

DE-POSSESSING DEMONS

By

MJ Politis, Ph.D., D.V.M., H.B.A.R.P.

(human being aspiring Renaissance person)

mjpolitis@yahoo.com

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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 locks 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 NOT LosT Angeles and Toronto, you are cowardling 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.

CHAPTER 2

It was a good thing that Nick Diamantis, or whoever his real name was in the ‘real’ world outside of Rapid Waters, had his driver bring me to his house. The new road that seemed to lead only to his place up the mountain was built on a bumpy road, filled with ruts that, if you hit them, blew out an axel. If you maneuvered around them, the deep, green and lush even by British Columbian standards valley below would swallow you up after a magnificent free fall descend down to wetlands which swallowed you up more rapidly than any dead corpse wearing cement overshoes in the New Jersey swamps which afforded the living, or the ascending dead, a magnificent view of the Manhattan skyline. Of course, my fear of heights prevented me from looking down over the vertical cliffs that led to the warm and cozy place down below where all manner of mammalian life got softened by the mud so the worms, crows and coyotes could get their fare share of the ecological buffet that Mother Nature and defective brakes could and did provide.

“A good place to film a horror Western,” I said to the driver, a pleasant enough to look at 25 year old dark haired lad who was not yet a man, clad in a black suit with a chauffeur’s hat in an attempt to lighten the mood. And perhaps to plant a seed with his boss, Nick Diamantis, regarding one of the hundred story ideas Life had entrusted me with. Crammed to the gills with ideas defining and keeping me alive, without telling me that such an honor came with hitting a brick wall when it came to getting it funded, produced or popular. “Yes, this place is a great place to shoot a horror Western,” I repeated. “As long as you have horses who could fly, swim or dig a hole in front of them as they crashed down into the earth. Or perhaps blast a hole through their fire breaking nostrils into the ground that would bring them all the way to China, or Australia, where they could unite the whole world, and get to, no pun intended, the Core of what makes the planet keep spinning round and round without flushing itself into a black hole. Just an idea...in progress.”

“Yes, Doctor Miller,” the driver replied, with even less interest in me or whatever I had to say than the under-expressed, monotone and ‘nice’ voice he used the last ten times I tried to make conversation through the protective plastic partition between us which allowed him to, legally anyway, not wear a mask. And by inference, allow me not hide behind the mask that (according to the overpaid and still attention-craving dull out virus afflicted nerds who got instant government recognition as experts in containing COVID) I found myself hiding behind so many times. When in session with patients who used them to hide what they were really meaning from myself, and themselves. And even when driving my car from point A to B in a life where I was losing sense of what the alphabet was all about anyway.

But as for the emotionless ‘yes Docs’ the driver said to every time I tried to open up a meaningful, friendly or at least civil conversation with this clearly dull out disease infected soul, I noted one thing. He was ‘nice’ about his tone. Too nice.

Too...procedural. Too...lifeless. As if he was submissive to someone who he felt more like an indentured servant to rather than a voluntary employee. 'Dull out disease stage 3A', I thought to myself, recalling my own situation of being afflicted with the agenda to be 'non-offensively successful' by my mother while I was still her son. To 'not rock the boat but climb the ladder to the top and enjoy the view' by my father, who like 95% of his War buddies from WWII in the 'two varieties of houses, two cars in each garage and two children separated by no more than 3 but no less than 2 years' suburban neighborhood I grew up in, were invited to work their way up the corporate pyramid and then assigned to stations far below their expectations or abilities. And by the 'suggestions' from my bosses at the clinics I worked at and all too many patients I tried to save rather than sedate that I should be less expressive and more 'professional'.

Clearly, I saw this moment as a challenge. Three forks lay ahead of us, the road, paralleled by what I saw by my biological eyes in front of me as the car seemed to swirve. The usual triple choice of maintenance, destruction or revolution. Thinking, or hoping, I was taking the Revolutionary choice, using this interesting and hurting 'case history' driving me to whatever patient I was supposed to see, or whatever beating I was supposed to endure for trying to do the Right thing, I took in a deep breath and opened the top button of my blouse.

"Hot in here, and hot for this time of year," I said, as the truth of the matter, noting my own body getting more sweaty than normal. I re-crossed my legs, allowing ample view and time for the driver to see more of the still in very excellent condition for fucking and fondling legs under my skirt, noting that he was interested, but not aroused. After a two second 'yes I noticed that' look at my legs, then breasts, he kept his eyes on the road. He adjusted the visor for, presumably, the shifting of the sun coming through the windshield, revealing a picture of a bombshell babe, most probably his girlfriend rather than transvestite guy or trans-woman given her facial structure. Then he put up his hand, allowing me a view of a ring in the fourth digit of his left hand.

"The seats were, a bit uncomfortable for the outfit I chose today," I said by way of explanation for my seduction bait gymnastics. "And it is hot in here."

"Apologies for that, Doc," the emotionally flat-lined driver said in a nice and impeccable civil monotone voice as he lowered his thick, black eyebrows in a turned the AC on. He seemed not offended or even interested in the 'game' I had enlisted him into playing with me, so that he could become a winner in life rather than a chronic loser, or submissive participant.

"Yes, mischief is a poor excuse for revolution, which the people on top use to keep the masses from even thinking about changing their fate of living lives of quiet desperation and involuntary servitude to fashion, popularity and pleasures of the flesh rather than passions of the soul that they call freedom," I advanced, readjusting my legs to a slanted neutral, but not professionally 'closed for entry to anyone forever' position. "Like the cowboys in this town who think they're all independent thinkers who all dress the same

at the bar, in town and especially at the 'express yourself like no one else does' rodeo. And who, with their buckle bunnies, pickle their brains out with booze and now weed on a Friday night, boink with their buckle bunnies till Monday morning, thinking they've 'stuck it to the man on top' not realizing that their drinking, doping, whoring and overeating made the liquor, drug selling and rent by the hour hotel owning bosses up the hill and in Ottawa or Washington rich. And by the time Monday comes around, they barely have enough energy to drag themselves to their 'take this job and shove it' mindless, soulless jobs at the mill, the factory or the tire shop, too exhausted and broke to even think about Social or Economic revolution to liberate themselves, and their bosses," I proposed. "True or false, in your assessment?" I advanced, with an open mind and, I hoped, soul.

It was a mouthful, even for me to put out there, even to this driver whose demeanors, diction and manner of dress had not a single element of County, Western or Rural ANYTHING in them. "Makes sense to me, Doc," the driver replied after pulling his clenched lips back into a chuckle that he enjoyed privately. "Too much sense, but..." he continued, retreating into a dark somber tone as black as the well tailored suit that fit his body so comfortably, but not his frustrated soul.

He turned passive again. His eyes acquired that 'victim' look which I was all too familiar with in the patients sitting in my office, the clerks I bought my food from at the local store and the special patient I saw in the mirror when I got home on my days.

"How much further?" I asked, noting that the route was beyond any of the roads I had driven on.

"Far enough," he replied, with a sense of...helplessness, and despair. He then got a text on his phone. After looking at it, he grabbed hold of his Chauffeur's cap with a clenched fist. Then violently threw it onto the seat next to him. "Sorry about the interruption doc," he said by way of explanation to me, as a servant again as he tried to make the cap come back to its proper form.

While looking at the cap, and the shaking hands which was bringing it back to professional appearance, I noted books under it. Big thick ones.

"So, you're a law student?" I said, noting the titles on the books laying on the passenger seat next to him.

"A lawyer," he replied with a tinge of anger, but not anything like a full expression of it. "Who, well...Isn't very competitive in the marketplace as a lawyer in a stab and jab, or kill or be killed, number one or number nothing world. But, that's okay," he continued, accepting of his fate. "But, in the meantime, I have a job to do. And will do it." He took in deep, painfully reflective breath then averted his eyes from mine in the rear view mirror just as I was about to connect to his pain, situation and perhaps a solution he could take home with him. He then flicked on the CD player. "Mozart," he said coming back to being a pleasant, and 'above all do no harm' Doctor rather than a 'gotta make an

impact for Good even if I have to break some eggs' Revolutionary Lawyer. "I heard it doesn't offend anyone, and is liked by everyone," he said of the most unexpressive, dull and boring rendition of Amadeus' music I ever endured. As I was driven further up a well lit road lined with primordial trees that opened up into a frightening big and aesthetically beautiful, to urban eyes anyway, Palace. The well hidden but frequently spoken about Diamantis domicile was painted brightly in every color which was not represented in the woods, pastures or even gardens known to 'the common folk', with harsh right angles which Nature never expressed.

The defeated before he even started really fighting driver dropped me off at the oversized front door, rang the bell, then walked as fast as he would without running towards the back door. The door was opened by a Nurse whose body was in perfect health, with an alluring body under her colorfully decorated size D cup surgical top. She motioned for me to come in with the whisk of a hand and a troubled smile. Then she led me through rooms with ceilings two stories high whose walls had gold, silver and crystalloid ornaments on them which said 'hello, I'm expensive and you're worth less than my owner paid for me' in the brightest and, I have to admit, most beautiful tones I had experienced in a long time. The furnishings in the living rooms was opulent, clean and sterile. The bookshelves were crammed with 100 sloppily arranged colorfully covered with then DVDs for every book present, the latter neatly placed, dust gathering on their tops. The big screen TV was on, its channel changed from one moronic program to the next 'made to kill brain cells' channel every three seconds by an unseen belching and farting 'commander' surrounded by a layer of pizza crusts, assorted chips and beer cans.

From an adjacent room with a half closed door, I heard coughing. In the oversized living room next to it with each escalation in the volume of the cough, the still unseen small 'master and commander' of the enlarged flat surface which projected bigger than life images with HD that brought the characters on it into more life than anyone in the real world wanted or needed to experience. With each louder cough from the bedroom, the couch sitter in the living room upped the volume on the tv. After four such escalating duels between the Nurse's patient and the healthy, popcorn and pizza eating (yes, beer drinking, slob) in sweats 'chillaxing' on the couch, the Nurse finally walked over to the wall, and unplugged the TV. As the slime in four hundred dollar sweatpants and a designer hoddie got up from the couch to plug it back in again, the Nurse flipped her finger to the left. The fat, belching slob turned out to be a twenty something year old girl who, but for the 'made to go to Walmart' ensemble of comfy sweat shirt and pajama bottoms, could have been a knock out model at any trade show. She gave the Nurse the finger. The Nurse took in a deep breath, then countered with a clenched fist in one hand, and a fist full of money in the other as an alternative offer. The colorfully cool to be cruel brat with the smug look on her accessory loaded thousand dollar 'poor Goth girl' face took the money and stormed out of the room, of course looking at her phone en route. Muttering with her overly pierced lips, "Fuck off, bitch. Or kill me already and put me out of my misery." Whether she was saying that to me, or someone else, I dared not ask. Not yet anyway.

“I’ll tell Mister Diamantis you’re in,” the Nurse said to me in a professional, detached manner, in an accent that I finally identified as not Greek, but Polish, or perhaps Russia. “I can offer you drink?” she asked, revealing by her lack of pronouns that it was probably the latter. And confirmed by the ‘you may call me a servant but I’m no one’s fucking slave’ defiance in her eyes.

“No thanks,” I replied in Russian.

“You’re welcomed,” she replied in her Native tongue, with a thankful bow and a warm, hard earned smile as she cleaned up the beer cans, cheetos and vomit left behind by her young ‘mastress’. Making no attempt to hide the needles, syringes and roaches from ‘happy tabacci’ cigarettes she was shuffling into the garbage bag.

“Please, sit, wherever you can,” I thought I heard her say in Russian too fast for me to translate, but with a graciousness I understood as I helped myself to a seat. “While I tell the boss you’re here,” she continued, in English.

As she left the room, I looked around it. What I saw, smelt and felt of it drove me to a frightening conclusion that I had been before, in many forms. It was indeed a posh expensive everything where no one enjoys anything. The ‘everything money can buy except happiness, or love’ reality that was the reward for those who sacrificed everything to rise to the top of the economic pyramid. With some moral compromises along the way, as the cleanly painted white walls had a tint of red spots under it which, by the pattern and the smell, seemed to be blood. The curtains which were drawn shut of course. The urns on the mantel were turned upside down. Then my nostrils were alarmed by the comforting aroma of lasagna coming out of what seemed to be a state of the art kitchen. The sealed black garbage bags outside of the kitchen looked like they came from the morgue rather than Safeway, each sitting next to recently dug holes.

“No, you haven’t walked into a set of the Sopranos,” I heard from a well but hastily dressed man who walked into the room between coughs. “But my wife, Loraine, wanted a house just like Carmella, and didn’t care if I did what Tony Soprano did to get it, as long as I didn’t tell her of course,” he continued while walking over to the largest urn on the mantle of the fireplace, repositioning it upright again. “My kids. Diamantis who have no idea of what I really, do and why, disrespecting their dead mother like this,” he said by way of explanation for disruption of the ashes of the departed. “Kids who had so much some promise to them,” he said pointing my attention to a family picture of the town’s most recent and richer than any predecessor ‘silent patron’ in happier times.

Upon looking at the side of his face while his stare was held hostage by the photos, I noted a face cleanly shaved, his hair more thick black than thin grey, his current double chin forced into a happy shit eating grin. “Yeah, they were good times,” he said of the photo in which there were the faces of the law student driver, the belching TV addicted ‘princess’ and his wife behind him. “But you see something else in them, don’t you, Doc?”

“Maybe,” I replied, hiding the fact that it was clear as day to me that according to what the camera captured in the family photo, Nick’s son felt unworthy to be a member of any family. His darling daughter in the bright yellow sundress seemed to be possessed by the darkest of demons. And his wife demonstrated more than any other photo I had seen in recent memory, one side of her saying ‘I love you’ and the other ‘you or me into the grave tomorrow, and I don’t care which one’. “But, we all have possibilities to turn our lives around,” I stated as my prognosis, and treatment.

“And destinies, Doctor Jenell,” the unshaven, limping more than walking said to me with something I didn’t expect from his raspy throat. Defiant fire. And a determination to make things right. According to him anyway. “Do you know what there’s too much of in the world?” he asked me. “The single element that makes life shit for even those of us who represent and market shinola? The one thing that prevents mortal humans from becoming better and more effective humans, or...godlike?”

“Ignorance,” I replied, partly out of reflex and partly from my own rethinking of the issue on the fly. “The source of all cruelty is ignorance. According to Socrates. A fellow Greek, who on my mother’s side anyway, I may have been related to,” I said, noting that most of the overpriced, or made to look like they were authentic and real, decorations on the wall were Hellenic.

“Yes, Socrates. Who was an idealistic idiot who let himself get convicted for corrupting the youth,” Nick countered. “Who maybe did reincarnate into you, so you can do what you do!” he continued with a sense of pride I had never heard from either of my parents, elders or contemporaries.

“Which is what?” I replied, taken aback by a man who admired what was behind my eyes rather than below my neck. “That ‘treat others like you want them to treat you only works if you aren’t a masochist?’” I offered and mused.

Nick pulled in his lips, understanding, appreciating and sharing in my bold and, this time anyway, successful attempt to turn fear, sadness and pity into humor. “It’s, as you know, and wrote about...in books written by you that I found anyway...” He limped, then proudly strode to a bookshelf containing my self published novels and hardly read scientific articles. He retrieved one of them, opened it up, and turned to a page marked with a red ribbon which he handled with the kind of reverence I never had for my own writings, or anyone else’s. “‘Dull Out Disease’,” he read, from my novel about the real lives of real stand up comics, as they are, and should be. “‘Which makes us non-assertive, non-expressive, procedural, boring, lifeless, ‘nice’, pleasantly stagnant, painfully inoffensive and dead years before the blood but not energy pumping ticker in our chest stops. Spread by easy listening rock, which is lifeless mud. Chillaxing country music that makes you dumber than any lobotomized mule. Sedating high blood pressure meds that decreases blood flow to the brain when the mind it is supposed to inspire really needs it and....’ ”

“This...” I said thumbing through the mainstream pop and the ‘hip’ so called counter culture DVDs his daughter had pulled out and self-intoxicated herself with. “These,” I continued, pointing his attention to Percy Faith, Faith Hill and Early Beatles records and tapes bearing his wife’s name. “And these,” I continued, moving on to law books. “If read the wrong way, and followed, to the letter. And not...changed when they have to be.”

“By someone who doesn’t know that my son George is inside a box of ‘nice’ but not effectively caring and artistically expressive, that his mother, and me, created for him,” the Greek Tony Soprano clone, who seemed to have more complexities, smarts and inner intensity to him than James Gandolfini, or any of the writers who provided the brilliant dialog for him ever did, confessed and related. “But YOU can and will fix that, along with untwisting the fucking knots that found their way into my daughter Diana’s fucked up soul and shit infused mind,” he declared, and commanded, pointing his index finger at me. “You, because you’re so smart, clever and wise, WILL bring back honor and accomplishment to this family, and the world. Right Doc?”

It was an offer I couldn’t refuse, a challenge I dared not refute. Thoughts went back to my Uncle, whose first case after graduating law school was to defend one of the highest level mobsters in the Big Crab Apple. If he succeeded, one of the most charismatic and vicious crime bosses would be out on the street colorfully administering his brand of ‘justice’ aimed at serving ‘the family’ first and, eventually, everyone else. If he failed to have the charges of murder, extortion and drug trafficking dismissed, my Uncle would be fitted with the latest fashion in cement loafers, and all expenses paid scuba diving holiday in the New Jersey swamps, or Long Island Sound.

I glanced again at another set of photos on the wall between the perhaps made in China but maybe manufactured in Athens plates, vases and reliefs of the Golden Age of Greece. They featured Nick, as an older man anyway, posing with Bill Gates, whose face everyone knew. Nick with the head of the National Security Council, as I recognized from the late night news interview shows that tried to untwist the lies related during prime time news programs. And my most recent patron shoulder to shoulder with the head of UNICEF, an organization which I assumed wasn’t in league with the Mob or the Illuminati, or...was it? Nick’s biggest and proudest smile in the photos were with A level actors in Hollywood who had more power than talent, corrupt top flight politicians from both sides of the aisle who would never leave office even if voted out, and dictators from ‘shithead’ countries along with the ‘Donald’ who called their nations such. But Nick’s face was also next to famous people who were heroes in finance, the arts and science, according to their publicists and my best assessment as someone seeing them from below. Indeed, he had a pragmatic sense of morality.

That effective morality was a flexible and relative sliderule by which we determine what we must, and should do, of course. I was indeed being given a chance to work with and for someone who had been both a demon and an angel, with the power to transform the universe if that fire was focused, or cajoled, into being aimed in the right direction.

Yet...something in my gut held back my throat to say 'yes' to saving Nick's kids from the abyss, and perhaps their father from an eternity of payback in hell.

"But, I do understand if you're too afraid to do what's effective because you want to do what's 'nice' and 'safe' and..." Don Diamantis interjected just as I was in mid thought, as if he could see me at another crossroad. "Your fee for today, and what you put in print before today," he said in a non-threatening way, offering me a fist full of money. "Finding the truth, and expressing it is more than enough of a challenge for most people..." he continued, quoting a passage from *Of Lions and Lambs* which I didn't think anyone had ever really read, or remembered.

"And... having it be implemented is the final act of the opera," I added. Recalling what the main character in the book, Atti 'the Hun' Nicholulias, a fellow Martian and dull out disease afflicted research scientist who actually DID duke it out on the dick joke circuits did till her dying day, when she was whisked off to her home/Om planet. After of course passing on her energy, wisdom and intensity to a younger humanist who became a socially and politically influential comic.

"So, it's a deal?" my dream patron who could get my ideas heard, read and implemented with his money, connections and charisma said as he saw 'yes' develop in my smiling eyes.

"Malista," I gave voice to as I took the money, and felt it...potential. "Yes," I said enthusiastically in as many languages as I could remember, or imagine. "When do we start?" I asked.

"Now!" Don Diamantis replied, putting his large, bearlike arm around my small framed and finally non-shaking shoulders. "You like lasagna?" he asked, leading me to the kitchen.

"Who doesn't?" I replied, neglecting to remember, or say, that I was one of those rare humanoids who didn't like Italian food. But if it was cooked by a Greek who, according to rumor anyway, owned a hundred restaurants across Canada and as many top rated chefs, a recipe that pleased me and now 'YOUNG' Saint Nick Diamantis could be formulated, and enjoyed.

CHAPTER 3

As a medical practitioner who used to be researcher, I still preferred to cure as many people who I didn't know with novel world-wide discoveries I came up with rather than having a few select patients who I spent all my time and resources with, and invested all of my attention to. But there was something else here other than the desire to be a medical celebrity who the history books would remember for what I did rather than a doc who would be remembered in the deepest way possible by a few patients who valued who I was.

But there was something else to this, other than the motivations that pushed some MD's into the cloistered research lab and others into the open to everything the real world threw at you hospital wards. That 'one to many' vs the 'one to one' dynamic I had committed myself to. I felt like I was Alan Alda in that episode of MASH where he was given the opportunity to be a comfortable, well paid and prestigious Doc taking care of a general as his private physician rather than a brilliant practioner of poorly supplied, always rushed, meat ball surgery who saved the lives of a hundred privates and corporals alive every day, before the General could have lunch.

But, once I gave my word to 'Pappa Nikos' (as 'FORMER Don' Diamantis requested I call him) to treat the body, mind and spirit of his two kids with all of the resources inside my 'brilliant, innovative and self tortured mind' (as he said, now me!), he provided me with an unlimited budget to 'demonstrate, develop and distribute' my craft. An expense account bigger than the Prime Minister of Alberta and, so Mary told me, in confidence of course, the three biggest drug dealers and five largest 'common folk' land developers in British Columbia, which of course she didn't name. And all the time in the world to spend it on my own research and development projects in the arts and sciences, entities that I vowed would not remain separated in the world, or within my cerebral cortex. As long as, of course, I was able to turn George and Diane Diamantis into productive, creative and economically independent citizens of the planet.

Such was...an interesting challenge. One which, if it worked, would get me necessary connections as an obscure novelist who yearned to merge into being an influential, world known philosophical-satirist. And a sometimes dramatic actor (in my own films anyway) who sought to be, yes, a comedian by night and a one to one shrink by day, IF I chose to be such. And a researcher whose discoveries in the lab and at the bedside would be implemented in the real world rather than merely remain as speculative suggestions buried into the Discussion section of seldom read articles in volumes in medical libraries that acquired dust over the years rather than students to build on what I started. And, just for kicks and giggles, to become just as recognized and literarily brilliant as my favorite Author on both sides of the former Iron Curtain, Anton Chekov. Who was the only physician who REALLY pulled off being an artistic writer and, according to his accounts anyway and most of his medical colleagues, an effective doctor.

When looking at the picture of old before his time behind the eyes Anton in the library of my new 'auxillary' office in one of the underused 'wings' of the Diamantis mansion, I

wondered, if he was brave enough to put jokes, witticisms and badly satirical puns into his medical records. Or a textbook on human psychology. Oh how I aspired to write my own “Interpretation of Dreams” or “Symbols of Transformation”, but with a sense of drama and comedy put into the medical texts, unlike what Freud and Jung did. Maybe in MY time, and particularly if I was talking about Dull Out Disease, MY book should display vitality and humor instead of ‘discoursing’ about it. And after I wrote it, perhaps Nick Diamantis’ money from Wall Street in New York and connections on Rodeo Drive in Hollywood would be able to buy enough stars, bloggers and publicists to MAKE the public understand, or at least absorb, the new concepts for curing the collective human soul I was offering, or rather, channeling to them.

But...more practically, and as a first step towards the above Aspiration of all aspirations, I had to find and implement cures for the poorly understood ailments afflicting George and Diane. Somehow, I knew that this would require me finding a remedy for my own various pathologies, and short comings. But...I still wanted to keep a toehold in my old life. Such was, I discovered, short circuited by Mary being unable (or unwilling) to book any patients at the free clinic for me back in town for the next two months.

But Nick promised that the Rapid Waters hospital was getting a new wing built for them, with a contract in place for me to turn it into an Art and Science training healing Institute to run it once it was complete. With money for me to have my new Institute from his buds in Big Pharma and three national health funding agencies, ‘at the appropriate time’. Yes, it was something to look forward to, if I was successful with his two kids, to their and his satisfaction.

But, as I pondered the situation from 43 acres of brush I was lucky enough to rent, and call home, for me and my horses, most of whom were rescues, I got a call from my Bavarian landlord. “I sold property, new owners moving in next week. Lawyers say is all legal,” he informed me over the phone regarding the property I was renting without a lease, or signature on anything. “But I made few phone calls so you have other place to live,” the usually easy going, and always there for me when I needed him 79 year old German immigrant who was stronger than me or anyone half his age said.

Within ten minutes of me hanging up, and wondering what to do with and for the horses, who had become my friends, protectors and closest family. And where to park my OWN body at night in a town where rents on ANY rural property were skyrocketing beyond anything I could pay due to an influx of overpaid pipeliners who could afford to shell out four figure rents for normally three figure digs where squatting at my office overnight was not a legal or allowable option, I got another call. It was Nick offering me use of a 200 acre spread up the mountain. Overloaded with knee high grass and access to five times that amount of crown land behind, where I could bring as many of my horses as I wanted to, along with as many goats, sheep, chickens and other critters who helped you build character. Though there was a clause in the \$100 a month rental agreement which disallowed me taking on as ‘roommates or guests’ pigs, birds or men. Little did he know, of course, that I used to be one of the latter.

But for the moment, I was being paid, and more importantly, valued, to find out secrets about other people than to reveal my own. George entered the opulent home office (where all the electric outlets and light DID work) at my new digs with a lowered head and angry eyes, and a shuffled walk, books under his arm, the aggression in his soul directed at himself and as yet unnamed others. “My teacher at school assigned me to read these,” he said of the law books under his left shoulder, letting them fall on the table next to my ‘guest chair’ then sat down, eyeing my body from stem to stern, with curiosity and an intense suspicious inquisitiveness. “And your new boss, or maybe client, said I had to read these,” he growled, dumping three of my most introspective and emotionally intense books about rebellions of various kinds in three different centuries on my desk. “My father told me to talk about them with you,” the hard working, still underachiever, apprentice to the god of self sabotage blurted out, after which he let his ass fall into the chair. “So, what shall we talk about, or discourse about, or, excuse my French, bs about?” he continued, turning ‘nice’ again, and painfully polite.

I leaned back on my chair, noting that George had finally given up looking at my shapely legs, and my partly artificial and partly hormonally grown size perfect (to men and I was told women) breasts. I stroked the chin on my finally electrolysis treated face, hoping that there was no trace of five o’clock shadow that had found its way through the foundation and recalled, this time remembering the exact words, a conversation I had with a new, I think and confess, love interest.

“What can or can’t I do with or for your kids?” I remembered having asked Nick Diamantis at lunch with him the night before at his place, while the sunlight coming in through a crease in the mountains which he seemed to be hiding behind that made him seem twenty years younger. Somehow seeing in his weather beaten, and life tested double chinned face the mug of every young man fell in love vicariously and every old sage I wanted to grow old, wise and increasingly defiant with.

“With and to my kids...you can do want to,” Nick had replied with a sincere smile, while offering me the first scoop from a pot of stew he had prepared himself. “Anything you NEED to as well, no matter what it is, or what it’s about,” he had continued with desperation behind his vulnerable, and hurting eyes. After which he had take a large sip of his whiskey, and had asked me about me and my relationship to my....horses, dogs and cats.

I had recalled from my upbringing hearing from my homophobic mother that it is not ladylike to, when invited to ‘help yourself’ to stew at someone else’s lavish and abundant dining table, to NOT take the largest scoop you can grab and dish out three giant ladel fulls which contain all of the meat. But, for whatever reasons, I had decided that it was time to be more like a gentleman, or more accurately a gentleman warrior. Which was required for my present situation with George.

“Tell me about your mother,” I put forth to George. “And what she meant to you?”

“She visits me in my dreams,” the reply from my now compliant patient, or at least ‘not ready to eat me and put me into steak to go to his father’s many restaurant as exotic meat’ partner in this joint exploration, looking at me face (and not any stubble on it, I hoped). “And nightmares,” George continued, turning his head to the left, then downward, getting lost in a blank stare.

I asked, gently, for George to describe both the dreams and the nightmares, but was answered with silence. To break that deadly silence, I changed verbage and delivered such with as much maternal feelings I could muster as a woman who never had a child, but a human being who had developed even deeper connections to four legged children. But my attempts to be a mother, girlfriend, brother, uncle or (as I was in real life) a father who had lost his sons when they discovered I wanted to be their ‘second Mom’, all had failed. Finally I just decided to be...me, whatever that was. George stormed towards nearly bashed through, the door.

“Tell me about your father, please,” I enquired as he grabbed hold of the pre-arranged ‘stuck on the inside’ doorknob, forcing it open.

“And your relationship to him, or mine?” he shot back with a stern face based in some kind of compassion for...someone other than himself. Or compassion for something bigger than his favorite habit of punishing himself for sins that probably others committed. Revealing all too well that who would be the patient and who would be the doctor, teacher and student, giver and taker was now a rotating affair. One that was, in my experience, the most effective modality of treatment for any ailment of body, mind or spirit, as I saw myself cast by life, or the director of this ‘play’, as his step mom.

Putting that ominous thought, or unexpectedly welcomed fantasy aside, I continued, taking George’s seat while inviting him to sit in mine. Upon sitting down, he turned pathologically and passively ‘nice’ again, and...curious. “Can you tell me why he made me dress and act like a chauffer?” he asked regarding the man who he never referred to as Dad, Pop, Father or even ‘Don Shithead’.

“To show you what you’ll become if you don’t become something else,” I advanced as a hypothesis which, to be effective, had to be related as truth.

“And that something else is...?” George inquired, respectfully demanding and secretly fearing the answer.

There were so many answers I could have given to that all important question. “We’ll find out, when we get there” would have been too ‘touchy feely’, but it was the best I could come up with at the time. But it was accurate, and truthful. And though the truth does set you free, it does make life more treacherous, hard and liberating, as long as you survive to enjoy that unburdening. And embrace facing a universe that you have irreversibly transformed into....something else.

As for that ‘something else’, there were two things at the root of it. The first was that George was blessed and afflicted with the Enlightened head and heart-set of ‘humility of the strong’. If you were more developed in the head, and therefore the heart, you were smarter, stronger, confident and more able to handle shit tossed at you than a weaker person who needed to stick his or her boot-heel into you to feel like they were worthy of being amongst the ranks of the successfully walking upright. I asked George to show me a picture of his betrothed, as he kept figiding with his wedding ring. Getting no response from that, I asked him about the law courses he was taking, and which ones he liked most.

George avoided that question, choosing instead to answer the earlier, easier one. He pressed a button on his phone and allowed me to look at it. , proudly showing pictures of him with his betrothed, ‘Princess and Queen Veronica’. I viewed with open eyes and as fake a smile of approval as I could muster the snap shots of the ‘happy couple’s excursion to Madrid to see a bullfight, Iceland to see the New Year’s fireworks, all paid for on George’s dime of course. Then at A and W on the way to the open mic performances in Kamloops which were attended by those who George paid very well to laugh at his wife’s jokes, particularly the ones directed at him. No matter how much make up or changing accessories she used for the ‘photographer’ in all of the pics, Veronica had the unmistakable ‘power bitch’ look the right side of her face and the other indicating that she knew she was a weak, ineffective idiot.

I made up, or rather embellished, stories about my own tolerance of ‘under developed earthlings’ as a, presumably anyway, ‘pathologically advanced’ Martian which characterized my own relationships with men, and women, which made their lives more painful or ‘interesting’. Then merged into asking George about the sellability of one of my books in which a village idiot in ancient Athens who inherited ‘smart’ genes from a runaway genius father thought that to let everyone ridicule him was a way to give them a badly needed laugh, and sorely required boost in confidence so they could get through the day, and life. “So, you view it as a service to lower beings to let them think they are right, when you know they’re wrong?” I proposed to George. “Or throw shit at you and call you such.”

George sat back on my chair, took in a deep breath, and shut off his photo loaded phone. “Veronica needs to feel like she’s in control of her life and think that she’s accomplishing something,” he shot back by way of explanation. “And it’s just her ‘habit’ from an unfortunate, poor and crude upbringing that when she wants something she tells me to get it, while I---”

“---Never use the imperative tense when talking to her?” I interjected, crudely. “Say ‘can you’ do this when needing her to do something? ‘Suggest’ like a meek mouse rather than a confident lion that ‘it would help’ if you can do that? Or as a neat and clean academic who’s read all of the books about being assertive in the library but never actually got down and dirty and applied them in the fucked up, messy world shit-infested outside?” I continued with a blasting voice. Such did, yes, did cast me as his Veronica. And casting him as the passive obedient woman, who naturally took the blame for

everything that got fucked up in any relationship. A relationship that he knew was doomed for failure unless of course he considered himself a failure and played that role in all matters.

“I’d rather talk about something else, and am getting darn tired of this friggin game you want to play,” George said to me in a calm, nice, polite monotone voice with the lack of peaks and valleys so characteristic of Canadians. From an American born and New York City bred son of the most expressive Yankee I ever met, while fuming behind his angry, self-hating eyes. “What the frig are you trying to do with, or to me anyway?” George challenged. “Is this my father’s goshdarn way of trying to make me ‘man up’ to make Veronica the kind of wife my mother was to him, and or some other cruddy game you’re doing to make him like you so he give you more money, connections and affection than you can ever get on your own, goshdarn it?”

It was a lot for me to absorb, and process. But it did force George out of several tortuous comfort zones. But many more self taken exits from his inner prison cells would be required for him to be a thinking, expressive, bold and therefore effective lawyer. So he could inflict those ever elusive but clearly distinguishable qualities of justice and honor on a world which was still only able to comprehend obeying laws and statutes. But there was still something else keeping George down. And it wasn’t merely a power bitch at home who had pussy whipped him, rewarding him with great sex, a great meal, or a tender approving touch after receiving his ration of psychological abuse each day. No, it was the verbage he was using. The ‘safe’ expletives of ‘darn’ and ‘friggin’ and ‘crud’ he was saying instead of expressing the real words of ‘damn’, ‘fucking and shit’. At the root of it, perhaps was the prefix to ‘darn’ which he felt a meager but insufficient satisfaction in saying. ‘Gosh darn’ in stead of ‘Goddamn.’

By the way he was now holding onto the gold plated Eastern Orthodox cross around his neck, the most fucked up relationship George had was with God. An ill-defined, ever present entity that we, as shrinks, were told to never talk about with client but which our patients thought about every day, hour and minute. Yes, ‘God’. An ever present and all knowing, punishment inflicting ‘boss’ to those who believed in Him, or Her, as a harsh taskmaster on days when they were ‘bad’. Or a loving father with a big beard, mother with welcoming embrace, or two spirited provider of goodies who resembled the kinder parts of the earthly parents they were born to when they were ‘good’. And of course a protector you can call on to extract even more unpayable back favors from when your survival is at stake, or you think it is anyway.

Yes, ‘God’, that entity which is SUPPOSED to be, by Its own expression in all of the holy books, That which is beyond any definition, attribute or picture that comes into our head or was put there by someone else. Described, of course as a ‘who’ not ‘what’. Whose name one is supposed to say with a loud thunderous voice accompanied by angelic background music or mystical chimes, whose ‘name’ is always capitalized. ‘God’, who can so easily become an enemy to those who were on their way to embracing the other side of ‘nice’ as Satanic worshipers or wackjob, super-powered instruments of unspeakable cruelty such as Joseph Stalin.

Indeed, 'God', who, or rather which, I still did and do believe in and serve, or need to anyway. Something Higher and Better, in a way that transcends the opposites of 'nice' and 'rude,' 'kind' and 'cruel, happy and sad, pleasure and pain, or even 'good and bad'.

Whose nature and intentions we seldom discuss with others at the dinner table if we want to eat. And, as I found out on so many occasions when I was 'let go' by patients, and employers, something we don't talk about or ever refer to when treating the Mind as psychiatrists. Or the body as physicians and surgeons. 'God', when mentioned, talked about, and channeled, through the therapist who showed and inspired me how to be one when I was an neurobiologist studying the brain rather than the mind, said to me 'God is not going to punish you if you put on a dress.' A hypothesis which I tested out, for the fourth time, after which I discovered that I could write far better being who I was. Rather than fearing that if I put on a skirt, heels or make up in private on a Tuesday, I'd get as retribution for that pleasurable liberation, plethora of rejection slips in the mail from publishers and agents for submitted manuscripts by Thursday.

But, George was not ready to talk about God. He kept deflecting the conversation in the hour he was assigned to be with me by his father. A perhaps, or at least now, loving parent who George still never described by any name except 'him' with downturned eyes fluctuating between anger, admiration and, yes, love. But George did infer, between the lines, half-expletives and voice tone, that God, 'He', was an entity which George seemed to think WANTED him to be passive, non-expressive, 'nice' and non confrontational. And certainly not comedic. Every time I asked George if had ever had fun on its own terms, or did something socially embarrassing, or decide to pursue being a musician, or go on stage at open mic night as a stand up comic in place of, or along side, his wife, he said the same thing. "What would people think?"

It was something I heard so many times from second generation and some first generation Greek Americans, and Canadians, who had climbed up the economic or professional ladder on this side of the Pond. Thinking about my connections to Carl Jung, Charles Darwin and the admittedly data-fudging but well meaning father of genetics, Gregor Mendel, I hypothesized that it was because after the Golden Age of Greece in 300 BC, the Greeks decided it was more profitable, and more life-preserving, to allow yourself to be conquered rather than to try to conquer the world, as Alexander the Great tried to do but eventually failed at. Try to enlighten the status quo system by being a scholar silently suggesting to the bosses what they should do, or think. It worked for the Romans. And if you can't change the system, feed the people in it by opening up restaurants everywhere. Perhaps sneaking into the food, decorations on the walls, or music on the juke boxes things that the world can use. And if such didn't work, you at least got rich keeping the non-Greeks pleasantly fed. And your family would be well cared for as the last thing any invading army, or pre-existing kingdom, wanted was for its elite rulers or commoners to not be able to get a steak with baked potato or burger with fries when they wanted it. And, combining that with the FACT that so many Greek restaurants were used by Italian mobsters to launder money, and that...I stopped myself, thinking about Nick Diamantis, and the way he made his fortune. Or perhaps how he

inherited it. And knew that since I was unable to destroy the system with my research in the lab and literary investigations outside of it, I had to work within, and with it.

Which brought me back to George, who, somehow, I hoped anyway, was unable to detect that the dialog in my head had little to do with the discussions coming out of my mouth. But then those two did converge again, just as the first hour with the first 'n value', i.e., George, in the study I was doing to transform the world, and myself was ticking down to the end.

"Adler was right," I thought to myself, referring to the 'third generation' of Freudian trained psychologists who tried so desperately, and (relative to today anyway) musically to find the 'central lesion' to what was wrong with the human condition and how to make it right. "In every interaction between siblings at home and everyone outside, there is someone who is, or thinks themselves to be, superior, and another who is inferior. Boss and worker. Teacher and student. Master and slave," I wrote in my head, hoping the words would find their way to my fingers when I had some alone time after George left my new office. "Products of human ignorance, or a God created by ignorant humans that prevent them from becoming better humans or...godlike," came to consciousness. "And at the base of that is self esteem," I recalled, coming back to 'reality', whatever that is.

Seeing the clock tick down, I had to divert George and my attention to doing rather than thinking something. "Do you think you are worthy of success?" I asked him, rudely interrupting the topic of whether the world would be served if America would be better off if it became more Canadian. Or if Canada would be better if it, like the 51st state of Alberta one province to the Corporate East, became more American. "

"What kind of success?" George asked, challenging me as well as questioning himself.

I self observed myself place my left hand over my chin, caressing the 'button' on in it which both at the times when it was bearded and now when it wasn't, maybe did activate a shakra in the gut that bolted up through the spinal cord to activate the brain. "Success is doing one of the six things we are good at which we feel CALLED to do by Life, big L, very well. By our own standards. And the standards of the ancestors we embrace, and the historical role models we aspire to be," I self observed myself giving voice to, inspired yet again by the third brain that, miraculously, had emerge between me and George. That third brain being, perhaps, God?

"And the standards of people in the real world?" George countered. "We're only as good as others say we are."

"And those others are....?" I shot back at George, having seen a hole in the wall between his mind and Soul that I had to get through before his reflex brain plastered it closed again.

George contemplated the matter, took in a deep, reflective breath, then released, with sober and somber resignation. "Those that matter," his reply, after which he looked at the

clock. “And as you say to others, and I say, to you. Our hour is up. And...” A beep came on his phone. He gazed at and into it like a pampered and protected lap dog, as if it was his master, calling him back from a needed and scary sojourn into the woods. “My class in legal presentation in the courtroom and interactions with the jury is supposed to start in ten minutes. Mock trial level 2.”

“Interactive over the internet,” I mused. “Where you can’t see what’s behind the judges eyes, feel what the jury is thinking, and smell the lying sweat or unshed tears of truth coming from the witness,” I offered.

“I know,” George admitted. “But at least we can see others and be seen without these face diapers,” he said, taking out a COVID mask from his pocket, his somber face starting to break into a smile. “Or I mean, protective medical garb,” he said, correcting himself, as I was not quick enough to display laughter to him at a time when he needed it most. “Next time, whenever time and schedules allow?” he asked me.

“Or whenever you want or need to make time, or adjust your schedule” I said with reassuring eyes.

As George left, I pondered the issue of self esteem. And how to turn it into effective action for well trained, over-conditioned, approval (from God and humans) needing under-achievers like George. There were of course two extremes.

The first one, the ‘time and some say tested’ old fart method that I grew up with and around, or at least my brothers did. The taskmaster with the whip or dicing and slicing tongue that pushes you beyond the limits inflicted on you by the idiots and asshole in the word, the manufacture voice of ‘God’ imprinted on you, or yourself. The ‘you’re number one or number nothing’ tough love given by coaches, teachers and parents like my ‘you got a B plus why didn’t you get an A’ father who, I found out after his death, graduated from college closer to the bottom than the top of his class. That pushes underachievers into becoming overachievers, sometimes in fields they chose, such as with my trans-accepting veterinarian brother Oliver. And other times that the family chooses for them, as in the case of my still homophobic accounting brother Dan. And, which has side effects such as my younger bro Allen, who killed himself with booze and drugs before he could find what the world or he discovered what he was good at, according to the world anyway.

Then there was, and painfully is, the use of deception to achieve internal Bliss and external Success. Yes, it is true that thinking you are worthy of being a great actor on stage pushed you into becoming at least a good one who gets enough gigs to be satisfied with your life. And being more over than under confidence as a novice surgeon in yourself before picking up a scalpel cutting into a patient allows you to save that fellow human being, or fellow mammal’s, life with a steady hand. But I suppose that the plethora (yes, I love to use that word) of souls over sixty in North America forced into retirement before they could achieve the mandate of their ‘must and want to do before I die’ lists they made in their twenties probably did have something to do with the ‘give

everyone a first place award for every competition by just showing up' phenomenon of the 21st century. Making people feel like winners in the competition we call the world by even THINKING about coming to the battleground, the ball park, or the arena.

I found myself once again looking at the stack of old notes on my new desk which somehow I had to transform into an authoritative scholarly Theory of Advancing Personalities for my fellow MDs and PhDs. AND a novel, perhaps with accompanying screenplay to be read by the vast number of humanoids who did not have to get letters after their name to be accomplished. Works, big W, which would survive after I'm reincarnated into some other life form, or, as the idea emerged again, a child who becomes a master (hopefully this time female) marketer who 'discovers' the work of a childless trans woman whose writings, in said marketers hands, transforms the world, as was the case for the almost lost and forgotten forever ahead of its time (and finally understood after the author's death) novel, Moby Dick.

Of course, there were both pathologies going on today. 'Don't judge lest you be judged', I recalled once again as I looked outside the window, trying to assess if Jesus was still up in the clouds somewhere, or looking down on earth from the Om/home planet he came from through some high tech device too powerful or potentially dangerous for mere mortals on this planet to have in their arsenal of tool for survival, or self destruction. Then, 'Spring time for Hitler in Germany' came to my mind, from an inner place I had still not closed the doors to. Forcing me to think about the writer of that song, who invited everyone to come along with him on his comedic ride, not caring if there was anyone in the wagon he was driving. Mel Brooks indeed as right when he, in History of the World Part I (to which I do not recall there being a part II yet) said that God, or whatever other factors or ETs, were behind the evolution of mankind had taken a wrong turn when, after creating the solo, 'I share what I see with my inner eye with and put it out there', artist. Yes, the critic. The one who with one quick, colorful and 'witty' remark base out of cowardice, cruelty and jealousy, discredited the hard work of the cavemench (or maiden) who...actually DID something new. Preventing the world from benefiting or at least considering the new artistic discovery by the solo and courageous visionary who made it happen with a lot of hard work. And, just for kicks and giggles, breaking the will and fiber of that visionary so he goes back to becoming an obedient slave for the critic.

And as for the modern world, this 'we're all sharing and caring together', the most vicious and deadly thing for an innovative, put my heart out on my sleeve millennial 20 something like George was one of his contemporaries. A fellow millennial. Who, according to I surmised about what George was talking about, not talking about, and, admittedly, with his father's orders and permission, hacking into his e mails for a brief period in his life when he DID write music, prose and poetry. Which....had possibilities, as I felt them anyway. As an psychological artistic assessor rather than, I hope an condescending critic.

Of course there were established methods available to artificially created elevated self esteem when it was lacking, or denied. In proper print, colorfully calligraphied professional looking, testimonial overloaded web pages and in the 'show me with picktures so don't make me go to the trubul of reading it or lern how to reed' youtubes channels which were emerging exponentially.

I somehow couldn't see myself putting George in a room, or even big open field where the only spectators were 'I don't care what you think' sparrows, chipmunks and earthworms making him repeat with Jesse Jackson tempo 'I am...some body', unless of course maybe I could get the winged, four legged and ground crawling creatures to join in.

Then there was the list making. Make lists of what you were good at. Post them on your walls. And your forehead when you looked in the mirror. On overpriced 'amygdala stimulating' and 'pleasure reflex inducing' specially colored and scented paper you could get on line.

The 'help others and you help yourself method' worked as long as you discovered along the way things you were good at that you hadn't tried or underestimated. But Veronica was no doubt really good at making George give her everything she wanted, but didn't need. Complimenting him for being a great proof reader to correct her grammatical and spelling mistakes on the articles she was using to advance herself as a well published music critic and 'social satirist' in print, while giving not a single compliment to George for his attempts to be a political reformer, aspiring novelist and, to be accurate, more heart than finesse musician.

Perhaps turning the 'I am garbage, I am crud, I should die,' song that George sang so often, with his eyes and muttering lips when he thought one was listening. I thought about suggesting to him to say 'THEY are garbage, THEY are SHIT, and they should die,' but the latter phrase was not something he was ready to will on anyone, even his critics. As for who those critics were, and how effective they were at breaking his will to live, and ability to enjoy life, even if he didn't achieve anything in it, there were many. Veronica, who perhaps, according to the pattern of most passive me, probably was like his deceased mother. The classmates in law school, to which perhaps he got in because of his own grades, or manipulations made in them behind his back by his father's cyber goons. His father, obviously. Or, perhaps...yes, Diane. Who was my next victim, patient and perhaps, if I understood and cured her well enough, the route to my own inner discoveries and salvation. As I looked at what to some was empty space in my new office, knowing there indeed were other visitors who had come in without invitation, or warning. Maybe trying to tell me something or to remind me of something they would not tell me until it was too late to do anything about it.

CHAPTER 4

I waited the required one hour between appointment in my new two, or if Nick was involved somehow, three patient practice. Diane was the next on the schedule which sat on the desk, in hard copy, written in ink by hand.

“Yes,” I told the ghosts whose presence I felt but whose forms I couldn’t see and voices I couldn’t quite clearly hear. “Diane is another story, as expected in sibling situations.” She came in, ten minutes late of course, as also expected, then plopped herself on the most comfortable chair in the office, thinking it was mine of course but not knowing that all the while it was hers.

The only question the cool to be cruel spoiled, yet tortured brat, answered with something other than a smart assed answer that had nothing to do with the question. But in answer to why she came in to see me instead of watching the idiot box (my mother’s term for television, and now mine), Diane spewed out with demonic venom that would convince even a non believer in heaven and hell that Dante’s Inferno was indeed geographical underworld fact rather than literary fiction, “Daddy Fearest is paying me twice as much to be here as he’s paying you.”

Whether she knew the exact amount, I was not sure. But there was something else I had to ask the straight A high school grad who was asked to leave three colleges after no more than two semesters with grades that could have gotten her into medical school, law school or any fine arts internship at Lions Gate as well as Universal studios. “Why are you still at home?” I enquired.

“Home rehab, after getting an advanced degree in applied pharmacology and existentialist trips to universes far more interesting than this fucking one,” she said proudly, extending out her arms, displaying her needle tracks, then showing off the ‘special tatoo’ marks behind her knees. “Do you want to see my tongue?” she continued, sticking out her scarred, pierces and cocaine-smelling tongue before I could answer that request. “But let’s talk about my moldy oldy parental sugar daddy. Who thinks he knows what’s good for him, and me, who needs some more...training from me. And who is---

“Dying?” I put forth.

“We’re all dying a little every day, and for him the closer he gets to the end, the better for him, and everyone else,” Nick Diamantis’ 160 plus IQ ‘goddess in training’ whose CQ, compassion quotient, was no more than 6, shot back. Such pushed me to think again about Socrates’ claim that the sole source of cruelty was ignorance. “And if you’re thinking about asking that Bolshoy Bullshit nurse for details about how and why he’s on his way to the All You Can Eat Ritzy Diner up in the sky, or the Satan’s Delight Deli where you have to dumpster dive into a hot pit for every morsel of stale bread your churning belly can fucking handle, you’re too late. She quit. Just like you will, or should if YOU have any fucking brains in your goddamn head.”

“Because she got tired of taking care of you as well as him?” I advanced, still calmly, to one of the most belligerent patients I had encountered in years. And the most dangerous. The kind who was not only a danger to herself, but to others. Particularly to therapists who contracted the contagious ‘possessed’ crazy she carried around, and didn’t even know it. A ‘crazy’ which if not stopped, or guarded against, could put any shrink into the psych ward as a patient. I leaned forward, and looked at, and into, Diane. As well as the demon, or other lost soul, inhabiting her body, and mind rent free, or in exchange for some kind of supernatural persuasive power Diane she wanted, or needed at a crucial time in her life and somehow acquired. Like Hitler in 1938, according to the pictures of him I saw, and experienced, and had nightmares about. “Why did your father’s nurse and your caretaker-maid leave?” I asked, demanding an answer without flinching as Diane’s green eyes turned the darkest shade of black in the Crayola crayon box.

“She had an accident with some sharp scissors, when she was asleep,” Diane informed me, whipping out a two foot main of thick hair, some of it tainted with blood. “It’s dangerous to not DOUBLE lock your door so that demons don’t come in and tell you to chop off your hair, and bunch of your scalp, with it. But, she needed a trim, and---”

“---You gave her one?” I interjected.

“It’s just hair,” Diane replied flippantly. “Which grows back in a year, or two or three, or four. Maybe. And eventually, becomes like yours,” she continued, advancing her hand to my long mane and stroking it. “But...we won’t have you get a trim just yet, because the head of this house likes and requires his women to be real women, and for women to have long, beautiful hair.”

“The head of the house being---”

“---My father, of course,” Diane replied, with a sadistic grin with every bit of a lie, finally letting go of my hair. “Who you won’t tell about your giving me prescriptions for and samples of these, Doc, right?” she continued, handing me a list of mind altering, soul sedating and sexually stimulating agents.

“I’ll do what I can for you,” I promised.

“I’m sure you will,” she smiled back at me, speaking deadly requests with kind words as all mobsters, and their progeny, do. With that she left my office, leaving me with a ticking clock, and feeling something on my sweat soaked face. Stubble, from my being a man. I felt a cold lightening bolt going up and down my spine, around the region between my legs which was the only area that had not yet been completely feminized. Which I would hopefully be able to have corrected with the new salary I was getting, before my clearly still LGBT hating old school new employer, and I feared lover, accidentally saw it. Or before he offered to take it off before having his government and mobster goons still in his employee cut open my scalp, and neck.

CHAPTER 5

Of the seven stories which are the stuff of all of the stories we experience, and try to live by and up to, in North America and Europe, the key element is that a whoever has to do a whatever against a whatthefuckisthis within a CERTAIN PERIOD OF TIME. That timetable, I discovered through Jack Peterson, a food service preparer at the hospital as his day job, the only restaurant cook in town who had a right to call himself a chef by night, and a wilderness bud to Nick on the weekends, dealt with the latter individual. I wish I hadn't.

It was one of those chance encounters where my rugged soul said I should prepare something at home, but my tired body said that I was permitted to have someone else do the cooking.

"So, what's up with Nick? His real story?" I asked Jack Lombardi when I stopped by 'The Bear Cave', the only restaurant that used real tomatoes instead of canned Ragu or Chef Boyardee to make their 'homemade' sauces, to pick up something to throw into my hungry belly which could provide more enjoyment to the tongue than my fifth attempt to convert an unusually large pot of kidney beans into something that would something other than barely edible chili or more much than substance pastafasule. "And what's that behemoth between you and Nick?" I enquired regarding the whale-sized trout between them which, when 'standing' on its fins was nearly as tall as the men standing on either side of him, or perhaps her.

"King Neptooned, loosely translated" the middle aged man whose intensity and lust for life made him grow younger each year, in both appearance somehow as well, replied, proudly. "The biggest and oldest and most awny fish in Newmans Lake, who Chief Allen Windmaker when he was Chief at the Rez, said was the great grandson of the Lock Nest Monster's North American cousin. Who was freed from an aquarium by Sitting Bull when he visited England with the Wild West show, then brought here to live free in a natural sometimes muddy lake 'stead a clean fishtank where he was gawked at through glass walls on all four sides, day and night. That underwater dinosaur get even with Paleface fishermen with four hundred dollar rods and four hundred thousand dollar boast who wanted to Aspenize this place by biting at their bait, then making them think they caught him, then making them turn over their boats and swim to shore."

"You mean the mechanical monster Al Windmaker placed underwater to scare away the American tourists so he could re-sell the property to richer German tourists," I pointed out.

"Germans admire Indians instead of just liking them," Jack pointed out as he scooped up two 'on the house' extra scoopfuls portion of my one scoop order for his trademark 'moosemeat ravioli' with banuck on the side. "And besides, the Germans value these forests here for what they are, not what the American lumber companies can chop down."

Jack went on about more stories about Indians who were more dedicated to finding their roots than their ancestors were about keeping them, expatriate Germans. Old no bullshit farts who at 70 had more stamina, vision and vitality than any Kanuk or Yankee (including me) at age 35. Then he drifted yet again into talking about ET sightings, both ancient and modern, in the hills behind the town which some say still contains enough gold for them to fuel their spaceships.

“How long does he have to remain...useful to the world, and his legacy?” I interjected, pointing Jack to a photograph of him at a fishing trip on the wall behind the counter that caught my eye when his waitress moved the new menu display to make alterations in the content and price.

“King Neptooned?” he replied regarding the whale sized trout proudly displayed by the the man who caught it, presumably honestly. “I still have a third of the meat from his old, tired but defiant to the end bones in the freezer that I put into the blander than Beegees halibut shipped from the coast to give it some substance, flavor and---”

“---I mean HIM,” I blasted into Jack’s wondrous, evasive face, stabbing my index finger in the direction of the photo showing Nick Diamantis’ happy smile, and uneven moderately jaundiced eyes while holding the fish up to smile for the camera as well. “I know that workers in the hospital kitchen who bring meals to the patients there know more about them than the doctors do, and care about them almost as much as the nurses.”

“We care enough about them to keep their secrets,,” the part time hospital dietitian and when he could be full time chef replied, with disappointment for his medical colleagues, and the passion rather than responsibility based compassion for his patients that I once had. “And to look out for their welfare, no matter what the family says, or doesn’t do for them,” Jack. He quickly transferred my specially prepared authentic Italian ravioli with more ingredients than could fit on any can he got from his Palermo born father, and the ‘can’t be any simpler than this’ flour, berry and shortening award winning bannock baked according to his Cree mother’s traditions. “And you want to know about Nick Diamantis’ medical secrets because...?” the Italo-Cree expatriate from Toronto with his own secrets pressed, firing an accusatory stare at me which is normally reserved for out of town land developers who wanted to turn his below minimum wage earning backwater town into a prosperous clone of Aspen.

“I think I can do something about them,” I infused, as quickly as I could and as much big city as well as expelled revolutionary bravado I could muster. “With new treatments that haven’t reached the books yet, and, maybe some rare herbs which haven’t gotten Federal approval for.”

“Well, Doc,” Jack replied, seeming to believe that I knew as much about treating the human body as I did about manipulating the mind of my fellow homo sapiens. “You approval to do what you can fast, or do what you have to faster. He doesn’t have much time. Maybe, 3 months. The big C, according to the charts he didn’t object to me taking

a sneak peak at. But he has one wish before he goes up, down or some other incarnation in the middle after leading a successful, interesting and misunderstood life.”

“To see that his kids make a difference in the world, like he did,” I interjected.

“Or more than what he did,” Jack volleyed back, placing my dinner into a plain brown wrapper, after which he threw in special brand of bannock that didn’t look or smell like Scottish scones, stapling it together. “Different than what he did anyway,” the town’s best cook and most elusive citizen, until now anyway.

I paid Jack with a twenty dollar bill, and a five dollar tip. He took all of the money, and ten dollars of his own, placing it into a can labeled very plainly “For those in need of help from the more fortunate of us.”

“And those unfortunates are?” I inquired.

“Hopefully not us,” he said. “But...karma’s a bitch, and what goes around comes around.”

The Toronto born olive skinned Sicilian-Injun who never felt completely at home anywhere (and therefore was maximally useful everywhere) flicked on the CD player behind him, to ‘Buddy Can You Spare a Dime.’ The Peter Paul and Mary rendition I remember experiencing when I was a young boy, fearing what would happen if I said that I identify more with Mary than with Peter, or Paul.

My intension was to go home to ride my horses, so as to be transported into a past century that made more sense to me, despite the doctorates I got, very non-linear brain. To feed them some oats, clean up some of their shit, then expose them to some of my verbal shit. Then settle in to watch ‘A Dangerous Method’ yet again, about pioneering shrinks Sigmond Freud and Carl Jung, who were trying to do complicated calculus in an age when the world hadn’t invented, or recognized, any mathematics other than simple addition and subtraction. Perhaps by doing so, I could let the mind and brain absorb what I heard, saw and hopefully accurately learned about George, Diane and Nick Diamantis. And process some kind of solution that solves all of the problems with a single medical drug, or in my case, a solitary psychological suggestion based on one central thing that went wrong at the start. Like Hugh Laurie does five minutes before each episode of House, a show which I had seen at least five times in reruns and absorbed so much from. But, alas, the best laid plans of mice, men and Martians were disrupted by that element we call life.

“Dinner at eight, don’t be late, a magnificent fate, does indeed await...the both of us.” the text read. The critic in me first wanted to tell Nick that the rhythm of the poem he had no doubt spent an hour trying to put into a text with his bear sized fingers rather than a voicemail with his expressive voice could have been better structured. But, as I was now in the business, and Calling, of redefining or destroying previous structures about human behavior, and life, the cavalry charge against ignorance, stagnation, cruelty and a life of

being alone had to be done with the imaginary horse between my, thankfully, recently re-shaved and still shapely legs.

CHAPTER 6

I rushed home to the property Nick arranged for me to buy at a super cheap 1986 price, with my own money, to change into an outfit that said 'classy' but not 'slutty'. But certainly not 'desperate', which I was for world recognition of my work as a literary neuroscientist/shrink without connections or money and...woman. In want and, as I confessed and related to the image of myself in the mirror to the basic black body con sort of low cut dress, need of a man to share my accomplishments with. And to, if at all possible, accomplish them with him. And NOT the man one I used to be, as 'he' tried to creep into my consciousness again, urging me to cut my three foot main to a two inch semi-military crew cut again. "No, you fuck off, Harrold!" I commanded the ghost hovering around the mirror, but not in it, yet. "And if he does peek his ugly head into the mirror, or any of the windows," I told Plato, my proud and pompous three legged rescued beagle and Promethius, my more human than canine Lab-Rotweiller cross. "You have my permission to devour him. And if it makes your stomach sick, I promise to take you to the best vet in town, no matter how much it cost."

My two canine children barked a 'yes' to such. I slipped on my size wide ten leather high heeled boots which, by perception anyway, looked like they weren't any bigger than narrow 8 and drove up to Nick's place. Then drove to his place, and out of the corner of my eye, noticed in the distance to my left the steep mountain road leading to my old place and town under a full moon. The trees had been cut down, denying me the ability to trick myself into thinking that there was flat land on either side of the road beyond the tall, dense wall of pine trees that held onto their foliage all year long.

"Okay, so I suppose I'm trapped up here," my fear based amygdala, and rumbling bowel, shot up to my higher brain. "Unless I can hire a driver, or find a therapist who can actually get me over my fear of heights or, maybe as I am supposed to do," I found myself thinking from a rational but still under-tested region of my cerebral cortex. "Find a way to get over phobia's and fears with behavioral modifications or developing a new drug-herb combo that would shut down those reflexes that didn't turn you into a power hungry asshole or dosed out idiot. Maybe distribute it world wide, which would..." the idea occurred to me in a flash, causing me to break into a proud, privately enjoyed smile. "It would put the horror movie industry out of business, and make the Halloween stores if snuck into the crowds at political rallies, would force the speaker at the podium to reason with his or her constituents rather than inflict his or her beliefs on the public as indisputable fact. But it would knock out one of the six premises of comedy being 'what scares me about 'X' or 'Y' is..'"

A deer wandered onto the road at the next intersection, forcing me to come back to 'reality' not only by its presence but by something in its florescent eyes. I rammed on the brakes, grinding my truck (the one I chose to repair rather than replace, even with my raise in salary) to screeching halt. The deer stood is ground, kept trying to say something to me, but I was too shaken up to listen. "Stop communicating with me in telepathy with those tapetum lucidem lighted up ocular portholes," I yelled out regarding the bright ET like eyes that all animals have but we two legged presumably top of the evolutionary

ladder land based mammals gave up, or had taken away from them. “I’m late, for a very important date, and my fate...”

“Depends on what fork in the road you take, or are tricked into taking,” I felt the deer saying. “Your choice, not mine,” the deer buck who was nearly as big as a small moose seemed to say.

Yes it was a perception, amplified by fictional yet maybe fact based ‘voices’ in my head. Maybe due to too much dopamine, or some other organic cause. Or maybe this was another one of the messengers who came to me in waking life rather than when I was sleeping.

“Come on, Bullwinkle,” I yelled at the deer with the moose-like antlers, honking my horn. “I must have meeting with Boris, to see how we can get secret rocket fuel so he can become Mister Big and I can become Doctor Miss or Mrs. Big,” I continued, in my best Natasha act out from the old centuries ahead of their time Rocky and Bullwinkle cartoons that allowed me to still be optimistic about the possibilities in life as a kid, but be cynical enough to know how to realistically how to achieve them.

Yes, I was doing another ‘no no’, according to the Catholic priests at the still impressionable age of 11 while I was sent to a Catholic Military high school to become a man rather than a sissy boy. Something that was said to be forbidden by a no more than 23 year old Jesuit priest whose black robes didn’t fit his kind, multicolored heart. I asked during a forced to take ‘religion’ class if Jesus was a Martian, to which he had no answer except to dismiss me from the class early after I presented some convincing arguments that I have grown too old and cynical to remember. But I did thank Spirit (who I still felt to a loud voiced entity rather than a formless energy that needed no power to be expressed Silence) for getting the rest of the hour off, and for the fact that he suggested I go to the Chapel or library rather than assigned me to go to the Prefect of Discipline’s office, where I would be ordered to get a second buzz cut, this time the razor going below the scalp.

As for the present, I asked Spirit, big S, to speak to me through the deer. Specifically, if I couldn’t understand deer speak, for the buck to fuck off to the woods on the right fork leading to Nick’s place, or to head on into the left fork leading back home, after a few circles of course. My four legged Messenger Spirit decided, after some contemplation on his end, and silently formulated prayers at mind, to saunter into a patch of woods in the middle of both roads.

Once again, ‘it’s up to you’ was the command of Spirit. Besides, I was all dressed up with somewhere to go. And if something doesn’t excite, scare or cause you some mental discomfort (which some call pain), it isn’t worth pursuing.

Upon arriving at Nick’s place, I anticipated a quiet dinner, alone, with him, regarding our collective fate. Instead, I was greeted by a hostess at the door with hair, accent and

demeanor which was similar to the nurse who I had encountered upon my first visit to the Diamantis castle. But she had stronger eyes, and a rhythm of speech which was far more assertive than that of her 'fled for the hills without her hair intact' predecessor, this one's accent being Russian with more than a tinge of Brighton Beach Brooklyn in it. I handed her the hastily re-boxed strawberry pie from home which I was going to wolf down myself hanging out in my fridge (as I was taught by my old world, thrown to the side because she was too wise, and therefore kind, grandmother, who treated me more like a granddaughter than a grandson to never come empty handed to any table I was invited to) which was accepted with old world grace. The Russian-American hostess took my coat according to her assigned station, with the bare minimal of social and informative conversation. She then pointed me towards the dining room. I bowed a thank you to her which was nearly, but not quite the extent, as the one she gave me, by design and I suppose my own desire, and noticed a portion of a stethoscope hanging out of the left belt, hidden by her white tucked out satin 'top waitress' blouse hanging over it. On her right side, I noticed the outline of a revolver. Or perhaps a tranquilizer gun meant to sedate any dinner guest, or guests, who were too rude, threatening or perhaps truthful.

Mozart, the clarinet concerto, echoed from the walls around me so tastefully, authentically and present that I couldn't identify its source. It found its way into my solar plexus, working its way up my spine slowly undoing the many knots from my past, and the ones I so clearly learned to insert in my present life. When turning the corner into the dimly lit dining room with lights flickering like candles, I expected to find this concerto, my favorite of everything Mozart channeled from the Heavens for those of us stuck doing Heavens' work on earth, played by a real chamber orchestra. With a table set for two, and a third setting for the third brain, and soul, which would emerge between me and my fellow diner, host, patron and, as I just friend. Yes, Nick, the born again philanthropist who perhaps had been the worst of mobsters. Who in three months, thanks to the kind of cancer I was told he had, would be up in the clouds somewhere with Amadeus not having to worry about having to feed, clothe and shelter a human body. Or have to worry about how to nuke an enthusiastically expanding tumor sent from Hell which had the mandate to devour it. But it would be a hard working three months, with a gentle soul, who you could experience three decades of Bliss with.

I hesitated, thinking of what to say to a man who, according to Jack, was three blood filled coughs away from requesting the chamber orchestra to play Mozart's Requiem so that he could see, talk with and perhaps negotiate with God while still connected to a human body, brain and mind. What to say? What to hide? What to invite him to tell her? And how to assure him that that I WILL his two misfit, loser in different ways, under accomplished and life hating kids into winners who will fit into the Right game who go through life because they WANT to and not because they HAVE to. And how to devise a strategy that the still young at heart but getting older by the day chimera of contractions that the world down the mountain considered an American-Canadian success story would see work, in whatever was left of his lifetime. "Yes," I told all of my other 'selves', glancing towards but not looking at the reflective surface to my left. "We have a lot of hard listening, and deep thinking to do. So let's work together this time, ok?"

Upon getting a consensus from the many manifestations of 'me', or a majority of them anyway, I put on as confident, loving and humor projecting and accepting smile as I could, stuck my breasts out in front of me, and walked into the room.

Upon looking up, I addressed the source of the music, a stereo system which Nick turned up after seeing me. And as for the man still refusing to die on a death bed, he seemed more alive than ever. More alive, and authentically happy, than anyone his age I have set my tired eyes on. "Welcome!" he said, with open arms, extending them out like a love projecting grizzly bear as he boldly strode towards me without a hint of a limp in his legs, or wincing of his lips to hide any pain. As he hugged, me, I tried to get a whiff of his breath. Yes, it was tinged more than a bit with 90 proof imported oozo, but there was something else in it. An odor I recalled from years ago at the 'happy parties' in Grad School, when I was invited to attend an all Wagner concert at the History Department across the campus. To a department which I never had the opportunity to visit again, and when I attempted to visit to get historical info on my thesis to make it more colorful and timely, had disappeared.

But before I could get lost, or found again, in memories of Grad School, while I was discovering life changing medical secrets from Mother Nature, while being awakened to who that discoverer really was behind my overgrown beard, life as it was snapped me back into practicality, and effectiveness.

"Meet my, now OUR, friends!" Nick boldly, proudly and blissfully proclaimed, drawing my attention to a long table over loaded with the finest foods viewable and eatable, and men behind each of those soon to be filled plates who generated the aura of success, some of it earned by hard work, some of it effortlessly obtained, but still...success. Confidence. And...Connected. All of the wedding ring bearing members of what seemed to be the board of boards looked at me like I was the woman of the hour, or perhaps, in their fantasy, mistress of their dreams. I recognized some of them from TV. F. Scott Russell, head editor at all but three of the major book publishers whose titles occupied 90 percent of the shelf space in Chapters as well as the University Medical Libraries seemed bigger and handsomer in real life than on the small, or large plasma tv screen. Wesley Edmonson, CEO, multi Emmy and Oscar winning film director and actor who I used as a prototype for a quarter of of my protagonists and nearly as many antagonists in my best self published novels and spec script scripts seemed shorter and older than I envisioned with noticeable bald patch on the crown of his greying head that he chose not to cover with a hat or an extension.

Then there was someone who I knew all too well. Still bow tie and Ben Franklin special wire rim glass wearing Professor Dominic Ranshaw, the 'made it to the top before hitting the big 35' editor very much in chief of Neurological Investigations and five of the other ten to journals, who lectured me when I was a male medical student and published my all of my research papers when I was doing my post doc, by which time I was referring myself as J. T. Gunderson rather than James Thomas, so as to have whatever continuity I could keep in my scientific career, as there was no shortage of homophobic and trans

hating reviewers who would stamp my submissions rejectable. 'Professor Dominic' (as he allowed the students who passed his course to call him) noted that I 'looked familiar' with a curious and definitely sexually interested penetrating stare. Stealing a line from 'Wiseguy' I smiled back at him, 'we all do', leaving the door open to him as to what he would say, or not say, to his fellow moguls about what I was, and who I was being courted to be now.

The conversation over dinner was about...me. Nick praised me as a self made novelist, self-taught director, brilliant 'diamond in the rough' screenwriter, 'top flight' researcher, 'brilliant' clinician and 'top of the heap' horsewoman as well. The men at the table agreed, even when his boasts were based in fabricated lies. Each one of my attempts to correct those tall tales and unjustified high praises was short circuited by Nick adding another compliment to my skill as a thinker, my brilliance as a creator and of course my 'special qualities' of defining what a real woman should and can be, particularly to a man's man'. Thankfully he didn't describe a man's man as someone who never did his own laundry, dishes or cooked his own food as some of my best penis bearing friends and colleagues, claimed in my presence when I was one of them.

But there was one issue beyond gender regarding these men stimulated in me, which had nothing to do with vaginas or penises. All of Nick's buds, and perhaps mine someday, were...celebrities. People I had seen on television. Or in photographs in magazines and newspapers. The rational part of my brain said to me, 'Jenell, they're just people. Humanoids who shit, piss and put on their pants, or leggings, one leg at a time.' But the reflexes based in my childhood, where I was brought up by and lived up to those on the tv screen more than in person said, 'they are gods, kings, who you are not worthy to look at, or speak to except with a bowed head and when given permission to do so.' No wonder when I opened my mouth, more stutters than words came out. No matter how much Nick said I was worthy of being invited into the 'in crowd' club that moved the world (on a good day anyway) forward. And, yes, I remembered the two celebrities who I had the mixed fortune to have as patients. Who did have a inflated views of themselves based in more bullshit than real accomplishment. Such as the actors who seemed so literate in the parts they played yet, according to the notes from their previous shrinks who couldn't handle their drug problems. Actors who had never read book themselves. Yes, the celebs, who are the North American royalty. Whose endorsements we consider facts that we must believe. Who in our most happy and wettest dreams, bring us into their confidences and inner circles. Who, in fact, rule over us because we let them do so. Particularly if they pass themselves off as 'avant guard' artists, scientists and politician who are 'formulators of the new revolution'. And who we keep on the throne by considering ourselves beneath them. But who, in the world today, seem to be necessary to have what we find, discover or create be heard by someone other than our dogs, horses or, yes, gullible students who consider, in some instances anyway, 'us' to be their betters in a world that, yes, IS about 'us' vs. 'them'..

But as for the plethora of men (and they were all men) at the table in the present, they were introduced by what they did, or controlled, before their name was given. Not unexpected since when you ask most women or kids how they are doing, they report a

feeling. And when asking men, particularly those who want to be in charge of other men, or women, or kids, they reply with what they did, or do. As for what these men did, I suspected that 'in transportation' could mean operating anything between a no frills, people before profits mass transit systems or movement of attractive young girls into the grubby arms of ugly old men. 'Multinational computer systems' from the sixty-year old with a dyed military crew clad in a Millennial spandex running suit probably mean in charge of monitoring all civilian private communication, including what I would comment on the next day to my friends and family back East who kept promising that they could come out West to visit me but thankfully never did. And as for the Chinese-German head of Astral Pharmaceuticals, 'Promethian leader of anti-microbial research' could easily mean creator of bugs, drugs and ET experimental additives to fingerfood that promote evolution as well as the devolution of the human species. Two of the three restaurant chain owners seemed to like the food provided by their host, the third wincing in pain every time he had to take a bite out of the food provided.

And as for that food, specific plates were given to specific guests, each one looking but not, to my recently reconstructed nose anyway, smelling the same. As for the food put in front of me, it seemed ok to the palate. More than ok actually. A delight to my tastebuds that made me feel empowered as well as fed. Then again, it was an empowering night, for me anyway.

And one where the whispering voice inside my solar plexus, which I still referred to as a gut, said that it wasn't so important to figure out who was my friend or who was my enemy. What smiling faces were plotting to extract what they could from me and which seemingly indifferent ones were trying to help me. Yes, in this 'game', it is best to consider everyone your potential friend if you can strike a win-win deal with them. And to talk to the most arrogant asshole as if he was a hard working saint, so as to inflict upon him a higher scale of morality that he may like, and decide to try out. And to converse with the stupid as if they are Mensa geniuses, offering them suggestions so as to add 5, 10 or maybe 15 points to their two digit IQs that they can take, leave, or give away to the demons who visit them during a drink, drug or boink fest. Such could of course get you screwed, or abused. But, as I was told by the only real teacher I had in high school amongst the plethora of instructor there, if persons A to F take more from you than they give back, you get paid back ten fold by persons H, I and Y. And Y? Because that's the way it is. And the way I say it is, so it becomes that! Sooner than later. But, the energy in the colorfully lit room that night turned into a hard light of day long before sunrise when Nick declared with the greatest of pride and the most assertive of tones, with his seemingly now giant sized arms around my narrow shoulders, to all of his guests as the 'when' of me 'transforming the world' with them. "She has two projects to complete here, and then, she is all yours, or, soon enough, you will be hers."

CHAPTER 7

In three days, I had all the money in the world, or at least available in Interior British Columbia, to stage my newest drama, or if I did my job and mastered tragedy, comedy. The set was a courtroom, we me as the judge. And twelve real jurors. Along with a weird bailiff who you'd trust to put your best friend into custody but would not dare allow your son or daughter to go out with. On trial was the devil played masterfully and so convincingly by R. Oliver McCalister, the tax accountant from nearby Whitewater whose hypnotic voice was as dull, boring, vitality-drainin and humorless as his by the prescribed numbers 'life'. As his defendant, I was able to find and pay the William DiGenerous (do not call me Junior) II, former blueblood English born (and perhaps disbarred or about to be) lawyer and now aspiring apprentice ACTRA actor who was one credit away from becoming full Union. As for the charges raised against the Prince of Darkness, the Personification of Evil and the Devourer of Weak, Ignorant, non-religious affiliated Hippie Dippie Pagans or 'Godless Communists', they were not for inflicting pain on humans, or starting wars among friends, or tempting dedicated Christians to forgo Church on Sunday for an extra day and night of fucking a hooker, beating up homeless bums to take home their ears as trophies or having their perceptions fucked up by booze and dope.

No, Satan was charged with spreading the most insidious form of evil---lifelessness. Spread by humans who, so he claimed, were acting on their own when they made happy mind-numbing pop music that rocketed its way up the charts, manufactured pills to lower blood pressure that specifically diminished flow of nutrients to the creative portions of the brain and insured that teachers on all podiums and role models on all computer screens disseminated only 'pabulum, simplistic, non challenging, bland, and non-offensive' content.

Prosecuting the devil, with the aim of confining him into some kind of chamber from which he could not distribute any dull out virus to anyone, or, at the people's expense, get a Soul transplant by a Renaissance Mench (or Maiden) Doc who could de-possess him, was none other than George Diamantis.

"This doesn't make sense," George said to me as the jurors settled into their seats in the courtroom the looks, felt and even smelled authentic. "I'm supposed to be practicing for my mock trial. To please the professors so they give me a good grade so I can please my Dad and I can.---"

"---Become a cog in the machine instead of creating a new machine, or revising the old one?" I shot down at him from my seat on the bench, adjusting the neckline on my 'low cut Stevie Nix wicken political activist Ruth Ginsberg' see through black robes. "Which pleases but doesn't serve your professors, your father, you or," I took in a deep breath, keeping infusing as much reality into the drama "...me."

"As a prosecuting attorney, I'm supposed to carry out the law," George insisted seemed scared of such a prospect of changing anything. "Even in this 'courtroom' of yours," he spat out of his mouth with a condescending eyeroll.

“Which is a start,” I noted.

“Which is what?” George inquired.

“You disagreed with me, the authority in charge, with opinion and attitude. The basis of all humor, rightly or wrongly,” I pointed out.

“What the fudge, I mean fffucckk,” he finally blurted out, “Does humor have to do with me passing my mock trial course, and becoming a successful lawyer.”

“You mean an EFFECTIVE twister, tester and transformer of the law,” I pointed out, picking up a four inch thick leather bound volume that SUMMARIZED the legal statutes of a Canadian province that was supposed to be run and occupied by the most free thinking Canuks north of the 49th parallel. I opened up a page to the middle, pretending that I could actually read it through my over-tinted sexy rimmed granny-who-can-go-all - --night with any biker under his sheets or mine’ glasses. “Let’s see, statue 34C, section D3, subclause 230, paragraph three reads...”

“A whole lot of literary detritus which in the end is shit,” George came out with, from a place of anger, and frustration. Such evoked chuckles, real ones, from all of the actors hired. Even the overly prepared and coached, with my own notes that I made them read, thespians who were playing the devil and his defense attorney “Eh, which I mean to say, your honor is...”

“Completely fucking accurate, true and liberating for all of us,” I said, to a now captive, or at least listening audience. “Now, to make our brains think, and be sure Lady Justice is served rather than fed a cheap pick up line, time for you to un-constipate us so the crap in our tight assed bowels doesn’t become ‘kaka’ between the ears. And to do it with a specially prepared brand of Exlax, Metamucil or canned pumpkin made from a carving that has a real smile on it.” Some of the jurors got the jokes, some didn’t. Some decided to stick up their noses and leave. But for those two who remained, I declared, with absolute certainty. “There’s nothing more over rated than a good boink under the sack, and nothing more under rated than a good shit.”

Every face in the room broke out into a laugh, or at least a smile. Yes, it was a line I stole from Frank Zappa. But, it was verified by my own personal experience. Yet, I couldn’t rely material from other people to make myself seem funny. And had to teach George, and myself, that value of coming up with your own ideas, insights and...comedic material, somehow combining all of those into being an expressive, creative, innovative and therefore useful human being, who wasn’t just another waster of precious oxygen or converter of tasty more chemical filler than food brownies into putrid crap. But, there was a process to becoming more than just procedural. Something I learned when I read books about how to do stand-up comedy, tried it, then, after finding out that I was more expressive in print than voice, wrote novels about those brave, lonely, misunderstood yet

magnificence souls who were able to make others laugh, while enduring and transforming suffering within themselves.

But this was about teaching rather than de novo learning. It was about George's growth, which could translate into my expansion. And as for that pupil, it was time to see what he was made of. "Take ten or if you live in a slower time space continuum, five," I told the normal citizens hired to be jurors, and the actors who I overpaid on my expense account to be a prosecutor and criminal. "But not you!" I yelled out to George just as he breathed a sigh of 'relief'. "You are going to tell me who and what these people in the courtroom are," I whispered to George. "Characterizing the life as it is or could be, or should be in ONE LINE!"

"Which is not going to be completely accurate, even if I do have all the facts," George spat back at me in 'lineareze' as he observed the hired staff for the mock courtroom milling about the snack table, and indulging in chit chat neither he nor I could hear. "A human being is a complex individual with many parts which can only be described accurately by extensive definition, clarification, verification and carefully worded hypothesis which is speculative observation that is---"

"---Coward scientist talk," I squawked back to him like a chicken with my flapping arms, appended with a cackle which threw him off balance, then offended him. "The feeling in the gut is always more accurate than the 'don't ask me to say anything it true because if it isn't accepted as true one day, it's embarrassing for my career if I was wrong' brain," I added. "Sometimes gut feel, first instinct and expression of attitude gets things done that needs ta gets done," I went on. "Like Siggy to his friends and Sigmund to his colleagues Freud, who was gutsy enough to speculate that between our voluntarily closed ears and behind our comfortably shut eyelids the brain-soul is divided into an ego, super ego and id."

"Which neurologically is not correct," George said to me, as a university instructor and/or chairman rather than a professor or teacher.

"And which is maybe functionally accurate, for every structure in the brain," I said. "Now, pick an asshole, or an idiot," I continued inviting him to scan the room for the exercise immortalized by Woody Allen in Annie Hall and practiced by every other creator of comedy in one form or another

"With me as the idiot who is trusting an asshole?" George countered with...introspection and humanism. Which had to be transformed into humor somehow to become...effective.

George's face became expressionless, his limb and tongue in full rigid extension. Yes, he was waiting for me to practice what I was preaching before he incorporated it into his life. I started with three standbys with a few necessary on the spot improvisations. "For rent sign on her head," I said with regard to the 25 going on 12 blonde bombshell by any man's definition chronically smiling juror who answered every question with a statement

that was said as a 'is this ok to say' question. "Santa Monica Suzie with bangs covering the lobotomy scars with happy faces on each of the incision lines."

"An idiot," George noted. "Who was..."

"..Hired to be the lead singer in the new Tick Tock hit 'it fun to be dumb'," I thought, while George said the same thing, but with less edge and less cultural references, without an act out.

"And him!" I said, pointing to a dour 50 going on 120 juror English pharmacist clad in a brown suit and matching tie, who took 'proper' to every extreme possible, from the way he ate the munchies, sat with a rigidly arched back on his chair and spoke through lips that never rose or dropped at the edges no matter that words came out of it, who transported himself from one area of the floor to another as if he was on military drill courtyard. "Health care healer who doesn't know he's dead. Dispenser of happy pills who never experienced any fun behind or in front of the counter. Who probably shits in formation."

"If he shits at all," George added, with a crack of a smile on his lips, feeling superior and enjoying a moment of being Alive, big A. Then, slipping back into being subservient as a handsome, confident middle aged man and his attractive, graceful less than middle aged woman came into his view. The local 'power couple' in town, second only in wealth and power to Nick Diamantis, who I wooed into joining the 'commoners' in the courtroom by promising them inside information from Nick's special contacts who I was seeing as a therapist. By the way George dropped his head, and hunched his back, he felt himself somehow inferior to Lawrence and unworthy of even speaking to Larisa.

"Brad and Jen, stars of the pablum infused crap containing movie they inflict on all of us, who are too cool to sweat," I started out with, feeling a need myself to take a dig at the people on top, who deserve to have digs thrown at them. Who looked at me with that 'I'm cool, hip and happening and you never will be' every time I saw them at the grocery store, gas station or local music concerts they attended, and performed at...badly. "Who were assigned by the gods on Mount Olympus they 'networked with' at Aspen to teach us that effortless success really is the only kind that's worth a shit," I said of the couple who not only wore the wealth and power they inherited by birth and with their charm lucked into everywhere. "Who I want to hear say one thing to make me believe there is justice in the world. Which is..."

George remained silent, then turned his head downward in shame as he noted the two 'Ls' becoming the center of attention of the chit chat at the buffet table, yet again.

"One thing that I would really like the beautiful people who make everyone else feel ugly inside to say, which is..." I planted into George's depressed, and hopefully, if I was doing my job right, angered soul. "Do you want fried with that, Sir?" I said, in an act out of a humbled Lawrence and a perhaps remorseful Lorisa once karma would come down on them.

“You mean, do you want fried with that, Ma’am,” George came back with, correcting my remark for the gender I was working with and within, yet still not completely adjusted to being.

It was a start. One step towards making George someone who would abandon ‘plain, clear and accurate’ legal talk that informs while it devitalizes, to something more...inspiring. Such as, to use the MASH expanded line, describing a ‘one cm by 5 cm long arterial graft’ as a ‘small egg roll mini-pipeline that takes sanguineous oil from the pump that churns it out to the hungry gas tanks that always need refilling, until of course the whole system goes electric.’ Okay, so that is a bit too long, and multi-referenced. But...there was a formula I could give George that he could apply on his own so that he could become that small portion of the population that is Alive with effective vitality rather than merely comfortably existing within the cozy realm of ‘normal’. I wrote them down quickly, then handed it to him, then asked him to read it to me, to assess whether he understood the meaning of the message, and to see if my handwriting was legible to anyone other than myself on a good day.

“What’s up with BLANK? What I hate about Blank. What I ‘love’ about Blank. What scares me about BLANK, and...” George read as the time clock to the break ticked down to an impending and required close. He struggled to look at the last line “Why it’s hard to be a BLANK?”

So that the jabs, digs and and agonizing but needed assessments go both ways,” I said to him by way of explanation as I recalled my own experience with it.. “Not everything that comes out of you head or onto the pads of paper you scribble on will be useful but you’ll know what does.”

“How will I know?” George asked. “By asking my ‘audience’? Who is...”

“Sometimes the people you are talking to, and around now, and sometimes the ones you can’t see, or are allowed to know about,” I said, recalling the golden two years I spent doing radio from a small windowless booth at a college station which I was told was being listened to by someone out there, besides the dour young co-manager of the station who did whatever he could to discourage humor on the air, and the older one who did appreciate any attempt to make people think, laugh and...yes it can happen...act on something important. “But, now, it’s showtime, for both of us,” I said to him, after which I asked the bailiff, who was sharpening his horse hoof trimming tools during the break, to call the ‘horses’ back into coral to complete the ‘cattle drive to justice’.

I can’t say that George’s role as prosecutor of the devil for spreading dull out disease would have gotten him a role on Law and Order, or an extra chair on the Supreme Court. But as the judge in this mock trial, which took on very real stakes for George, I noted that he was able to somehow combine elements of being a proficient lawyer with regard to knowing statutes and bylaws as well as a persuader of people, and not a bad inspirer of thinking. He was able to convince most of the jurors to prosecute the super-slick actor I

had hired to play the devil for spreading dull out disease. George's' most colorful victory was converting 'Santa Monica Suzie' into someone who wanted to go to bed with him rather than the actor I cast as Satan. But most notably, the dull out diseased pharmacist seemed to look into himself, lamenting what he had not done in the 40 years of 'life' he had led, and considering doing those things 'outside the box' which he had not even considered experiencing. And there was a wrinkle to the sentence for the convicted Prince of Darkness, suggested to me by George as the DA. "He is to be de-possessed, re-educated and then revitalized," he suggested. "By the Goddess, big G," he stated, proudly referring to me.

OK, when I was a man, I dreamed about being God. And now as a woman, it was within my grasp to become Goddess. Functionally anyway. George was on his way to becoming an effective lawyer and, if he wished to, successful attorney. After of course applying everything he had learned that day in 'my' courtroom, and other lessons I still felt, admittedly egotistically, that I could teach him, in his 'real' mock trial at law school. Nick Diamantis would be proud of his son, and could die a fulfilled soul. But as for the student I didn't want to teach, but had to, for reasons beyond Nick's mandate, she appeared in the doorway at the close of the session. Her arms tightly folded. Daring me to untwist them with a condescending eye-roll as the entire congregation in the courtroom gave a standing ovation to me as the judge.

With a slight motion of a finger, she motioned for me to look below me. There is was, a note on my judge's bench, visible only to me. Somehow delivered there without my knowledge. "Your heart, guts and dreams mashed by my teeth," it read script that smelled and spread like real blood. "And unlike you, the blood between my teeth is NOT mine, and never will be."

Yes, I always said that one should never be too comfortable. That such was the worst way to die. So, does being uncomfortable to the extent of terror make you maximally Alive? I would no doubt found out, very soon.

CHAPTER 8

Basic horsemanship and horsemanship tells you that if you want to bond with, or otherwise teach manners to, a herd bound, stubborn filly, you have to take her away from her home herd and home turf. Such is what I was allowed to do with Diane by her father, and required to do by whatever logic I could muster up. “So, dear old Dad said he would keep me in the will if I learn to ride one of these things?” she said with a mixture of fear and condescension regarding Plato, the oldest, most intelligent and, perhaps because of such, most gentle horse in my herd.

“And that he double your allowance if you learned to like them,” I informed the spoiled brat possessed by a demon I didn’t yet know but had to negotiate with who was allowed everything except the opportunity to succeed at something on her own, with the joy of struggle.

“And all I have to do is for you to get video of me riding on this smelly and big overgrown dog’s back?” she barked at me as Plato edged his way up, pushing her forward towards the saddle rack, and, after a slip on a layer of fresh snow on still green grass at my new digs, into a mixture of mud and manure.

“I also need, by your father’s command, to get dated footage of you cleaning stalls for three days in a row,” I said to the screaming lunatic who I refused to give a hand up from the ground. And, though I was tempted, did not keep my other horses away from. “And for you to like it.”

“Fine!” Diane said as she pulled herself up from the ground, the ‘super cool’ shit dispensing to everyone around her winner of every game chose to play experiencing the feel and stench of shit in her nostrils, on her face and now brown colored lips, which said, “But we want candy first!”

It was odd that the golden girl tossed out of her father’s comfort laden ultra modern mansion sentenced to an indefinite educational experience in the my mobile unhooked to any 21st century facility trailer and ‘bug ‘n bush’ acreage said ‘we’ and not ‘I’, or ‘me’. But Diane as well as the ‘entity’ inside of her would have ‘candy’, or the two of ‘them’ would cut my throat with the hoof knife she had grabbed on her way up to her two shaking feet. Her fist firm enough to hold onto the handle, but her arms shaking like the last autumn leaves around her defiantly holding on to a tree against the biting pre-Halloween winter wind.

“Sure,” I said, reaching into my pocket and pulling out a vial of ‘happy pills’. This time, the active ingredient was the most deadly, according to some anyway, molecules to come out of a multi-billion dollar a month making factory. “I’ll give you two of them,” I said with a firm hand as I gave her two corn syrup fructose sugar pills.

Diane wolfed them down her parched throat, then allowed the ‘happy’ to take her over, just as the real mind altering medication I had given her in the previous few weeks of her

treatment had been doing. Maybe this time I could fool her, and the demon inside of her. But there was one element about this experiment in mind manipulation and soul restoration which I was unable to control. I felt it in the wind, yet again. A presence which, as October 31 approached, was opening more and more each day, breaking down the veil between the realm of what we 'safe' people with intact bodies on this side called the 'living' and the realm of the 'dead spirits', small s, or perhaps, according to my wicken friends anyway, something more 'positive'. Maybe one reason why October was 'spook' season for green horses, and a disturbing as well as the most challenging month for humans, no matter what profession they were in, or wanted to enter.

I looked at Aristophonies, wondering if the gelding who (between the ears anyway, in Platonic ways) was still a proud stallion knew what I was talking about, asking him for an answer to the questions forming in my own head about this 'Diamantis' experiment, and venture. He seemed to, yet again, give me an answer with his big, brown eyes that I could feel but not yet understand. But one thing I felt, and self observed, was that every time I was invited to a power meeting with Nick and his, yes all male, old boy's club of movers and shakers, I felt empowered. Like a king and a queen. His queen, yes, but one who wanted to share the throne with him. And no one else. A queen who usually needed 9 hours of sleep a night who now required no more than 5. Whose mind moved faster than I could understand, or trace, or take mental and written notes about. A good thing, perhaps, which was related, perhaps to fragrant odor at every 'me being the only woman present' breakfast, lunch and late night dinner. That fragrant aroma of...power!

I started to dream about what my lioness mind would do with my, so it felt like anyway, lionhearted body. How I could conquer the world. Be as powerful as any man. Or, yes, more powerful than any man! I imagined myself directing my first feature film, on someone else's money this time, extending my goddess like muscular arms out to the mortals under me, like Athena, the goddess of war, and beauty. The definitive Western and Eastern which brings both worlds together far more effectively, colorfully and humerously than anyone else. Bringing together The Magnificent Seven, the Old Kung Fu series and Blazing Saddles into a final statement about how the human condition was back in the day, how it is now, and how it should be. From atop an elevated mound or, even better, the back of a horse. I turned to my herd, seeing who would be the best candidate to be my Grane for my rekindled role of Brunhilde in a film which I writing in my head which channeled Wagner's Ring Cycle operas into something that, yes he was, two spirited secret cross dresser, would do if he were reincarnated into the 20th century, feeling that maybe I was him, he was me and we were far more than the walrus. It was then that I was brought back to the real world.

"Stop walking away from me whenever I dump this saddle on you!" Diane was yelled at Aristophonies, once she had put the halter on him, with a voice that scared the gelding who usually tolerated and understood the angry rantings of any two legged humanoid, including me. "Stay still or I'll make you stand still!" the mall brat whose father owned all of the malls she ever shoplifted in, or got stoned in screamed with a voice that sounded more possessed than ever at the still mute horse who was trying to slither away. With each of the horse's steps to avoid her fist, she grunted out another expetive,

including terms I had never heard. Cursing him to Dante's inferno hell, damning me to a hell far worse than anything that Italian poet could have imagined, and cursing everyone else to an eternity of suffering that would even scare Satan into going 'straight'.

It was interesting to watch Aristophonies (yes, who did understand and like a five syllable name) trying to teach Diane now NOT to saddle a horse by avoiding all the wrong things she was doing, nudging her gently between her attempts to do so with the greatest of affections, and loving humor. But neither Diane nor the demon inside of her, who I now saw as a black cloud around her beet red face, appreciated the jokes, or affections afforded by Aristophonies. I recognized the voice and face of that demon immediately with my inner ears and third eye. "Harrold!" I screamed out at the demonic entity that I had felt inside of me who kept pushing me into cutting off my hair and becoming the man I wasn't (and shouldn't have been, even at birth) just as I was about to embrace my spiritual destiny as a woman. "Get out of here!" I screamed out, putting my fingers in a cross. "In the name of Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, John Lenin, Vladimir Lenin, Karl AND Groucho Marx, fuck off!"

"No, YOU fuck off!" Harrold said, using Diane's voice. "You fuck off and die!" she/it continued as Diane's hand reached for a knife and edged it towards Plato's neck, knowing somehow just where the cut the carotid artery. "You fuck off and---"

Other than rats in the lab who I had 'sacrificed' in experiments to find cures for diseases that plagued, tortured and took the lives of cats, dogs, horses and people, I had never killed anything. I, as a man, and even more so as a woman, gravitated down and up to movies about combat where one had to kill or be killed. Or, even more so, kill or see a fellow human or animal you valued more than any human get killed. Something in me shifted into gear. En route to Diane, I grabbed hold of a stick on the ground big and sharp enough to put a hole into her head. I pulled on her hair, lifted up the 'stick' and felt my arm swing it up, then downward to find that....it missed the mark. Hitting her on the arm that was holding the halter, not the knife.

The demon inside of Diane turned her body around to me, knife in her right hand, her left holding onto my hair. Her feet somehow raised high enough to kick me in the groin, inactivating my ability to do anything. "Time for YOU to die, just like Lorraine did!" it/she grunted into my face. "And now."

In that moment, as I prepared myself to die, something bumped Diane onto the ground. Then pushed her into the bush. A white, brown and black cloud of moving boulders, as I blurred vision perceived it anyway. Which, upon focusing on the realm of the material rather than ethereal planes, was the rest of the horse herd. Pushing Diane down a hill, rolling her into a rocky river bed. Then lifting their feet, attempting to smash her head into the muddy and soon to be bloody waters.

Somehow I was able to run, roll and then crawl over to my equine friends, and convinced them to become flighters rather than fighters. Then I turned over Diane's body, seeing that her face was still intact. Both of her eyes possessed by remorse rather than revenge,

or sadism. The sadistic smile of the ever powerful, trans-hating, and dull out disease infected male demon I called Harrold, who I used to be, gone from her soul, for the moment anyway, as she struggled to breath air in, and painfully let it out. Mumbling 'Lorraine, Lorraine', until Diane broke out in tears.

"Who is Lorraine?" I asked myself, then thankfully an intact and only superficially wounded Aristophonies, then finally Diane as she woke up.

"Someone who..." she said, after which she turned catatonic.

While dialing 911, I searched the recesses of my brain, and memory, to figure out who this woman, Lorraine, who Diane loved and Harrold hated was. Then it hit me, as I recalled the script under one of the family photos in Nick's living room. "Your mother?" I dared to ask Diane.

By the way Diane was breathing, in desperation now, the answer was no doubt 'yes'. And by the way I could still feel Harrold around me, the killing spree was just starting. And perhaps was not confined only to Diane's mother, but others. Others who perhaps had killed due to the drugs she was taking, the mental illness that did indeed make her naturally cruel, or the demons who took her over, who now found their way back to...me. No coincidence that Nick Diamantis had kept her inside the house with everything she wanted. Or that he found me to cure her and her, soon to be lawyer, son to fix the mess. Or...perhaps the whole thing was orchestrated by...Harrold. Who seemed to say 'I will see you again soon' as I felt, and saw, a black cloud of perhaps 'bioelectric energy' disappear into the woods, diffusing into trees which seemed to turn from warm brown into petrified black.

CHAPTER 9

There was an eerie feeling about the three going on no star hotel room three towns away where I brought Diane after having snuck her out of the ICU, just before the security guards came in to transport her to 'a safer location for all concerned'. My stomach churned as I turned on the lights in the hotel room, only to feel more black in there than my eye could see in the dark. As there were ghosts there which Diane brought in with her, their entry into her body and into the smokeless yet still dense as icy fog air made possible due to the self-prescribed 'medications' she had given to herself. Or maybe it was the residual entities hanging around the room in the about to be boarded up and burnt as firewood motel from previous guests in the room.

"Dispossessed beings who do not mean us any harm," Olivia L. Richardson noted as I hauled Diane into the room, faining to the passers by outside that she was just a common drunk, and not an other-worldly wackoid Visionary. "Who protect more than threaten this place, which is above an ancient burial ground," continued the still young looking, and great looking, now Wicken and ex-Baptist friend from my old life who specifically recommended the 'Riverbank Paradise' hotel as a place where we could not be found by the Mounties in Blue who put those who violated the law in the clink for a defined period or the Orderlies in White. Whose job was to confine those with the contagion of 'mental disease' into locked psych wards for the rest of your natural life. Or until you learned (as I had to for ten days of hell when put in a ward by a close friend for my 'own good' when I made after making some figurative but not literal remarks about taking an exit from life stage left as soon as an opening somewhere else was available) how to hide away any mental anguish or pain you had and convince the shrink in charge that you were happy, content, cured and, of course, compliant with the world as it is.

After I had laid my drunken and husband battered niece 'Linda' (as I named an half unconscious but still possessed Diane for the hotel registry, neglecting of course to say that Harrold or other ghosts in her were to share the room) on the single, half soggy half hard as rock bed, 'Olivia instructed me to cover the smoke alarm on the ceiling with a plastic bag, which I did. Then with an assuring smile her rosy red, succulent lips, asked me to 'so kindly' draw the shades closed. Then, with more fluorescent intensity in her coral green eyes than I ever saw, or felt, threw me a ray of Light and Fire that went into and threw me.

"Alright, I owe you one," I said to my former-lover, wife and, as soon as I declared my true gender to her, my worst enemy in the courts. "Or...more than one," I continued, as I tied Diane's wrists to the bed post, recalling the pain I had inadvertently caused the woman I married as a man, allowing her to think I was the man or her dreams, and aspirations. And seeing that she was still angry about so many things, some that she had done to herself, and some that I had done to her. "But I need your expertise here, Oli."

"It's Olivia, Jack!" my ex blasted at me. "Who still is Pastor Richardson in states that allow women to be Priests. High Priestess Olivia to Palefaces with fat wallets. And Shaman Leona to those rich in the Old Knowledge and poor in White Man's wampum,"

the half Cree and half Irish woman who I fell in lust, then love, with blasted into my all White hide. “Who, as you very well know, can and does kick bad spirits out of good people.” She turned to Diane, looking pensively at her still unconscious face. “Or souls who you THINK are good, and savable.”

“Everyone is savable,” I suggested, and asserted, to Olivia, feeling more brown-red in her half white skin as she proceeded to smudge the place with freshly lit sweet-grass and sage, containing the excess smoke inside a portable hand vacuum cleaner.

“Including this cunt, bitch and drug-intoxicated spoiled brat idiot you’re asking, and overpaying, me to save, so someone else can save you, in your new life as Jenell’?” my ex-everything countered with a calm voice, calling me on my bullshit as no one before or since ever could. “What’s in it for you for me to get this demon out of her? A demon who, so you claim, goes by the name of ‘Harold’.”

“Liberation for all of us, Shaman Leona,” I discovered, and related with a humble bow.

“All of us being?” Olivia, as Leona, demanded, raising her head up, placing her hand on her chin, in the exact manner I did when getting and trying to maintain the upper hand with my patients.

I took in a deep breath, knowing that my answer had to be accurate, and true. Then let loose with, “De-possessing Diane from Harrold will liberate her, her father, her brother and...”

“You?” Shamen Leona shot back at me with a calmly directed arrow that found its way to a bulls-eye inside of my still tormented and far from healed soul.

“And will liberate Harold,” I volleyed back. “Who---“

“---You used to be, Jack,” Leona replied, as she slipped into becoming a very intentionally kind, and unintentionally cruel, Olivia. “The man who you were, who I loved, and still want back. As a man. My fee for de-possessing Diane so you can build her up into this wondrous savior of the world that you think she can become, and her father, whoever he is, needs her to turn into. And as for this ‘Harrold’, Jack.”

“Harrold is real,” I insisted. “That entity which lures me into shaving my head every time my eyes accidently pass by a barber shop during business hours. Who with each step closer to being a creative, intelligent, caring and kind woman, tried to boomerang me backwards into being the procedural, dumb, aggressive and cruel military man I used to be. Who would get a hard on when I shaved my head into a crew cut. And cut off my breasts. Becoming a brawn over brains bear instead of---”

“---The freak and perversion who you have become now,” Olivia sneered. “And are not,” she continued, caressing my legs in the same manner she had done when I was Harrold, or Jack, as I recalled how stiff she and only she was able to make my usually

limp penis turn into a hard woody. “Come back to me,” Olivia whispered into her ears as I remembered, this time with fondness, who I was to her and she was to me when I was living a lie. My eyelids decided that it was best for the rest of me to cover my ocular portholes. “Become who and what you are, and I require you to be,” she continued, again and again, her voice becoming deeper, more carnal, less ethereal, more military and more like----

“Harrold! Get out!” I said as I felt Olivia’s flesh holding a pair of scissors, about to cut a fist full of my three foot long mane on the top of my head down to the scalp. I opened my eyes and saw, a black aura around Olivia’s half white, half brown face. I pushed her, and the being possessing her, away, throwing her onto the floor. “Out Harrold Out!” I commanded, just as my spirit protected hyper feminine ex-wife got onto her feet, and stomped towards me, every inch of her actions being manlike.. I grabbed hold of the sweet grass, pushing it into her face. “Be gone! Now! Return to God, or wherever you came from, in the name of...”

Before I could voice the names of Jesus, Buddha, Allah, or any of the other Avatars who I sought as protectors, guides and allies in the quest to make earth a more heavenly place to do time on, Olivia shook her head then laughed, as herself. “Must have fallen asleep,” she said by way of explanation. “Working overtime as a de-possessor makes you tired enough to be...”

“...A joke,” I heard from behind me, from Diana’s slurred mouth, as Harrold. “Which I will share with you if you take these restraints off of me,” he/she promised, after-which Diane’s arms pushed into the, thankfully this time, unbreakable ropes with intense jolts.

“Which we will not do,” Olivia said, as an ally and perhaps now educated friend. Or perhaps as someone who was pretending to be possessed to freak ME out. “We keep Diane tied up no matter how badly Harold or whatever is in this possible wonder wench makes those restrains cut open her skin, tendons, blood vessels or nerves which..”

“She will need when you de-possess her, Olivia,” I said to my, for the moment, comrade in common cause. “With the tricks in here,” I said, pointing to her fringed, less than legal smelling pouch of goodies. “And here,” I continued, placing my hand on her heart.

“And what you have, have learned, and discovered, with this,” my ex said, putting her palm on my forehead. “Professor Doctor Jenell,” she continued, looking at me with admiration and respect than I ever recall. “Starting with these de-possession points that you used to do, and I hope still do?” she said, opening my medical bag and pulling a box of acupuncture needles, as I pondered how I’d get them to the points on the chest of a screaming and violently struggling to get loose patient who growled more than talked now, with interrupting drones which according to any scientific or metaphysical healer’s assessments came from the depths of hell. “And if we need them, these,” Olivia continued, pointing to syringes and drugs.

“Or we can do this first,” I said, after which I put my hand in a fist and punched Diane in the solar plexus. As for her body, Diane stopped struggling. Air was the only thing moving out of her mouth. Her teeth stopped biting into her finally still tongue and only mildly quivering lips.

“Good aim,” Olivia said to me, assuming that I was an expert in the science of reflexology.

“Determined intentions,” I replied, considering the very real possibility that my determination to send Harold’s tortured soul to somewhere it could be confined, and healed, and my assertion that Diane would be turned into something better than I, or Olivia, ever were, was the effective ingredient in the punch.

With that, Olivia, me and the third brain-soul (which some call God, and others smart enough to know better don’t call anything) set to using tools in the physical and metaphysical realms to de-possess Diane. Which we did, after an intense night and most of the next day. Until...we got a loud knock on the door.

“We don’t need any house-keeping services!” I screamed to the person on the outside of the double locked door as me and Olivia shared a drink of deflated soda, and the treat of seeing Diane in a restful sleep, dreaming about things pleasant, kind and somehow creatively intelligent. Finally trustable without restraints.

Olivia put her arms my waist, pulling me into her, seeming to be ‘the man’ in a ‘morning after the boink’ hug where I was allowed and encouraged to be the woman.

“I’m not housekeeping,” a voice which could have been from any gender said from the other side. “I am----“

“---An innkeeper who I paid for three days to leave us the fuck alone!” Olivia blasted out.

“Please,” I added.

“You will open up the door now, please, Ma’am,” came through the other side of the bolt-locked door “We’re...”

“...Going to have to wait a little longer,” I said as I felt the essence of my ex-wife’s soul from a genderless perspective. And she felt mine. “You’re---”

“---The police!” the voice said, loudly.

“Who want what?” Diane said, waking up from her sleep.

“You,” the other Cop said, after which the door was broken down by a combination of force and mechanical machinery on the so called ‘entry-proof from violent husbands’

lock. “Come to arrest her,” one of the men in blue said, as his subordinate grabbed hold of Diane, escorting her violently to the car outside.

“And you are?” the head Gendarme asked me.

“Her doctor,” I replied, assertively.

“And you, Ma’am,” he asked Olivia.

“Her healer,” she proudly proclaimed.

“A shame,” he said. “She’s gonna need a lawyer.”

“For what?” I asked.

The courteous yet firm Mountie gave me a list of names, and photos of several dead people, slain in the ugliest of ways, very much including her mother, Lorraine. “Her handwork. Which if you know anything about, Doctor?”

“No, I don’t,” I replied. “Really. And my friend here, Olivia, didn’t know either.”

The Cop seemed to believe us. Still, they took down our names, and other details about us. “And as for her father,” he finally said, after getting more information about us than either of us thought we knew ourselves. “Tell Nick, her fate is in the hands of the courts now. And she will need a good lawyer.”

With that, the Mounties saddled up behind the steering wheels in their blue and whites and drove Diane away. Olivia, now terrified, turned to me. “So, you know a good lawyer for her?” he asked regarding a young woman, under the influence of ‘Harrold’, who by all parameters, was now back on the other side of the veil, for good, had committed horrific crimes.

“Her brother George,” I replied, having been hit in all areas of the brain by a bolt of intuition, and divine providence.

“And a lawyer for us? If we ever get put on trial?” Olivia said. “They used to burn witches, you know. And still, in some ways, do. Even good ones. Whether they use magic spells or FDA approved medications.”

To that I didn’t have an answer, but would find one. So I hoped, projected and...prayed.

CHAPTER 10

There are many laws about the universe that I think I know more about than the average bear. The law of energy in is required to get energy out, demonstrated by having to use an enzyme to a six carbon glucose molecule so it breaks down into carbon dioxide, water and ATP, a source of energy that can be used by all biological systems, which applies to people making significant changes in their lives too..that no pain no gain thing. The law of electrical currents which says that current (what circulates) is pushed by pressure difference from A to B, and inhibited by resistance in the tube or wire between A and B. The law of relativity which says that energy goes up if mass moves fast enough, and that mass is converted to energy if it moves at or more than the speed of light, intuited by Einstein and proven by the 26 inch waist on my own body that went down from a 34 only after I decided to use my brain and body in a masochistic workaholic manner rather than feed it bon bons and live a 'do only what others allow or tell you to do' existence. The law of what goes around comes around, albeit for some lucky political shitheads it takes the death of a million or so people and the passage of way too many years for it to come around, and that, in the process of leaving a great legacy no good deed goes unpunished, in the short term anyway. And of course the law that, in 94 of the cases, if you were born with a penis and a Y chromosome, your brain is hard wired to not see the need of putting the toilet seat down and if you have two X chromosomes with a vagina you see leaving the seat up as the most blatant sign of disrespect and insult. But there was one law I didn't understand...the law itself.

"That code which people write down that always has the potential to serve injustice as well as to make Lady Justice smile with delight and have a Joseph Campbellian orgasm under her robes, depending on the circumstances of course," I commented to Bill Simco, in the driver's seat next to me on the way to the courthouse after ten miles of smooth road and rocky silence. Yes, such was probably not appropriate to tell the Mountee who arrested Diane at the hotel room and who shielded me from being tricked into giving evidence that would implicate me as an accomplice in her murdering her mother, and some people who I kept claiming that I didn't know. But Bill, as Constable Simco insisted I call him, seemed like an anomaly. A thinking cop, who somehow hid his 160 IQ so he could be hired as with a score of 105 so that he could rule over and think like the schleps in the 'real world' who registered a 100. "Maybe I shouldn't have told your buds that I didn't know Diane's mother, or her other victim, 'in this lifetime' anyway?" I confessed. "I was just..trying to let them know that I was innocent by sharing a joke that they, me and you needed really badly."

Bill's face remained stern, his silent stare remaining on the road, his focus on thoughts behind his thinking and, according to Socrates anyway, caring eyes.

"Look, I really DO appreciate the accommodations you arranged for me," I continued, feeling in the back of my throat the gaseous mini-explosion of corn bread, quiche and chili I had been served for lunch, by room service, cloistered in a five star hotel by guards outside protecting me 'from dangerous interluders' and who apologized for the wifi going out on me whenever I accidentally connected to anything resembling the truth about the

situation on the internet. While Diane, and for three days, Olivia dined on stale baked beans and cold hot dogs with meat of undisclosed origin at a maximal security facility which allowed no visitors other than the roaches that slipped through the cracks of the walls, and Correction Officers, some of whom had been convicts themselves. "But, it's important that I speak to Nick, Diane's father. Who----"

"---Is still in the hospital, at the ICU, under heavy sedation, like I told you," he interrupted. "Where he is getting the treatment he needs."

"But not the truth that he needs even more!" I insisted. "And to be around people who care for him. And understands his mind and connects to his heart."

"Like you?" Bill sneered from the side of his mouth, his breath reeking of sweet cinnamon glazed donuts, salty fear and sour jealousy. "Who I almost lost my job protecting, serving and trying to please! And to form other connections with, on your terms?"

"Like his son, George!" I assured Bill, placing my hand on his shaking yet rock hard wrist. Still thinking that he had accepted me as a woman interested in him as a man. And praying that, if indeed Nick was to die in the hospital, Bill would accept me as the kind of woman I was, who could give him anything he wanted and deserved, except children of course "And who, so I was told, and see..." I said.

Bill quickly turned the car around the corner, giving me a full view of George, the 'never in the in crowd' compliant geek and psychological doormat who shuffled his feet with a downturned head walking proudly up the steps with briefcase in hand, sought by desperate hip, cool reporters, many of them far more attractive than I would have been if I had become a woman at the age of 20 instead of 40. He was followed by an entourage of classy, Ivy league lawyers, and law professors, who were not his stooges rather than bosses. "Is a lawyer now!" I noted. "A celebrity lawyer at that!" I said to Bill, and myself, proud of my biggest and, so it seemed, most socially impactful treatment for any patient, or friend, who was entrusted to me. "Who his father wants to see in action. And deserves to see in action! As he defends his sister! Who was and is an innocent victim who was possessed by evil spirits, which do exist."

"An argument he'll tear apart as the prosecuting attorney," Bill informed me as he stopped the car. Finally, after a long drive from the place of my own confinement and 'protective custody' from unnamed bad guys, including his own buddies in blue, Constable Simco looked at and into me with truthful and the saddest of eyes. "So he can---"

"---Become a sell out?" I surmised, and gave voice to as I saw an elitist confidence in George's face that I never had, yet knew I had to obtain if I was to win any 'game' with the people of power and influence. "Or.." I considered, after letting the thinking part of my brain overtake the emotional portion which had become activated. "He's playing a game. Pretending to be the prosecutor who will self sabotage his own case so that Diane

would get off. Get some rest. Get some treatment. Get what her undiscovered real self deserves.”

“Which is,” Bill said, taking a newspaper out from the recesses of the compartment on the driver’s door. “To see his sister rot in hell for viciously killing his mother, and the mothers of four more sons who don’t have the resources or determination to see that justice is done, and closure is provided,” he read. “And,” he continued with a wry smile. “To negotiate with God so that maybe in the next lifetime Diane could pay for her sins in full penance as a Nun in a Catholic school who hits herself more than she wacks her students, a smart ET who winds up crash landing on a planet even dumber than planet earth just after she crawls out of the womb, or an author who...”

“...knows nothing about publishing but everything about writing,” I said, anticipating that George would extend his humor into something as profound and dangerous as the truth.

“Something like that,” Bill said, looking at the rest of the quote celebrity Lawyer George gave to the press which I was unable to get on the news. “But for now, justice has to be served,” he concluded, folding up the newspaper. He got out of the car, opened my door, and invited me to come out with a courtly bow. “You’ve been called as a witness.”

“For who?” I asked. “The prosecution or the defense?”

“Fuck if I know,” Bill replied.

“And fucked if you did,” I volleyed back. “You catch ‘em, and don’t cook them, right?”

“And don’t judge them either,” he assured me.

I wanted to believe Constable Bill so badly. Yet knew I shouldn’t. But there was one thing I had to ask. “Who is the defense attorney?”

“Something we will both find out, soon enough,” his pledge, promise and threat.

CHAPTER 11

Due to my pathologically ‘moral, smart and cover thy ass before anyone else thinks of kicking you in it’ life habit of covering all of my legal bases or not daring to question the morality of civil law, I had not been in a courtroom in two decades. My initial impression upon entering the municipal building was that there would be a mega-sized oak desk at its head reeking of fresh varnish with walls portraying legends of justice from past eras whose eyes followed you wherever you went, and would lash out at you if you even thought about telling ‘the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth’ to the judge, jury or yourself. Complete with a ticking clock over head whose pendulum reminded you of how many seconds you had to prove you were innocent, redeem your soul with a confession or guilty or just be reminded of how your own ticker under your ribs was counting down the seconds to your final judgment on earth before seeing if there was anything beyond the dimly lit, hot as hell, but cooled sort of by fans above hallowed hall of justice.

Instead, all of my senses detected a room which was as sterile as it was clean, few inside realizing the difference between the two, accentuated by air reeking of hand sanitizer. My eyes were blinded by bright fluorescent lights hidden within the ceiling. The ears were permeated with the droning fans of the multiple lap tops laying on surfaces in front of the judge, the lawyers and the court ‘stenographer’, the latter being an androgenously dressed nerd with a wild mane of half purple haired on the left side of her head and a shaved scalp bearing a Gothic Druid tatoo on the right. She, or perhaps he, maneuvered the board behind the lap top which rotated the cameras attached to the walls such that they would not miss a single action, on, over or under the ultra-modern imitation wood tables. The two cold as stone faced bailiffs checked COVID vaccination cards as we came in, handing out masks to everyone who was not provided with a glass partition to hide behind, which included the prosecutor’s table, and that of the defense.

While Bill guided me to our seats in the ‘audience’ for this show of horrors, I passed by George at the prosecutor’s table, busily looking over a stack of notes, clad in a new suit that said ‘solid professional’ and ‘eccentrically hip’ both at the same time, somehow. “May the best Martian win in this earthly court, in the service of Lady justice and truth,” I said with as much of a smile in my eyes and active listening in my voice as possible.

“This from a ‘Lady’ who knows nothing about justice, or truth,” his reply, delivered with his head focused on his work with indifference which went well beyond simple hatred.

As Bill led me away from George towards what appeared to be an assigned seat in the ‘viewing audience’, I wondered what George meant when he said ‘Lady’ that way. Did he find me out as a trans woman? And if so, did he tell his father about such? And would he spill the testosterone flavored beans to the rest of the people who knew me as a woman now, half of whom would not accept me as anything if my ‘secret’ got out? But which half? Indeed it felt like one of those moments when the universe was becoming inverted. Where I would find out that all of my friends were now, and perhaps always

were, my enemies. And all of my enemies, who I fought hard against and protected myself from, were my closest and friends.

One of the latter seemed to be Diane, as she was led into the courtroom by three bailiffs, nearly twice her size, dressed in a blue blazer and matching pencil skirt, complimented by a buttoned up to the top white blouse, topped off by her multi-colored hair now being her original shade, tied back neatly in a librarian's bun. She thanked me with a nod, and bow, then raised her cuffed hands up in the air, seeking to request the help of God the Father, Mother and genderless formless entity in between. Waiting for her at the defendant's table was her lawyer, none other than 'Councilor Olivia, clad in a fringed leather skirt overloaded with traditional Old Style and flashy New Age beads that glimmered in the dull light like a Christmas tree, complimented with a low cut peasant blouse above the waist, her normally slick and straight black mane frizzed out so as to make her look like a First Nations cougar who went through and became the wind itself.

Olivia winked at me, giving me a thumbs up. Then took out a fist full of sweet-grass from her medicine bag. She commenced to set it ablaze with a lighter, but was halted by doing such by the bailiff, who pointed to a 'No Smoking' Sign. Olivia put the lighter away, then commenced to walk around the courtroom like an exterminator looking for roaches hiding hide under the floorboards, waving the sweet-grass towards every corner of the room, speaking to invisible (to the 'normal eye anyway) 'entities' in a tongue which I never had heard but somehow...felt and perhaps understood.

Eye rolls abounded, of course, from everyone Paleface in the room, including Bill. And, Diane, who hid her head in shame, and terror.

"We offered you professional legal council, Diane," George informed her sister as the jury came into the room, taking their seats behind the glass partition provided. "We want you to have a fair trial. And I..."

"Have become part of 'we' now?" Diane blasted at her brother, accusingly.

"By...necessity," George replied with a face that, even from the side, seemed conflicted. Yet determined. "You have to pay for what you did. That is the law."

"I don't know what I did, or why. That is reality!" Diane begged.

"You're a danger to yourself and others," George slurred out of his mouth. "And it's my responsibility to..."

"Shut the fuck up!" I heard from behind me. "This is a court of law, not a playground for you kids to throw mud at each other. Or blood!" Bill announced, as Cop, Sage and real man who I found myself respecting, and even loving, till he got out of his seat and grabbed hold of Olivia, taking away the un-burnt sweet-grass she was using to cleanse the room. He pointed to the gun under his jacket, his badge, then to her seat.

“Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s,” Olivia said, by way of explanation for her complying with the request as she took her seat as the defense attorney. “I decontaminated the room of bad spirits. No charge. But for those of you who are possessed,” she announced with humility and caring to the bailiffs, the members of the jury, handing them her card. “I can offer my services, free of charge. For today only.” She finally approached George. “But for you, and every member of your family, services rendered free of charge.”

“Come near my father and I’ll have you and that ‘witch’ who brought you here burnt at the stake, legally and slowly,” he sneered.

How George had found out that me and Olivia had been involved, then reunited, I didn’t know. And how he, or anyone else, found out about Diane’s having killed her mother, and the mother’s of other ‘Diane’s’ I also didn’t know. Perhaps it was something Diane blabbed about to the ER when I brought her in for repair of her physical wounds when she tried to kill my horses, then me. Wounds that I, and the horses, and karma, inflicted back on her. But for the moment, all was academic, as I heard the immortal words spoken in Laugh In re-runs from back in the 70s. “Here come da judge, here come da judge,” Olivia noted, with a dancing voice as a black haired middle aged man with a stoic, rigid old soul strode into the room.

“And there go the defends attorney,” the spitting image of Brett Cavanaugh in a robe almost as black as his soul said, as he pointed to the bailiffs while everyone, including me, reflexely spring to their feet, pushing their hunched backs into a rigid arch of attention palms pasted to their hips, except for Olivia, whose posture was upright, but whose arms were remained open and expressively extended in a welcoming gesture. “Out of my courtroom and into my cell. This defective and over the hill piece of meat who---.”

“--- Is working for me, Your Honor,” I found myself saying, and committing to.

“And you are?” the Judge demanded of me with a stare looking down at me from ‘up high’.

“The head defense attorney,” I informed him, and myself, with renewed courage. And insight coming from a place inside of me I never had known. “Your honor,” I continued with a reverent bow, dedicated to the cause of serving both law and morality. “Who humbly requests that my assistant, who is honoring the traditions of courtrooms in her own country, otherwise known as the reservations we put her people on, stay on with me as a special advisor, who is representative for the kind of justice that my client, Diane, deserves, as part of her genetics IS First Nations, as I recently discovered.”

“Discovered when?” George blasted back.

“Yesterday,” I asserted. I appended that false claim with authoritative statements of percentages and numbers worthy of a bullshit throwing top flight geneticist. Much like

Gregor Mendel himself, who, history recorded 30 years after his death, was able to convince the world that enough green peas were yellow, and yellow ones green, so that the data he fudged fit his precise model of dominant-recessive genetics.

Maybe it was my assertiveness, my training as a clinician, the exposure I had to bullshitting biomedical professors, or my analysis of bullshit throwing pharmaceutical reps that allowed me to convince the Judge that Olivia was required by law to be in his courtroom. And that George was indeed part 'Redskin Injun'. Or maybe I got some help from the 'spirits' in the room that I felt re-enter the chamber, at Olivia's request. Apparently, she did have some tricks up her flaired, seductively puffed out sleeves.

And so, my new career as a lawyer in a court of law began. Which I hoped would not lead to a Calling as a criminal in the clink. Or, worse, a conflicted bullshitter who didn't know if and when she was bullshitting who would wind up in a psych ward, prison cell, grave, or the ethers as a bodiless soul who was blessed and cursed with never having to eat, shit or piss in the material plane.

CHAPTER 12

A patron and friend who I wrote for, and with, as Jack a long time ago said that you waste less energy, time and emotional investment if you know you know what your goal is, what your strategy to get there is, and the difference between the two. The most obvious application of this of course is the money making thing. So many businessmen and women think that their goal is to make money, but...unless they know what they want, or need, to do with the money, they become Munioses. The Cree, and Olivia's, word for Palefaces, or blanched Redskins, who 'have gone mad in the pursuit of money.'

As for application of this to my current situation, as I pondered it during the whole half hour Judge 'Brent' (which was his real first name, frighteningly) seated next to my terrified client, Diane, behind a shield of, so I was told, was see through plastiglass (for 'security' reasons of course) which allowed us to speak without being heard by anyone outside of it. And to devise a way to convince a judge and perhaps jury who didn't believe in anything that can't be seen, heard, felt or smelled with their biological senses that Diane was literally not herself when committing the heinous crimes that Harrold, and perhaps his buds, made her do, without her knowledge, when squatting in her body, mind and soul without permission to do so. Or perhaps with false intent to empower her in ways that broke her down? While talking strategy soft voice and (after I saw George appearing to read our lips and giving hand-signals to the judge) more spoken than notes communication with a confident Olivia and terrified Diane, I assigned the inner portion of my brain to indulge in that most private and, to the ignorant, selfish of endeavors---self observation as to the 'why' of it all.

What was my, as all actors should ask themselves, 'motivation' in this scene of a screenplay perhaps of my own making which I brought to set without having put anything on the page first. Was converting Nick Diamantis' wild yet lazy protégée wild child daughter into an accomplished AND free citizen all about as well as final connection to his inner circle of those with power and influence so that I could be famous as a writer, therapist and scientist rather than, theoretically anyway, just 'right' about what I was offering the world? Or maybe it was to offer to the world on my own terms that I was the first effective bridge between the seeable and un-seeable, such as Freud and numerous other neuroscientists as well as those in other Callings such as Galileo, Pythagaris, Einstein, Tesla and, through his novels about the human condition as it is and should be, Anton Chekov, M.D., H.B.A.R.P. (human being aspiring Renaissance person, with letters in Cyrillic of course). Or maybe it was to prove to myself that I was worthy to be in their company, and that their lingering ghosts would give me a 'well done, girl, guy or whatever you need to be' pat on the back which my own meat and potatoes parents were never able, or willing, to do provide. Or, maybe it was something more personal...a chance to work with Olivia on something we both believed in for the first time in 20 years again, rather than having our aspirations diametrically opposed, which was at the root of the misery our marriage became barely 6 months after we enthusiastically tied the knot, and I inadvertantly got her pregnant with a mentally defective child who we both had to send off to be raised by others, but who we still felt responsible for.

But there were three things I felt and thought to be true. First, Diane didn't know who she was or what she was doing when her hands took the lives of four people, very much including her mother. Secondly, that Olivia's claim to send ghosts, demons and angels back to the other side of the veil as a 'white witch' also came with the ability to invite them back into the land of the living was real. Third, that anyone (including Diane, me and numerous patients in my now 'past' who were the most difficult to help) could call in 'negative, dark entities' into the 'safe' realm we call 'reality' when mentally imbalanced, scientifically adventurous or under the influence of psychedelic drugs sometimes as innocuous as weed. The most prominent case in point that came into my fast moving and hopefully effective mind was Carl Marks, not spelt with an x, an altruistic technical genius 30 year old patient of mine who was never able to grow a beard like the man his obsessively political 'revolution now' Socialist parents named him after. Who experimented with peyote, weed and shrooms to explore non-political alternative realities and built a machine to record on video and audio white noise in a room he rented that had been built on an old Indian burial ground, which had in its time, become a veterinary clinic where multiple euthenasias were done, then a funeral home after the animal doc who owned it decided to end his own suffering. Who shut down his equipment as soon as he saw something come over the screen, so he told me anyway in a very private session where I asked him, as a fellow scientist in an increasingly non-scientific world, how he was able to access verifiable data from beyond the veil. Who refused to tell me any details. Who, so I heard later, was convinced by a girlfriend who fancied herself a 'Christian Satanist', to re-investigate 'the beyond', with whom he died in a car crash that took him after swerving off a 'cliff' in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, a place so flat that even Columbus would question that the world was round.

How I yearned to show the people in this courtroom proof of the beyond as a Ph.D. in Neuroscience, and a law degree assigned to me instantly by...myself and perhaps the angels who were guiding me in this endeavor to serve justice, within the confines and contradictions of the law. Yes, it would be dangerous, as would be the experiments that I had to do now to save Diane from life imprisonment or lethal injection as a murderous, or an in-determinant time as a drugged-into-sedation-for-life psych patient in a facility that was far worse. And, somehow, seeing this as the most important, and maybe last, gift I could give to Diane, her father, Nick, her brother George all of whom now seemed to be....my new dysfunctional yet beloved beyond earthling or Martian measure family.

CHAPTER 13

A fact few patients know, but any smart no bullshit Doc does, is that the placebo effect works 37 percent of the time. But it also can go the other way, disbelievers being made unable to feel or access medicine that DOES work. One of those patients dug in with both daggers to Diane when she was requested to take the stand, after pledging on the Bible with maximal sincerity and a plethora of fear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

“So, you say that you were possessed by demons when you killed your mother and the mothers of three other families, all of whom are in the courtroom now, is this not correct, Miss Diamantis,” George stated as the opening argument for the prosecution.

“Yes,” Diane replied, keeping her answers brief, accurate and, to the extent that anyone could be, truthful and honest, while looking at and into the vengeful faces of the motherless children of two families and a widower left alone by the third slain, butchered and scalped victim who was still at the stage of late shock or early realization in the grieving process.

“And you say that you didn’t know what you were doing, that you had no knowledge of what was going on, Miss Diamantis?” Diane’s, until now anyway, meek and less clever brother continued in a calm, professional and even caring voice.

“Yes,” Diane answered again, trying to say so much more with her eyes to the survivors of the carnage she had inflicted during the home invasions when the Moms was alone.

George took a deep breath, accepting Diane’s answer, so it seemed. Then exhaled, firing out with the effectiveness of a well tuned laser, “So then if you didn’t know what was going on, and had no knowledge of what was happening, why do you claim that you were ‘possessed by demons’ at the time of doing the devil’s worst handiwork?”

“Objection!” I blasted out.

“To me describing these vicious murders as the devil’s worst handiwork?” George volleyed back, to me. “As someone who TOLD your client that she was possessed at the time of doing these murders? Who, according to your own admission and professional psychological evaluations of studies you published, said multiple times that...” He whipped out from his briefcase papers I had written as a graduate student in when entering science, a novel I wrote when trying to get out of becoming a dulled out scientist as well as a clinical report I penned after applying my ideas, ideals and theories in the real world three years ago. “‘The devil is an invention of male priests, ministers and rabbis that was designed to make people fear God rather than seek to connect to, know, serve, love and laugh with that Spirit big S inside of all of us that is beyond good and bad. As are entities which we think we conjure up to scare ourselves when we feel bored, and scare the, pun intended, hell out of people who are threatening or trying to get the upper hand on us.’ You did say and write that, didn’t you?”

“I did,” I confessed, and related. “But further research I did, with an open mind and expanding heart indicated unequivocally that negative, malicious no goodnick, for lack of a better work, entities do exist. And can be brought into us by---”

“‘Drugs, spells, and suggestions, that ‘inhabit our souls’,” he interjected, quoting other papers that I didn’t recognize, but that I may have penned, as it sounded familiar. “‘Or somehow activate genes that activate archetype or perhaps past lifetime memories which fire off dormant primitive reflexes from the amygdala, hippocampus and other limbic structures with that take over circuits in the higher and reason based regions of the cerebral cortex, specifically areas known as...’”

The words were familiar, and George had pronounced all of the Latin names of those brain centers with the accuracy of a top flight modern neuroscientist and the flair of an Ancient Roman Senator. “Is that not true, Miss Miller?” he demanded of after hia logical, correct but certainly not expansively Right assessment of what was going with a sadistic and vicious grin.

“Yes it is, true, ‘Master’ as in what you call upstart boys in boarding school, Diamantis,” I barked back, insulted for the first time in recent memory for being called a ‘Miss’ and not a doctor. “But there are different mechanisms afoot here.”

“Like you putting your own foot in your mouth in my courtroom, Doctor Miller” ‘Judge Brett’ interjected. “And you, Councilor Diamantis, seeming to be more interested in extracting some kind of revenge against the defendant and the defense council than in serving justice in a quick, timely and professional matter.”

“Apologies, your Honor,” he replied with a courtly bow.

“And apologies from her too,” Olivia added, regarding me, knowing fully well that I was unable and unwilling to wag a civil tongue to such uncivil and uncivilized men.

“Duly noted,” Judge Brett said with a dignified tone and, as I noted, an possibly unbiased mind. Until Olivia looked around the room to all four corners, flaying around her skirt as well as the womanly wares under it. “And apologies in advance from the new arrivals to the courtroom. Who assure me that they will not move any objects they aren’t supposed to, keep their formless hands to themselves and not fondle anyone’s chest, thighs or genitals without---“

I put my hand over Olivia’s mouth before she could get more graphic. Noting that three of the jurors appreciated broke their frigid faces into a quiet chuckle. With a male, and female, juror’s eyeline fixed on Olivia’s shapely legs and suggestively succulent breasts.

“‘Doctor’ Miller,” the Judge said, this time using that medical form of address as an condescending insult. “This is not a stage play in a psych ward. You will control your assistant.”

“I will,” I said, hearing Olivia muttering things in her own special tongues in her own way, while rubbing items in her pockets and medicine back I knew nothing about. Which emitted perfumed smells into the air which had a distinct odor.

“As will I,” Diane added, restraining Olivia just enough for her to seem compliant, and submissive, to everyone except we three ‘witches’, as we were about to be called in the courtroom and labeled by the press, if this experiment didn’t work.

George, being a man, with male nostrils, were affected by but didn’t consciously detect (according to some theories about essential oils) the mind aromas emitted from Olivia’s medicine bag and secret pockets. Neither did the judge, who with a slower and less frenetic tone, called for a five minute recess with no one leaving the room. Or the jury, half of its members closing their eyes to take a brief nap. From, as I sensed with detection devises other than the olfactory receptors in my nose, aromas a lot stronger than lavender which made more than one of my horses calm steeds to ride rather than wonky bucking broncs, that ‘study’ conducted with an n value of three horses and one, admittedly, suggestive to any stimulus rider, being me of course.

What we really needed was some hallucinogens that were ingested rather than inhaled, as there was more hard data on them. To make brains more open to stimuli in the real world, but to open up minds to what was beyond such. ‘Oh, my kingdom for a chef who was trained in the Jerry Garcia and Timothy Leary school of baking, broiling and boinking afterwards!’ I said to myself, and, yes, to the snoring ghosts in the room who Olivia had put into a deep slumber in the (to my eye anyway) dark corners of the courtroom, and to the ones she had invited in, whose identities were unknown to me.

But there was one name that, during my talk with a confounded and progressively fearful Diane about legal protocol (as I understood them anyway) in ‘real world’ language, did come out of Olivia’s muttering whispers and into my consciousness. “Bahuchara Mata,” I distinctly heard from Olivia’s lips.

“The Lord and, today anyway, Lordess of Two Spirited devotees AND atheists,” I said to Olivia, as I felt myself see a solid grey two legged, strong-armed cloud march through the boltlocked North Exit door, contract into itself, then emerge as a long limbed, dancing figurine of white light. “Who will...make an appearance in the latest unisex fashion for disembodied souls?”

“Or make good ole boy Judge Brett, and the mostly male jury re-think how much manhood is really in them, and how it could be educated by some womanhood,” Olivia told me. “If we work with the choreography she’s setting in motion and not against it.”

“That’s...an interesting strategy,” I said as my eyes, or perhaps only my brain, saw Bahuchara Mata’s lilting fingers and floating feed touch onto the heads of the jury members, then the judge, then hover around George’s thick skull, avoiding another musical dive into the black and white notes in his now linear head, then fleeing off onto

and into the ceiling, causing the fans to slow down a bit then speed up again to normal speed.

“We embodied mortals have to do SOMETHING on our own,” Olivia explained regarding George’s non-visitation.

“Like getting legal council that lives in the real world,” Diane grumbled. “Or at least ACTING like you live in the real world. Which will execute me, making me one of those ‘ghosts’ you say I was haunted by. Who will haunt both of you for the rest of your days on this fucking miserable planet.”

“Fair enough,” I said to Diane as I noted the clock on the wall tick down to ‘game on again’ at a steady beat, uninterrupted by any ghosts changing the speed. “But there’s one thing you should know before we do what is necessary to get you out of jail. And us out of being burnt as witches, or disallowed entry into ANY ‘normal earthling’ village square, farmer’s market or day care center.”

“That your girlfriend here was once your wife, and in some ways still is?” Diane challenged, pointing to Olivia. “And that YOU’RE carrying more secrets there than behind your eyes,” she said, pointing to my still sort of ‘hybrid’ body parts between my legs. “That I bet my father doesn’t know about.”

How Diane knew about me and Olivia as a ‘couple’ with unresolved issues, such was obvious to anyone with any relational experience as a mother or daughter. But as for my being trans....There was nothing left on my external anatomy which would give me away. And I was sure that when getting a snooze, I was at least two rooms or 30 feet away from Diane’s ears so she would not hear ‘Jack’, who I still was in many of my dreams, groaning, moaning or speaking in any tongue. Still, I felt my jaw drop, my stare looking downward, and my arms pulling into my side in that ‘I was just made and found out’ gesture which happened more times than I could count on any nail polished fingers when I was transitioning.

“Thought so,” Diane said. “But that’s okay,” she continued, after which she sat back in her seat. Content with me being trans, with me and Olivia using her trial as a means of working out our own post-marital issues and/or her homophobic father Nick, if he was to come out of the coma he had fallen into after entering the hospital, waking up miraculously to marry someone who used to be a man, or leaving his fortune to a wife who would still need more expensive surgeries to become a real woman. At that point I would have settled for any of the above.

CHAPTER 15

Alright, so how was I going to convince a judge and jury who lived in the real world who thought that we all had free choice that ‘beings’ from elsewhere could possess a human being and have them do inhuman acts with superhuman strength? The power of suggestion, otherwise known as the placebo effect, was what I was counting on. Along with some help from Baruchara Mata et al. As for who that ‘et al’ was, such was immaterial right now. That gender neutral diety, or perhaps ET, had its assistants, and I had mine. Including Olivia, who called in someone else with ‘mutterances’ under her breath, which stopped when I intermittently looked at her.

On the last ‘tell me what the fuck you are doing with a note, a whisper or even your (no pun intended) goddamn eyes’, Judge Brett announced, staring into me using the eyes of everyone who made me bow my head down to them. “‘Doctor’ and for the moment Councilor Miller. Proceed with your opening arguments or----”

“---I know, Your Honor, tempus fugit,” I interjected holding back a sarcastic tone with regard to HIS title. And, after two seconds of in-depth consideration, recalled that in Doctor School we are taught to be kind and courteous to those around us, whereas in Judge school they instructed as to how to be ‘effectively assertive’. As for whether he understood that tempus fugit meant ‘time flies’ rather than ‘time to fuck it’ (as more than one legally trained patient of mine thought it meant), that didn’t matter. Actually, it was a ‘time flies as well as ‘time to fuck it’ moment. As I felt in the gut, and had to make others feel in their guts, or other body parts.

“I call, summon and request my client to the stand,” I boldly and assertively announced as if I knew everything (something of course that no one who knows anything truly does of course), to which Judge Brent nodded with arrogant approval masked as professionalism. “As I am instructing my assistant council to not disrupt the proceedings with further prayers for Lady Justice to enter the room,” I noted, staring accusingly at Olivia. Who ceased her mumbling, and, under the table, fondling of rosary beads, waving of sweet-grass. She opened up her palms to me with a ‘yer da boss’ bow, conferring the sword and strategy of battle to me. Something she seldom did or meant, to the extent that I could understand in the relationship I had with her in which there were more secrets we kept within ourselves than truths we shared. Something that I suppose is true with any two souls who are so close and, in more ways than life allows us to know, connected to each other. But I digress, which is the reason why perhaps you are still reading this story.

In any case, I walked slowly with an arched back to Diane, noting that she stared at and into my poker face, hoping to find her guardian angel there. And from the corner of my right eye three male juror and one most probably lesbian member of that elite body admiring my legs and perfectly (and of course artificially) implanted breasts. And from the corner of my left eye, noted George’s face. His right side expressed grief for his slain mother and remorse for what he had to do to his sister. His left bore the stoic rigidity of a man who was proud of his ability to be a top flight lawyer in such a

publicized trial, having been approved by 'the system' he has served but was now a ruling member of. In the middle was a boy who finally saw himself as a man his father could be proud of, said father still wavering between life and death, according to the nurse at the hospital who was secretly sending me text updates against the mandate of her bosses.

After swearing in on the Bible which she found herself believing in now, Diane interrupted me in mid thought and reflection with a clearing of her throat. Yes, 'taking your moment' thing so you could find the right place Inside to start from was allowed on movie sets where you were playing a lawyer, but in the real world, reflex thinking according to a pre-arranged plan was what was expected. "Will you state your name, for the record?" I asked her. "Your full name, which you were born with, and given, and expected to live up to."

"Diane," she said proudly. "Diaamm...." She uttered, fearing

"Mantis!" George shot out, with a mixture of pride and shame. "Diamantis."

"Brother to the prosecuting attorney, whose name is...?" I advanced from the ever changing yet still envisioned plan on the chess game with multiple players in which the rule of the board, and the game in this highly political trial were changing with each move.

"George," Diane related, with a bold of unexpected assertiveness. And more love than resentment as she looked at her brother with..pity.

"And the name of your father?" I inquired, while George and Diane were having a non-verbal conversation about their past, present and, if there was to be one, future connections as siblings, which I DID plan on. "And hour departed mother."

"A father in the hospital and a mother in the afterlife who aren't here," Judge Brett intervened.

"But who, in spirit, is, your Honor," I reminded Judge Brett, noting that a dancing ghost who seemed to resemble Bahuchara Mata hovering over him, firing a lazer beam of something into his head, which seemed to be deflected by his thick head of black hair. Then another beam that hit his left shoulder, which flinched. "And spirits, as well as Spirit, does exist. In a God fearing and, on a better day, God living society such as ours where swearing in on the Bible DOES encourage even atheists to think twice about lying on the stand."

"A wartime injury which comes back when I am perturbed by arrogant idiots, or the weather changes," the Judge noted with regard to his aching shoulder. After which the ghost fired another round, to my eyes anyway, into his crotch. To which he winced again. "And a prostate issue that's....my business, not anyone else's!" He turned to the

jury, who was looking at him like he was a fellow mortal cloaked in a black robe rather than an divinely implanted instrument of justice.

I was tempted to pull my lips back into a smirk of 'gotcha' at Judge Brett as well as all of the men, and women, of power and influence in my past whose confidence was built upon lowering my self esteem. But, recalling experience with my negotiations with Mother Nature when a researcher in the quest of finding out her hidden biological secrets and psychological truths about her most disobedient and dangerous species, an added infusion of humility at the moment of victory always entitles you to more god or goddess like powers as a discoverer or disseminator of curative truths. Bahuchara Mata nodded to me, to proceed, as did Olivia. As did Diane, having pulled up a whatever courage she could muster from her terrified soul.

"Meaning no disrespect to anyone, or anyone's faith, I would like to show the court that the defendant was not herself when committing these horrific crimes which, Your Honor, did send Diane Diamantis' mother to the afterlife, which, according to your own admission, does exist," I said.

"Which I said metaphorically exists," the Judge countered, as if stepping off his bench to confront me face to face, soul to soul. Something that he was probably told never to do in Judge School. And which, unfortunately for the profession which said it was about being personal, I was discouraged from doing when in Shrink School. "The fact is that Diane did these four murders. And confessed to doing them."

"And has to pay for her crimes," George intervened as he sprang up to his feet. "Or allowing them to happen by...perhaps inviting these demons into her, with the drugs, incantation, Satanic verses she kept doing. She has to pay for her sins."

"Miscalculations," I countered. "Which is the real translation of the word 'sin' in Hebrew and Aramaic."

"Moral miscalculations," George volleyed back. 'Punishable by law.'

"Law, which is a temporary and flexible replacement for Honor, and Common, Compassionate sense," I self observed coming out of my mouth, and soul. Both of which felt were being controlled, guided and/or inspired by something bigger than myself. "Your Honor," I appended, to Judge Brett, realizing that I had just downgraded his profession from being a Holy Institution to that of a temporary fix it. But there was one truth that had to be completely revealed. "We all know that no one law applied in all cases as the moral, right and just punishment for a miscalculation."

"Agreed," George said. "But we all have to share one universe, even if it is imagined, and live by the same rules."

"Which says that if you do the crime, you do the time," George added. "Particularly if you are a danger to yourself and others. Which translates, for my dear, defective sister, a

lifetime in a secure, State operated psychiatric facility IF she's faking it. Or a jail if she isn't..."

"There are other options," I asserted, and tried to explain, to George.

While George and I haggled over what to do with and about Diane, trying very hard to keep our personal secrets to ourselves which would reveal our vulnerabilities, and ultimate defeat in this 'yes or no' courtroom, Judge Brett leaned back and just watched us. A lazy and hazy glaze came over his eyes, which was noticed by the jury. The ghost above him then turned from a dancing bright light to something grey, dark and as non-musical as anything. A repressive ghost, I surmised, which personified Dull Out Virus, as he face turned into something procedural, lifeless, boring, insensitive then...deadly.

Brett's brown eyes turned back, then red. His face blanched white. A black aura around his head. That same look I had seen in Diane when she was about to kill, Aristophonies, a horse she wanted to love but now wanted and needed to destroy in body, mind and spirit. And which she blasted at me after Aristophonies' buds, pushed the possessed Diane aside. Yes, I know now who had just entered the room, and the body, mind and not soul of Judge Brett, who growled, screamed and then threw every object on the bench at me. After which he picked up a pair of scissors, edging his way towards me, motioning for me to cut my hair. Then throwing the scissors into my now shaking hands. I looked to Olivia as an explanation. "A necessity," she explained to me with a dedicated and apologetic tone, and determined eyes.

"No Harrold!" I said into the biological face of Judge Brett. "The cameras are watching you!" I turned to the jury, half of whom were edged forward in fascination, the other half leaning back in their chairs in sheer terror. "And you are seeing a demonstration of possession thattttt iss...."

My affirmative voice dissolved into a fearful and helpless stutter. As I observed my left hand picking up my finally long grown mane, about to cut it off at the scalp with the scissors Brett offered me. And looking at Harrold, inside of is his newest unknowing host. "Yes," Harrold said with a voice that was half his and half Judge Brett's.

"No!" Olivia proclaimed, shaking a whiff of, this time, freshly lit, sweet-grass into the usually pathologically sane and now mad with rage black robed referee in the game called justice. "Get away from him, and her," she commanded in firm voice.

"Absolutely not," Harrold said with the calmest and most 'reasonable' voice he could get from Judge Brett. "This is what I do. Equilibrate you all into being passive, obedient and lifeless. To halt expressive experimentation with arts, science and gender."

"And destructive to ourselves, and others, particularly the ones we want to love but are pushed by life to hate," Diane intervened. Still chained to with her feet, and hands, she hobbled in between me and Harold, snatching away the scissors just as I was about to cut off my hair to become Jack again. To not have to struggle. To not have an agenda of

expanding my soul but just to have a comfortable mind, and procedural brain that plays second fiddle to everyone.

“And stay away from him too!” Diane said as I saw Harrold make a swift exit from Brett, leaving him with shaky legs and a confounded white face even paler than his own Caucasian tone, making a beeline for George. “You’ve done enough damage to him!” she continued, placing herself in front of the mobile gray crowd that, in actuality or effect, was ‘seeable’ by all but one of the jurors, the rest of whom were terrified.

“Relax!” Olivia commanded the jurors, springing to her feet. “He only can inhabit one body at a time. And the one he really wants isn’t you, or the judge. Or the now educated in things beyond what his eyes can see prosecutor,” she said of George. Who, in an instant, seemed to know realize what had happened to his sister while committing those crimes. And to himself when he committed the most deadly sin of all, surrendering to and embracing passive lifelessness as a victim of dull out virus. To which there was still no biological vaccine, despite my multiple efforts in the lab to try to devise one. Olivia then walked to the judge’s bench, stepped on his chair, and then planted her feet firmly on the bench, so as to let everyone see her, opening up her blouse so that he could have a clear shot at her heart, pointing to the place she wanted him to enter. “The inhabitant Harrold, as he seems most eager to answer to, is...”

‘

“---Me!” I exclaimed, loosening the buttons on my own top, after which I climbed up on the bench and pushed my now beloved, and about to be re-possessed, ex-wife. And, perhaps, new fiancée. “Who followed me here and who will follow me to the grave, where both of us will remain,” I announced, leaping back onto the floor then grabbing hold of a revolver loosely held by the shaking hands of a bailiff too scared to use it. “One shot into this will bring the end to both of us,” I announced boldly, aiming the barrel at left side of my head, being sure that the contents of it would smush up the base of my brain and not merely sever the optic nerve, rendering me a blind, easily re-possessable mental patient for life, as was the case of so many others who were driven to ending it all with defective aim directed by demons who knew more about neuro-anatomy than they did.

The ghost collected itself, knowing that I meant business this time. And was prepared for the ultimate sacrifice. Not necessarily the most dramatic way another female Jesus would allow herself to be sacrificed so that the rest of the world could live, but when you didn’t have a rope or cross to climb on, a 0.45 calibre revolver would do. “On three!” I told the ghost, who I know knew as a demon, who thanks to Diane, and now George, stepping between us. “One...” I announced as I adjusted the aim of the barrel.

“Two,” I went on, noting that the Diamantis kids were united in common cause, for perhaps the first time. And a positive one. Feeling somehow their father seeing it, from wherever he was now. Or being told about it if his soul was to re-enter the body that was being operated on across town. It was a good day to die, and live, I pondered, and now finally believed.

“And..”

Before I could count to three, Olivia did, in several languages, some I didn't recognize. But one which the ghost knew, as he, or perhaps she, or maybe 'it', turned its focus onto Olivia, darting its black cloud to and surrounding her body, up to the neck. My human eye, which was the only one that was working now, observed 'real world' Olivia shaking with convulsions hard enough to break all of her limbs. Still, she had control of her mouth, which uttered words that made no sense to my now 'real world' mind. But which I somehow understood.

Harrold blew up, or so he seemed to, as Olivia's clothing was torn to bits. The skin underneath was browner than normal. And felt hot. “Ethnic almost spontaneous combustion,” she said to me by way of explanation with a voice that was resigned to death. Physical death anyway. “I'll be alright,” Olivia said as her complexion turned pale, as did the circulation in her fingernails. “As will you.”

“As will be both of us!” I asserted, after which I called 911, to the nurse who was keeping me abreast about Nick's REAL condition at the risk losing her job, and getting blasted by him for making me worry about him. “I'm coming in with a special patient, who we're treating MY way. Who is...”

“Innocent,” the jury announced, in unison. “Of all charges,” the head juror affirmed, after which he turned to the Judge. “Yes?”

“Yeah...sure. Of course,” Judge Brett mumbled half coherently and half still in a fog.

“Which the camera just verified,” George said, assuring his sister as he motioned for the baliff to unlock her shackles. Allowing her the opportunity to embrace her brother in a way she and him hadn't experienced for, what it seemed like, a long long time.

But as for me, who was still a scientist....I needed explanations. I sniffed the chocolates in the Judge's desk. Then looked at Olivia as she was being taken away by the ambulance, who nodded a 'yes' to something I was thinking, or speculating.

Maybe all of this was arranged, induced by hallucinagens, or orchestrated by bioelectric fields set in motion in a courtroom that was controlled by people so powerful that I could never know them. Or perhaps Nick didn't know them either. But I did have to relate the events as I saw them, felt them and, made them happen somehow (at least to some degree) to other disbelievers. In the service of Universal Benevolence and expanding Human consciousness. But, as we know, and I didn't fully realize, no good deed goes unpunished, in the short term anyway. But there was one act of defiance against the limitations we allow to be put on ourselves before settling in to the new equilibrium on the safe, but perhaps less vitality enriched, side of the veil.

CHAPTER 16

“So, how is he, really?” I asked ‘Nurse Sam’, my contact at the hospital where Nick got emergency surgery for the tumor inside of his abdomen which had to be removed before it decided to regulate the comings and goings of all of the organs around it.

“He’s doing ok,” she told me between yawns and sips of cold, super rich, black coffee from her thermos. “We thought we had lost him on the operating table when something came into the room to bring his ghost back into his body after it floated to the sealing then checked out to another location for a few minutes, following the something that came into the OR, without of course scrubbing in or masking up, that is...”

“...I think I know about, and would like to think I had something to do with,” I said, recalling the time when I astral projected from the courtroom during a bathroom break and had, as I recalled, a private conversation with Nick to tell him that even though he was going through life because he had to rather than he wanted to, that I wanted and suppose needed for him to remain in the land of the living. A big favor to ask a potential husband, to ask him to stay alive rather than give up, but I did have to ask. “And...if you have any other patients who I could...”

“Visit and talk some extraordinarily supernatural common sense to?” Sam said as she slugged down another bout of coffee so thick you could drink it with a fork. “There are some things that we both know we don’t tell our bosses, or our kids but...maybe have to tell our grandkids so that ‘the gift’ is passed on, somehow. With one provision...That they still burn witches and others who try to tell linear meat and potatoes people that there are other varieties of nutrients, and gustatory challenges. Or, as you now know, put them into locked psych wards where...”

“---I can’t get out until your bosses and mine say I become and embrace being...’normal’. Publically and privately,” I replied, as I looked at my new jewelry, a bracelet of plastic with my name and diagnosis on it. “But didn’t Nichola Tesla say that he got his inspiration from ‘extra-terrestrial’ sources? He invented everything. Most everything that’s important anyway.”

“And died in obscurity, with a soul mate who was a female pigeon,” I noted.

“In that lifetime anyway,” Sam smiled back at me. “But you have something that he didn’t have.”

“A vagina?” I replied. “Unless Nichola was hiding that along with other things and was trans man.”

“No,” Sam assured me, locking the door so that the ‘real’ nurses in charge of me would give their inner voice quenching pills to someone else for a little while longer. She took my hand into hers, sending a bold of hope through my shaking shoulder which was, thankfully, still covered with the hair on my head, my statement of defiance, expansion

and womanhood, which was still long and uncut. But with a lot more grey in it than I noticed before. “You have a family, that’s waiting for you when you get out. Two step kids who are doing everything they can to get you out of here, and have your Work as a scientist, artist and human fucking being recognized DURING your lifetime. And a powerful and influential husband who...”

“---I’m told by George and Diane is not so powerful and influential anymore,” I said, noting the calendar on the wall that showed that I had been in ‘safe keeping’ for thirty days already. “What happened out there to his Empire?”

“It’s in...transition to something else,” Sam informed me. “But when he found out that you were a trans women, somehow, and accepted it, the old boys’ club kind of voted him out. But...he’ll climb up the ladder again, or created his own pyramid.”

“Without inference from a Harrold, or Harriet or Harrolda?” I speculated. And hoped. “Who...” I somehow ‘saw’ a voice coming from the a darkened corner of the room and heard it with my eyes, thanks to Sam tossing the meds she was ordered to give me by my bosses and hers, and perhaps Nick’s, into the toilet so that the fish and rats in the sewers could stop hearing flashes of light and seeing voices.

Yes it sounded familiar. A cold presence that spread from behind Sam, passing around her, making her shiver and put on a sweater. Then, as she got a phone call from her boss requiring her to be elsewhere, it sat in front of me, its cold vapors turning into a heater that blew into my face. Saying my name, several times. ‘Jenell’ in a mocking tone as if that was never who I was, or would be, or allowed to be.

I got up, and pounded my fist into it, emerging with an injured set of knuckles, connected to fingernail polish that had melted away from blue into blood that fell on the floor.

I took in a deep breath, collected the best part of myself, moved the visitor’s chair and sat my aching ass on it, doing my best to not be literally shared shitless. I reached for a chocolate from the box of candy Nick has sent me, against Doctor’s orders, and took a bite out of it. “Very dramatic, Harrold,” I said to the ghost as I felt the empowerment of the chocolate and caromel something inside which was not too dissimilar to the feeling I got whenever I ate anything at Nick’s dining room table. “Like seeing that my youtube page always brings up videos of women defeminizing and desensitizing themselves by cutting off their hair to look like and become men,” I continued, taking another chocolate into my non-shaking right hand while my left was shivering with fear as to what to do with the pair of scissors which somehow made it into the room. Or which I just noticed. Or which I was hallucinating. Or seeing in the realms beyond the normally ‘seeable’ ones which, thanks to Olivia and others, I was now privy to observe, but not able to make as many changes in as she could. Or maybe couldn’t, I realized as I questioned what I thought was a fact. “I saw you disappear, and go back to where you came from, with an order from your boss, and God, to haunt someone else. What happened to you Harrold?”

“Harrold was de-possessed, by you and Olivia,” the ghost said in a voice that sounded like him, but was definitely someone or something else, as the vapor before my eyes turned into another face and body. A calmer, younger face, so it seemed. A wheeler dealer who dressed not like a Wall Street Stock Mogul or President of any country ruled by Wall Street, but as a hipster who talked philosophy at Starbucks by day and charmed enlightenment seeking vibrant, creative, slim young women into getting impregnated with his sperm, and becoming dulled out, overweight ‘Moms’ who gave up their freedom and dreams for their ‘love being sheeple’ children, then, so they would be spared the opportunities offered by empty nest syndrome, grandkids. Yes, less business-like but something that knew the art and science of the deal more than Harrold did. “And in answer to your next question, Harrold was inactivated, sent into the ethers to reincarnate as someone...harmless, uneventful, obedient and pathetically ‘nice’.”

“But not compassionate of course,” I countered. “Yet, ‘happy’, right? I hope anyway,” I said, feeling a way of forgiveness overtaking me for everything Harrold did and was. “Yes, I forgive him and pity him for what he did to me, and so many others.”

“And aren’t wise or clever enough to know what Harrold did FOR you, others and the Cause of Liberation of the collective human body, mind and soul that you have dedicated yourself to,” the visitor said as he helped himself to another bonbon in chocolates box. Making it disappear, and, unlike Harrold, able to enjoy what he stole from us in the ‘primitive’ material real world plane. “Interesting taste in these,” he said. “May I have another?” he asked.

“And if I say ‘no’?” I protested, affirmatively. This time with my hidden left hand in a fist, ready to absorb any blow to it from the electric field of his body, or the wall behind it if he decided to duck or go formless again.

“You would be doing my job, and I would be doing mine,” he replied, his blue eyes turning red, then black. “And our mutual boss would be satisfied with the species he, she or it, created so It could Realize Itself big R and I,” the demonic visitor continued inferring caps.

“I’m trying to do good, and you seem to want to do evil,” I countered. “We can’t have the same boss.”

“But we do, and I am in YOUR service rather than you, even in your weakest moments, are in mine.”

“Huh?” I observed coming out of my mouth.

The visitor uncrossed his legs, closed the blinds, and leaned forward on his chair. “When God loves you, he sends you demons’ a line from your favorite movie, Last Temptation of Christ. And..’the closer you get to Enlightenment, or Heaven as some would call it, ‘the hotter the fires of hell try to pull you down’, a line from your favorite novel, Revolutionary Blues, about someone like you fighting one of us in the dream realm, the

huya aniya, and changing the real world, the fate of the Yaqui Indian Revolt in 1926 Mexico, to be specific. And other defiant revolts that became all things considered, beneficial for humanity revolutions to follow. And even de-possessing a few of us along the way.”

The visitor leaned back then took in a deep breath of air, as if he was starved of such wherever he called home, allowing me to absorb what he had said.

“Please to meet you, won’t you guess my name,” he stated in a monotone voice, reading my mind again, but not completely my soul.

“And the nature of your game,” I sang back to him with my best Mick Jagar imitation for Sympathy for the Devil. “Which is...”

“To make sure that you and other idiotic idealists continue to try to implement Enlightenment, Empowerment and Liberation in a world and universe, that so desperately needs that!” ‘Harrold II’, as I named him in my mind said, but with desperation, more than I heard from any patient on my couch, dying patient in a hospital bed, or ‘ex-Catholic’ death row inmate who wanted me to be around while he pondered what was going to happen to them after the needle went into their arm. Yes, this visitor from hell, the dark side, the alternative universe, or wherever, as pleading for me to understand something he was trying to say, and to do something about it, very tears streaming down his beet red face from his demonic eyes. “The only way for our kind, the evil demons, to be liberated is to be destroyed by YOU. And ONLY by you! You being...”

“The ‘good guys’?” I countered.

“The beyond good guys!” the visitor insisted, as if I was a voluntarily deaf student who was given the honor of being given keyboard lessons from JS Bach or Ludwig von Beethoven. “The Promethians who break all the rules, even the ones made by God, in the service of the Beyond God. Spirit big S. And put Spirit’s will and best intentions into action! As heaven watches, and earth works.”

“Giving me a kick in the ass if I get lazy?” I surmised, and stated. “From dull out , ignorance and cruelty spreading shitheads like you!” I continued crossing my arms in defiance, and defense. “Whose name is...”

“Something you, if you know what’s good for you, the world, and my fellow co-workers, you will never say,” the demon visitor said with a voice that seemed to be as saintly as wise. “Or give utterance to,” he continued. “Or write about, please!!!”

“A request which, of course, you’re saying to me so I WILL write about it,”

“Which will be harder from here, in this confinement situation, but will be more effective and intense because it is,” the visitor informed me, delivering yet another secret he was

not supposed to tell me, and which he was mandated to as well. “The most powerful medicine that Moscow needs comes from rugged individualist banished to Siberia.”

“Banished temporarily,” I dared to speculate, and affirm.

“Yes, perhaps, I hope,” he said, with an averted stare. “But,” he continued taking my hand and putting it on his belly. “You have one more wish to make, by rubbing on my stomach. “

As my real world and metaphysical realm hand felt the clamminess of a flat surface which seemed rough, and smooth, both at the same time, I pondered what last question I would ask this messenger from hell, or specially sent angel from heaven.

“Well, I’m waiting,” he said. “I don’t have much time left before I have to...ya know.”

I pulled my hand away. “Do what you have to do so I do what I’m Called to do?” I asked and stated.

With that the visitor poured two glasses of water and lifted his hand up in a toast. I joined him, this time without swallowing any pills prescribed by a doctor given a degree by a worldly institution, or a ghost awarded qualifications from other realms. It was the start of...another interesting friendship.