

CHAPTER 1

You don't know me, or my story, but in the event that you do want to find out about someone who has seen, jumped into and, I think anyway, emerged from the abyss, maybe it is worth some of your precious life time and soul energy to relate this to you. As someone, like you, who is trying to be part of the solution rather than the ongoing, complicated and increasingly 'colorful' set of problems we face, or create, today. But then again, is being a problem to others a way to challenge others to become their own solutions? OK, as my more down to earth connected friends would say, no more than one thought per sentence. Which works maybe for simple language books in German, but not the way real Germans speak, write or think. Or used to speak, write or think when the heroes of the Germans were Goethe, Bach, Beethoven and Kalfa rather than Air Supply and AC-DC. But what happens when you become part of the solution and the problem at the same time? Depends on perspective I suppose.

Yet one thing that is true from all perspectives...In the process of trying to understand ignorance and halt the cruelty that happens as a result of such, even the cleanest of souls get dirty. Even for Docs like me who have taken a vow to 'above all do no harm'. And who found out soon enough that if you want to make an omelet which contains all the vitamins, minerals and mind altering meds a hungry world needs, you gotta break some eggs and make a mess in the kitchen. And, sometimes get some egg on your own face. Or have your own fragile skull get broken and have your own sanity scrambled in the frying pan we call...the real world.

So, how did it happen that I wound up as a patient in my own hospital, for injuries of the mind, body and spirit? As a woman who is trying to become the most effective chimera of yin and yang possible. Or was anyway.

Maybe this story about human good against global or, as some would say, demonic evil (which threatened to destroy humanity, and perhaps still is) is best told in the second or third person but...Some stories are best told woman to woman, or woman to man, or woman to whatever you identify as (ideally something beyond the transient and superficial qualities known as 'race and gender').

I suppose that we should start this tale of international intrigue, and undiscovered psychological pathologies, from the beginning. No, not when I was evicted from my mother's rent free womb, or housed in a nursery where I had to give happy smiles I didn't mean to bigger and more hairy beings than me so I could get fed, hugged, sung to or be left alone in silence by adult humanoids who THOUGHT they could sing. But...later on, when it was up to ME to help patients, (and friends who didn't know they are my patients) to negotiate the world outside of the womb in their present accidental or perhaps chosen incarnation.

The start of the journey away from the safe and some would say accomplished road I

planned for myself was an unusually warm yet cool fall morning, a transition between seasons, and climatically-induced perspectives. The leaves outside my window spoke to any eyes with loud fortissimo expressions of erotic red, outlandish yellow and sensuous gold, making even the common street in the common British Columbian small town (which the native population there called a city of course) seem like New England. Rays of warm sunshine seeped through my dress and tastefully yet not sluttily exposed lower neck, while the brisk air ushered up my lightly stockinged legs. Just like the autumn during the golden days of my youth at the very accredited college in suburban New Jersey where I was taught how to learn. And a strange September half several degrees and unintentional academic promotions later at a university planted into the middle of the vast Canadian prairies where I learned how to teach. And a decade or so later at the British Columbian town that happened before this one where I learned far more than any books I read, taught from or, truth be told, wrote.

Upon arriving at my office at the Rapid Water Community Medical Center, after waking up most of the neurons in my nocturnally oriented brain, I looked at my appointment book. Mary, my government assigned secretary and, truth be told, confidant who took care of me more than I ever took care of my patients, had put another nocturnal soul in for a 9 AM appointment. “The morning is wiser than the evening,” I thought of telling Carl, a 25 year old musical genius who was born into the wrong town, the wrong continent and the wrong era for any unpublished, broke yet painfully unrecognized composer who was so good at combining the best elements of music from all centuries into something novel, new and thought provoking. But it would be a lie. Both me and Carl never belonged to the daylight, or the world of ‘meat and potatoes’ farmers, ranchers, carpenters or business merchants who lived in, and built, what we metaphysical oddballs, freaks and (as some would call us when we don’t have something the world wants RIGHTNOW) losers call ‘the real world’, at least in Rapid Water. Yet, it was an experiment in self observing one’s own perspective that forced me to have Carl come in for his session before noon, or sunset. And an experiment I was trying as well.

But, as the clock ticked down to 9 bells and five minutes, then ten minutes, then thirty, I felt the earth speaking to me through my back SAVING and professional feeling four inch stiletto heels. “It isn’t about you, but him,” Mother Earth said to me, as a Goddess. “And if you understand Carl, you can understand and cure him and everyone else in his generation, and perhaps even the old farts in your own,” the Deity ‘above’ (which I admittedly was trying to remind myself didn’t have a penis, beard and human attributes) seemed to say through the clouds passing over and into the bright yet somehow dark-tinged blue sky outside my window.

“It’s a global problem, I think,” I told myself, then turned to what some would call the demon that started it all. “It’s you who trained these kids to live in your world, be mesmerized by the reality you gave them, and isolated themselves from the earth, the sky and endless horizons they could reach if they actually struggled with their bodies rather than formulated strategies with their brains,” I said with a single breath of anger, and frustration at the computer on my desk. Which, I admittedly, needed to write all of the historical fiction books I penned which were based on facts about the human condition.

And the novellas about modern times which sought to implement solutions from the past into the present, as, theoretically anyway, the biological workings of human body and therefore brain and by inference soul, had not changed over the last five thousand years.

I felt a wind from outside blowing over my own naked, and shaved, arms which made me feel cold. Then I brushed aside the combed and conditioned long, and dyed, hair from my unwrinkled face. And recalled that I was neither hungry nor infirmed nor in any kind of visceral pain at the age of 65, unlike my technologically underserved prehistoric and ancient ancestors who usually died at the age of 40, and lost the appearance of youth by the time they experienced 30 cold winters or brutally hot summers. Yes, indeed, for better or worse, as I was reminded every time a mirror caught my glance, even without make up, I was one of those women who would never age. Or, in external and internal ways, grow younger with each turning of the seasons.

I then looked around the dwelling protecting me from the elements, noting the masks hanging on the wall for patients who 'forgot them at home' or the pro-maskers who demanded that I wear at least two of them, now that we are in 'plague' season again. Thoughts about COVID came to mind and soul, from a historical and contemporary perspective. It hit me, yet again, as I looked at the year we were in now, and the maple leaf on the Canadian calendar which had Thanksgiving highlighted in October rather than November, that the only political or social issue these days that people cared about, or put their lives on the line to do anything about, was COVID. Anti-maskers vs, pro maskers. Pro-vaxers pitted against anti-vaxers. Quarentiners 'for the next ten decades and 1,000 new covid wave surges' vs 'everyone jump in the pool to see who is worthy of swimming and who drowns due to natural selection.' I could say that I found myself on both sides of those lines at one time or another, and lament loss of friends and colleagues who, at the wrong time, were on the other side of the argument. But...that was then, there were other issues I was Called to deal with.

An older and more incidious disease was on the rise, and had not even made it into the books. Not the ones on the medical shelves or the best seller list in any layman, or laywoman's, library. Dull out disease. Something which turns an otherwise Passion driven soul into being lifeless, boring, procedural, passive, sedate and...yes, 'nice'. 'Safe'. 'Non-offensive'. Comfortable. Restrictive. A contagious disease which turns George Orwell's externally and internally repressive 1984 'Big Brother' world into a 'happy place' where everyone is wearing comfortable and colorful fashions from Old Navy and The Bay. And dancing to the beat of the two going on one digit IQ DJ's drummer. Lingering as non-accomplished souls on a mythical mountain made visible to them with mind altering drugs a lot more seductive than Soma, or weed. And living 'carefree' and non-accomplished fake existences within video games which had become a substitute for..Life. That 'so yesterday', painful and offensive thing the old farts keep ranting about, which I kept ranting about too.

But, one patient or pathology at a time. Including healing MYSELF of dull out disease.

After all, it was me who was now sitting behind a comfortable desk or a compliant, non-argumentative computer, rather than singing, speaking or performing my heart in the town square, or even at open mic night to real people.

After Carl shuffled his feet and old long before its time body into my office, and sat down, I asked him what he wanted to talk about today. This time he answered with something other than self destructive or protective silence.

“Self worth,” he muttered, the expression on his face and eyes that perhaps could tell me what he was really feeling hidden by a mop of unwashed, knotted up straw which some could call hair.

I sat back, re-crossed my legs, adjusted the hem on my dress, then slid my fourth finger over my forehead to be sure that my own overgrown bangs would not hide what I had to say, or see. Then felt the artificially softened and thankfully today, hairless skin on my chin and cheek. I then leaned forward, allowing the best answer emerge from whatever shakras were open, be they fed by estrogen from the present, or testosterone and adrenalin from my own misrepresented and misdirected male past.

“Self worth....As I see and feel, and experience, it...There is something to 'results not excuses'. And we are only a loser when we stop trying,” I said. “Yeah, yes, a line from Saint Elsewhere, and perhaps a writer who I feel resentment for...long story behind that,” I thought but didn't give voice to as I had recommended the show to Carl as what we old farts who are still fuckable grew up with instead of House or, Buddha forbid, Grey's Anatomy. “But there is also 'we earn our wings every day',” I said, knowing that he would not have picked up on the fact that it was an ad for PanAm airlines back in the day when Bill Cosby was the father you wanted to have rather than the husband you wanted to castrate. “Only by doing, struggling and Working till we are victorious behind our shield or dead over it is any Real accomplishment possible, and inevitable,” I continued, leaning in like the Spartan Shield maidens who I KNOW made up part of the 300 men who died defending their culture, and legacy at Thermopile. “As for who one is struggling for, and who one is trying to 'please', or get approval of .for me is it..” I hesitated, trying come up with the right name. “Spirit. Big A. A Deity which is, despite my defective mind's constructs and old reflex, beyond gender or any human attributes,” I related and re-realized, or tried to anyway. “Akin to King Arthur fighting to keep Camelot Alive and expanding for the sake of Merlin, the generations who will come after him, and his comrades in the present,” I proclaimed as I felt the horse between my thighs which I was always riding, on a good day anyway, into cannon fire against the no-goodnicks.

But unlike the movie in my mind...I noted Carl's eyes becoming deader, being lost within a vacuum of purposeless inside his hip, cool and well read but not yet well written mind. Then, it hit me. What to say to someone who, unlike myself, had the good sense even at a young age to have never bought into in the egotistical fire and brimstone 'God' of the Old Testament and the guilt throwing 'Heavenly Father' of the New One? And

who also never, thankfully, bought into Satan being the Master of the Universe, no matter how many sacrifices you made to the Top Administrator who cast him into hell.

“If we are not fighting/Working for a Cause bigger than ourselves, and our own satisfactions,” I continued, leaning in as far as I could to Carl without jumping into his soul, trying to rescue it from the stagnant place from which it was finding painful comfort. “Such as awards, money, fame, or getting sexual pleasures from whatever man or woman we fancy, we lose the ability to do the impossible. And I mean by that to create something Innovative that changes the universe now or later. To...”

“...Make a real difference, right,” he blurted out with through dried out lips to the floor in a sarcastic tone that blackened his already grey aura. “Success is all about ego anyway. And whoever has the luck to have...connections and talent.”

I took a deep breath, leaned back, and nudged the steed under my feet with the spurs around my ankles and shot back. I recalled the defiance of the dethroned, disempowered and demoted goddess Brunhilde in Wagner’s opera Gotterdamerung, written by a composer who, for real, was a man who wanted to live as a woman, and, behind closed doors, did so. I put on the tape of her final charge into Valhalla, defying the gods with a charge on her horse, Grane, armed with the ring she stole from the gods which she was going to throw into the walls protecting the gods, and thus bring them down in a big explosion that would finally bring Real Light to the world down below. “The smallest rebel in the darkest of places can and does bring Light to the world,” I related to Carl as a 21st century summary of that three hour 19th century opera.

“If the cameras are on, and the new broadcasters allow it to be aired,” Carl pointed out. A fact that I felt compelled to recognize as true, and to still defy.

“But if we dedicate ourselves to the Cause, the universe does give us special abilities to transform that universe, in its service and humanity’s,” I countered, finding that I had proved this myself on many occasions, between bouts of despair such as what Carl was now being pulled into, yet again. “And as for the mechanisms of how that works, we’re instruments of Enlightenment, Liberation and Empowerment, with power that is loaned to us, with a special responsibility to use what we’re given. And as we both know, a Mind that is not used to expand consciousness and express maximal creativity eats up the brain, and soul, it’s housed in.”

Carl nodded ‘yes’ to that. An agreement. Finally.

“And as for using that Mind, creativity is not a comfortable process. It requires activation energy. No pain, no gain. No push up the molehill and no magnificent ski ride down the mountain. No struggle, no accomplishment. And...you have a choice, Carl,” I finally said, pushing him to the fork in the road where I hoped I had kicked his ass to. “Would you rather be happy, or accomplished?”

“Can’t I have both?” he asked, as a boy a third of his biological age. But also as an old man with ten times more painful experience, dead ends and despair than any of his estranged fellow 25 year olds.

“You can experience Bliss, if you bypass happy, and comfortable, and ‘safe’. Passing by ‘nice’ to collect more than two hundred dollars on ‘Effectively Compassionate,” I said slipping into a maybe understood 20th century Monopoly analogy while trying to show him the smile behind my neutral and hopefully Zenned expressionless lips.

“I don’t know, but...let’s ask each other the big question,” Carl said, coming to a realization of something.

“Does the ‘Deli’ Llama ever get a hard on under his robes?” I proposed, with a smile, feeling the accomplishment of transforming tragedy and internal drama into relatable comedy.

“No,” Carl shot back. “The real question is the one based in others being able to see the path in front of us better than we can see it ourselves,” he said, pushing that all too true fact, curse and blessing back at me. “And what holds us back from our highest destiny, and the universe’ best intentions and wishes.”

“A asks B what he is not doing, or doing wrong, out of ignorance or cowardice,” I replied, recalling the formula which got to the root of so many of my patients’ life issues.

“Or what is SHE not doing or doing wrong out of ignorance or cowardice?” Carl challenged.

I pulled back my lips, trying to find the answer behind my averted eyes. And at that time, felt like Spirit was speaking through Carl, ironically the most intelligent and kind atheist I ever met. “I’m open to suggestions as to what you can tell me,” I said, trusting my fate to this ‘young man’, who some considered an underdeveloped boy. Who I prayed would give me the Answer I wanted, needed, and feared. “What am I not doing out of ignorance or cowardice?” I asked him, bracing my mind and tensed up torso for the answer.

Carl pulled back his lips, and averted HIS eyes. His face seemed to take on that of an old man. The aura around his unwashed hair and dirt caked temples made appear to be the ancient soul I always suspected he was. “The day you can tell me what I’m not doing out of ignorance or cowardice is the day when I can tell you what you aren’t doing out of ignorance or cowardice,” he offered.

Was it Carl speaking as a fellow human, nay Martian, who was delivered to the womb of an earthling mother by some divine mistake, or as punishment? Or was it...the Divine who was speaking to me? As this point I didn’t know. All I knew at that moment was that the clock ticked down to the allotted time I had with Carl, according to earthling

schedules. And that when he got up to leave, he seemed just as helpless and hopeless as he did when he entered. Or maybe more so.

“Next week same time, Carl?” I asked him.

“Sure,” he said as he shuffled out the door. “I’m not going anywhere and you aren’t either.”

That statement rang truer than I was prepared to accept, or face. Carl was going back to a comfortable, secure and eternally painful existence as a boarder in his parent’s basement in a small town that was going nowhere, except for the abyss of silent desperation. And I was...hired by this town to try to get patients to try to rescue people from that fate. By administrators and fellow medical practitioners who were dead themselves, and didn’t even know it. Who were welcoming me into their ranks as one of them. An invitation which, thanks to the cotangent of dull out disease, I found myself eagerly accepting more and more every day. An overpaid, underworked and at the end of the day, therapist serving the wants of the clients the community was shuffling to me.

I indeed was now a ‘respectable success story’ who would have been far more fulfilled in my old job as an itinerant, overpaid and overworked shrink working for the now defunct ‘Psychiatrists without Borders’. In countries most of even the school teachers in the present ‘sheltered from worldly adversity’ Canadian town I was working in could find on the map. Then again, I should have known that you are paid more to effortlessly give people what they want than to struggle to offer them what they need. Then, you forget how to provide them what they need.

Mary buzzed me on the intercom, informing me that my next patient was ready to be seen. I told her that I needed ten minutes to prepare. Actually, it was to regroup and to consider another quote from the Ancient Texts that were too advanced for this modern world to fully understand. “Do not be moved by failure, or success,” I recalled from the loosely translated Penguin version of the Bhavgada Gita. Or was it “don’t be moved by applause from the world or boos, or, worse” that found its way to paper on manuscripts by my hand, as I recalled my stack of rejection letters from publishers for my submitted Works of fact based fiction. Such was Carl’s experience as well with his peers in his bucolic British Columbian home town, population 3,000 and dropping every day. And those who he was trying to reach outside of such through his home page on the internet.

Clearly, members of Carl’s generation were mostly watchers, and not doers, who got more praise for lampooning and colorfully knocking down a new song, book or performance by their peers than actually DOING something new. Or trying to. Just like in MY time growing up in the late 50s where ‘you were number one or number nothing’ was the rule. And that one person on top of the pyramid initiated a socially accepted and embraced passing down of shit that fell on everyone. Of course, the 60s, and 70s didn’t change much of that. The cool kids still ruled over the struggling ones, even at ‘there’s enough room on the Revolutionary Stage for everyone’ at the one-stage events such as Woodstock and the radio stations that overplayed the top hits at the expense of intricate,

intense and thought provoking music that only Martians like Carl could come up with. And when effortless success was considered the best kind in the 80s, officially, the frontiers were closed. And the pendulum went back into the other direction, so it seemed, the opposite of 'you're number one or number nothing' being that everyone is the SAME number no matter how high an integer (even in your own mathematical universe) you wanted to become.

No wonder why Carl grew up in a generation that was given trophies for just showing up. And nothing special for accomplishing anything out of the 'average' or 'ordinary'. Indeed it was the soma of enabling. A generation brought up without the most precious gift an older generation can provide---challenge, while giving the tools and support to do your best, and beyond, on your own. To embrace struggle. To enjoy pain. To...be in the disruptive and ever evolving upward motion called being Alive, rather than being....comfortable, happy and secure.

But, such would come in later..For now, there were other considerations. And other patients who I was supposed to help out of the prison cells they had built for themselves, or helped others construct for them, giving them the bill from Home Hardware for the building supplies of course.

Ellen Holstein came in this time with two abnormal ocular portholes, the pattern of black, blue and elevated brown displaying different patterns on both sides of her nose. "My right eye got injured when I fell last night, and when I tried to put make up on my left eye to make it sort of match, well..." she confessed and related, after which she lowered her head. "It's Halloween in a few weeks, and I look like I'm in season for it, right? But...Kurt had a bad weekend at work."

"Which he turned into a horrible week at home for you!" I pointed out. "What else did he do to you?" I enquired, pulling back a bit, as I noted Ellen painfully pulling in her arms under her oversized long sleeve shirt towards the fetal position she adopted whenever I pressed too hard to pull her out of it.

"He told me that he loved me," she replied, with a smile that showed just how fast she was progressing from being a once hot looking 27 years trophy wife lover to a burnt out 60 year old embittered hag. The view of her mouth clearly showed two missing teeth, yet with the happiness of a child who had been taken into Santa's inner workshop to play with all of toys she ever wanted, or imagined possible. "And I know he loves me," the mother of two, thankfully with their grandmother, children said with gratitude. "And he showed that he loved me by hitting me!" her conclusion. "People who love you always get angry at you, and if they don't care enough about you to yell at you, well, it means they don't love you. Right, doc?"

I wanted to say that this was wrong, but, for most earthlings, such was true. I recalled my own experiments with 'mixed relationships'. That is, me as a workaholic masochist seeking enlightenment thinking I could find fulfillment, and inspiration, with a comfort

seeking, material plane oriented man whose reward at the end of the day was to 'chillax' and at the end of a working life, to comfortably retire. In a way, my mild mannered, intensity hating, and benignly energy sucking Bill was just as defective as Ellen's Kurt.

For the rest of the hour, I tried to empower Ellen with all the platitudes I could regarding her right to be treated with respect, and her obligation to respect herself if respect, or admiration, was not conferred to her from someone else. But the 'IF you got her talking she would never stop' water sign was like the element she was, and sought to be around. Ellen defined herself according to the vessel that controlled her movements, or contained her in one place. According to what she told me about her life history, from 'tell me about your mother' to 'what was your first boyfriend, or, as I thankfully can ask now, girlfriend experience like', she never left the womb.

She never lived alone, or even spent a single night in a hotel room alone, at least the entire night, without some form of human company. I dared to suggest that she live independently, and to find a life of her own, or create one. Or, I mused, get a robot who didn't have 'ego' issues to keep you company. Or failing that, a dog whose eyes you could look into and not lose yourself in while crawling into them. She said she would think about it. It was a start, considering that the last time I suggested it, she gave me a billion excuses ranging from her inability to make enough money on her own, to 'this or that person' still needs me to take care of them, for 'just a little longer'. The seed was now planted anyway, which would germinate, unless it was watered by hubby Kurt or Ellen herself urinating on it.

The next 'victim' was Tom, or Thomas, as he allowed me to call him. A large boned, well muscled carpenter, master farrier and former college wrestling champ who jokingly started to lose his thick head of long hair the day he let his first wife, Linda, take her home after winning the Provincial championship. Those long lockes becoming cut down to 'respectable' length to get a job with Linda's Pastor father's construction company, funded by a Mormon run international firm. Then Linda's criticism of everything he did, made him lose the follicles on his head as well as his broken heart's connection to the multitalented set of multi-tracked brain circuits under it.

Thomas had been on the verge of leaving 'lovely to everyone but him' Linda, but still stayed with her. "Conscience without caring," is how the 50 year old potential genius who now looked like an 80 year old has been described his relationship with his once healthy in body, mind and spirit as well as emotionally supportive dream babe. Who was indeed using Thomas as a meal ticket. And punching bag. And nurturer when Linda needed it. And someone to practice her rapidly developing art of finding where he was most emotionally vulnerable, slicing him open with insulting witticisms that had more 'creative venom' in them than any episode of 'Veep', or 'Married with Children'. But, "Linda can't make it on her own now, and I have to keep the family together for my offspring," Thomas said about the woman who had turned all three of his own well cared for kids against him. "When the kids get out of high school," he promised a year ago regarding doing an exit stage, left, right or if he had to, center. "After they get settled in college," last month. "When...the time is right, economically and emotionally," his

excuse today, while shuffling his feet in cowboy boots that had holes in both soles and worn down heels which no doubt he wore out when trying to give himself a kick in the ass that never quite make its mark.

My '11 o'clock', as I now preferred to call Edgar Jackson, should have been seen by the Cop who arrested him for the third assault and battery in a year, which unlike previous years, resulted in temporary loss of limp function rather than life itself in his opponents at the bar fights. But Corporal Wes Brady, the only RCMP in town who knew how to ride a horse, and respect people who took care of them, very much including me, thought it best that the community, Edgar and me, that Edgar would serve out his probation in the world on this side of the bars. And outside of the locked doors of the wards that kept crazy people from infecting, or inspiring, the rest of us.

"Anger management", Edgar's therapy was called, but for me, and hopefully him, it was a lot more for the gentle giant who turned into a vicious viper when he had too much to drink on his own accord, or was cajoled into doing so by girlfriends who wanted to dump him or buddies who wanted him to get into legal trouble, or to join them in crimes where Edgar would be left holding the bag. It was indeed a challenge taking on a patient such as Edgar with multiple problems who three 'normal' shrinks gave up on. But there were some things I knew that the know it all 'professional' psychiatrists who had turfed him didn't.

I DID know that the newly developed medications that made drunks hate the taste of alcohol, and making them barf up their cookies after the first three swigs of even low octane Canadian beer would make Edgar stop drinking. And I speculated that sneaking him estrogen analogues and testosterone blockers to a boy who was trained to be a macho man who was too macho to be integrated into the military of three countries would actually make him civil, physically strong and intelligent. But, God, Buddha and Allah help me if he ever found out. The 'neuronal network growing vitamins' that I had snuck into his court order anger management meds were indeed making him into the kind of man who hated killing. Rather than the one who, after being in combat for the first time, enjoyed taking a life so much so that his cock would enlarge and stand up at attention every time his bullets hit the brains or balls of an enemy soldier, or civilian who his Army and black ops bosses swore on a stack of fake bibles were soldiers out of uniform.

But after being released into civilian life, with, somehow, an honorable discharge, and several medals of honor earned in places Edgar said he would tell me about 'only if I was going to kill you afterwards', the veteran who no Army wanted back but needed at the time decided to settle down and have a family. "To pass on my sons, the legacy of heroes and patriots, who gave everything for their country, as honorable and effective soldiers for good," he said to me yet again after diverting conversation to his wife becoming pregnant again.

"The wife who gave you three beautiful daughters?" I dared to point out. "And who---"

“WILL give me a son this time!” Edgar blasted out. “Sons being the ones who pass on the Jackson name and honor, since fighting on the RIGHT side of the Revolutionary War, the American Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I and two, the Korean ‘police’ action, and the fight against the Sand Niggers who think they can blow up our buildings and cut off the oil WE helped them find and dig out of the ground whenever they want to, or when ‘Allah’ commands them to! Like I did when...”

Edgar went on about his military exploits, his stories about such being of course different than in previous sessions. But some of them seemed to be real, at least to him, by the way he carried pulled back his chest, and eyes. The details had been the same for the last eight times he related them to me, sometimes in anger, sometimes with pain, sometimes with survivor’s guilt that drove him to pull out his knife commence carving the details into the somehow still intact veins on his wrists. “But in the end, we all know what I am. A necessary evil!” he said in conclusion to it all. “In a world where if I see something that’s wrong, I have to make it right!”

“By arguing with or doing harm to whoever you think is wrong?” I proposed, calmly. “You DO know that the only person who wins an argument is the one who turns the conflict into a discussion. Or who tries to understand why the other guy, or gal, in the case of the wives you have driven away from you, thinks and feels differently than you do.”

“That’s BULLSHIT!” Edgar blasted back, escalating the volume of his voice. “What’s right is right, and there’s nothing more to say about that. Like...”

Edgar went on about political issues this time. His drug assisted advancing smarts, with regard to being manipulative rather than intelligent, clever rather than wise, somehow led him to know exactly what side of any political issue I had a strong opinion, or fact based best hypothesis, about. The demon inside of him, as some would call it, pressed every button inside of me that would force me to counter an argument back at him, based in reason of course, but fueled by righteous indignation. I almost gave in, particularly when he started in on how women were born to be inferior to men, good for nothing except to provide their testosterone-endowed ‘masters’ with beautiful babies, a pleasure boink under the sac whenever they wanted it, a great tasting meal, a clean house he can bring any of his mistresses to and an audience to laugh at their jokes when they made a pun about any of the above. “And if any woman wants to or tries to laugh AT me instead of at my jokes!” he concluded, clenching his fist, looking at me as if I was his fiercest enemy, or easiest prey.

“No one is laughing at you,” I replied, as calmly and assuredly as I could, holding back the primal fear of any woman, even one such as myself---having her biological life, or ability to ever have children, ended by the fist of an angry man. “And no man who is real man will ever laugh at you for not beating any woman into submission. Even if she is a bitch who slices and dices you with her tongue, then dares you to hit her so that she can call the Cops on you and take away your kids, your money or your freedom. Or a

cunt. Like....” I extended my hand out to Edgar, inviting him to give more specifics about who had spread the chain of evil to him.

The tension in Edgar’s muscular, more tattooed than flesh colored skinned arms went limp. He fell to the back of his chair, turned to the left, then squirmed into an even tighter semi-fetal position to the left. “I’m not a fag. Or a fairy. Or a fruit,” he claimed. “It was just that, when I saw that dress on my mother’s bed when I was a kid. And Gloria’s bed last week, now that I’m a grown man. And thought no one else was home...I...”

“Experimented? Like a recent study says 20 percent of all boys do, at some time?” I proposed, as a question of course, since women are supposed to apologetically suggest answers to men rather than assertively promote them.

Edgar replied with silence. Progress of sorts in getting to the root of his personal problem so he could become a global solution. That fairy tale, and sometimes reality, all of us therapists hold onto as why we do what we do. The central lesion in the brain that explains all of the problems in a patient, or rather person, who has an organic neurological disease induced by toxin or trauma. But, as in the real world of neurologists who ignore psychology, or Skinnerian reductionists who see all behavior as neurological reflexes rather than complex souls who are trying to connect to our bodies and minds, there is no such organic neurological disease in which ONE area of the brain ONLY is afflicted, or affected. Such is what seemed to be the case with Edgar, as he turned around, and faced me. He took in a deep breath, stood up, and said in a voice reeking of active indifference, “I’m not coming in here anymore.” He walked towards the door, opening it with a calm demeanor.

“Because you hate me or what you see something in yourself you hate, or think you should hate?” I offered. With the assertion of a man, and the empathy of a woman. Or so such qualities felt like they wanted to be labeled anyway that somehow made Edgar stop dead in his tracks, his head downward. I rose to my feet, standing tall in my three inch heels, as a lioness rather than a hooker, mother, wife of fuck buddy. “Edgar. I want and need to help you,” I stated.

“Why?” he challenged through an angry growl. “You hate everything I stand for, what I am and what I really want, or wanted to do, before this court ordered therapy you started!” He reached into his pocket, then threw three bottles of pills into my face. “Jail or the deep six is better than this!” He yelled at me. “Which is where I’ll put YOU if you don’t tell my PO, or your boy toy Corporal Wes Brady that I’m flushing any more of these they make me buy down the toilet! You self righteous bitch, stupid cunt and...”

He closed the doors slowly, so as to not arouse Mary or anyone else’s suspicions. As for what Edgar would do with what he thought was his new found freedom, such was anyone’s guess. But the best prediction was that it would not be pretty, kind or gentle, particularly to those women, men and ‘girly men’ who demonstrated and valued those traits.

My next patient was 'easy'. Angela was her name, the one she used most of the time anyway. A college age trust fund baby who learned at an early age that the best way to get what she wanted from her father was to manipulate him. Treat him like shit one moment, then shinola the next. She would express gratitude to dear old dad for giving her everything she wanted in the first few bars of every musical letter she wrote on the internet or conversation she 'sang' to him like a subservient princess to the most worthy king in the world. Then, without notice warning or predictable rhythm, she would become into a guilt nag, Nun and Nanny pointing out all of his mental flaws and moral miscalculations, blaming his ignorance and selfishness for everything in her life that went wrong, and blaming him for the agonies experienced by whatever family he had left.

"So, do you like my new haircut?" she said with a smile, fluffing her new curly three-inch bob that made her look more like a penis bearing Curly Joe than a California cool courtesan. Complimented by a blazer; slacks and gender neutral Preppy penny loafers.

"You look...different," I replied, to the richest student in the local educational establishment which dared to call itself a 'University'. Whose long breast-length lockes and short skirts with ultra-fem boots attached to heels taller and thinner than I ever wore, at least in public, had been her trademark, for the last two months anyway.

"Well," Angela said, sure of herself, embracing the newest identity she was taking on. "I dumped my latest boyfriend," she related with eyes that were...more possessed than ever. Perhaps because she really was falling off the deep end. It seemed that she had surrendered even more of herself to the demons that overtook such souls, which happened with the help of hallucinogens and firewater that numbed the mind and tore down the walls which protect us from 'entities' we can't handle. And, for reasons of self preservation, or fear, can't see or hear. "And I've decided to become someone else for a while," she said, or rather the demon inside of her did. "Someone who maybe you might want to become, or try out," Angela's mouth emitted with a voice that was not her own, somehow. "Snip snip with that long hair of yours, Doc, and you'll be liberated, and free, like I am," she voiced with glassy eyes, enjoying the cell she had locked herself into. Which, when she woke up from this dream, the young woman who was so attached to her femininity in previous 'identities' would no doubt beg to be released from.

I confess and relate that I felt the demon wanting to pull me into 'him' and to become 'him'. Particularly as Angela described in words, pictures, then by manipulating my own hair, then guiding me to a mirror, what it would be like to get my own valued, and still connected to, long mane chopped off. Shorter than hers. "We'll get our heads shaved together," she, or rather, Harrold, the name I gave to the demon who wanted to lure me backwards into becoming a power hungry, non-artistic, lots of meat and a few potatoes 'man's man'. The opposite to whatever I had, by means of hard work, had become now. But when she reached for the scissors in my box of pens, and approached me with them, I held out my hand, halting her progress by pressing on her chest. Which, thankfully, had breasts on them which had been wrapped tight rather than cut off.

“I can make my Dad in Toronto pay you twenty thousand dollars to look like me,” she offered. “Think of what a commoner, non-artistically talented, uncool nerd doc like you can do with twenty thousand dollars.”

“I’m thinking of what would happen to you, and your father, if I accepted that offer,” I replied. “And not what I could do with the money.”

“That’s a lie, Doc,” Angela said, with a born to the Manor smug smile directed at a simple servant, or a disobedient mentor. “Just like everything you’re doing, and are, is a lie,” she went on. “But...we all lie to each other. It makes life...hmmm...interesting.” Angela stroked my cheek, her unpolished for the first time in two years fingers looking feeling like that of a man.

“Interesting how?” I inquired, somehow regaining my composure, and the feminine part of me which Harrold, who was trying to enter into me through the ethers and the fingers of this patient who I had tried so hard to help, or at least contain.

Angela pulled herself back, strode around the room three times, then sat behind my desk. She leaned back on the comfy chair which I insisted would not be above the level of any other sitting apparatus in the room, and put a pencil into her mouth. “So, tell me about YOUR mother,” she said with a Freudian accent and demeanor which, for real, seemed to imitate all of the gestures that Sigmund himself had shown in real life according to the picture, books and movies I flocked to and embraced.

For the rest of the session, I talked about my own past, giving Angela bits and pieces of it in what I hoped was for her good, rather than mine. Enough for her to be bored with the truths relevant to both of us. But, just at the verge of her voicing discoveries to help both of use, she devolved into telling some stories about her own upbringing, and relationship with Daddy. Most were lies, or embellishments, of course, but Angela, in any of her varied identities as someone who alternated between being needy and bitchy, seemed to believe them as fact. And such was all I had to work with, for now anyway. But, thankfully, Angela’s hour did end. Afterwhich she left my office, then the building, without incident.

I looked out the window to see what Angela was doing as she went into her car, a fifty thousand dollar sedan in a town which was overpopulated with five thousand dollar cars and trucks that were on their last owners. Looking at Angela’s car was Edgar, lingering in the parking lot, smoking a cigarette. I waved him a hello, or perhaps a goodbye, after which he drove out in his pick up truck without, for better or worse, slashing the tires on my ‘antique’ (more than 20 year old, that is) \$1,200 car.

Relieved that I still had wheels to perhaps one day leave my life and job in Rapid Waters, I looked at my schedule for the rest of the day on my computer. It was emptied, my usual clients, and reasons for still being hired here, having cancelled. Save for one name that I didn’t recognize, who reserved me for the rest of the day, and the two afterwards that Mary had inserted into my assigned tasks. “Who the hell are you?” I asked ‘Nick

Diamantis' in absentia reading the next patient's name. "And what, or who the hell am I?" I enquired of the reflection in the mirror which caught my attention.

"Someone in transition, yet again?" I suggested to the reflection, in a whispered voice this time, as it is bad business, unprofessional conduct and career suicide to let the public (or especially a sane, well adjusted confidential confidant secretary Mary) know that the crazier a shrink is, the more effective he or she is as a practitioner. Particularly if she was once a he, and knows that being discovered as such would at the very least force her, or the 'him' trying to take over her again, to start over in a new town, with, if possible, a new career.

But the chill I felt now wasn't like that. It went down to the core of my bones this time. Time and space had no meaning at that moment. It was as if life was giving me a choice. I felt myself being pushed off a cliff and somehow find wings to fly, a service I so skillfully offered my patients, and selected friends. But which I declined to give to myself for so long. "Confucious said something that we should listen to, as I recall," I mouth whispered to the reflection in the mirror, which felt to be both male and female somehow.

"Which is 'invest your quality and learning time with people equal to or better than yourself,'" the chimera Two Spirited image reminded me. "You are becoming a big fish in a little pond, here in this town, again," it reminded me.

"Yes, but Confucious said, or at least meant between the lines, that he, or she, can learn something from everybody, especially in an undereducated, unconnected and uncool town like this one," I replied. "I'm sure Confucious said that."

The reflection, who seemed to become more like Harold, who I had been as a man, than Jenell, who I am now and want to be more of, took in a deep breath, rolled its eyes, and seemed to say, in the voice of my father, "After all these years of schooling, training, teaching and professional accomplishment as a research neuroscientist AND psychologist in New York, Los NOTLosT Angeles and Toronto, you are cowarding out by being a 'simple country doc' here. And after all the sacrifices me and your mother made for you when growing up, and tolerance of your 'eccentricities' and 'desires to be who you wanted to be' instead of..."

"...I know," I shot back, in a voice that I did hear with my ears. "Change the world, make an impact as a scientist, artist or politician, or don't bother coming home to..." I stopped, thinking about so much in my own past that had found its way into my fictional characters in the plethora of unsold novels I penned, and case histories of the many research papers I published as 'Harold', externally anyway. "Yes, coming home to a father who climbed only half way up the corporate ladder in a world where if you weren't a winner on top, you were a loser on the bottom, and a mother who could have been a composer and abstract painter who whose inner 'what would respectable people think' demons inside of her prevented her from playing ANY note on the piano that wasn't on

the printed page, and whose art work showed exactly what the human eye or camera could see. Both victims of..."

"Dull out disease?" I heard. But not from Harold in the mirror, or the 'other' Jenell who was in constant struggle to fight against, and work with him. But from Mary, outside the door.

"Your ride is here, and Mister Diamantis is most interested in the work you did examining dull out disease," she said. "He's very connected to those of power and influence, somewhere else, so I hear. A man's man, who, so the cable guy who installed his satellite dish said, is looking for a real woman who can 'put his house in order', which cost ten times more than anyone else's home or 'vacation cottage'. And very rich. For reasons no one in town who I know anyway knows about, or got a verifiable answer from when asked, but hurting in ways that, well...can hurt whoever comes in his way, or tells him the truth the wrong way. But...."

Mary gave me 'space', then what I wanted most, but needed least. "But if you are still rehearsing lines for the one person play you're preparing to film, and take on the road, I can give the case to someone else. Drs. Jack, Bob, or Carol, who..."

"---want and need time to deal with their own patients, and spend time with their own neglected families," I self observed myself blurting out as I opened the door and noted Mary's smile of pity turn into a nod of...maybe respect? "I just have to prepare some notes, gather some books and..."

Before I could make up yet another excuse to delay doing what needs to be done in the heat of the fire-infused moment, I heard the honk of a car outside. Upon looking at its source, I noted a black limo with tinted glass amidst the dust and gravel parking lot chronically filled by hay covered pick up trucks, second hand suburban vans and rust-bucket cars one failed cylinder away from being sent to their final resting place in the junk yard. A sun-glassed driver in a slick black suit with a cap stepped out, and opened the rear passenger door. He pressed the honk button again, and looked at his watch, impatiently.

"Well," Mary said to me as I froze in hesitation, or as some would call it, 'forethought before action.' "In or out?" my perhaps only real friend, and ultimate executioner perhaps, said in a voice which echoed from the depths of Truth, or perhaps Spirit.

"The first line you wrote in 'Professor Jack', one of the your early novels which most people I know still like, and which is still on the library shelves in town here and not in the giveaway bin with the others that no one relates to," she reminded me.

"Yeah, 'in'," I felt myself saying, and meaning. "So I can get out of wherever I am now," I whispered to myself. Maybe Mary heard me say it, maybe she didn't. But at this point I didn't care. Something told me that my life, and hers, and so many others would be changed forever by the 'house call' I was to make that afternoon. And, for better or worse, it did...change things. For better, or worse. Or both.