been investigating on the internet; knowledge that we were being held back from.”

“What?”

“Wait for it, duuude.”

“Okay,” said Owen, with a curious smile on his face.

*“Flat Earth, mate.”*

*“Flat Earth!”* called out Owen, breaking into laughter, and so did Jack.

“He was *really* concerned, and he had seen some *very compelling* video on it. He was really concerned that we were being manipulated by the ‘*lie*’ of a spherical Earth.”

“I’ll *bet* he did,” said Owen, laughing again.

“He has a heart of gold, but his construct led him to allow the possibility of *Flat Earth*.”

“Sounds like some of our politicians.”

“Yep, they’re a little closed.”

*“A little!* Politics is becoming more like a religion of two churches, and the religions are getting more political and wanting to be more secular to keep adherents. Mate, there are clowns on one side of politics that are like preachers in their pulpits trying to make up a new human religion. Actually, one side is making up a new religion and the other side is trying its very best not to evolve *at all*.” Owen chuckled a bit and added, “And then you got the media telling us how to swim in a creek, and what to think; like we’re children who can’t look after ourselves and need to be educated, it all adds to this new religion that must not be questioned by us uneducated heretics. It’s the blind leading the blind.”

“We’re in a process. Humanity is learning. Making mistakes is part of that I suppose. Better to let go of all these polarising thoughts, and all the drama. It’s us all learning.”

“Learning!?! Geeze, I don’t know about that.”

“We are; even if it’s sadly through big mistakes, or crazy fads, and even if it’s hard seeing the blindness and the hurt. It’s good to understand that there’s an education process

going on. But that doesn't mean we are powerless or should be apathetic or get all incensed. You know *moderation not mediocrity*, calmly but sacrificially building a positive future."

"You've changed, man."

"We *all* have to, mate. The ship is sinking and not everyone can just put a board in the water and swim away."

"*Jack...mate*. That's not nice," thinking it was a shot at his apathy.

"I am callin' it as I see it, Owen. I was talking generally. If you don't want to act, then don't. But don't kid yourself, mate."

"I don't, Jack. But like I said, it's *your turn*, buddy," and with that, he grabbed his ankle rope and snapped the velcro into place. He got up, grabbed his board, and as he stood tall, he then turned to Jack and said, "Good luck, dude."

He then turned back toward the surf and walked down the beach to the water.

*JENNIFFER SAW CHANGE PASS BY HER SOUL'S EYE. He was on a podium in a 1960's suit. He then changed into Martin Luther King Junior, as these immortal words came...*

***"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character."***<sup>12</sup>

She then found herself in front of a wall of mist, just as Yuri walked out of it. The mist was about two metres in front of her and few metres behind her was a great precipice. The great wall of mist and the great precipice ran from east to west. In some places the mist rolled over the edge, cascading down into the steep, impossibly deep, chasm.

“Where is Jack? Who are you?” asked Yuri, a bit confused, but still poised.

“I’m Jennifer. I don’t know any *Jack*. Where are we? What is this place?”

Yuri looked at her, assessing her by her demeanour and stance, when suddenly a white robe flung itself at her. It burst out of the mist, very intent to take her over the edge of the great precipice. Yuri moved quickly, but Jennifer had moved faster...to the side of the hurtling creature’s path. As the robe passed her, she whispered something to it. The creature squealed and exploded, dissipating into nothingness.

The Russian stopped his run, and stood there with a smile, “You must be Jack’s woman. He told me that you would like to hunt with Yuri.”

“Who’s Jack? And I am not *anyone’s woman*,” she pronounced, as it seemed even some of her recent memories of home had fallen away here.

“You seem to fit the description,” said Yuri, now smiling.

“I don’t know any Jack, and who the hell is Yuri?”

The Agent smiled, and said, “Don’t worry about Jack then, and I am Yuri. I work for the Department.”

“What Department?”

He looked at her for a short while, and said, “It does not matter. It will just confuse you. I need you clear minded, *moya sestra*.”

“My name is Jennifer,” she said, not realising that he had just called her his sister, and not some other name.

“Come. We go hunting. Keep your wits awake.”

“I don’t know if I *want to...go hunting.*”

“In the void you move, you hunt, get lost, or get taken. What is your choice?” he asked plainly, using both hands to show the choice between the precipice or the mist, then turning and walking back into the mist.

Jennifer shook her head, and followed him in.

THE TWO WARRIORS HAD FOUGHT WELL. They walked out of the mist, but little did they know that the attention of The Oppressor had now been turned on them and other hunters of The Department. But this nothingness was intent on Jennifer more so; not only because of her and Yuri’s far higher success in culling the Robes, but because she was something different; a type of soul it had known before.

The Oppressor, like all essences that were somehow a *lack* of something, needed to *be something*. This oppressive force *was* the mist, and it *was* the darkness within it, yet was not anything. It now watched them and made its plans.

“There’s a good mix of robes in any one place,” explained Yuri, as they walked out. “The Black and the White are not friends, but they work symbiotically. The Black’s use the White’s like wedges, and the Whites need the Black’s inventions to enforce their agenda, so they put up with each other.”

“I would have thought they would naturally oppose each other.”

“No, they’re both projections of ignorance, be it lost in the material things or lost in some thought form. Want and fear are primal forms. Many people have strong shadows of both, no matter who they seem to be, or what they proclaim. All people have *some* shadows

that they allow and accept, even though many do choose to fight these influences within them. None are pure, and most people with high white robe mindsets can be as black as any black robe.”

“So, they are the same really?”

“They’re all of the animal ego. They are love of the self, love of power, love of the world’s trappings; the love of these things over love for the All Loving, or over the love for generality of mankind. They are fearful and hungry but made up of all manner of variant thoughts that bend the knee to themselves, their knowledge, or the baubles of the Earth. So those who hold these lesser thoughts and loves, soon get lost in the mists of the void; in these Other Places.”

“That’s sad.”

“Yes, but their choice; choices. Some get so lost that everyone else seems to be a fool to them, so they close their ears and become more closed minded and walk deeper into the dark. Others even take these thoughts further, seeing others as just fools to be used for their material gain, or fools who need to be educated to their obviously higher intelligence. The ones who are *totally* lost in the midst of the black and white hoods seem to need weak minded or fearful lackeys who agree with their every thought, or agree with any justification of their injustice, greed, or ideology. There are *so* many lost in the mist which is why the robes are now easier to find there.”

“These are extreme ones though?”

“Yes, most simply struggle as we all do with the lower influences, but they are growing exponentially in number, so having greater effect on the air and the soil here deeper.”

“How do we know the really bad ones, and do we need to take their Robes down first?” asked Jennifer, feeling like she was in a second-rate thriller. “*Take them down,*” she thought, with an incredulous look on her face.

“We don’t bother with them because they are *too* lost in the silence of the void. They *only* hear words of acceptance and adulation. They are surrounded by hangers on who call out loud that they are *great* men or women, when it is *obvious* that they hold no real virtue. Robes on robes, veils on veils, surround them.”

“There *are* great people, though. Well, I believe so,” offered, Jennifer.

“Those who truly *are* giants of humanity will not be drawn there, and the great spiritual ones are humble and only feel only pain with the smallest compliment and shun enforcement of any belief on another,” explained Yuri, as his carpet swooped in to pick them up.

There was a second carpet underneath it, and this time it slid out for Jennifer to fly. It had sensed that she was more than ready, and Yuri said, “That’s enough of the dark for now. We are going to another place; a Place Deeper. Love drives the carpets, so hold thoughts of love and positive intent.”

“Sure,” she said, getting on and smiling wide with excitement.

They then flew out over the precipice to the north, and eventually to a doorway. They dismounted the carpets, which followed them through a portal that opened out onto the wide veranda of a beach shack. The carpets settled to the floor as the sight of the ocean and the sounds came to the hunters. The sights and smells were fresh and clean in themselves, and a huge difference from the oppressive energies of the void.

“Let’s wash all this negative energy away,” suggested Yuri, as he nodded towards the ocean.

“Sounds good, Yuri.”

They went into the water clothes and all, and dove in deeper, and floated, and swam. After a while Yuri body surfed a bit, while Jennifer sat down in the shallows and breathed in deeply the ocean air.

In time, Yuri came out, and said, “There’s someone I want you to meet. He’s a *crazy* surfer man, and not at all addicted to the drama that swamps the void. He is good for the soul too.”

“Yes, *the heavy drama*,” agreed Jennifer, now just realising its weight on her. “Why is it so heavy there?”

“Drama makes them feel alive.”

“Alive?”

“The void holds no meaning; no love and no meaningful purpose in that place, just plenty of ego and fear to fire up the emotions. People trapped there seek material things, addictions of all kinds, or thought forms that seem to hold meaning or make them feel alive. They seek meaning in the meaningless. They chase phantoms, and the drama helps them feel *something* as they wander in the endless nothing.”

“I think people try to see things, and try to help, even if they are a bit blinded?”

“Some, sure, and most, sometimes, but people choose themselves over knowledge mostly; their wants over open mindedness. Actually, many are lost in what they *believe* to be meaningful and wonder why they feel the pain of loss and unhappiness. We must all find our

way out of the mist, and we all can, but it takes humility and selflessness. Love and knowledge are requirements, as that is what we are made of,” finished Yuri, as they reached the shade of the veranda and sat on the outdoor chairs.

“Still...a shame,” commented Jennifer, feeling deep compassion and loss for the souls lost in the dysfunction, while noticing a man walking towards the hut.

“That’s why we remind them, as a mercy...

***“O SON OF SPIRIT!***

***Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou  
wast created.”<sup>1</sup>***

“I see, but I don’t use those words,” said Jennifer, “I use...

***“O MY SERVANT!***

***Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize  
thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.”<sup>13</sup>***

“Of course, I never thought to ask you. You always whisper it so gently,” realised Yuri.

“It was in me to say, and in me to say it...*that way.*”

“You must have done this work before.”

“Maybe?”

“You are *sure* better at it than Jack. Dis, I know,” stated Yuri, with a smile.

“*Heyyy, Yuri dude,*” called out The Surfer, walking up the sand towards the veranda.

“Who’s *the chick*, man?”

THE SURF WAS GREAT. The two men stayed out there a long time. The waves were so perfect that they had rested beyond them, rather than come into the beach for a while and miss some of the feast. The waves were here *now*, and the joy they could produce was for *today*, so they seized the opportunity.

They glided down the front of the waves, shooting out of the green room, and fighting their way back through good sized breakers to catch that next bit of magic. The physical exercise and the joy of the great sets invigorated them, and also kept them out there longer. But as all good things must come to an end, each came ashore. Owen stayed out longer, while Jack fell asleep with the exhaustion very soon after he laid back on his towel in the shade.

His eyes opened again just as Owen grabbed his towel. He had simply slept and not experienced anything; even a normal dream. This was not usual *at all*, and he now realised that the recent flow of knowledge beside that inner great ocean was going to be the last of these odd, but magical, experiences. He felt a strange mix of relief and grief, but just *knew* it was done, no matter what he felt. He then received a flash of a carpet, or an empty space where it should have been in his house. He knew it had meaning for what was now happening and felt happy at its strangely hidden yet clear message.

He then felt a little lost; like he was suddenly not going anywhere, even though he was. It was the strangest feeling after this initial acceptance. It was then he realised the grief more consciously; as it must be served. In any case, he definitely knew there was something now missing and that he had been moved on.

“What’s the glum look for, man?” asked Owen, noticing Jack’s demeanour.

“Feel like a post turtle all of a sudden, mate.”

“*A what?*” asked Owen, breaking into laughter.

“A post turtle, mate,” said Jack, with a smile.

“Where the *hell* did you get that saying?”

“It’s something I heard years back. Out west, I reckon? I can’t remember where. It’s like being a turtle on a post. Post *tortoise* might be closer; but basically, it was about someone being like a turtle on a post. You know, sure they’re going somewhere because their legs or fins are moving, but going nowhere, and not having a clue why or even that they’re on a post.”

“That’s *gold* mate. What a *great* analogy.”

“Yeah,” agreed Jack, but still feeling lost.

“So, you’re a post turtle,” commented Owen, again breaking into laughter. “You have a lot of friends out there, dude; and some very confident ones too.”

“I just suddenly feel like I don’t have any traction; don’t know where I’m going, or why, suddenly. Definitely a fish out of water.”

“Most people feel lost at times, dude.”

“Yeah mate. *Sure,*” responded Jack.

Owen started moving his arms like he was a post turtle and started laughing. Jack joined in the laughter as he accepted his post-turtle-ness.

JENNIFER AND YURI STAYED A WHILE. It was definitely good for her to have time here because she was trying to stay in each cycle, or journey, as long as she could. At least she felt that. She had retained memory of some of her longer term past here, knew that she was in a coma, and knew that she forgot most of her travels; this was her only *ground* in this particular trip at least. It was not much, but a reality with some parameters at least.

Her new reality *had definitely* taught her how to be in the moment, make the most of it, use what was available, and do what was in front of her. Her growing reliance on The Great Spirit allowed all these even more. But there was something about continuity of purpose, and bonds grown with those she met, that she could feel the loss of deep inside. These connections seemed to mean just as much as the knowledge; well possibly far more. She *certainly* came to know how memory was one of the greatest gifts of life, and powerful in the continuity of a person’s experience.

The Surfer had taken time to teach Jennifer how to surf; and some tips on spiritual poise. It had really helped, and it was his *thing*, after all.

“It’s my *thing*, Jen. What can I say?” he had said, looking as if he *just* couldn’t help being *really cool*.

They had just come in from a second day; a fourth session, on the waves.

“I’m struggling a bit,” admitted Jennifer.

“You’re doin’ okay, Jen,” replied The Surfer. “Give yourself more time.”

“I don’t know how much time I have though.”

“How’s that?”

“I just get moved on, and I lose memory of where I have been. One place I do remember was in a place that I thought was my life, but it was just a construct.”

“You won’t forget *me*, Jen,” commented The Surfer.

“Yep, maybe I’ll even forget *you*,” expressed Jennifer, with a cheeky smile.

The Surfer shook his head and made a face that made it clear that would be impossible; even doing the side on pose. A light bulb then went on and his face lit up. “Well, if you get back this way, we can get to know each other *over and over*,” with a face that said, *You’ll be really happy meeting me again and again*; all this to ease Jennifer’s pain a little.

“Sounds good to me,” said Jennifer, smiling and reaching down to grab her towel.

“So, most of your waves are *all new*,” stated The Surfer, now realising the intense nature of her predicament. “The Big Man is asking some big questions of you, Jen.”

“He is offering her a *great* opportunity,” said Yuri, who was swinging gently in a hammock in the shade nearby. He had a straw hat over his face and did not move from his relaxed place.

They looked at each other, and The Surfer raised his eyebrows. They both thought about that for a while as they dried themselves off.

“Don’t worry surfer man,” added Yuri. “She needs poise, and she will keep the skill. She has skills from other places that she does not even remember. Like muscle memory she

will know how to take the waves. That's part of why I brought her here; to learn to surf whatever might come."

"Thanks Yuri," said Jennifer, a little bit emotional.

"Love the emotion, Jen. It's a beautiful thing, Lady," said The Surfer, giving her a genuine, but joyful, look. "Emotion, like the ocean, changing and rolling."

Jennifer then sobbed hard, and continued to, as the tears flowed. The Surfer gave her a supportive hug as she let her pain go. It had not been easy at all. Some early journeys that she had forgotten still weighed on her somehow, like her heart was in deep pain from struggles there. As well as that, the challenge of hunting in the void with Yuri had been very intense.

"I chose to travel, but I am struggling with it," she said, after her body had released enough of the strain.

"Bud' kak budet. *Let it be*, moy sestra."

"Let her talk *it out*, mann," protested The Surfer.

"I'm okay."

"Comon' Jen, let's go for a walk up the beach, and you can let it *all* out."

"That sounds great; and thanks, Yuri."

She was very thankful for Yuri bringing her here, and for the words he just shared. She was also thankful for the understanding heart of The Surfer.

IT WAS VERY DIFFERENT FOR JACK. He was getting his feet more on the ground. His new pathway was providing a very different set of challenges; more real world ones again now. That felt good in a way; like he was back somehow; different, but back in life.

He was still in some grief for experiences and people unremembered, and for Travelling itself, it now felt to him though. He also couldn't get his mind off Jennifer. He had gone to see Rouha to ask where Jennifer had gone, but she had not known. She had decided that Jennifer would be in touch if she wanted to, and that it might be rude this early in the friendship to call. Rouha had explained to Jack that the problem with introducing one's deeper beliefs to someone too soon was that a trust and friendship may not have been built strong enough to carry it over any struggle with difference.

"I'm allowing her to come back to me. She had a very intense experience here that really challenged her," Rouha had said, not knowing of Jennifer's stronger experiences with Jack.

Jack could see where Rouha was coming from with this, but even if it had been an intense introduction, it did not mean that their relationship was *all* about sharing the Faith. To his way of thinking, Rouha was Jennifer's friend, and she should act that way, even though part of him could see her courteous intentions.

To him, too many religious people saw their duty to teach as the prime mover for personal contact with others, when it should always be love for them and a genuine shared appreciation of each other. There were certainly times when the sharing of someone's Faith was a simple and very direct thing, which was honest, but to him, to start a friendship or some other relationship with only the intention to teach someone showed a lack of integrity and good manners. It was controlling, dishonest, and could only produce a false bond of love. While Knowledge is first, surely love is still primary in the spirit.

Nothing is simple of course, as there are relationships of all kinds and mixes. A strong will to share the wisdom of one's Faith is not something to be apologetic about, but honesty was, to him, showing real love and *embodying* the requisites of any Faith. To *live* the integrity and nobility of what we profess to be true is the only true way to reach the hearts and minds of other souls. It should come from the genuine will to connect with others and be of service. But maybe he was being too simplistic in his views too, as life is complex, and so are connections; they rise from many different intentions.

In any case, he *could* understand Rouha's view, and she may have even been right to do as she did. He had found out from her about the group that had held the event where she had met Jennifer, explaining that he would follow that lead to find her. Rouha could see that he was quite different now, as their talk was one of caring shared reflection. He was not at all self-righteous and tactless like the reports from Naomi had suggested. They had talked about Jack's '*tell is how it is*' conversations in the firesides and the study group, but not as gossip, in reflections together.

Jack had then left; following the connections he found all the way to their end, but no one seemed to know where she was. He didn't even know where her Aunty lived.

# *Engines*

They had now reached deeper into the void. Even Yuri had never been this deep. Jennifer was having some bad feelings about where they were and encouraged her Russian compatriot toward higher ground. He followed her lead, and they climbed a high rocky outcrop to their left. The carpets slid along behind them as they always did during the hunt. They were there for quick retreats and Jennifer felt they watched their backs in a way.

Oft times the two hunters would seek a little guidance from the words and symbols on the carpets; most especially before they entered the void, as they inspired them and returned them to their deeper state. At other times they rode them when they found themselves somewhat unsure in the mist. They didn't realise that they could actually rely fully on the carpets and fly as they hunted. It was just that Yuri had seen it that way, as he was used to fighting on his feet, and Jennifer had just followed suit. The carpets were new to him, and there are always those who being so able often failed to use the power of assistance available to them.

The two now put their heads up over the lip of the rocky wall. They had aided each other in the climb and were a bit worn out when reaching the top. The carpets still sat behind

them, making sure that they did not fall back from exhaustion. Carpets will always wait to be used, even though they can make work very much easier.

Below them was a forbidding sight. Malevolence seemed to rise up from that place and almost choke them. There was a great arcing line of robes, black and white, in no particular order, waiting to scoop some dark mist from a fountain. They would come and bow before The Oppressor who floated above this fountain; scooping out their fill, well as much as they dared, and drinking deep before heading back into the mist. This was their sustenance and power source. They did not realise that it sprang from the dark mist of ignorance flowing out from the people of the world. They thought they were receiving it from this formless Oppressor. But the dark mist flowed from people; from people The Robes had successfully captured within the ignorance of their spiritual nature. All The Robes took people from true consciousness; even the White Robes of fundamentalist religion took people from their souls.

If the Robes had known of this confidence trick of The Oppressor, they would never have praised this Darkness, or sought its fountain; but ignorance is ignorant, and a lack of vision always hampers the powers of darkness. Always too proud or too hungry, they only saw themselves and the things of the world. In any case, the engine of darkness was firing on all cylinders below the two hunters. The Oppressor could feel it was more '*something*' as The Robes sought its fountain. Truth be known, they also felt they were *more existent* when they drew from The Oppressor's fountain. How sad things can often be, even when seemingly great.

If The Oppressor had a form other than the dark mist, or in truth the lack of light that actually demarcated it, it would have smiled to itself, to the side, as it could feel Yuri, and even more excitedly, Jennifer, nearby. It was not only being praised by The Robes; it was also sneaking up under the carpets behind Yuri and Jennifer. It then suddenly enveloped the

carpets with its mist while reaching out for Jennifer's ankles. Yuri cast himself at it as he saw it envelop her. But it had tricked Yuri, it had no form, so he only hit Jennifer, knocking her down the front slope to the great line of robes below.

THE SMALL GROUP WERE NEARING THE END. The study book had taken them some weeks, and they had very much enjoyed the last unit on the subject of *life after death*. It is such a mystery, and while the study did not paint a complete picture of it, it certainly painted a clear picture of its implications on our lives here.

Cynthia saw from it, and through the comments of these souls, that this Faith was intent on life here, while also about passing prepared for the next world, not simply intent on escaping it saved and unscathed like many others seemed to believe. It was about spiritual resilience rather than being saved from the hardships of life, an optimistic view of the potential of each human soul and the future of the human race. But mostly this unit lent itself to the wider understanding that this material life is a small part of an eternal journey, and that this had deep implications on our intent here.

The group were a few sections from the end now, and the whole study had taken precedence over working on the community project, as they found that discussing the quotes and learning to live them during the following week took up their time for now. They also came to realise that the quotes were powering up how they could go about things, with the study giving them small skills that they could use when they started, so there was no rush to lay down the foundation yet. Though, the intention to act was definitely strong in all of their hearts. Sue had let it unfold naturally, as snippets of conversation on what their service might look like in the light of the quotes happened here and there.

Sue, now asked, “Where does character come from? Why would people decide to do the good thing, or the hard, or sacrificial, thing?”

No one answered, so given a little time, she then added, “It is a deep question, but *where* does goodness *rise from*, and *is it apparent* in the manners and attitude of society generally?”

The group was all very quiet. Some not wanting to lead the conversation, and others hoping that someone else would begin the exploration.

“It is a big question, and not easily answered,” put in Brig. “Maybe we need to just look at the goodness in our lives and track it back to the source.”

“Yeah,” said Pete, feeling released from the impossible mental strain it took him to answer those questions.

“My parents, and society at large, were my source of good when I was a child. School too. They all rewarded good moral behaviour and punished a lack of character,” offered Cynthia.

“Society seems to reward weak character these days, in so many ways,” added Brig.

“Let’s keep to tracking where the good in people comes from,” requested Sue, as she knew that only goodness had form and reality; that building it would fill and light up the void.

“Sure, well, my parents too,” said Brig. “They were good people.”

“Where did our parents get it from? Where did society get it from?” then asked Sue.

“It’s all about belief systems,” put in Cynthia. “Every religion or culture has these social laws, or ways that are considered superior, and they do create good. Christianity was a wellspring of our whole culture then.”

“Some cultural things create a lot of bad, too, and with no disrespect, religions as well,” said Pete. “I mean, look at history.”

“For sure, mate. But they’ve reformed and re-birthed whole societies too. Beliefs of all kinds have kept order in almost every society since the dawn of man. I know for sure that *we* all sit on the Bible and all its lessons; and I reckon the Eastern world sits on its religions,” said Jack plainly, yet far more gently in tone than the others were used to with him.

“Whether we like it or not, Peter,” added Cynthia, “It is where morality and the call to nobility comes from in our societies.”

“We tossed it though, because it was made up by men,” said Pete.

“We are seeing in the world today *what is made up by men*,” offered Jack. “I know religion wasn’t perfect, and it became closed off to science and caused huge conflict at times in history, but it was where good character was taught and supported, and I think we threw the baby out with the bath water.”

“Many, in my day, began to think that religion had had its time, and we were moving on to a greater humanity in science, but it hasn’t appeared. Actually, people are now *very much* more selfish, *cut off*, and society is growing colder,” shared Cynthia.

“Maybe it’s all meant to be. Maybe we were meant to move on; to evolve. Maybe we were meant to become somewhat less for a while. Maybe we had to learn about our lack of knowledge, and our powerlessness, even beyond the great leaps forward technologically.

Maybe we were supposed to forget God and do whatever we liked for a while, so that we could see that the mind and the self would never be enough,” offered Jack.

“A lot of people wouldn’t agree with you, Jack. A lot of people see this as the age of enlightenment.”

“I get why they do, and in a way it’s true, because good change is happening too, but the breakdown, anger, depression, and anxiety of a meaningless world is growing too. This new societal ideology is not enough and getting more inflexible.”

“We believe that religion has to be renewed; as spirit, like all things, is alive. It moves and evolves. Things that do not grow, renew, and evolve, die out. All things like thought forms, invention, and science develop and evolve, and naturally so does religion. Old ethical systems can’t be useful in the current day. They have to evolve. For example, old views of slavery, race, and a women’s place. Religions like everything else erode and become brittle because of various dogmas and the ravages of age. The spring of their youth passes, so a new Child needs to be born into the world to renew the vigour of the spirit of life in humanity; the deeper spiritual truths restated and renewed,” explained Brig. “We don’t believe in different Faiths. We believe in one single unfolding story of the interaction with God; through His Messengers over time. Good rises from the Wisdom of these Fountains and the Light of these Suns are the continuing sustenance of The Creator.”

Pete then piped up and said, “I know what’s good, and I do it. I think we know *what’s good*, and we choose to do it, or we don’t. Call yourself what you like, we all know what’s good and what’s bad behaviour that we make excuses for.”

“So, goodness rises out of *us?*” posed Sue.

“Yep. *For sure*. Look at all those who went to war to protect others; their families and friends. No small sacrifice. It’s really powerful when you think about it. We’re capable of real selflessness, eh,” finished Pete, just now realising the power of higher human intent.

“Yes,” said Sue. “So, religion, culture, families, society *and us*, is where goodness can rise from?”

“And all its opposites can rise there too,” added Cynthia.

“Maybe from a misuse of these social structures, and ignorance of our higher selves; maybe a failure to evolve in these, or even making childish or rash changes rather than move onwards into the future with some consideration and moderation,” offered Brig.

“Maybe a lack of knowledge, and humility,” added Jack.

“It’s a big question, Sue,” said Pete.

“We have almost finished a whole unit on life after death, and the big implication of life after death is that we need to grow the higher human qualities and live a *good life here*. I for one want to succeed here. This is where good intent rises in me; in that motive, and that I really want to be of service to my fellows. I want to be a better human and do good things, and for me, all of this rises from the *knowledge* and *love* that I access through the Guidance and exhortations of The Blessed Beauty,” put in Sue.

“The two springs,” added Jack. “The Creative Word and our own will to bring good things into this place. I can feel the power of those words and the transformation they can bring. I think I want to join up with you lot.”

“*Really, Jack?*” asked Brig.

“Yep, *for sure*. I loved the other books you gave me, so I’m in, brother. It’s a powerful current you guys swim in.”

“Geeze, Jack. I thought you and I would be mates and *just do some stuff*,” said Pete, feeling a little put to the side.

“I’m still me, and I’m still up for all that, Pete. We can do plenty. It’s not about *us* anyway. It’s about what we can do, and even though we’re a small group, we can *really* grow something; *no matter* what each of us calls ourselves, eh.”

“Our Faith is not primarily about making more of us, Pete,” added Brig.

“Oh, com’on Brig, don’t spin yarns; *of course* it is,” challenged Pete.

Brig had a chuckle, but he was honest about what he had said. “We do see the majority of humanity coming to the unity of One Faith, but it’s up to them. We’re about reinvigorating the world by being channels of the *Spirit of the Age*; by sharing the Creative Word, by striving to be more in ourselves and how we live, and by actively building a new world. We’re supporting the *Spirit of the Age* by empowering people to help humanity help itself. We’re not bringin’ up a hammer to thump people with; that’s for sure.”

“Okay,” said Pete, believing Brig, but not believing him just a little bit too. It was not that he did not see the good intent and actions of this lot; it was just that religious people had a tendency to sell their religion with well-chosen words. Time would tell if they carried themselves through all this with real integrity and honesty, and to him, let him be as he was.

“We can finish off the last few sections next time,” requested Sue. “We can then look at what our intentions are, and re-look at what service we want to do individually, and as a group.”

“Now you’re talkin’,” said Pete. He then stepped right out of his box, as he wanted to be very clear to all there, and said, “I have come along to this course, and it has helped. I hope we can do some *good things*, but I have had to be patient with you all. Mainly for Jack’s sake and what we might learn here. But you need to know, that I am *never* goin’ to be one of you.”

“We respect that, Pete,” said Naomi, who had been quiet tonight. She was seeing a lot of her husband in Pete, and had a lot of respect for someone like him; who from his own essential goodness, with no clear guidance, had just wanted to do some *good things* and bring some *good stuff* to those around him.

“Doesn’t change what we’re gonna’ do out there, mate,” said Jack, and Pete could now see that it wasn’t.

SHE EVENTUALLY WOKE; but still a little dazed. She was sore all over, bleeding a little bit above her eye, and had cuts on her elbows and hands. All around her was a circular wall of Robes which was many rows deep. The Robes knew that she was to be The Oppressor’s prize. If the great fountain of the mists of oppression and ignorance could gain *form*, it could forever reign and they would be far more powerful; as they too held no form, no substance. They were only the shadows where light had failed to shine.

The dark mist rolled in from around the thousands of Robes now gathered, enveloping each circular row of robes as it went. The tempo of a chorus, that seemed to be created in the air around The Robes, rose and rose. The tempo was working up into a fever. These are the words that were heard.

*“The way is found,” exclaimed the Black.*

*“There is only one way,” proclaimed the White.*

*“The way is found,” sang the Black.*

*“There is only one way,” chanted the White.*

*“The way is found.”*

*“There is only one way.”*

*“The way is found.”*

*“There is only one way.”*

And on, and on, it went.

As the mist reached Jennifer the disembodied chorus of the words that were heard, and its sickening energy, reached full intensity, *suddenly* squeals of pain could be heard in amongst these terrible chants. It was the sound Robes made when being dispatched mostly, but *any* small niggle usually had them screaming. Hope rose higher in her as she now saw light pulses above the Robes, and amongst them. The stunned forms turned on the source of the attack, as the chorus faded into a mass of incoherent yelling, and the screams of this horrid crowd.

It was Yuri, and he swooped low over the crowd now, firing as he went. Many of The Robes gained a grip on the carpet though, so he swung high, and cast them off. He could see the Horrid Mist now fully enveloping Jennifer, taking advantage of the distraction. Yuri knew that it was now or never, as The Oppressor could hide any creature in its deep darkness. He shot towards her, as he would not be able to see which way she was taken from here if he didn't act quickly, so he had to enter the cloud and retrieve her now.

He swung down and was three meters from her when the Robes piled high on each other and quickly gained purchase and load on the carpet. Jennifer had seen him coming and held out her arms, but Yuri was dragged off the carpet and taken away by what seemed to be a wave in the mass of the crowd of Robes. The carpet hung there in the darkness, not moving at all. She could not believe that it did not race to his aid.

“*Yuri!*” screamed Jennifer.

“Don’t worry, my sister,” called out Yuri, as he was taken away. “My death is my freedom; this sacrifice, my deliverance. Be strong. Resist. *Stand.*”

Jennifer felt swamped by the darkness then, as thoughts of loss and fear filled her, but knowing that positive thoughts, trust in The Provider, and holding her will, would keep her safe right now and that these may allow her escape. But at that same moment The Oppressor distracted her; as is its power. Distraction at the right moment was one of its great weapons. It regularly took people from themselves, and regularly kept the weak minded obedient, by its use. The Dark Mist would now take her away to where it would work on her. In time it would gain entry, be embodied, and it would be out in the world and seen. The world would praise it; as it should.

If it actually held any form right at that moment, it would have laughed with a great peel of self-consumed laughter. It did not feel happiness though, just a fleeting high, as the void is the void, and only depression and addiction can live long term in the meaninglessness there.

The Dark Mist then suddenly cried out, with robes quickly scattering. Some squealed and dissipated in a light that shone into them from a very loud invader. Even the nearby roar of its engine, which told of its proximity, made them shudder and run. The Mist disappeared,

but the darkness of the wider void remained as a vehicle with seven lights roared in. The powerful beams dispersed all darkness. The lights were set on a frame, an arc of pipe steel which rose from the front of the machine, then over it and down to its rear, like a half circle. The machine was a souped-up dune buggy crossed with a tractor, but much bigger. There was a man at the wheel in an open cage below the arc of lights and above the engine that powered it. He now swung the arc of lights down to the left to chase the tails of the retreating robes.

“Are you okay, Miss?” he called out.

“I am now, *but Yuri.*”

“*I saw no one else.*”

Jennifer cried at the loss, as the man jumped down from the machine.

“You two should not have been this deep in the void without an engine.”

“Is he really gone?”

“I would say so, knowing this place.”

“It was like his death would set him free, or that losing it, trying to save me, would. I don’t really understand that.”

“We all have our reasons.”

“You know, he never talked about himself at all. I never realised that until now,” sobbed Jennifer, now realising how much he had been in service to her and his work, quite selflessly.

“Mmm,” said the man, in kindness.

“Who are you?”

“I’m Joe. I’m a mechanic.”

“A mechanic?”

“Yes, we work under the instruction of The Physician.”

“The Physician?”

“The Manifestation...who brings the light. He is very skilled, and we are trained to tend the engines that have been created in service to His Cause. We bring the beginning of light wherever we can; we bring The Remedy.”

“What was that *darkness*?”

“It’s The Oppressor. It grows to power in times of meaninglessness. It has no form, but it blinds vision, distracts minds, misinforms people, feeds arrogance, and it fires up the weak minded who hide away in their ignorance. Its power and reach are building now, but thankfully all the darker forces turn and run at the sight of an engine.”

“Why are you here in the darkness?”

“Where else would I be. The fields are fertile here now, and the light so apparent in the darkness. I help till and build the fields, and help people create communities of light.”

“You build it for them.”

“They do it themselves. They have to. They see the need, make the effort, and they learn how to build their own engines.”

“So, you are a travelling engine?”

“*Mechanic*, but yes. Although it does depend on...”

“Hey, Jen. *Wow*, what an engine!” said Change, appearing in a space suit and floating around in the darkness above the engine like he was in space.

He was slowly flipping over, and then pulled himself very slowly in towards the engine by a tether that wasn’t there. He finally went through all the carrying on, with all the flair of a professional actor, plus a bit more of course.

“Who’s the crazy guy?” asked the Joe.

“Hey, watch it mate. Don’t mess with me, I will *mess you up!*”

The mechanic laughed, and asked, “So who is he?”

“He’s Change,” answered Jennifer.

The mechanic was suitably impressed as well as enjoying the show, while Jennifer thoughts went to the fate of Yuri, she went to ask, but only got the hand from Change.

“Change is inevitable, Jen. I am good for people, and I keep them in transition and evolution. Don’t worry about Yuri. It’s *all* good.”

Jennifer nodded, accepting this life force’s wisdom, and her powerlessness, but still very sad inside for her Russian brother. He had helped her, and she was not able to help him; and that really hurt. She was not sure why Change was so flippant, or more truly, she really did not yet have a good understanding about the true nature of life, deeper places, and the everlasting soul.

Change had kept moving when he reached the floor, and now walked around to the machine looking at the engine from all sides like he knew what he was doing. You could tell he was not a pro, like those people who don’t know anything but pretend they were cool and all into it.

“Is this a Change 303?” he asked.

“No, it’s new. It’s a Transformation 909?”

“*Vrooom vrooom, man!*”

“*And it’s updated with all the heavy new Encounter tech’.*”

“*Wow!*”

“That’s the *unlimited potential drive*, right there,” said Joe, pointing to the engine under the driver’s seat. “It’s powered by *True Understanding*. We tried to run them with just unity for a while, but the new drives would only idle. Then we added *individual initiative* injectors, and *bam!*”

“*Nice!*”

“It’s *rock and roll, alright*. I really want to upgrade it to a Ten-Lighter, but I can’t stop doing what I’m doing right now.”

“*Really, ten lights!*” said Change, like he meant it. But as he was such a foundational essence of life that he already knew that. He just loved doing the whole excited by change thing with people, and seeing people excited by the evolution of things.

“*Yep.*”

“*Crazy!*” said Change, now in his nineteen sixties shades, flairs, and bandana. “I bet they drive The Robes to distraction.”

“*Yep*, those Robes can’t handle anything that produces this much light, let alone the amount of fertile ground we can till with them. They hate the rich worked soils. No inactive rocky ground for them to hide and grow in.”

Suddenly there was a loud musical horn, and a loud roar. It was a *ten-lighter*, and it roared in and halted beside the other engine.

“What the .... is going on! Are you all ..... nuts! Only a Ten-Lighter can take out that many of those ..... creatures!”

“*Apparently not*, sister. Steady up on all the *swearing, eh!*” responded the Mechanic, confident in his engine.

“Sure, whatever the .... you say.”

Change and Jennifer were laughing. The lady was not sugar and spice and all things nice. She was full of life, kicking the proverbial, and taking names. She was fired up, had been going hard with the work, and took no prisoners. But, as rough and full on as she was, she had made great efforts and certainly helped many people make their own engines. She had empowered many to work their own soil with great kindness and patience; but when she was in the dark mist...well...*watch out darkness!*

“You took my kill. I don’t like anyone ..... with *my kill*,” continued the lady. “I’ve been tracking that dark misty ... . . . . . for a while now.”

All of them laughed harder, as there was no way she was going to hold back on the swearing, or *anything else*, for that matter.

“Laugh away, *that thing*’s causing the void. Who *the hell* are you people anyway?”

“Hey, *steady up*. This lady *lost a friend* today,” explained the Mechanic.

“Oh, sorry for your loss, love,” said the lady, seeming to settle, and with genuine caring. The change was very quick and took them all by surprise. Well, except for Change, of course.

Jennifer started to cry again, and the lady's demeanour changed some more. She jumped down from her engine to give Jennifer a big momma hug while she let some stuff out.

"She always cries," said Change, like he was an old friend.

Jennifer looked up, and said, "I hardly know you, *sixties boy*."

"That's *the stuff*, love. Tell him how it ..... *is!*" charged the lady mechanic.

They all started laughing again, and Jennifer looked at Change as she did. He gave her a look that said, '*We are old friends. We have had, and will have, endless life experiences together*'.

She shook her head as she came to an even deeper realisation of this friend; a friend that Change has been to us all, even though he can be quite hurtful and shocking. He bubbles up continually in our lives, ever there, with every moment, in every small change and great adventure.

ANOTHER GROWTH ENGINE WAS STILL FIRING ALONG NICELY. Sue and the others were doing the final section of this study course. It was a simple course yet held a gentleness and depth that made the experience very strong and beautiful. Coming together regularly too, had grown trust and bonds of good favour between them all. It had cemented them together for what they would do out in the community.

This small section they now read through talked about how the course had reminded them, or informed them, of their spiritual nature, its powers, and its responsibilities. That as this physical life is a small part of an eternal journey and people being spiritual in essence, how would, or may, their actions in the future now be informed by a different intent. Some of

the questions it used to help the participants reflect on the course, and the implications of all they had studied on their future actions, were in part more suited to those who held this Faith. But there were other questions that applied to all; in fact, Cynthia had said, that even those who didn't hold this Faith could get something from answering *all* the questions, and she believed they all should, even though she was not sure of the fourth one.

Sue was very happy about that, as she had wanted to introduce that idea, but coming from Cynthia made it very natural. Sue had then added, "The truth of the matter is that all reflective questions are valuable; to see yourself, see for yourself, and gain a more purposeful and meaningful foothold in life."

So, they were now all in the throes of writing down some answers to the four questions; or really one question with four aspects to it. The air was silent and almost meditative as each reflected and put their thoughts to paper. Cynthia and Pete asked a few questions here and there, and Sue obliged with answers; most which returned them to the quotes in the book, but she shared some understanding where required. She had never done this course with people beyond her Faith before, and it had been challenging, fulfilling, and confirming. She was beginning to understand that the courses *were* universal; that people who decided to study these books *wanted to*, got a lot out of them, and mostly enjoyed them and the regular company.

After a while they talked over the four questions; but not in order. They did the first and fourth questions for starters, and some of Pete and Cynthia's answers were very clarifying for Brig and Jack, as the flower blooms from all the differing responses of those who studied these courses. The group then moved onto the second and third questions. Sue believed this was for the best, owing to the mix in their particular group. It was in the

discussion on these last two questions that the clear answers for what they all wanted to do as a community service came out. This discussion was quite long and animated.

As they had started this discussion, they realised that each had quite different intentions for their service; yet were all leading to the same end. Even though they had worked out the general idea of what they may do early in the study, and bits of ideas as they went along, this was the *put it all in place* part; making it real, what each would actually do and felt comfortable to do. It all started to coalesce, and they could all see the power of each person's offering as this new creation became what it became. It was far more powerful than one idea being fought for, as most things seemed to be done in the world, because all of them had put forward something very valuable and became part of the whole.

“So, it's all youth focused then?” tendered Brig.

“Yep, seems that way. It's coming together, eh,” said Pete.

“So, life skills, like budgeting to cooking, to basic home repair skills, and character development with the Junior Youth spiritual empowerment courses?” put in Naomi.

“They can be done with each other, with each of us doing a part,” suggested Brig.

“Yep, I like it that we're doing the life skills over a few weeks each, along with the spiritual empowerment, and maybe we can even invite guests to come along and share their skills or arts at times,” added Jack.

“Yep, and we can get the youth working out what kind of community service *they* would like to do, as we go,” said Naomi, very pleased with the evolving outcome.

“But aren't *we* doing the community service?” asked Pete.

“*Yes*. Aren't *we* providing the service?” added Cynthia.

“I think we are just starting something,” ventured Jack, with his clear view of what potentials lay in these early drawings of the foundation they were building.

“It may end up just being the beginning of something. We are about empowering youth to see and *use* their own talents and abilities; *to see to* their own spiritual, intellectual, and even material development. We can build capacity in the youth that allows *them* to act just as we’re doing now, and believe me, they are more than ready to get into life and community action at eleven or twelve,” explained Brig.

“I don’t want to get into something *too* huge,” said Pete, and Cynthia agreed.

“*They* will build it. We’ll help them build themselves. You will just do your bit, I will do my bit, and they will do their bit. It doesn’t have to be some huge undertaking for any of us. Many hands make light work, eh,” said Brig.

“It will evolve almost on its own, and you can do more, or less, as it goes along,” added Sue.

“I see,” said Cynthia.

“Wow, this is *really* something. Why hasn’t stuff like this been done before,” asked Pete, now beginning to see the real power that existed in any community, and how things added to each other to become more.

“We just forgot how to look after ourselves, Pete. We got good, as a whole people, at supply of goods and services, and governance, which took a lot of the responsibility and effort out of our lives. It was, and still is, a good thing, but *we* need to steer our future and build our own communities and neighbourhoods as well,” put in Jack, now very clear on the process they were embarking on. He had done this before, he knew it; he must have done this

kind of work many times. He could feel the skills, insights, and experience required, lining up in his conscious knowledge to come out as they discussed their plans.

“So, how do we run the Youth empowerment course? Who is going to do that?” asked Pete.

“Well, three of us are trained to do it because we’ve done all of the seven core study circle courses. If you, or Jack, or Cynthia, want to continue on with the series of training courses, we can do that too. We can even do these main courses with the youth in time, and they can continue what we are doing, or expand activities themselves. You see, these courses can build the capacity of more and more people, can be self-replicating, and multiply. They are the engine that can bring out potentials already in all of us and build our capacity.”

“I see how this is building, but I don’t get the self-replicating thing,” said Pete, a little confused.

“I facilitated this course, and I can tutor other courses that help with skills and insights in community building. We have just done the first book of seven main books. I can help grow new facilitators by taking people through these courses. They can then build their own growth engines. It’s not catching fish, it’s not just teaching people how to catch fish, it is *teaching people how to teach people* how to catch fish; but in this case how to empower people gain the capacity to empower others take charge of their own future. This can exponentially grow to more and more people participating into the future; as well as expand out to other neighbourhoods to grow more courses, more tutors, and more capacity in other souls. It is self-growing. We believe these courses have *limitless potential*,” explained Sue.

“That’s really powerful,” commented Pete. “So, *again*, why has this *not* been out there?”

“Willing people, I suppose, and our struggle to help people see its value and power. We have struggled due to the low trust in this society generally about religion. Many people told me they would like to do this, but without the religion part. But these community empowerment engines are powerful because of The Creative Word; *True Understanding* that transforms people, and so transforms communities. We can’t water them down or the courses or the process will have far less effect. The spiritual attitude is paramount.”

“Why not! People would rush at it if it wasn’t religious.”

“Because *it is* religious, and it *needs* the *spirit* for it to grow and be maintained. That’s why *so* many community projects haven’t worked so well, or run out of people, impetus, time, will, or funding. It has to be the people themselves creating their own future and the *actual* power source has to be the *true understanding* grown in those who serve the process, this way it becomes a part of life and ever-advancing,” explained Naomi.

“The real wisdom in the Blessed Beauty’s writings guides and powers us, and all our efforts. Even *we* have tried to do a lot of things our own way, and with our own mindsets, only to realise that there was so much more possible using the power in the guidance of His words. From my experience, Pete, it’s just the way it is,” added Brig.

“And you are welcome to see and do as you wish, Peter,” said Sue. “I believe we are *all* putting in our bit, and we should use it *all*, and create a great project *together*.”

They all agreed, and then Sue asked Naomi to say a prayer for the success of their project.

Sue was a good mechanic, and she had just brought one light of ‘*the limitless potential engine*’ to bear on the environment, and potential soil, here. She could also see that these people were just beginning to build a new engine too. It was a great feeling that they

were learning in some humility together, and she was excited to be heading out there with these new gardeners, and maybe even *new mechanics* in the making.

“I would just like to read something, to end our course,” she requested. “It’s a quote from The Guardian. He has passed away now, but we still look to his words as well as our Sacred Writings,” she added, referring her words to Pete and Cynthia. “These words were written to the people of our Faith, but again, they can resonate with all of us, no matter what our belief or purpose may be, and so I would like to share them as a service to our group as we embark on this project.”

*“Not by the force of numbers, not by the mere exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organized campaign of teaching -- no matter how worldwide and elaborate in its character -- not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and sceptical age the supreme claim of the Abha Revelation. One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.”<sup>14</sup>*

After a short silence, Pete said, “Yep, I’m not into it, but I feel that *deep*. I love what he said about integrity, and your integrity is what’s kept me here; nothin’ less.”

Brig then piped up and said, that he and Sue must have been on the same wavelength, as he had also brought along a quote to share from the son of the Abha Beauty. He said it was also to help inspire them, and with the permission of the whole group, he read it out.

*“Look ye not upon the fewness of thy numbers, rather, seek ye out hearts that are pure. One consecrated soul is preferable to a thousand other souls. If a small number of people gather lovingly together, with absolute purity and sanctity, with their hearts free of the world, experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the powerful magnetic forces of the Divine, and being at one in their happy fellowship, that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth. The nature of that band of people, the words they speak, the deeds they do, will unleash the bestowals of Heaven, and provide a foretaste of eternal bliss.”<sup>15</sup>*

The small group of friends felt the beauty of this moment together, and all sat there for a short while. They could all feel something real and strong. They felt empowered in their purpose about doing this high-minded service together and felt the connection with each other deeply.

Then Pete just jumped up, like he could not contain himself, saying, “Let’s *do* this thing,” to the laughter and agreement of all there.

# Striving

## ***Soul Overcoming***

*In the free flow of spirit, the soul does dance,  
afraid of no enemy, which may bring its stance.  
Not afraid to be poor, to struggle, to die.  
Not afraid of something new; nor afraid to try.*

*It trusts that all that is needed, will be supplied,  
as it flows along, in this perfect tide.  
Not afraid to give out, nor wishing reward.  
Not needing to judge; easily forgiving things untoward.*

*Living right here and now, and celebrating all difference,  
it wanders in wonder, not knowing of ignorance.  
Not attached, nor concerned, with the endless things of the world.  
Not addicted to emotions, or words, in the whirl.*

*Simply enjoying the things of life, and opening new doors,  
forgetful of its own power, seeing humour in its flaws.  
Not combative, nor aggressive, sad, or sarcastic.  
Not aloof, controlling, or afraid of...being elastic.*

*It celebrates other's talents, successes, effort, and grit,*

*following its intuitive flow, always humble; heart in mitt.  
Not apathetic, or arrogant, nor even hiding in kindness.  
Not opinionated, or fearful, it revels in open mindedness.*

*It seeks and speaks the truth at all turns, and sees for itself,  
is guided by Wisdom, and dreams not of it's self.  
No negative thoughts, no self-pity or loss.  
Not ever losing trust; never trading faith...for dross.*

*Passionately seeking the truth of any matter;  
showing humility, and firmness, when others may shatter.  
Not afraid of any knowledge, and enjoying of science.  
No lack of faith; no thought that is not of trust, or reliance.*

*Just doing life stuff, in self-death running free,  
and being in heaven; here, and there, and when all is at sea.  
Easily content, sacrificial, and self-sustaining.  
It is humble, and happy, with its gifts ever raining.*

Jack woke from his dream, which had housed these words; so appreciative of this small experience that he decided to write down all he could remember of it. He was content with whatever was granted to him now. After writing as much as he remembered of the poem down, he went out on his veranda, sitting there in the beauty of the moment and in appreciation of the peace in his heart. He would not go surfing today; today was a day to just potter and do some jobs around the place.

He let his whole being relax as he looked out into the limitless sky, watching the birds go about their morning business. It was nice to be able to sit back. Life, work, and working on his part of the group's project had kept him very busy, and he appreciated this small respite. It was then he thought of Judy. He had not been back to see her; to encourage her. He had been tardy in his support of her, deciding that he would water his trees and then definitely head over to *annoy* his sister. He laughed as he thought of the facial response he would receive, even though somehow deep inside he knew she needed him and wanted him to be there for her.

As he got up, he forgot the trees, and grabbed his keys. He was just moving as life willed in the flow of the current of the spirit, and it was taking him to Judy's place right now.

It was only a five-minute drive, and as he pulled up Judy was washing down her veranda, and he got the look. The *'Oh God its Jack coming to help me again'* look. She had been on her own journey since that day and the odd visit.

He turned off the engine, and called from the car, "Washing down *Fortress Judy*, eh."

"Get stuffed, Jack."

He didn't want to be hard. He had just decided to crack her defences quickly, and only because he needed too. The last time he visited he had to break through again too, even encouraged her to see someone; to get someone else to help lift the load. She was resistant, even though she had seemed very willing to escape her pain two visits ago. It seemed that no matter how positive she had become at the times he visited, she would fall into the darkness again.

"Com'on in. I was wanting a cup of tea now, anyway," she continued.

He got out of his car and followed her into the kitchen. Many a time he had come up here, sat in the kitchen with her talking, or had tea with her and her husband and the boys; many a time he had sat on the veranda with her throwing up unhappy hand signals at the world and the universe. She just wanted love, and respect, and to be seen and valued, but she had struggled to gain it, as some do in this life. *"It seems God tests us with what we want most,"* he thought, as he sat down on a stool at the kitchen bench.

He then chuckled inside, as he thought that *God* had never even entered his thoughts for a *very* long time before his heart attack. He and his sister had been brought up Christian, and he knew that she did believe in God behind all those walls somewhere, but she was still

angry at Him. It was hard for people who felt that they lived a good life, only to receive pain from others in return for their sacrifice and love. The thing they miss though is that it is not about another's state, it is about our own. Love is an outward flowing force, and about how much we love, not how much others may. "*Advancement of the spirit is not about another,*" he thought.

Life to him now was a conversation with God, and living His guidance, and he looked within to grow and learn; then acted in life to test out new growth within. We always need to look to ourselves, and strive to grow, as it is only, *deep there*, that unassailable change may be made. "*Striving brings forth knowledge and tests its worth,*" he thought, feeling a deep sense of confirmation strengthen his core at the flow of this understanding. He had found a little more of himself again today, as we do when we seek to be of service to others.

"So little brother, come to tell me how it is again," commented Judy, as she put on the hot water jug.

"Yep," said Jack, with a big smile.

"Oh, God!" said Judy. "Please, just save it for someone else, Jack."

"You know, Judy. You see me as just another person judging you and believing that you don't know enough to regulate your own life, but I don't, and I don't believe I know it all. It's only *love* that made me speak up these last few times, and I want to be of some service to you. I just think that we can all do with other heads, and hearts, in our struggles, when it's healthy to."

"But I don't *want* you in *mine*, Jack."

“Do you *really* mean that? You’re my sister, and I feel that I *have* to. I believe I have understanding that can help you *no end*,” he explained, feeling huge flows of life experience, psychology and reading, let alone deeper understandings, all now mixed together within him.

“I do not *want* your help anymore, Jack. I *want* to be *left alone*.”

He sat back, and sadness filled his soul. He saw that it was not his place if she did not want him in it. He could see that he was only another annoyance to her, as he sensed her low opinion of what he had to give. It would have been bad mannered, and maybe arrogant, for him to force the issue further now. Maybe he didn’t even *really get* where she was at. He just felt that he had the knowledge to be of aid to her, and now hoped like hell that he was wrong about her ability, to eventually, be able to pull herself out of this tailspin of negative thoughts. But his heart was breaking as the words of a Simon and Garfunkel song then came to him...

**““Fools,” said I, “You do not know. Silence, like a cancer, grows. Hear my words that I might teach you. Take my arms that I might reach you.” But my words, like silent raindrops fell, And echoed in the wells, of silence.”<sup>16</sup>**

# *Building*

The preparations for their project had taught the small group quite a lot, and thankfully insurances held by Sue's Faith would cover what they were doing; well mostly, their Local Spiritual Assembly deciding to arrange any further cover required. The small group were all very happy about having that worry taken off them, having had afternoon tea with the members of this local institution. The members had been very helpful, even offering to provide some basic funds for start-up as well. Cynthia and Pete felt a deeper sense of oneness in this meeting and the clear feeling that they were definitely supported in wanting to make the world a better place.

Brig was on this local institution and was very happy with the honesty and genuine allowance of its members at the meeting. They were growing as an institution, he had thought, and had watched as they aided the process with offers of backup and putting in some ideas that might help the project to fruition. There was no element, or even hint, of control. There was no intellectual arrogance from anyone. It was just another group of people with them in building and learning together.

Pete had still been a little concerned about the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment programme and had raised his concern with the people there that day as he was still a bit

uncomfortable with a particular religion being put forward by this process. A very honest and reasoned discussion had taken place on that subject, and the general response was that this part of the planned activities was simply this Faith's gift, and that the intent of the programme was to be of service; that it was to spiritually empower youth. Also, that they had found that it had been very powerful to people of all beliefs, and very much so, those with none at all, in many settings the world over. They had seen that building character in youth, as well as the concept of selfless service inherent in the activity, had built stronger communities.

The discussion had eventually centred on a comment by Jack. He had commented that you can't have '*spirit in a bottle*'. A lady on this local institution had asked what he meant by that, and more discussion followed. What they all came to in the end was that spirit was spirit, and that it came from somewhere. It couldn't be manufactured, and that generic intellectual versions did not hold *this particular* water; somehow. It simply was *in* something, or it wasn't. The conversation then moved on to a discussion on Pete's question, "Can't you do spirit without God?"

The discussion was helpful as each put in and they came to a unified place on it. Not that Pete had agreed totally, but he could definitely feel the spirit here and felt the humility in these people, just as he felt it in the people of their small study group. He had felt this *spirit* in the words he had studied, and now understood that this same ethos or energy was what actually powered the youth character development courses, the course he had completed, and that it could power other community development.

Jack had said at the end of the discussion, "It's like saying '*I love the rays of the sun because they produce light and warmth, but block out that annoying sun, will you*', or '*We*

*can turn on this bulb over here. It will be just as good as the sun'. It just isn't; to me anyway."*

"There's certainly something in all that," commented Cynthia at the time, while still contemplating the nature of churches and other holy places, and what made them feel different. "*What was it that made philosophy and poetry different to religious writings?*" she had thought. These were some things she was looking forward to exploring for herself and reflecting on.

Enough is to say that in the end they had explored the subject together, and all had been quite happy in their own way, on the nature of all the aspects of this community development project. They were all very sure of the need for it in the community, that it would be useful, and that it would be inspiring to the youth who attended.

There was also a suggestion by one of the members of the local body that they should get any parents and older youth to be part of the process from the outset, as then it would have more life and longevity. It would be more about people helping themselves and building capacity in the community itself, for *its* future, rather than just another service being provided. The lady had then made it clear that this understanding was a prime, and foundational, element in their experiences in community development all over the globe. Cynthia could sense the depth of experience in the words and explanations, then realising that she was a part of something very big; a small part of a great movement of ordinary people bringing change on the ground all around the world.

The group would now hire a room in the local Community Place, cheaper hire rooms provided by the local government, to present their project to all interested. They would put out flyers on notice boards and go out and introduce their community project at some school Parent and Citizens meetings. These were to publicise and invite people to their presentation;

that was, after they had all completed the Child Protection course. Some training on the nature of abuse, and the calculating the element of risk to the youth in their activities, was required for the protection of the young people they hoped to empower. That had been made clear by Sue, and also that she could provide this training one afternoon or evening.

It was in all this that Pete started realising that their small group was a branch of a tree. They would produce fruit, but Sue's Faith was like the trunk with the other branches and leaves providing the support and some sustenance to their activities. He was not into red tape, so it suited him that these people were all powered up and organised. All this, as well as the experience they could provide from all they had experienced with these kinds of things. He was beginning to see the bigger picture, just as Cynthia had earlier in the meeting that day.

The group were now at Brig's place and working on the presentation. They had all talked with friends and family about the nature of their project; for interest's sake, and to see if any of them wanted to be a part of it, or if they knew some youth who might like to attend the presentation night. They were also on the lookout for older youth who may want to become what they called an 'animator'. A youth group mentor of sorts who could eventually learn to facilitate the Spiritual Empowerment part of the youth activities they had planned. It was Brig and Naomi who had put their hand up for now though. But Jack was also keen to learn about being an animator, as well as wanting to share some of his practical life skills with the young ones.

"Any older youth interested in animating would have to go through the training. You too, Jack," explained Sue.

"What training?" asked Pete.

“Study circle books, like the one we all did together. I did mention to you that I could provide the training for others to develop the youth group, and also could eventually provide the training for anyone who wanted to be a tutor of *all* of the study circle courses in time.”

“That’s right, and it wouldn’t have to be us. Better it is an older youth, or a parent maybe, who’s interested in developing capacity in young people,” put in Jack, not sure if he really knew what he was talking about.

“This process really needs to be a continuing one to make a real difference,” added Brig. “It needs to come from the people who live here.”

“*We* live here, Brig,” offered Pete.

Brig smiled, and said, “Yep, we *sure are from here*, brother. Maybe it’s just that we can help build *this one*, let the people involved take charge eventually, and maybe then go on to help build others.”

“*This one is my thing*, mate,” stated Pete, very sure he would find a great deal of purpose and meaning in what they had already planned.

“Sure. I get you, Pete. All power to ya’. It’s just that for it to grow, and become part of this community into the future, people need to join in and take part. You know, grow their capacity. They need to take charge of their own future, as we have been saying.”

“Well, I suppose we start with the youth group and go from there,” said Pete, now seeing more, but calling the group back to the job at hand.

“Yep, *one step at a time*; but we need to have a *vision*. Maybe when we meet with the parents and youth to introduce the course, we can ask them about *their* hopes, and *their* vision for their kids and the area,” added Naomi.

“Yep, it needs to be a community project, *by the community*, for the community,” put in Cynthia.

“Yes, we will need to stress that,” said Sue, very happy with Cynthia’s clear grasp of this core understanding.

“So, we have to get this presentation ready, and decide which P&C’s we are going to see,” offered Jack, to get the crew focused again on the job at hand, and he got a nod from Pete for doing so.

“Which schools will we go to?”

“It doesn’t really matter, but from experience, it is good to do one or two first up, and see how we go,” put in Brig.

“We may get a huge response from one school, so better we do them more *one at a time*,” offered Naomi. “I have a good connection with the principal of one of the High Schools.”

“Okay,” said Pete, as the others nodded. “So, how do we start the presentation?”

They were all very appreciative of the conversation, and where it went. The process was unfolding ahead of them as they had done and were doing the work. Even small things are not simple, but with the will and determination of just a few people, and the understanding that *most things are a process*, one step at a time, much could be done.

THE ENGINES MADE IT TO THE EDGE OF THE VOID. The lady mechanic, who had eventually confided to Jennifer that her name was Trina, which she made *very* clear was a *locked vault of confidence*, was now visiting one of the places where she had brought the ten-

lighter to bear. Jennifer *had* spent some time with Joe on his machine but was now on the bigger one with the lady mechanic.

People here were tilling the soil and many fruit trees had been grown. As the two engines wandered through the rich soiled and verdant fields, they saw some new engines too. There were even some now partially completed in the sheds nearby the fields.

“This place is alive. Plenty of light, and people taking part,” called out Joe, from his machine.

“Yep. This place was bad when I got here. Robes everywhere, and only a small daytime sky. The ground was almost dead, but when the people first saw the lights of my machine they responded quickly and were very keen to learn. It was a very sad place, and most felt powerless.”

“But look at it now,” commented Jennifer, as she watched some children going off to school. “*The small ones are so cute,*” she thought.

“Yeah, *nice work,* sister,” said Joe.

“Yeah, you are just lucky that even you made it here, *little man.*”

He looked at her, a little taken back. He was trying to understand her a little, and said, “You don’t swear out here.”

“The people don’t like it here. I have to respect them, and it’s not good for the kids. *That,* and I really only get *my mean on* for the darker places of the void,” explained Trina.

“*Sure,*” said Joe.

“*Sure, what, piston head?!*”

“Just, *sure*,” responded the mechanic, shaking his head and looking away.

He was thinking that this one had real issues and was definitely all armoured up, but he assumed it was for a reason. There was no judgement in him, even though there was some hurt. He didn't understand her aggression but at least it was something he could see. He had found that people played all sorts of games, mainly because of one fear or another. They hid away in their words then suddenly jumped out with a good slap. Trying to understand what was going on inside people had helped him in the past, but it had gone against him too, because no matter how good you get at understanding others, you can be terribly wrong at times. In the end Joe had learned that it was just better *to be him* and communicate honestly. To let *them be them*, and just get on with doing what he had to do.

The engines had kept on through this large and growing community, and were now on the edge of it, when Jennifer asked, “Aren't we staying here?”

“No, Jen. Some of us move around a lot. Me and the likes of *gear head* over there, help start places. I mean, we may stay a good while, and maybe one day we will stay put, but for now there's still a need for ranging mechanics like us.”

“You don't like him, do you?” asked Jennifer, but really as a statement.

“Oh. He's *probably* okay,” said Trina, going a little red. “I don't really mean what I say sometimes. It's just the way I am.”

“He seems to know his stuff.”

“He did *really well* even *finding* you with that old machine. You were deep in the dark, and it *was* the rumble of his engine that alerted me. It's got a *real* nice rumble, and some *great* lights, but don't tell him that.”

“*Why not?* It’s good to encourage people.”

“*Sure*, but we can’t get cocky. These machines are not ours. We share our abilities, but they belong to those who learn to use them, and he looks a little cocky to me.”

“You don’t *even know him*.”

“*Hmm, he chased off my quarry*,” accused Trina, as she went red again, and turned to pretend to check a gauge.

Jennifer liked Trina, even though she was not yet sure of what was going on with her. She certainly had a lot of time for Joe. He and Jennifer had had some long talks as the machines made their way out of the void. He was a gem as far as she could see. Both these souls had risked their lives for her, and they were now *definitely* her *friends*. A thought of Yuri then came, and she sobbed just a little. Fortunately, Trina was ‘*busy*’, and Joe was looking at the green fields and fruit orchards, as the engines roared down the road.

IT HAD FINALLY COME TO THE PRESENTATION NIGHT. There were more than a few nerves, but Naomi explained that the presentation was *all about the people* who had come to listen. “It’s not about us”, she had said. They were there to give an honest talk on what they planned to do, and why they thought it would be beneficial to the youth, and the community.

That didn’t help Pete. He was a nervous wreck. Cynthia was actually excited to tell how she was going to share the crafts and nutrition tips with the youth; especially clay work. She said to Pete that she knew these skills made for a far better life, and that she felt alive knowing she could now give them to others. She was going to explain what she planned to do, as well as tell these people how she felt about it. That thankfully reminded Pete of how

alive he felt when he and Jack had started on this journey. He then said he would only use a little bit of what he had prepared, and just tell the story of how all this happened.

“That’s a great idea,” said Jack.

“From the heart, Peter” added Cynthia.

“*Now*, I’m feelin’ the joy,” said Pete, laughing as he did.

It turned out that Naomi had done a lot of this kind of work, and so she was to be the main stay of the presentation. She had these skills from all the community development courses she had done, doing children’s classes, from other meetings, and what they called *tutor encounters*. These tutor encounters were where facilitators of the study circles like Sue would get together and learn to do the community development courses more effectively. They were always learning. Everyone it seemed in this Faith, and those beyond it, taking part in these activities, were constantly learning; as individuals and as a collective.

She now welcomed the people who had come to the night and started with a small series of questions about what they saw was needed in their community and what they hoped for their children and youth. This was to help them take ownership right at the beginning, be empowered, and help them understand that this was about *them*, *their* children, and *this* community.

After the small exploration she explained a little about the life skill courses and the character-building courses. There were about twenty people there, about a quarter of them youth, which was a good turnout for this kind of thing. Apparently, and quite providentially, these community efforts always started with a small amount of people and tended to grow as time went on quite naturally and sustainably. Naomi and Brig had even gone out and scouted around the area one day before. It was to ask people if they saw any use for the courses, to

talk with them about what *they* wanted for *their* children and youth, and also to invite anyone interested to this presentation night.

In any case, Naomi did not leave much out in the short time she talked, also mentioning that in the longer term, the youth and other participants might even feel so encouraged by how things develop with the junior youth empowerment that they *all* might seek a wider vision for their community together; basically, that the youth group might just be the beginning of something bigger.

Naomi then reiterated that the weekly afternoon youth group would about practical skills and spiritual empowerment; and that the youth would develop their own community project, or even a number of them, over time. She even added that the youth may feel they want to do neighbourhood children's classes or even develop more youth spiritual empowerment groups in time.

After she had framed it all for those there, she explained that the people involved in this project were now going to share what they would be individually doing with the youth. The others followed on from each other, and their small introductions were well received; most especially Pete's story, which was very honest about his own process of inspiration and his doubts.

At the end there was a question time, most of which seemed to be centred on the spiritual empowerment programme. Brig explained it well, setting it on the ground and with concrete examples from his experience with these groups. But even then, there was still need for parents to feel at ease to send their children along. Brig then offered to sit down with any parent, with the books, and show them how they are really powerful for these young saplings. "I have brought some of the workbooks along, and after you get something to eat and a cuppa', we can go over a bit of them together," he finished.

After the question time had ended, Naomi shared her own thoughts on youth and the power of this time in their life, eleven years to fifteen years old, to close of the presentation. She said, “Life is a wonderful reality in which the newly individualised souls begin their journey. That journey is a very practical one, because all of our lives are like growing and nurturing the trees of ourselves, our children, and each other, in this place. Any seed may produce the potential within it, or it may not. So, if it can be tended and watered, it can give the full expression of itself in the world; in what it *can* give, and *uniquely* give.

If the courses can grow more strength and vibrancy in the youth then they may produce more fruit, then the collective world will grow more verdant. The potential of many youths have been wasted sadly; the ones cast upon barren ground, some over-indulged, or just allowed to grow wild. We have to care, and we all have to *participate* in growing nurturing communities; these new gardens, with strong trees, fragrant blooms, and wonderful fruits. *We* have the ability to grow our own future if we just muck in together and *take part*.

We believe that this youth group can increase the youth’s knowledge of themselves, and life, and inspire in them the volition to act for the betterment of others and humanity. We believe these basic skills and an understanding of the nobility inside them will empower them. This, not only making their own lives better and themselves stronger but producing a more nurturing and more just world; a more nurturing and just community.”

This received some applause, and she then asked people to stay and eat and talk some more; to *connect* with each other and start a new garden *tonight*.

Sue had all the fruit, cakes, and biscuits, out on a table ready, and they all moved over to eat and to talk some more. The chatter was lively, and Sue went around getting names and phone numbers, and an idea of how interested each of the attendees *really* was in being *actively a part of things* going forward. It was no use just getting names, with no true

understanding of the person's perception or intention, or even some rose-coloured glasses view of what the person really thought of the programme. She had learnt that real and hard information was required so the team was informed for when they contacted these people afterwards. This was to be a foundation, and so there needed to be real knowledge of these people's views and intentions. It also granted some more understanding of this *unique* community, and group of interested individuals. This was another reason why Brig and Naomi had scouted around the area and talked with local people about their community before tonight.

THE MACHINES ENTERED THE VOID AGAIN. They had decided that they would hunt as a team; and go after the Dark Mist. There was much they could do in communities everywhere, but with the insights they had gained from the work, and knowing the power of these engines, they decided that going after The Oppressor was important. You see the machines could produce much beyond their basic work. They were not just for energising the soil and bringing the light. They could inspire and produce many social and economic development endeavours, educational institutions, the arts, and even influence cultural change, which could bring The Oppressor into the light, or more so, dissipate its shadow over wider areas.

Jennifer didn't realise it, but she was now in a future time to her own Earthly time, and not when she entered the void with Yuri. When The Oppressor had hold of her it had tried to hide her in the future so no one would come looking for her, and also where its influence was more intense. The engines existed in Jennifer's time but these two were far more advanced. It was in this future time that the engines found her. This is why Joe had not seen Yuri taken.

Much had happened on the Earth over the years between. There had been terrorism and war, tsunamis, drought, fires, and quakes. There had been disorder, polarisation, mass shootings, and a spread of a new virus around the world. This was followed by many varied hardships that continued shake the world and parts of it; troubles that harried the people of the world. It was still dark in many places, and many were still lost in lower intent like the ones she and Yuri had freed, but the calamities had also brought people together and helped them learn that we were all in this life together. As the virus spread there had been some hoarding early on, but also some real sacrifice in many in the firing line, and many nations were helping each other. The new reality of the perfect storms that followed it seemed to be quieting the noise of endless small and unimportant things.

A strong realisation that people were all in this together was also dissipating some of the mist of The Oppressor, as more crashing waves, economic and other, and many terrible acts followed the epidemic. The Darkness strangely believed that all the breakdown was helping his purpose, but as is the pain of the mother in birth, it was actually producing something vibrant and new. People were learning; letting go a little more of their own selfishness and tribal considerations, doing more of what was best for others. Many felt a release from their own fears in selflessness, finding relief in increasing the fortunes of those who needed help, or those needing kind support.

It was not a time of opinions, as one violent, or shaking, wave came one upon the next, and people had more periods of time to be and reflect a little away from the rush and noise of their busy lives; when the cogs of The Oppressor and the Black Robes seemed to slow. People realised that it was *people* who counted, saw their frenzy in chasing every consumable thing, and understanding the price they paid for rampant consumerism. They had more time to eat with each other and appreciate the quiet, or even enjoy simple games together, like they had in the aftermath of the Japanese tsunami.

A great reconnection in smaller places grew, and families missed each other more. It was time when people mucked in to give to their local community, and governments got more generous. Much societal pontificating of the White Robes had been silenced, and the mirage of the material machine lifted for a while; but unfortunately, still grew loud again when things seemed to settle in the world. But at each new calamity they were again cast aside as unimportant, even though the zealots of these ideologies raged, and the material machine still sought profit over all else. It was strange how the darkness was so strong but only brought the light of a new day nearer, and made what was *really*, beautiful, true, and important, very much clearer.

It was a time where people learned to expect less and did not fear life outside the bubble of ease. So many had fallen into the rut of ease and become dependent on material things *only* for strength and support, yet in these times had again learned to find it in others and in their own inner strength. The myriad calamities chased them there and made them see. They found joy in what they could do for others, realising that the endless feeding of their fears and wants was actually denying them freedom and happiness, as they plugged into the material machine. They began to understand that *want* was not *need*, and seen that they had not cared about others in their drive to gather what they wanted. People helped people; the mists of oppression were lifting and the light shining more brightly as they cared just a little more for each other.

In any case, there *was* still much work to do to help dispel the Dark Mist, and Joe had made it clear to Trina that they were going in on equal footing or there was no point in him going. She was not at all happy with that and Jennifer could not understand why. The mechanic had said, “We move forward together, or we fall back. The age of winners and losers is over. The harder we trust our own strength or go against each other the greater the chaos; the greater the grip of The Oppressor. The more unified we are the less power it has.”

“There needs to be a leader,” said Trina, still not even wanting ‘*spanner boy*’ to know her name. She had gone to great lengths to make sure her new passenger Jennifer did not spill those particular beans. But truly, the name calling was partly some personal self-protection, and the rest was trying to discourage these two from coming with her into the void. She knew the power of unity and equal footing in their work, or she would never have been so successful, or certainly even driven a ten-lighter. Something else was driving her words.

“I think we need a plan. We are all going into a dark place, and we are all taking a risk, so...” offered Jennifer, as she as Trina cut her off.

“You’re *just a passenger*, Jennifer, and I have hunted this creature before. I know it better than both of you.”

“*A passenger!*” said Jennifer, no longer feeling okay with Trina’s attitude.

“Yep.”

“Then please, be my guest to head off in there without me,” shot Jennifer, as she hopped down off the large light engine.

“I think it would be for the best,” said Trina.

“You know, *even for you* that’s a bit rough,” charged Joe. “*How the hell* did someone like you get to drive a Ten-Lighter?”

“Because I’m *really* good at what I do,” answered Trina, a little disgusted at the feeling of even this *feigned* pride.

“I don’t feel comfortable going in there with an ego that size,” said Joe. “Maybe I’ll just take you home, Jennifer. We can skirt the deeper darkness.”

“So much for the plan,” said Trina, pretending to pout like a child.

“Thanks Joe, but I’m not from here, and I don’t have a home right now,” explained Jennifer. “So, what are you up for?”

“Maybe we can go building for a while; in the half light.”

“That would be great. I’m not keen on the void for now.”

“I’m going in. See you two *losers* on the flipside,” called out Trina, as she revved her engine, turned on her lights, and fired off into the darkness.

She was gone quickly, and it left Joe and Jennifer a bit cold.

“We had better go after her. She is going to get into a jam in there with that arrogant nature of hers. The mist is tricky, and it loves arrogance.”

“That’s what I was thinking, Joe,” agreed Jennifer, as she got up on the seven-lighter.

There was something about these engines when they fired up, and it amazed her when Joe had explained that the unlimited potential engine just needed to be used. He said it powered itself and a whole lot more, and never needed recharging. All it took was courage, and a little striving on the part of the mechanic. They had been built well and continually redeveloped, and mostly you just needed willing drivers.

There was also something deeper in the nature of these light engines that even Joe had not yet realised. He had an inkling, and some mechanics knew it for sure, but most in their line of work did not yet know the core essence that these engines needed. It actually leaked into the machines from the people and the mechanics who took part in the work. This great power was in plentiful supply for Joe’s engine, as he had it in spades, and it leaked out everywhere he went; even in the void. Truth be known, not even a ten-lighter would endure without it, and no seven-lighter could have run so deep in the void without it in its mechanic.

The power was humility, which begs the question of how Trina's even functioned. Well, it's like this...Trina wanted to go alone back into the void. She was chasing a terrible dark creature and would not let these two risk their lives again. She had been after it for a long time. She had learned many hard lessons; not counting some lucky escapes. She *knew* that mechanics needed humility by the amount of building she had done with the engine, and she knew the *patience* required to build it into a ten-lighter; let alone what a soul needed to hunt such a dangerous quarry. And even though these two new friends might have helped her, she did not know them well enough to know if they had the humility to rely on God, and not themselves. She had tested Joe's with her battering words but had still not been sure of his growth. She knew complete powerlessness and reliance were needed to withstand The Oppressor in his deep dark places.

THE FRIENDS WERE REFLECTING. They had come together on the Saturday morning after the presentation. There was a good deal of knowledge that they had gathered; in the scouting, as the process went on, and on the night. They needed to bring it all together and see their next step. You see, there are our plans, and then there is the context; the environment, the particular will of any community and the terrain for best planting, which all mix in together. It is also an unfolding process, not just a plan and doing it.

Bringing people together to start the youth group and seeking more of a unified vision in those who wanted to participate, seemed the natural next steps. But this small band had to be clear on its part in this process right now. It had evolved naturally from doing a course, developing their own plans, and doing the presentation night. The new participants, youth and adults, though, needed to be brought in on the ground of this process. They had to be part of the developing vision so as to have ownership of this process too.

It was like a tree. You plant the seed of a process, but as it grows it has different stages, sprout to sapling, small tree to large, flowering to fruit, so their goals would change. But more so, this seed had its own unique potentials, and was in a particular terrain and soil. This community and group of people were different, this community a unique place, so while this small band sought to do what they saw to do, they had to respect and include the local knowledge and hopes of the people here in this part of their town.

As they now reflected on the night, and considered the response they received, they decided to start the youth group running for three weeks or so; then invite everyone involved, including the youth, to participate in working out a vision for the community that they could all work towards together. This way the youth would be on board for the process, and it would be a more whole community effort; organic.

“That’s great,” said Jack.

“Feels good,” said Cynthia.

“It’s strange, you know. I never realised that people were so interested in making a change; in being part of change. *Hell*, I didn’t see it in *myself*,” offered Pete.

“And we do it *together*, or we can’t really do it, eh,” added Brig.

“Yes,” agreed Naomi. “We can’t solve the world’s problems, and *by it* create unity. We need to *create unity* first, and *then* we can solve the world’s problems. We have to participate in humility and respect. That attracts people and inspires effort. It takes unity to move *any* group forward.”

“Yep, *respect* and *equality*,” said Pete.

“Yep,” agreed Jack. “And just like we have in our smaller group, we all can put our views forward, but we respect each other; we have to engender unity in the way *we* go about things with the larger group. Not hold back in putting in, but acting with love,” said Jack.

“Man,” exclaimed Pete. “I never thought I would be all ‘*love*’, you know. But I *am* feelin’ it,” he finished laughing.

“Just not *too* much there, brother,” said Jack, leaning away from his mate a bit at the table they sat around.

They all laughed a bit, all feeling too the *deep bonds of love* growing; no *one* there better or higher than any other. Truth be known, *this* was the other *true power* of any growth engine.

AS THE SEVEN-LIGHTER RUMBLED ALONG IN THE VOID, Jennifer and Joe shared a conversation on the reason this void even existed, and what it would take to cast off The Oppressor for good. Joe was up on why it existed, but they had all kinds of maybes, ideas, and scenarios, about how and when the darkness would be cast away.

They had talked about all kinds of aspects of this Other Place. She had called it Deeper, when the mechanic said, “This Void is an Other Place. We don’t live here. We live in the radiant light.”

“So, it isn’t a Deeper Place.”

“No. *Definitely not*, and we don’t see places as ‘*Deeper*’ as much as we see things as ‘*Closer*’.”

“So *deeper* is *closer*?”

“I suppose, but yes, and no. They are two aspects of reality, and only the Omnipotent knows it all, and where any of us may be. It’s just that we think more in terms of ‘*Closer*’. It is more essential, and more important.”

“Closer to what?”

“Closer to The Source; and closer to The Merciful’s Will.”

They discussed the nature of these two words, these two aspects and how they related. She was not totally clear but had gathered a better understanding of how they worked together. So much is connected, and even connections with others, affected ‘Closer’; and vice versa of course.

They then talked about Trina, and what was going on in her.

“Who knows what’s going on in there. I mean, we can only guess. I’ve found it better to do my own thing, be real with others, and get about my business. Leave difficult souls, their issues, and wounds, to God,” offered Joe. “All I can do is offer the Light. We need to love and care, but we cannot live someone’s life for them. In the end we are all responsible for ourselves, kindness aside.”

“Sure. Anyway, I’m glad we are going after her.”

“Yep, me too,” said Joe, strangely feeling love for Trina. “What is it about her? We should be running in the other direction.”

“Joe! You *like* her.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, we need to look after each other, and compassion is a powerful force. But there is more...”

“Yep, *that’s* why we’re going after her. *That’s* love, isn’t it?” he finished, deflecting the continuing investigation by Jennifer, and thinking that he was not being quite as honest as he would like to be.

But he knew that some things were a person’s own business, and that sharing everything inside had very little to do with honesty and sometimes more to do with a lack of maturity. He would keep these other feelings to himself until he could work out why they were there. What he said, or didn’t say, hadn’t mattered though, as to Jennifer, it was written all over his face. But his intentions to help Trina were not just an attraction. They were driven by deeper intentions in him, and Jennifer knew that too.

Meanwhile, Trina was running deep in the void. Robes watched her from the dark, and from ledges and openings in the great unstable rock wall to her left. It towered above her and gave her the creeps. She had not seen a rock face this high in here, but it was a good sign that she was closing in on The Oppressor. This mechanic was very happy with that but was also very much wishing that she had some company in here. Maybe she had been rash, but she was used to running alone; even when she was working with many others. It had always been this way for her, as she was so focused on the work, she often forgot to even live a little, or connect enough. She had met many good souls in her work, and treasured them, but then it was always onto the next place, or the next job.

Such was her nature, and a little in the nature of the world of a mechanic more so in the earlier years of their work. It was very much so in Jennifer’s time, but not so much these days, as there were so many Unlimited Potential Engines out there in this time. But Joe and Trina were carried by the breezes of the spirit and could not help but still roam seeking new places to bring the engines to bear on.

Jennifer and Joe had pulled up for the night; not that you could tell night from day in here. Joe had told her to sleep; that he would take the first watch, and she was glad of it. It had been *all go* since beginning a hunt with Yuri, and again she sobbed a little inside as she remembered him. She was sad that she had not got to know the man who saved her life, if in fact, this was life she now wandered in. This traveller didn't know what would happen if she was taken, or died in here, or other places deeper. Truth be known, her soul was always on the line if she was in danger.

She lay back on the blow-up mattress beside the engine and fell fast asleep quickly. It was as much the void, as it was her tiredness, because the darkness of the void tended to make people sleep and dream more, rather than get up and do things.

*Jennifer felt the salt water gush over her head and down one cheek. Her head was now part of a great inner rock face of a circular coastal blowhole. Her head made up a fourth of that almost circular rocky wall; her face, side on, with only that side showing, and her cheek jutting out a little in the blow hole. She was locked in there, and her face was pointed toward another part of the wall, very close. She could not feel the other side of her face, as she now felt the water blow up and out of the blowhole, and then again wash back in from the sea; back into the great rock hole. She could not move, or see or feel any other part of her, as he she took in water and coughed it up.*

*She held her breath, but relaxed too, and let the water blow up past her face and the sea flow in again, and she began to enjoy its natural rhythm; breathing in between each opposite flow. It was a lulling sensation, and after a while she felt her eyes closing and opening as if they wanted to sleep.*

*When she opened her eyes for the third time, she saw a shape in part of the rocky wall very close and facing on to the front of her face. It seemed to be a rocky projection that jutt*

*out into the blowhole. The water was not making it easy to focus, but when she saw it clearly, she screamed. The uneven rock face she was the facing into was actually the outward-facing head of a mighty cobra; its head the same size as hers. She could not move, and it was so close; so face to face, that she screamed again and again. Its giant eyes glistened as is it watched her soullessly; the water washing down its open mouth and dripping off its two great bared fangs. She could not move; desperately hoping it could not either, screaming again.*

The Oppressor could now hear her. It knew they were here; *these intruders*. It could not gather a bead on the engines, but screams it *most definitely* knew. It had brought on the screams and the deep loss of whole peoples with it's work; most especially with the help of The White Robes; of both East and West, strangely. The Black were oppressors of great power, but many a human ideology had brought on great swathes of killing. There were always the ones who loved to hate, or more truly, fell to arrogance or fear, and who pushed their ideology through far more than just violent means; ones who still sat in this creature's dark torture chambers. There were the many innocent ones who died at their hands. There were the many that also died fighting these sad forces through the histories of planets all over the universe.

*"Calm yourself; this is one power of knowing," said a man waking her, but not from her sleep near the engine. It was on a beach, The Surfer's beach, and she gasped as if she had just surfaced after too long under water.*

*"Knowing?" she asked, still lost in her terror, but coming out.*

*"Knowing," said the man, plainly and with a gentle smile.*

*"Knowing what?"*

*“Knowing peace, knowing calm...Knowing,” said the man, with a sublime feeling she had never experienced before. It was almost like she did not know that word before today.*

*“Yes; feel it.”*

*She did, and it made itself more known to her; so simple, yet so all-embracing. It was endless things and yet it had one Spring. She could now see it in the distance. It poured out creating all things, making and remaking them, growing and disintegrating them; all things moving and growing and learning, and struggling and dying, and exploding into new life. The universe, and so much beyond it; moving in the sea that flowed out from the Sublime.*

*“Is it Him?”*

*“He is the Unknowable; this is true understanding. Knowledge exists only as a mercy for us, so we may know of Him and love Him. He is love, and the creative force; the re-creative force, The Endless One of All Beginnings; The Uncreated.”*

*“That’s too much,” said Jennifer, knowing she could not fully understand that reality, yet still feeling its beauty.*

*“Some words for you then...”*

*“Some words?” asked Jennifer, a bit lost in this place, as its reality seemed too high for her mind to gather here. She could only gather things by the feel of them and by flashes of images like in dreams, as words here, did not make the message clear, and some things are mysterious to us and only time unfold them.*

*“Some words of life for you?”*

*“I don’t understand.”*

*“Listen; and hear them. Hear them. That is all,” explained the man, now trying to bridge the great divide of station between himself and Jennifer.*

*“Okay, sure.”*

*“I am thankful for the impossible providence of my creation; my life and having life; thought and breath and movement and speech and love and family...I love you, no matter how despicable you are, but justice needs be done...I am your brother, your sister; man or woman, my race or yours; human...I respect your high creation, and I have no right to it or over your pathway...It is good to venture, but not to take; good to strive and good to share...All are my children; as I am father, I am mother, even if I have none myself...We are one.”*

*These words filled Jennifer with light, finally chasing The Oppressor away from her.*

*The gentleman then said, “You may ask any question.”*

*“Any question?”*

*“Yes. What do you seek to understand?”*

*“Is all knowledge good?” asked Jennifer, as it seemed to be what she was learning about here.*

*“All knowledge is good, except for knowledge of the rank perversity of men. If a person has the capacity to see some knowledge and it can be wielded for what is good, then it is good. It is relative, as are all things. These are words from The Physician...”*

***“Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation.***

***Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired***

*as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world.*

*Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book in this conspicuous station."<sup>17</sup>*

*...If the pursuit of knowledge fails to elevate the soul, to raise the hearts and wellbeing of others, it has failed, and is not truly knowledge. The sea of love oils the machine of True Understanding; at least in those relative to your state. In those of greater station and state; one lives within the other."*

# *Resistance*

Trina strained to hear. It *was* a scream; far off, but definitely a scream. She turned the engine around and tore off towards it. She knew it was *those two*. She just *knew* they were too compassionate to have been put off by her carrying on; though she had been hopeful that they would stay away; away from harm. She deeply appreciated the love in them as she now powered through the darkness. Many robes ran across in front of her and dissipated in the light beams or ducked back into the darkness. “*I should just have been honest,*” she thought, now quite worried for her two friends.

It seems we always learn on our feet. Whether it be a mistake or a firm foothold. Experience and action gather *solid* knowledge; striving gathers *real* growth. The gifts of knowledge that lie within action or errors, wrong turns, or struggle, are wondrous. And truly, what can we really know unless we have experienced it, or what knowledge do we really hold unless we can live it.

Joe had woken Jennifer and was now extremely concerned for their safety. They were far deeper in the void than they had been last time, and Trina’s words had made him a little unsure of the power of his engine; certainly not helpful right now. He was sure wishing he had a Fourteen-Lighter. They were really powerful and had some *wicked good machinery* that

had been rolled out after the success of the Twelve-Lighters. They were a natural evolution of the Limitless Potential Engine and had been rolled out as soon as they were developed. That was quite a long time ago now and some of the earlier machines, like the One Lighter had been upgraded, and ones like the Three-Lighter and the Five-Lighter had been upgraded and had many new lights added on down their sides. The Fourteen-Lighters could change a place with real precision bringing strong light and rich ground that was very substantial. But the Seven-Lighters had taken it all to a new level when they spread around the globe, and Joe was happy to work his growth engine.

They now heard something coming towards them, it was a great rustling, like endless dry leaves were falling and scraping along hard ground. He raced up onto the engine, and as Jennifer looked up at him a tide of robes hit them. They tossed them along a bit; like a dead dry wind they had come and gone, depositing the engine and Jennifer beside each other; fortunately.

Another wind was then heard as Joe powered up his engine and shone his lights in a protective arc around Jennifer and the machine. The second tide dissipated as it hit them, but it was bigger and stronger than the first wave and it moved the bubble of light and the machine again, which had Jennifer running to keep inside its light over the rough ground. Joe knew they were in trouble when a third wave came too quickly for Jennifer to climb aboard the engine. Again, the engine was shifted, and Jennifer had further to run in a different direction. The waves kept battering them; coming in quick succession; moving them here and there as they did.

She could not get aboard the engine. She was tiring, and the waves did abate. Another shift came, and another. Jennifer felt her back fall out of the light; feeling a terrible power enter her being.

But suddenly, she was in the light again. Trina's engine had shot over a small rocky ramp and onto the ground beside her, across from Joe's machine. Jennifer was now between them; all of them waiting for the next wave, as the two mechanics put down their rock pulverisers and ploughs to hold them to the ground. It had been done with a nod of understanding between these two mechanics, ready for the next powerful ill-wind. But it *did not come*, as *suddenly* Jennifer fell through the floor of earth below her.

She had been positioned over a narrow shaft by the waves of Robes and the terrible air, and the engines could not follow. It would take them a century to burrow down and get through. Jennifer fell very deep, very fast. She fell and fell; fear filled her soul at the depth of the shaft and what its end might bring. Would she be smashed, or she would be facing the beast of the void? She screamed, and she cried.

She fell, and she fell. But before she reached the bottom, she composed her soul, reset her reliance, and readied herself for her fate; such was the distance of her fall.

Trina screamed, "You bloody idiots. *You ..... morons!* What were you thinking?!"

Joe, just looked at her, thinking, "*What does it matter now.*" He was not happy that they had come in here after her now. He was not happy that this mad mechanic had carried on the way she did; not wanting to work together from the beginning. He was very angry at her, but also himself. He should have been more urgent about getting Jen on the engine when she had screamed in her sleep. He should have woken her even though she had settled, as they were in the void, and attentive circumspection was *always* required here. He became quite intent on his failure to protect Jennifer; on his *own failings*.

He certainly did not need someone else adding their opinion to the mix. He was *no* child and did not need *mothering*, and he looked at Trina with that clearly on his face. She

relaxed and did not add what she was about say after her first small barrage. She too, then looked to *herself*, and her *own* failure that had helped create this situation.

But, like many situations, there is failure, struggle, and then learning. The getting of knowledge is not simply one act, or many; it is forever continuous. It is challenge, success, and failure. It is learning. It is standing again, and charging in once more, when the battle is at its thickest.

IT WAS TIME TO GO AND DO SOME HOME VISITS. They had to meet up with the youth and parents who had shown real interest in the Youth effort. Pete, Jack, Cynthia, and Sue were in one car, and Brig and Naomi were in a car behind them. They were going to split into teams of two and go talk to the various people interested. Most of those who attended the presentation had been, but that could have changed, and sometimes Brig and Naomi had found that it also worked the other way; that some of them were even keener or had even got others close to them interested.

No one knew at any stage what was going to happen. It was about making a plan, acting, and being flexible as it played out. Learning came from any action and further reflection as they went; then acting again with the new learning, and what the people and terrain offered them. The *action-reflection-action* cycle was a concept rooted deeply in the culture of the work of this Faith. Any people involved in these community efforts soon learned that it was an unfolding process, and never about one event, or finishing. It was a commitment for, of, and to, life, not just a job to be done.

As this process had unfolded, this small crew had realised that they needed to go visit each of the interested parties and arrange the youth group *together* with any adults

participating, right from the start. So, they were out there today beginning that part of the process. They had arranged to meet about half the people who were interested today, and the other half next weekend. It was crucial to the longevity of the youth group that this process *belonged* to all participants from the beginning.

Pete was really nervous about doing personal visits with people because he definitely did not see himself as a community leader. He was making all kinds of comments about not being sure if he should be part of *this part* of the process. Jack wasn't nervous at all, which amazed him really. He was right into the whole idea and reality of this undertaking, and was just excited.

Cynthia was feeling a little unsure, but willing to give it a go. The thing was that except for Naomi and Brig this was new ground for all of them; Sue included. The discussion in this car was a bit concerning for Sue, as it was a bit negative. Pete had just asked Cynthia if she was feeling comfortable about today and what they had to do.

"I'm okay, Peter, but still not confident about what we are going to say."

Pete nodded, a little more than relieved that it was not only him. Part of him thought it was that he still wasn't sure about the character development, or spiritual empowerment, as they called it. But as Sue began to offer a solution, he began to realise that he just needed more training.

"We have a second book in the study circle series that deals with visiting people, sharing ideas, and learning with those we visit."

"*Really,*" said Pete, just a little bit peeved. "Why didn't we do it before we *started* all this?"

Jack stayed silent, as while he remembered telling Pete about it before they started the first study book, he decided to leave it be. We all learn as we go, and he could see that seeing things was relative for people as the process unfolded.

“Well, you expressed the fact that you did not want to be held back with too much study, before we acted,” replied Sue. “I didn’t want to hold you back because your enthusiasm seemed to be waning a little; well, you were just impatient to get out there and do something.”

“Okay, sure. I was a bit *at first*, but the study inspired me a bit. I mean, I got a lot from the first training course, but yeah, I didn’t join up to study. I joined up to help get the project on the ground. So, it would have been hard to talk me into it before now.”

“Yep, it’s something we are still learning about, as each soul is a little different, and we have to gauge their commitment and understanding,” explained Sue, “and each of us has to understand that all seven books, these different lights, of the main sequence of courses are powerful tools and understanding to hold when we go to act.”

“So, *seven books*. We can’t wait *that* long. We’ve *already* started the project,” put in Pete, now a bit concerned he had let his guard down by his comment.

“Sure, I get it, but now that you can see the value in the next book of the main sequence maybe we can continue through them one night a week, or even each fortnight, as we build the youth group. Even book ten would be *really* beneficial in time.”

“We’ll be, kind of behind ourselves though, won’t we,” commented Jack.

“Maybe, but the beauty of this is way is that we will very much understand the *need* for these skills when we study them, because of our experience. We’ll definitely appreciate

more what we're learning, and we'll have had some *real experience* to reflect on as we study, too. One will empower the other."

"Action, reflection, learning, action," sprouted Jack.

Sue smiled at the closeness of that to the '*action reflection action*' they had in their Faith, and the added element of it that made it even clearer.

"What I can do is work on a small deepening on a few skills and some attitudes encouraged by book two, and we can do it next Saturday. It will take an hour or two, but it will help before we go out next Sunday. It will make it all so much easier. Maybe we can work out a basic plan of what we'll share with those interested as well."

"Sure," said Pete, knowing he needed some help.

"When we do this small deepening on Book Two, we'll come to understand that each meeting will be different, and to relax about the outcome."

"I don't understand," said Pete. "Didn't we sell this thing with the presentation?"

"We are *offering* this thing and *sharing a vision*. And *believe* me after we have done some parts of that course, you will understand what I mean," explained Sue.

"I must say this is all very gratifying. I am really enjoying being able to learn new skills at my age," said Cynthia. "A little age, and we get written off as useless."

"Your age gives you *more* to give, if anything, Cynthia," commented Jack.

"So, how do we go ahead today? I'm thinking I want to wait to be trained, but we promised people we would meet them today," asked Pete.

“You know,” added Sue calmly, as she always did, “we’re well placed, and all powered up, because Naomi and Brig have done all the courses, and have done this visiting before in other places. One of you can team up with Naomi and the other with Brig today, and one with me, as we have the experience. You can dip your toes in as well, and the experience will help you get more out of what we will study next Saturday. We’ve got the capacity amongst us, and every course you do, the more capacity we will have as a group. It is all about us gaining capacity, and helping others gain it; then things can grow and keep growing.”

“Maybe you just have to be honest and heartfelt like your story the other night, Peter. I don’t think there is a *particular* way. They will feel your enthusiasm. I certainly have,” offered Cynthia.

“So, we’re revving on all cylinders...*Rock and roll,*” called out Jack, as he started to chuckle. Pete, not quite so sure yet, but feeling more supported by the people who had done this kind of thing before, and re-armed by Cynthia.

“THE MEDIA WANTS TO RUN THE WORLD, when they should rightly be a clear glass on it. They’re so biased; each to whatever ideology they follow. It’s all left and right and it is making me sick. The Education Department wants to socially engineer instead of educating our children like they’re supposed to. Who made all these people God! The media and the Education Department need to return to their place and do their service properly. It’s painful hearing what they’re doing.

Everyone is pushing their own social system, and every group is pouring out their own propaganda and I’m over it; religions, cultures, companies, rights groups, left, right. So called intellectuals, so called leaders and role models with no character.

They are all as *dumb as*, and they all think they are *so* clever. Every one of them thinking they're our saviours, but just *pushing* us around, fighting each other, and *stuffing* everything up. Who *asked* them, anyway? I didn't. They didn't call me; they just worked out what's *best for me* in their minds. *Who do they think they are?!*" ranted Judy.

Jack had just come over to visit, and definitely not provide any advice. He just came to give love and support and maybe have a few laughs, but his heart sank as the subject of the world rose again.

"It's just a youthful humanity experimenting and learning. It will come good. We will grow up. I believe that," offered Jack.

"It's getting chaotic, and people *never* learn."

"They do learn, and they will. It's a process we're going through, and we'll learn by consequences of all that. The bushfires showed the sacrifice in people, and the virus taught us so much about unity and the nurture available in our family and community bonds; the good of it and the bad. Anyway, the Light will become apparent in the darkness eventually."

"You sound religious, Jack."

"I *am*, now."

"*Oh God*, Jack, *not you*. You're just *another* lemming."

"No, I'm not. I think *you* are. Blindly running with these forces that you can't stand over the same cliff. You're all angry, separating, and running the same sad energy, and it's producing nothing."

Judy was a bit stunned by that remark, as she saw through the fog a little.

“I’m helping build the new boat, rather than beat up on the old boat and its crazy crew, anymore. We’re in a special time for humanity, a transition time. We’re coming of age; most just don’t know the time they are living in. I think most people mean well, and things are a *little* adolescent yet, but the process has to unfold for now.”

“Adolescent. That’s what it is alright! But build anything good and the new *world according to the new social religion* will shout it down, or the *money men will* because it doesn’t align with their interests,” commented Judy, now firmly back in her anger.

“Unity *will* come, Judy. It just may take more chaos to eventually teach us that to be united is more important than *anything* else; to be humble enough to seek the truth together, and to learn *a lot* of other things I suppose.”

“Take your religion and *go away*, Jack,” she said, now strangely almost afraid of the peace and poise in him.

“You don’t mean that.”

“I *do* mean it.”

“I just came to visit. I didn’t mean to get into all this. We were just talking about the world, and I just said what I think.”

“Well, I have had enough of all of it; theirs *and yours*.”

He was not sure what to do. So, he just told her he loved her, and she replied, “Yeah, I know, Jack.”

He didn’t know whether she actually did see his love; that he was not here to make her anything or make her do anything. He thought that maybe she only saw another of those ‘*morons*’. It was terrible word that was bandied around a good deal on all sides as the

division grew in society. In any case, he didn't feel he should stay. He said goodbye, told her he loved her again, and headed off to leave her be. When things leave the heart, and become only intellectual, they lose their power to change things, and when these thoughts become powered by lesser emotions, they slowly destroy us and things around us.

*“Even if you're right, your intellect and your righteousness can still gao! you; it can even disempower and destroy you,”* he mused, with you meaning any of us, not just his sister. He failed to elevate her current state and had probably just pushed her deeper into the sad place she now lived. It was a lost place. He could see clearly though that we can be our own worst enemy and very blind to ourselves; that we are all a little blind, as full vision has not been afforded us here. We are not to know *all things*; we are all here to *learn*. *This was real* knowledge to him, and humility a *powerful* friend, a rich fountain.

He really didn't care if she was right or wrong, or whether he was for that matter. He was concerned about her, and her health. Her heart was weak, and all this negativity would only wear her body down. Something then rose up from his mysterious past and said to him clearly, *“Heal the soul, heal the body.”* He then saw that negativity itself was a disease; that love heals, and wellness rises from good spirit. When the spirit or mind is ill, or burdened, the emotions and body follow. He could see in his mind's eye that the spirit, the soul, needed to be well for the body to be well; maybe not always, but mostly.

ANOTHER HAD ALSO BEEN IN TORTURE. It was torture of a very different nature; *or was it the same*. The mist had wrapped around Jennifer, and the darkness became *lightless*. She had been gathered as she fell and now sat within this pitch black, and slowly The Oppressor tortured her.

In this deep place of dire disconnection and hopelessness, the void within the void, love's outer light is lost. This, even though, within us, an inextinguishable light remains. For some it is not known, for some it is well-known, while others are simply distracted for a time, but for still-others it lays hidden under a deep and heavy burden. To be meaningfully connected, to have real love in those around us, to have faith, to know we are a spiritual creature, to know light is *within* us, to have strong hope, and to know that the hardship of the anvil of life reshapes our light and makes us stronger; these keep us from this Other Place.

While Jennifer had some depth of understanding and a grown reliance, while she knew that she was essentially spiritual in nature, it was still very early in her Travels to face such a creature as this. It was mostly that she felt so alone in this torturous void that weakened her. Disconnection and purposelessness are the two great highways to the tortures of the loveless void. It had been many weeks now, and she was almost mad, when suddenly, now in front of her, appeared two huge Robes. They towered above her; one white and one black. These were the words that were heard, as they now both reached into her chest to weaken her heart with their satanic strength...

“The Way has been found.”

“There is only one way.”

She screamed as the horrors of the world under the weight of these two forces were brought to bear on her being. The endless drama, gossip, and backbiting; the fracture of difference, exclusion, and opposition being touted and exhorted as truth; the cancer and insatiable want of consumerism gone mad; the wars, denials, and violence assailed her. The estrangement, the arrogance, the growing rarity of integrity, unity, and love, started to tear her very atoms apart, as they now reached deeper toward her soul, just as it was tearing the

human world apart. The Oppressor needed chaos to grow strong; fractured beings to enter, and fractured worlds to rule.

She could hear the Great Loss, another of The Oppressor's names, now very close in the pitch darkness just beyond the Robes. I was like a beast at a great door; a beast that was not able to wait or withhold itself from its food, and it now rammed itself at her door. It seemed to be breaking it loose from its holdings as the terrible fractured and distracted energy of the Robes built higher within her. Like Judy, the dark forces of exclusion, dehumanising labels, and hatred, entered and tortured her being.

It was in the pain, in the *deep* pain, that a sweet sound came to her ears. *It was melodious; a chant. The words were of another language, and it calmed her and freed her. The pain had gone far beyond bearing, but thankfully, now somehow, she was separated from it. She looked down on her torturers from beyond her form; The Robes oblivious of her freedom continued their foul work.*

*A question of the fracture in her world went out from her soul, and she heard the word 'resistance', over and again. It repeated, and repeated, and repeated, and in it she found the meaning of the fracture of her world. She saw people's resistance to truth and true understanding, resistance to love, resistance to unity; due to fear, ego, want and anger. She also saw the many that resisted this resistance; the majority who wanted an end to this negative pall over all humanity. Many were even unconscious of the weight they felt on their beings and what their hearts and souls called for release from, but a long-felt wondering of when this fever of humanity would break was there below the surface, and in their conversations.*

*In these things she saw that this one word, as most things, could be all good or all bad, and all grades in between. She saw in this one word the nature of her times and a*

*personal message for her to resist the terrible onslaught. She cried in relief, as she began to resist, yet somehow detach. In this new state she still cried; she cried for the excruciating pain of the separation and fracture in the world.*

*It was then that these words appeared in letters of light in front of her, as she seemed to float free in front of them.*

*“...though world unity is possible—nay, inevitable—it ultimately cannot be achieved without unreserved acceptance of the oneness of humankind, described by the Guardian as “the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh revolve”. With what insight and eloquence did he expound upon the far-reaching implications of this cardinal principle! Plainly he saw, amidst the turbulence of world affairs, how the reality that humanity is one people must be the starting point for a new order. The vast array of relations among nations—and within them—all need to be re-envisaged in this light.*

*The realization of such a vision will require, sooner or later, an historic feat of statesmanship from the leaders of the world. Alas, the will to attempt this feat is still wanting. Humanity is gripped by a crisis of identity, as various peoples and groups struggle to define themselves, their place in the world, and how they should act. Without a vision of shared identity and common purpose, they fall into competing ideologies and power struggles. Seemingly countless permutations of “us” and “them” define group identities ever more narrowly and in contrast to one another. Over time, this splintering into divergent interest groups has weakened the cohesion of society itself...Consider how radically different such a fragmented conception of human identity is from the one that follows from a recognition of the oneness of humanity. In this perspective, the diversity that characterizes the human family, far from contradicting its oneness, endows it with*

*richness. Unity, in its Bahá'í expression, contains the essential concept of diversity, distinguishing it from uniformity. It is through love for all people, and by subordinating lesser loyalties to the best interests of humankind, that the unity of the world can be realized and the infinite expressions of human diversity find their highest fulfilment.*"<sup>18</sup>

THE VISITS TO PEOPLE'S HOMES HAD BEEN WONDERFUL. The friends were all quite energised when they returned. Pete and Jack were really wired up, but Pete did not know why. Was it the spirit of this new Faith flowing through him? Was it the positive conversations, or the bonds and connections made deeper today with these folk? Maybe it was just relief that today was not as daunting as it had seemed beforehand. Maybe it was all these things. It really didn't matter; it was good, and it was energising. Such is the power of detaching, connecting, and doing what was to be done; acting, not endlessly thinking.

The group began to collate the number of youths who would start the practical skill and spiritual empowerment courses, and the other people who had put their hand up to take part in the effort. For now, no older youth wanted to become an *animator* of the younger youth, but there was one young lady about sixteen who wanted to take part in the study courses and see. She was a bit resistant for now, as she did not feel confident. Brig and Cynthia had been very encouraging though; and helped her understand that it was a process in learning how, and that she could go at her own pace.

All the parents were very positive about the group and its aim to strengthen the youth; get them participating in society, and growing their strength, character, and natural talents. One father was very happy that the service projects they did would show these saplings that they could influence the world; even if just their small part of it. Two mothers were very excited to participate and had offered to gather the youth and host the classes at one of their

homes. Another, a teacher, offered a, sometimes, drama class to help the youths explore themes that they learnt about and maybe even help them present one or two a wider audience in time.

Things were now in full swing, as the small group and those willing to participate had overcome their own resistance. Change is scary, even if it is simple things, but when you step and act the fear falls away to be no more. Courage to act, and love's drive, comes before knew knowledge. All it takes is to step through the ring of fear; the fire. When we stand in front of it, it seems so hot and looks *so fierce*, that we hesitate. Some even end up walking away, unable to handle the anxiety, because they waited too long and did not step through to the relief of the other side; that of action itself. Vision too, helps one see the great value of what is to be done, and a shared vision helps power people through the fire of challenges.

In any case, the group had worked out a programme for three months ahead, for now; that is all the practical life skills that each of them would share. Not all of them would be required each time the youth met, and each would develop their continuing classes. They had separately worked out how they would present the skills they would teach, even though the subjects would evolve organically as the group went on. But, right now, they threw it all into a process of shared consultation, as Jack, Cynthia, and Pete, had not held or facilitated classes of any kind. Here again the need for skills from the training courses came up.

The big thing that came up was time and the amount of instruction that they could actually fit in each class. Jack had just now said that he could wing it, as he knew his trade, and Naomi asked him, "Wing it now for us, Jack."

Jack froze, and then began to laugh, "Okay, so how do I cope with this."

“Make a *programme* for each class and put in where each micro skill you are sharing fits. Write a script for parts of it, and practise doing your lesson out loud with yourself. This will give you the timing of things if you allow for responses and activities,” explained Naomi.

“These tools and preparations make you feel more confident with the flow of things and help you iron out the bugs beforehand. It’s all about preparation, and when I do a dry run; you know, *talking and acting it out* myself, I find what I *don’t* know, what I *didn’t* see. I see what physical aids I would have forgotten to bring, and gather how the whole thing might sound; better having glitches before, than on the day,” added Brig.

“*But,*” said Naomi, “You practise it, and then you *let it go*. Some things come up suddenly, and the full plan may not fit, even if you *are* prepared. Watch your time and skip one thing, or just slow down the delivery of your course’s content. You know, leave some for next time. There’s no formula; it’s really just about getting skills to the youth.”

“And ask a lot of questions, before any instructions, or *rather than* instructions. It will *engage* them more in their own learning. Questions, questions, questions. You’ll understand why when you use them. The difference between using plain instruction or questions, or a good mix, is *huge*, brother. Hands on activity too,” added Brig.

“Man, we should have trained. Can we go over these things, and can I practise my first lesson with someone?” asked Jack.

“Sure, and things may go all to hell on the first day, or even when you’re really prepared and experienced, but it’s all about learning from mistakes. Sometimes you’ll get *very* lost. Sometimes you’ll just need to let go. Just *do your best,*” offered Naomi.

“Yep. None of this is the end of the world, and better doing something a bit rough than *not doing* it at all, eh. Humble up if you fall over. Have a laugh at yourself. Show them you are human. Just relax with the kids, and use an emergency activity if you have to,” added Brig.

“I don’t know. It’s all easy for you to say,” said Pete, feeling the heat.

“I would like to practise too,” said Cynthia.

“Everything you struggle with needs to be seen as an *object of learning* for you. You just reflect on it after, find solutions, and make it better next time. Don’t get disheartened; get to work on it for next time. You’ll actually feel the *wonderful power of mistakes*, the foundation they help form, making you *more and more* capable. I *love* mistakes now,” admitted Brig, with a wide smile.

“We will get to Book Three on neighbourhood Children’s Classes in time too, and we’ll gain some educational skills and capacity by doing the skills workshops before we get to it. We’re all in this together, and we’ll support you in your classes for now if you want,” offered Sue. She was now even thinking that they needed to do the Children’s Class training book before Book Two on visiting people and explaining ideas. They needed the skills now, and could even go back to Book Two after Book Three. The skills built up, or developed, with each book on the sequence of courses. Each building on the one’s before, and was far more effective done in order, but sometimes exceptions needed to be made.

“Anyway, what can possibly go wrong?” Brig added, with a laugh, and had the others chuckling.

“Plenty, but *let’s do it anyway*,” called out Cynthia, starting to understand that it was all good, now charging through to the other side of that ring of fire.

*“From the beginning of the universe, or existent within the deepest reality of The Great Mystery, we were meant to be. It could be no other way, as here we are. So too, today’s struggles are also meant to be; no matter what we believe. Make the best of things, always seek learning, be useful and loving, and enjoy the process. What more can we do?”* delivered Jack, from something that came seemingly unbidden.

It was as if he was finishing off a documentary, and Naomi and Brig shot a look at each other. Peter was wondering who this bloke sitting next to him was, and Cynthia just smiled gently, as its wisdom and scope now settled the group to the work of preparing their life-skills classes.

JACK HAD STILL BEEN SEARCHING FOR JENNIFER. He had not given up. He was now visiting another school. She had mentioned that she was a teacher when they first met, but it had fled his mind until the recent meeting when two of the small group had mentioned that a drama teacher wanted to help out the project. It now seemed so long ago that he had met her.

He was walking up some steps to the administration office of the school when some bad news came in a phone call. It was one of Judy’s sons. She had suffered an aneurism and was now in an induced medical coma in the Brisbane. She had been taken there by helicopter, after she was stabilised as much as possible by the local hospital.

He was shocked; as these things are at first, quite unbelievable. He also felt terrible that they had such a bad experience when they were together last. He loved her and just wished he could have been of some use. Actually, it was more so, sadness. He now wondered

if he had just burdened her heart more, as he knew that she loved him and would not have been happy with how she had treated him.

These words came to his mind, as he continued listening on the phone.

***“O MY CHILDREN!***

*I fear lest, bereft of the melody of the dove of heaven, ye will sink back to the shades of utter loss, and, never having gazed upon the beauty of the rose, return to water and clay.”<sup>19</sup>*

# *Love*

The Oppressor had now broken through the door. Jennifer's resistance, or more so spiritual resilience, had now fallen. The respite and inspiration she had received had given her more time of resistance, but the weight of the world bore down on her and broke through her door, and finally she had fallen. The mists of the creature now rolled in around Jennifer's ankles, and she cried. She had been strong all this time, hoping that help would come, no matter what the beast had continually and loudly suggested through the door. It had done its best to cloud any light or hope inside her, and she could now feel even her heart weakening. In the deep darkness it rose up to take her, when suddenly two engines hit the ground on either side of her.

The Oppressor roared, as the lights came on; their brilliance stunning it and wounding it. Truth be known, light simply showed its non-existence, and that almost destroyed it right then. *This* was its pain, as its pride and control could not be served by its nothingness. It knew it was as close as it had ever been to being *something*; this *one time* among the many times, on the many worlds, throughout the ages, in endless places. The *lack* of the Light of Knowledge had come, and would come, from time to time to all places large and small, but was always, and simply, the dark before the dawn; as The Dawn must always come.

It bellowed like a wounded bull, *and* as the lights had suddenly lit the darkness, the cavern's width could now be seen. It was a huge wide flat piece of hard ground, and as the light from the engines spread out, they found they were in a monstrous circular cavern. It was enormous. It was at least a kilometre in diameter, and even in the light its emptiness felt like the desolate void it was. As the dry rocky walls went upwards from around its edges, they lessened in circumference forming a great rough rock dome above them, but the rocks seemed to be moving. As the lights from the engines now went up, row by terrible row, they saw the true nature true of this place. It was filled with robes clinging to the rocks and almost oozing out of the crevices; hundreds of thousands of robes, ever upwards it seemed.

The two mechanics had not given up on Jennifer. They had worked on the ground around the hole that she fell through. They had found that it was weak, like The Oppressor; only seeming strong, but it still had taken a great deal of time to burrow through to this great cavern.

*"Hey ....face! Remember us!"* now called out the lady mechanic, with all the *class* she could muster.

*"Oh, it remembers us,"* added Joe, as he jumped from his engine and cut Jennifer loose.

The creature had been surprised, but the fight was in no way over, as the walls began to move in the partial light. A tide of Robes had begun to cascade down the rock walls from a third the way up. These soon poured out onto the flat ground, and toward the friends.

As they flowed down the walls of this great caldron in a great *screaming* mass, and rolled out on the rocky floor, these words that were heard,

*"There is only one way."*

*“The way has been found.”*

*“There is only one way.”*

*“The way has been found.”*

*“There is only one way.”*

The noise from each sentence was like a punch hitting the friends, and its frequency grew, as the black and white tide poured towards them.

“Let’s *do it*, Trina!” called out Jennifer, from Joe’s engine.

*“Trina! That’s a girl’s name,”* called out Joe, with a smile.

Trina went red, and called out over the din, “When I’ve finished with them, I’m comin’ after *you*; *Spanner Boy!*”

Joe laughed out loud; then called out with a smile on his face, “A *classy* name, for a *classy* woman.”

Trina just beamed, as the *beauty of love* covered her face, and the fire of battle *lit her soul*, all at once. Joe smiled wide too and nodded to her as the three friends turned to the job at hand.

That’s all we have really, the moment, and the choice to act. Sometimes that action may be to simply stand or carry something to completion. Sometimes it is to fight hard, as sometimes standing is not enough, when wisdom calls us there.

The Oppressor screamed, as if it had been mortally wounded by the interaction between Joe and Trina somehow, and called on a second tide, which now followed the first.

The engines moved together, and their lights now formed a closed circle of light around them; the two great arcs of lights, now one, beaming outwards. As the tide came nearer, they revved their engines, and strangely, the Robes dissipated without a whimper as they met it. It was strange, because the friends had known the great squeals they usually let out as light hit them; the more powerful the Robe, the greater and more dramatic the cry. But something had made the light so strong that they had no time to squeal before they dissipated.

With a nod from Trina they revved the engines up even more, and the tide of robes began rolling backwards. But the second tide that was still rolling down the walls hit the floor and spilled out over the retreating lip of the first. The Oppressor then sensed a weakness in the beam's spread; they were only effective to a certain height, so it called the flow to grow higher and deeper towards the light engines, as a third wave now rolled down those terrible walls.

The Robes even started to fall from great heights above them, as the third wave, a tsunami, was about to pour down and over the top of them. With this rain, and higher tide now again moving forward against them, the engines roared louder; louder than the chorus from the robes. The machines moved apart with the arcs of light then swinging from the floor on one side of the machines to the other; this created a dome of light about each machine as the speed of the steel arcs that held the lights increased. This sent the tide backwards again and stemmed the flow from above; but did not stop it. The Oppressor then roared again so loud as to drown out the Robes and the engines. The walls began to fall. Again, not the walls, but endless robes; deep lines pouring out of the walls above, and flowing toward the light engines, until they covered the two conjoined domes of light, like a small dark sea pouring in over them. There were simply *too many of them*.

In time no light at all could be seen through the dark tide, and so darkness returned to the great coliseum. The roar of the words that were heard, from many millions of robes, still multiplying on the walls, came like the beat of the drums of war; one only *just beginning*.

*“The way has been found.”*

*“There is only one way.”*

*“The way has been found.”*

*“There is only one way.”*

*“The way has been found.”*

The Dark mist then entered the sea of its command, pouring through the robes to seek its captive. It could not wait, as it needed so badly to *be something; to be someone*. It had no patience. Its fear of missing this opportunity drove it deep. It could *not be nothing*; it just *could not*. The Oppressor strove ever downwards, as it sought the engines, and its future.

The tide rose higher, and higher, the darkness becoming so dark that nothing could pierce it. The Oppressor roared as it cast robes aside, digging down further and further. Now was *its* time, now was *its* victory; when suddenly one of the machines burst out of the dark sea like a small sun. It burned above the waves. So fast was its arced arm of light now freely spinning through the full 360 degrees around the engine’s body, that it was a powerful pulsing sphere of light.

Joe was at the wheel, and he and Jennifer hoped they would see the other engine breaking free soon. It took too long so he nodded to Jennifer, and she nodded back. He began to set the engine to dive, just as the ten-lighter exploded out of the terrible sea below them. Its light was far greater in intensity, and far whiter. It held The Power, the great power of The

Covenant. This focused power of The Creator's light was *too* much, and the robes began to dissipate. The putrid sea seemed to drain into the rocky soil; the wailing robes also disappearing into the broken crevices of the colossal walls. The Oppressor went with them; breaking up into tiny pieces, so as to seek out small and hidden places where it could survive.

It was then that the engines started to lose power. The mechanics looked at each other, confused as to why. The beast turned, re-coalesced, and rose in a mighty surge out to the rocky ground again. The Black Robes surged out *with* The Oppressor, as was their power, and their great desire of self-protection. The Whites though cast themselves from the walls above, as death was their final fervour. The engines were now losing light; the slowing swing of the arc lights also lowering them. They fell toward the rising Dark Mist that now seemed to sit upon a sea of the black robes. The two mechanics looked at each other, trying all sorts of things to power up their Limitless Potential engines.

*"How could something overcome The Power?"* they thought, but it was not that. It was that a linkage, a bond, a channel, to this place was also needed to keep the flow of The Power flowing in any world. *The Power* was a two-sided agreement, and so required two parties to stay to their word. It had been upheld by these three friends; but it was also that too many hearts had ceased to pump in the world. Hearts were *the pumps* and *pipes* that brought the Deep Essence of light through.

A great lack of hope then filled this dark place, and the Oppressor roared with the feeling of power. The friends were then attacked tangibly by a great feeling of hopelessness. But just as it came, the Oppressor began to fall away. At the far end of the sea of Black Robes, with floating islands of White Robes, a gentle glowing green light could be seen. The Robes all moved back, giving way, and some even bowing to this light that now walked among them. It was The Lady of the Green, and a man walked beside her.

Jennifer recognised the man. She thought that Yuri had made it, but as they came closer, she realised that the man was no one she knew. She asked herself how that could be, just as the light of love exploded in her heart. She loved this man, and in the growing light she could see his love for her. She then looked to the high creature who walked with such poise beside him that she seemed to be floating.

The Lady of The Green was looking to Trina. Trina cried with the love she felt, no longer concerned with any bravado. She knew now that she did not need it, and never had, seeing it clearly now in this glowing light. It was only a wall that she had protected herself with. Her way *was* her, but really *it wasn't*, as we can all find out sometimes. She smiled at the lady and then looked to Joe, who was transfixed on this woman.

“It would seem, as always, your time is at an end, Dark One. The tide has turned. You *are not*,” she finished, and The Oppressor fell away. Something had happened in the world, *something big*. Many waves of challenge had already hit the world, to harry and so strengthen the love and knowledge of the souls of men, but this was to be the great one; one that would finally cast it into its adult future. The Ravager, The Physician, had cast His final gift upon the Earth.

The Robes withdrew, knowing the creature of light in front of them, and what her presence meant. Jack smiled at Jennifer, and she went a little red.

“It’s okay. You don’t remember me, *Jennifer Thompson*,” said a very different Jack, exuding spiritual surety, and smiling kindly.

Change was there too, as he tends to be at such times. Looking on, from high above, he smiled. “*Inevitable*,” he said; dusting off his hands like his work had been done, then pushed off in his astronaut gear, but more like he was swimming through space like a frog.

Jennifer smiled, and cried with some relief, as Joe asked, “Why did the engines fail? They have *limitless potential drive*.”

The Lady gave the floor to Jack with a gesture, and Jack’s heart began to glow with the same almost white light, with a sublime green hue within it.

He said gently, “The machines run on two powers; His light...The Creative Word and The Power of The Covenant, but also the love existent in humanity. Love for each other, and the love for the Creator feeds the engines. The Covenant is two sided, and if our engines fail, we have failed to *truly* love; *even though* The Creative Word fills your heart, and your machines roar with all the limitless power that they have imbued with. Unless our actions are powered by *real* love for each other, then it is *all* for naught. So many *believe* they love, but that someone thinks the same as you, or even that a cause need be served above the needs of others, does not make your actions love.”

“*Love* is simply, *love*. *Not mistaken want. Not a concept. All* is powered by it. It is the *First Law*,” explained the glowing lady.

“And, the *Last Law*,” added Jack. “The machines cannot succeed without love. Their power cannot be brought to bear, or wielded, without it. Love for the Creator and each other is life, and the rest is just the Void.”

Jennifer had come down from the engine, and Jack turned to her. “My name is Jack. It is lovely to see you, and we *will* meet again. You have some work ahead of you, but you *are strong* Jennifer; and *He is Great*.”

With that, he and the Lady of the Green were gone. Jennifer turned around, and the engines had gone too. Then, she was.

JACK LAY BACK IN BED, thinking of Judy, and sadness filled him again. He could not imagine the fight she had ahead of her, as now, even though awake, she would just stare off blankly to one side as if seeing something there; unaware of those around her. He loved her and would do all he could now she was so physically broken. Such is the love of family, and most certainly a love the *whole* of humanity *needed* for each other right now.

It had been a busy time, and a real change in his life over these past months. So much had happened, and he sighed with tiredness, sadness, and also great satisfaction. The small group had started something and had brought more love into the small community; a gentle cohesion that brought life with it. He could not believe what they had managed to do and how capable they had become in such a short time. He now saw how any regeneration took the effort of many people, but it was more than manageable.

“What a ride,” he said out loud, as he lay there tired, but so awake with the wonder of the process that he had experienced here in the so called ordinary.

He was coming to a real state of joy. Part was the realisation of the deep bonds of caring in the group of friends, and how it, and their enthusiasm, had drawn others into a brighter place; *where days were longer, and the soil was now rich*. He saw that love and unity came first, before all else, and that things develop quicker and stay stronger within these two choices. It didn't matter the size of the group, it was that nurture and peace could be found within it; holding back the darkness and gossip; holding back fear, ego and suspicion, and the deep mists of people turning against people.

The darkness had been defeated deeper, *in a future time*, and thankfully its time was as all things dark, limited. But these pernicious forces were still building in the present and had yet to be turned away in the outer reality; in every place, large and small. The winds of chaos would be known on planet Earth if this new tide of rising light was too slow in

dawning. The world had been running on the last dregs of spirit and order; the spirit and social structures left by the great belief systems of the past.

Unless the collective human soul again returned to its inherent spiritual nature and noble character, the spirit which The Oppressor still distracted the people of this planet from; unless the human cells of the great human body renewed their bonds of love, cooperation, and even willed to sacrifice so that the body of humanity could be renewed, until it passed through its death to a new life, or regathered its balance and walked on to its collective maturity; unless the people sought Knowledge from its Eternal Source again...then humanity would continue, punch drunk, wailing and flailing in its disordered mind, and tending more towards total chaos.

The time of youth was passing though, and the inevitable maturity of mankind would, at the appointed time, be at hand. Only the choices enshrined in the free will of the people, in time, and in the coming of *true understanding*, stood between these two eras; these two stages of social development. Even in this, only love could come to suffice; no matter the Knowledge brought forth from Deepest. Knowledge *and love* are required; knowledge that produces love...*only these*.

*“Only the will and effort of each of us to humble up, love each other, and muck in together,”* thought Jack.

JOE, TRINA, AND JENNIFER FOUND THEMSELVES ON THE BEACH. Jennifer sighed in the relief of staying in the same cycle for now. She wondered about the man with the glowing green heart but was now more so glad for a rest after the battle of her life. The

Opressor had worn her down, and she would have to reflect on that; but not now. Now was time for some joy and for some *'nothing in particular'*.

“Hey, who are *you guys?*” called out The Surfer, coming out of the trees that lined the beach. “You’re gettin’ a little greedy there man, with *two good lookin’ ladies. Two good lookin’ babes on my beach.*”

Trina went red, as Jennifer said, “I still know you. It seems I am here to stay for a while again.”

But she wasn’t. These would be her last days in this place, even though she would be given time to rest and reflect. The learning had come, the cycle now almost completed, so her soul would fly on to wander in new places.

“*Nice. You are welcome any time, Jen. Always a pleasure, my dear lady,*” said The Surfer, as he fell into a deep bow.

The strange thing was that, in that bow, there seemed to be a wave from Deepest saying *'good work'*. She felt she had failed in that void though and was not comfortable that someone should bow to her at all, but she received the message with grace and deep thanks.

“So, you guys look like you need some *down time*. What happened in there?”

The friends were all silent and thoughtful, as so much had happened.

“Must have been some heavy seas in there,” said The Surfer smiling, helping the three friends realise that they had all done well. “Comon’ up into the shade, and fill me in.”

They all walked up the beach and sat down in the shade of the palm trees, and they told their stories. The Surfer seeing the growth of poise in every sentence; from the new knowledge they had gained of themselves, and from the nature of things in their experience.

He could see Jen was much stronger, knowing that her ordeal had *“ploughed deep the soil of her soul”*. The friends talked on into the evening, presenting what they had learned; *to themselves really*.

“...So, we learned a lot; *all* of us,” finished Joe.

“Knowledge, real understanding of even taught knowledge, comes from the experiences of life and really testing our souls,” added Jennifer, looking out to the sea. She took a deep breath in; the ocean air now sweeter from a gentle evening breeze coming in off the water.

“Yep, you can think you hold more than you really do, and you can be too proud,” reflected Trina, as she looked down, playing with a stick in the sand in front of her.

*“No one holds all knowledge, but love is a far easier path,”* offered The Surfer, with a knowing smile.

THAT NIGHT THEY PREPARED THE MEAL, AND THE FIRE, TOGETHER. They ate, and talked, and they laughed quite a lot. Mostly at their own bumbling but enjoying the bumbling’s and victories of each other. There is always plenty to laugh about on reflection, surely one of its greatest attributes.

Later that night the three friends seemed to hit a wall, and all started to tire heavily. Joe just lay back in the sand, making himself comfortable, and he nodded off while the others were talking. The Surfer then led the ladies to a small hut with two large hammocks, and they crawled in; almost asleep before they settled. They almost felt like children being tucked in by their father. That was saying something for Trina and showed just how hard they had fought.

Their effort had been quite galling, *especially* Jennifer, and she soon dreamed again of the man who had saved her from The Oppressor. Not Jack, the one from the earlier dream that she had had in the void.

*“It is good to sleep, to rest, to regain your energies,” said the gentle man.*

*“Yes,” said Jennifer, feeling the relief of sleep.*

*“I will not keep you from a deeper sleep. I will just share some knowledge. It comes from a writer on your internet...”*

***“The mind is dry, and seeks to conceive what the heart already knows. The mind has no vision if it tries to build without love. Anything built without love will fall in time. Until love exists, the effort to hold something together will be a great burden. Great structures need, and are for the purpose of, love.”<sup>20</sup>***

IT WAS LATE IN THE EVENING. Jack had been visiting Judy in the hospital. He was now walking along the corridor after leaving her room, when he heard someone call his name. He walked into the room it came from, wondering who had called out. It was a high care ward, so he was surprised at *any* words issuing from there. The room was dimly lit for the night, and as his eyes accustomed themselves to it, he saw her. It was Jennifer. There was no sign of cognisance, let alone a chance that she would have called his name.

He then found himself grabbing a chair to sit down beside her bed. As he sat down, he took her hand and held it as if it were not a surprise to see her or for him to hold her hand. It was *strangely* natural, as he sat there; allowing this experience to be as it was. After a short while, he settled, and he began telling Jennifer about his sister, and his day. Then a feeling; strange, and deep inside him, came. It was like a great cycle had been completed.

He *knew* all this. He *knew* that he was to look after her; that *love* required it. It was not some inkling, some hidden hope or imagining; it was *knowledge*.

# 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 be in agreement 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 is 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 spiritual wisdom written into 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.

He has been writing philosophical realisations and poetry, under the acronym JDC for a number of years, and has now written upwards of nine novels; which will be published, when edited and developed.

# REFERENCES

1. Bahá'u'lláh. (1990) *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. CXXVI, p. 271
2. Bahá'u'lláh. (1999) *The Hidden Words and Selected Holy Writings*. Kuala Lumpur. Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Malaysia. Part 1. From the Arabic: 22. p. 16
3. Bahá'u'lláh. (1990) *The Kitab-i-Iqan*. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. p. 68
4. Bahá'u'lláh. (1990) *The Kitab-i-Iqan*. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. p. 68
5. Bahá'u'lláh. (1990) *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. LXXXIX, p. 176
6. Isaiah, 9:6-7. *The Holy Bible*. Thomas Nelson publishers, Nashville. p. 787
7. Bahá'u'lláh. (1990) *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. CXXXII, p. 289
8. Bahá'u'lláh. (1990) *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. CXXXVI, p. 297
9. Bahá'u'lláh. (1990) *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. CXXV, p. 265
10. Bahá'u'lláh. (1990) *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. CXXII, p. 260
11. Bahá'u'lláh. (1999) *The Hidden Words and Selected Holy Writings*. Kuala Lumpur. Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Malaysia. Part II. From the Persian: 38.P. 47
12. Martin Luther King Junior. (1963) I Have a Dream, public speech. Washington, DC. August 23.
13. Bahá'u'lláh. (1999) *The Hidden Words and Selected Holy Writings*. Kuala Lumpur. Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Malaysia. Part 1. From the Arabic: 40.p. 48
14. Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932*. Retrieved from [www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/shoghi-effendi/bahai-administration](http://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/shoghi-effendi/bahai-administration) P. 66

15. 'Abdu'l-Bahá. (1982) *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*; 202. Bahá'í World Centre. p. 80-81
16. Simon and Garfunkel. (1964) Excerpt from song: The Sound of Silence.
17. Bahá'u'lláh. (1992) Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. p. 26, 27
18. Universal House of Justice. (2019) *18th Jan 2019 Letter, To the Bahá'ís of the World*. Bahá'í World Centre. p. 3
19. Bahá'u'lláh. (1999) *The Hidden Words and Selected Holy Writings*. Kuala Lumpur. Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Malaysia. Part 1. From the Arabic: 13.p. 35
20. James D Connolly. (2016) *Meme: by Novel Author*. (JDC, author Acronym)

## RECOMMENDED LINKS

For further information on the Baha'i Faith the following links are recommended

[www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org)

[www.bahai.org.au](http://www.bahai.org.au)

[www.bahaiebooks.com](http://www.bahaiebooks.com)