

The Journey



An adventure in consciousness

By Roy Posner



1. A Meeting by the Bay

It was a bright and beautiful day as I walked along the shoreline of the bay. The gentle waves were crashing softly in the background.

I found a grassy hill and settled down with my lunch, gazing across to the hills and mountains in the distance.

I was about to lie back on the grass when I felt a tapping on my shoulder. I quickly turned and saw an elderly woman sitting next to me. She was also staring into the distance. She then slowly looked in my direction and began to speak.

"I realize that you don't know me, and I am being a little forward, but I was wondering if you would mind listening to a story about something unusual that happened to me recently."

A little startled at her directness, I nodded in agreement. She then began to tell her tale.

"One day I was watching a TV program. In the middle of one particular show, I received a phone call from a friend of mine. While listening to her, I sensed that there was some connection between the call and the program I was just watching.

Months passed, and I hadn't spoken to my friend in all that time. One day I found myself watching a rerun of this very same episode of the program. And wouldn't you know it, I received a call from this same friend at the exact same point in the identical episode as the previous go around!

But there was even more to it. In our phone conversation, I learned that my friend was having problems with an individual who had the very same last name as the person on the show!

And so I wondered what in the world this could all mean."

As the waves gently crashed offshore, I considered the mystery of this woman's story. Then new thoughts arose in my mind; something about an event that occurred long ago, ... or was it recently?

I then emerged from my reverie, raised my head up, and looked up at this woman with her weather-beaten yet serene face. Haltingly, I began to speak.

"You know it's strange. Twenty-five years ago, I was in Athens. When I arrived, I found out that several days before, the country had become a democracy, throwing off the shackles of military dictatorship. Everywhere I walked in town there was celebration and joy.

On my first full day in town, I hiked up the hill to the Acropolis. As is my nature, I decided to go up the side, less-crowded path. After a powerful experience there -- I supposed that everyone had one -- I walked down the same narrow, stony path. At the bottom was a man in robes with a long beard peddling Grecian vases. I purchased a pretty blue one with gold trimming. As he handed me the change, I knew that I had experienced this same scene before. When I mentioned it to him, he said that my experience was but one of many types of unusual occurrences people had when walking among the ruins of the Acropolis."

The woman in front of me and I then shared a moment of silence, taking in our own quiet thoughts. Then a minute or so later, she shifted her weight and abruptly rose to her feet. She looked deeply into my eyes and said, "Well, I've got to go!"

Surprised, I also quickly got up. I then put out my hand to shake hers. Instead, she put her arms around me and gave me a warm embrace. She then took a card out of her bag and said, "You know, a person I met recently gave me this. On it is the web address of how to get to a site called 'Growth Online.' There they talk about all sorts of things. They answer questions like "what is the source of life in the universe," "what does a human being really consist of," "where is humanity headed," and so forth. You know the usual sorts of things!" she said bursting out with laughter.

Then this weather-worn, yet handsome woman smiled at me intently, touched my arm, and quickly walked off, traversing the grassy hill in front of

us. She then disappeared into the Ferry Building to catch a boat across San Francisco Bay.

In a minute, she was out of site. She seemed to have disappeared forever.



2. Meeting With a Remarkable Man

As I touched down at Charles de Gaulle in Paris, I flashed back to that meeting with the weather-beaten, yet wise woman at the edge of the bay. "Let's see," I thought, "what were we ever talking about?" My mind went blank, but 10 seconds later, something began to emerge. Ah yes, the TV story with the synchronicities, and my mention of the feeling of déjà vu while visiting the Acropolis. And then I recalled standing there watching her disappear into the distance, wondering what was the meaning of the mysteries we had just shared.

Now I reached into my back pocket, pulled out my wallet, and found the card she gave me -- the one for Growth Online. I looked at it a moment, lifted my head, and turned my gaze outside the window of the plane. I flicked the card under my chin, contemplating the meaning of it all. I then thought of the fact that twenty-five years earlier I had taken off from Athens to Geneva, Switzerland, also gazing out the window; also thinking about the remarkable events of that week.

After several moments of reverie, I turned away from the window and looked down at my feet where my briefcase was sitting. I then remembered why I had come to Paris in the first place. I was on a business trip to meet a colleague about setting up some sort of web site.

Jason Lambier was an old friend of mine from my Syracuse University days. Back then, he was an exchange student from Florence who had come to SU for the semester. I was also an exchange student who got to go the other way -- to Florence for six months. (At the time, I thought I got the best of that deal!)

When Jason contacted me on the phone two months ago, he briefly alluded to the fact that he was building an interesting web startup company.

Somehow, he was able to find me and my company. Needless to say, I was eager to learn why he considered us for the project. I was also curious to see how my old friend was doing.

I drove up the Rue de La Seine and looked for the entrance to his office. I was not surprised that it turned out to be an old 4-bedroom apartment, which had been converted into a loft/work area -- not so different from flats that had recently been converted for use by dotcom start-ups in the Mission district of San Francisco.

I then climbed up the three steep flights of spiraling stairs, and arrived at a kind of reception area. The friendly receptionist greeted me with a bright smile and vigorous handshake, and told me that Jason would be out in a minute. I sat down, and scanned several journals, much of which I did not understand since I never did very well in Mrs. Pierre's eight grade French class. After a five-minute wait, I heard a familiar booming voice.

"Bon Jour, mon ami! It's been way too long!"

The last time I had seen Jason Lambier was thirty years ago. We had briefly met at the Syracuse airport. He had just arrived with others in his group of exchange students from France to Syracuse. I was on my way out with my corresponding group of SU students to Florence. I guess the departments heads arranged it just perfectly so that the incoming and outgoing group would meet at the airport.

In the midst of the confusion, I bumped into this large young man. He said "Excuse-moi;" and I said "ouch!" After glaring at one another, we were chatting away like old friends several minutes later, discussing the great changes and adventures that were in store for us. Just before parting, I wrote down his new location and phone number at Lawrence Hall, and he jotted down his home address and number in Perche.

There were two additional things I remembered about that initial conversation. The first was that he was eager to see a Syracuse football game, especially if we played Penn State, our archrival. The second was that he told me he had recently seen God.

In front of me was a tall man, with rugged features and a lot less hair than the thick-mained young man I knew thirty years earlier. Still there was the mischievous smile, and that same twinkle in his eye.

"Jason, isn't this amazing?" I said.

He led me into a conference room, and sat me down at the large oval table, on which were spread assorted books, contracts, printouts, and computer laptops. The energy I felt around me was clearly one of an Internet startup, with people dashing to and fro, as they worked on dozens of projects simultaneously.

Jason looked at me for a moment. No words were exchanged. It was the type of silence that connects two worlds.

After this quiet moment went on too long, I nervously said: "So Jason, are you still talking with God?"

His brow furrowed for a minute as he tried to understand my remark. Then he raised his hand to his chin and stroked it for a moment. He then looked dartingly at me.

"Yes, I think I remember what you are referring to. I was going through some extraordinary things back then. Yes, I see what you are getting at."

He thought for another moment, and then continued.

"You see it was all so amazing, almost silly really. I had this astonishing realization -- epiphany if you will -- in the middle of the most common of things.

It was holiday season and I was watching *The Wizard of Oz* film with Judy Garland. I had seen it half a dozen times as a child in French. Now for the first time I was watching it in English. Then somewhere in the middle of this film, I had a profound experience. At some point, I realized that Dorothy was in search of God!"

"Yes it all made sense. I had been reading spiritual literature, including Aurobindo of India and Alan Watts of your California, when I suddenly realized how the whole story perfectly fit together. And in that instance I felt an inner stirring so deep that one can say that the rest of my life has been a mere afterthought of that moment in time."

I sat there hypnotized by this startling turn in the conversation. It was thirty years since we had seen one another, and yet Jason Lambier had gotten right to the point. No discussion of our careers, our families, our experiences. Instead, he went directly to the heart of the matter.

He continued:

"You see, it all fit perfectly. If you will indulge me for a minute. As you remember, Dorothy runs away from home when the evil woman tries to snatch away Dorothy's dog for allegedly biting her. This is the injustice and the rebellion that propels Dorothy on her journey. She then leaves home, meets a sideshow magician, who tells her to go back home because her family misses her, which she does. However just before she reaches her house, she is caught in a twister; she gets a bang on the head, and, voila, she ends up over the rainbow!

There she then begins her search in earnest. She meets the straw man who is seeking knowledge. He is the symbol of Dorothy's *mental* development. She then meets the tin man, who wants to have a heart so he can truly feel. He is the symbol of the development of Dorothy's *emotional, vital* being, seeking fulfillment through one's needs and desires. She then meets the cowardly lion who yearns for physical and psychological courage. He is the symbol of the development of Dorothy's *physical* being, including her strength and her will to action. It is thus Dorothy's attempt to evolve by integrating all three parts of her being simultaneously. Isn't it just as Aurobindo has presented it? Do you remember?

But there is much more!"

Jason breathlessly continued: "They have been told that there is a magnificent wizard, who can give them their hearts desire. So they embark on a journey to find him in the emerald city of Oz. Each of the four has a purpose. For Dorothy it is to get home; but what it really is is to find the integral wholeness of her being, embodied by her three companions who represent the mental, emotional, and physical parts of her self. Thus, in essence, the entire journey is to bring about Dorothy's integral progress!

Now please stay with me.

And so they move through life's experiences, which greatly tempers them. Poppy fields, evil witches, flying monkeys, and other dangers challenge their personal limits. And yet their real goal is to find the *force*, the *power* that will bring them their heart's desire. And so they reach the mighty Oz, who they hope is their salvation, the Truth. When they meet him, they discover that he is a phony. And yet though he is a fake in his outer life -- i.e. the big show of power; the fire and brimstone -- he *is* in fact able to give each of them their heart's desire -- i.e. greater wisdom, compassion, and courage, respectively.

He also grants Dorothy her wish to go home, by having her click her bright red shoes. Actually, he gives her something more; something she would have never ever dreamed of -- deep happiness and joy. In fact, when she arrives home, she expresses profound gratitude and love for the people around her. She is also filled with spiritual-like appreciation for her home -- the place where her journey began. She has now returned to the world as an *integrated being* who has discovered higher aspects of herself, which brings ultimate delight and joy.

Mon ami, it is precisely the path that Sri Aurobindo has outlined in his yoga, his path of conscious evolution!

As a result of this epiphany, I now clearly saw the path to the Divine, to God, and how to traverse it. I perceived the way of the yellow brick road to the Infinite, that really exists within us. Like Dorothy, I felt I had communed with the Supreme consciousness, who revealed all of His secrets in a single flash!"

Jason looked straight at me. He was beaming.

I looked down, bit my lip, smiled nervously, and shook my head side to side. That's quite a start to our reunion, I thought. I raised my head and looked at the imposing Jason who stood before me. His face was filled with light.

And yet for some reason instead of responding to his powerful tale, I instinctively reached into my back pocket, took out my wallet, and shuffled through it until I found the card I was given by the older woman at the edge of the bay several months earlier. I laid it down, and pushed it across the table until it was in front of Jason.

"Have you ever heard of this," I said as I pointed out the name "Growth Online."

"Mon ami, you are kidding of course! That is one of our own web sites!"



3. Programming in Bangalore

As we drove the street parallel to the main drag in the high tech district of Bangalore, we hit potholes filled with water as we streamed past the teeming masses, and a blur of bright and vivid colors, animals, beggars, and wealthy entrepreneurs on cell phones. It was a cacophony of energy, anarchy, and well, excitement! The jeep rocked back and forth, as we finally made our way to the newer buildings in the high tech sector of town.

My host Satish Chandrasekaran smiled at me as we pulled into the circular entranceway. We then stopped suddenly, and I encountered another grin, this one from the driver, who was not too subtly indicating how eventful the ride was! This was one anarchic scene, I thought, as I took a deep breath to keep the nausea at bay.

We then all piled out of the car, and headed to the main entrance of the building. There we were greeted by a receptionist who pointed us to the second floor, where we proceeded to climb the stairs. I looked around to find out what the company name was, but it was nowhere to be found. However, I did see the moniker "IdeaHatcher!" at the top of the stairs. When I asked about it, Satish explained:

"My friend, IdeaHatcher! is the name of the company that hatched us. They provided the initial capital, as well as the facility, the furniture -- even the programmers. We just arrived with the idea and they helped put the right people to work for us to accomplish our goal. We're really a bootstrap operations, but I think it will work out. I believe our approach will really change the world!"

After we climbed the stairs, I found myself in a large room with dozens of people sitting in front of computers set on rows of tables. Though quite a Spartan operation, every person was very busy at work.

At the front, several individuals were gathered around a buffet, where they were scooping up food that they brought back to their desk so they could continue working on their programming chores. No one looked over 25.

One person, who seemed to be the manager, was an attractive and coolly dressed dark-haired woman. Satish introduced us, and she told me that she was one of the project managers at the company. I asked her how long she had been working there, and she said three months. She then went on to explain that she was in charge of rolling out several web site services for the firm. I was taken back at how young she was, and yet she was managing people younger still. Satish then continued his tour.

"What you see here is Silicon Valley lifestyle transferred to Bangalore. People eating buffet-quality food at their computers, huddled together in rows of tables, where some are doing marketing, others java programming, and others still customer support. They may not fully realize it, but they are working on new web services that will change the world."

"Has Jason told you what we are doing here?" Satish added.

"Well, not really. He told me that you would fill me in." I responded.

"I see. Well then we have much to discuss."

Satish then guided me toward a small conference room in the back of the facility. He then gestured for me to have a seat on the side of a long oval table.

The young Indian then began to explain the origins of the mysterious program that Jason had alluded to in Paris. He explained the history of the idea, how they developed a business plan, how they secured venture capital while "shmoozing" (he knew that term!) at Buck's restaurant in the hillsides above Silicon Valley, and how they had set up operations in Paris, Bangalore, and the Middle East.

For some reason I flashed on Buck's, and thought about my visit to that restaurant near Woodside in the wealthy hillside area of Silicon Valley where big ideas and bigger deals are hatched. I remembered walking around, observing people with their families, talking up big Silicon Valley initiatives. What impressed me most however was the twenty-foot wooden trout in front of the restaurant!

"Are you with me?" Satish asked as he recognized that my thoughts were drifting.

"Sorry, Satish. Please continue." I said.

"Now here's the interesting part of the story. This is between you and me only, since I haven't told anyone about this." I nodded in agreement. "The other day I ran a section of the program. The first time I put it through its paces, I suddenly got a call on the phone with good news about a new program we were developing for a client. After that conversation, I ran the program again, and wouldn't you know it, I instantly get another phone call! This time when I answered, I learned of more unexpected good news from yet another client in Europe! Two minutes later, I ran the program again, and the same thing happened! I thought either someone was playing a practical joke on me, or something extremely unusual was going on."

Satish smiled and continued: "And so I stopped what I was doing and turned off the program for the day. I then went home, got into bed, and drifted off to sleep with these extremely strange events swirling around inside my head. The next day when I returned to the office, I ran that section of the program again, and at that very *instant* someone walked into the room! I then wondered "what now?", but the person told that my wife's medical tests were fine, and there was no need to worry. This was now getting very spooky. Actually, I think I used the word "cosmic."

I remember once reading at the Growth Online site -- you are familiar with it? (I nodded yes) -- that if you overcome a negative attitude, or if you take an action you were reluctant to take before, you can evoke a positive "response" from life from literally out of nowhere. Since that time, I had experienced this phenomenon once or twice in my life. They call it a "Life Response."

Well it struck me on that second day that we had somehow developed a program that *itself* evokes life response: that somehow instantly triggers positive circumstances from the world – such as the sudden appearance of the three very beneficial phone calls, plus my wife's good medical report!

In the next few days, I got kind of sidetracked with other matters. For example, there was an old friend who I had some financial problems with who contacted me after a number of years. It kind of agitated me. After an hour of difficult negotiation, I went back to the office. After I regained my composure, I ran the program again. This time however there was *no* life response. There was instead a thundering silence. Perhaps all that I had witnessed was an illusion; or it was all coincidence; or there was simply something unusual occurring that I didn't understand. Do you follow?"

I nodded yes, though I did so with a quizzical look on my face. For after all, I too wondered what in the world was going on.



4. Dusk at the Pyramids

Time passed, and I now found myself thousands of miles away in the Middle East. I was now observing a bus unloading a group of tourists from Germany. I had decided on my day off here in Cairo to rent a van and come out here on my own. As I gazed upon this fantastic landscape, I heard the tour guide's explanation of the purpose of the pyramids of Giza. It was haunting to watch the golden sunset begin behind this great wonder of the world.

After taking in the haunting landscape, I turned my gaze elsewhere and noticed that the tour guide was wearing the traditional garb of the desert people. Yet interestingly she spoke in the most modern, proper English. After she completed her final summation, I walked over to her and told her how delightful her presentation was. I mentioned that I caught the last part, and was intrigued by her insistence that a subtle magic permeated the area.

She thanked me for my feedback, and we walked back together to the bus for the German tourists. I mentioned that I was here on a free day, and was getting away from the intense project I was working on here in Egypt. She then asked me about it, and I explained that I actually knew very little. I told her that my involvement was limited to connecting the web site to a back end database of secret information. I mentioned that the project had something to do with a cumulative knowledge base of human consciousness. I also indicated that there were some strange goings on surrounding the project that I didn't understand, though I didn't dare get into the phenomenon Satish described in Bangalore.

She raised her head, and said: "I knew it! I felt a presence around you."

"My name is Francine Alfassa," she continued. "I have a few minutes before we drive back to the hotel in Cairo. Perhaps you'd like to get a beverage."

We then walked a few hundred meters to the refreshment area, sat down with our drinks, and exchanged a few pleasantries about the freshness in the air and beauty of the sunset. Now where the sun had gone down, the sky began to turn crimson. For a half hour, we gazed silently as the sky changed from pale red to an inky blue. We were lost in the silence of that moment.

After a while, I turned to Francine, reached into my wallet, and once again produced the card for Growth Online; wondering if it would elicit a response anything like Jason's.

"This is a card for a personal growth web site I visit on occasion. There are some interesting ideas presented there: insights that I have not read anywhere else. Many of the ideas are fantastic: things I've never come across before."

"Yes I am not surprised that you have found such a place. The atmosphere around you is filled with light." she remarked.

"How so?"

She was about to explain, but then hesitated. She looked down at the ground, and then looked back up at me and began to explain.

"You see, I am part of a group of woman who have embraced a number of revolutionary ideas about human consciousness. Our group is spread around the globe, and communicate with one another through our computers and smartphones. We don't have a public website, yet we share our experiences regularly. We are performing an experiment in human evolution. Not with drugs, or genetics, or exercises, but with consciousness. We believe that we have found several of the keys that can help an individual live as long as he or she wants to. In other words, we are learning to overcome illness, sickness -- even death itself."

"This is fascinating. Please tell me more." I said with journalistic curiosity.

"You see there was a woman in India who actually tried through efforts of consciousness to overcome the limits of the human body. She learned to bring down a spiritual Force, which could end physical suffering -- even overcome the deterioration of the cells of her body and thus the inevitability of death. She made bounding strides, and succeeded to a large degree, achieving something no one on earth had ever done before. She was somehow able to commune with the very cells of her body -- i.e. actually have a kind of dialogue with them, and eventually gained their cooperation in her transformational attempt. She reached the point where she was able to beat back illness and pain; where the cells were no longer decaying and dying; where there was the possibility of prolonging life indefinitely. By opening to

the spirit, the consciousness and programming of the cells had begun to change to the point that they themselves felt the possibility of their own immortality!

You see, in recent years we have taken up that monumental effort, though in a more modest way. For after all, she was already a realized soul before she even got into the physical transformation business. We are not anywhere near that point. Still, what we have achieved of late has really been a marvel.”

Francine paused for a moment, but then began again breathlessly. “You see, before the cells of the body acquire this capacity, -- this willful aspiration and power to overcome suffering and death, -- we have to establish a more solid footing. That is, we need to become more whole and integrated beings before we make the physical change. Specifically, we need to shed our limiting habits, our wanting attitudes, and all the rest. We have to put our psychological and spiritual house in order before we can tackle the body’s capacity for unending life -- for immortality.

Thus, the physical transformation comes much later -- after the emotional and psychological change has taken place. In fact, we first have to come in contact with the spiritual Reality, its Force, and apply it in the details our lives before we can begin to engage in the more dramatic physical transmutation.

This radical change in the condition of the body is really the final frontier of human evolution. It is the most difficult type of conversion to bring about. Much harder than changing our psychological condition. That is because the body is so inflexible; is so tied to old habits; is programmed through hundreds of millennia to act and respond in a limited, unconscious way. And so an effort to overcome these limits requires a great deal of calm, equality of being, purity, and inner development. That will in turn serve as the foundation for this much more challenging and difficult physical transformation and change.”

Francine looked up at me, smiled broadly, and then continued. “From what you say, it sounds as if your project and this Growth Online site would be of great benefit to us since we need to improve our psychological makeup before we embark on this more challenging physical work.”

There was a pause in her narrative. I then considered her surprising proposal. Then, in a low, soft voice, I responded.

"The program we are working on is supposed to take this knowledge about personal growth and turn it into an expert system of some sort that you take

with you everywhere. It measures your capacities, strengths and weaknesses, and develops a personal profile for you. Then as you come up against particular circumstances in life, it suggests what you could do to invoke an immediate, positive response from life. When you then take up that advice, you attract sudden good fortune!

I don't really understand the specifics, but I think the program could be helpful to you and the members of your group." I then paused for a moment. "Sometimes, it seems to have a mind of its own. In fact, I know of someone who had this strange experience in Bangalore in which ..."

I stopped myself cold, realizing that I could not breach this taboo subject. Satish had asked me to promise to keep it under wraps. I then took a deep breath and continued.

"Well I'm not sure I can talk about that, but anyway I can send you a beta copy of the software when it's ready. We do need several people to test out the program. Does that sound like something you would be interested in?"

"Yes, absolutely, it sounds fascinating! We can definitely help one another. After all, we also have some experience in this area. We may know things that could be built into the smarts of follow-up versions of the program. I know we are talking in generalities here, but I sense that we really can definitely collaborate!"

Francine then looked at her watch, pursed her lips, and abruptly got up. "I've got to go. They are probably wondering where I disappeared to!"

She wrote down her phone number on the blank side of her business card, and apologized for breaking off at this point. She told me to get in touch when our program was available.

Suddenly, I was alone in the darkness. I leaned back and saw the first evening stars twinkling above. It then dawned on me that I was now part of a startling and mysterious adventure.



5. Renewal in Athens

A month ago, I sat in my home outside of San Francisco and contemplated the significance of the places I had been and the people I had met in my recent travels. That previous month had been a whirlwind journey around the globe. Jason warned me that there would be a lot of travel, yet I did not anticipate the extraordinary experiences that would accompany it.

When I first arrived back from Egypt, I was a confused mess. I was all at once overtired, excited, and stunned. I wondered what in the world all of these experiences meant. Where was the pattern? Most importantly, I wondered "what should I do next?"

Over the next few days, I began to sort out my experiences. Working my way backwards in time, I came up with a few observations, which I wrote down as follows:

-In Paris I met Jason, my old college friend, who brought me there so that I could participate in marketing a web site to broadcast information about a mysterious new program his company was developing. He also explained to me how many years ago he had a mystical experience watching 'The Wizard of Oz' in which he realized God. Most startling of all was the fact that when I mentioned the Growth Online web -- which I learned about from a mysterious woman I met earlier in San Francisco -- he told me that he was the owner and developer of that very site. This was a coincidence beyond belief.

-In Bangalore, Satish brought me to the bank of programmers who were working on Excalibur, OzCom's personal growth application that morphed itself into a program that showed an innate ability to evoke sudden good fortune from the surroundings -- a capacity previously thought only possible by humans.

-At the pyramids, I met a woman named Francine, who was a tour guide and belonged to a sisterhood who were attempting a form of physical transformation. When I told her about Jason's personal growth program Excalibur, she was eager for members to use it so that they could develop the right consciousness that would serve as the foundation for their attempt at the physical change. She was also interested in the many consciousness-changing articles that were offered at the Growth Online web site.

As I reviewed these events, I tried to find a common thread, but alas, I came up with nothing. After considering the matter from several angles, I finally threw up my arms and allowed things to take their own course. With the limited information I had at my disposal, it just seemed impossible at this point to make sense of it all.

A day after jotting down these thoughts on a yellow legal pad and then typing it into my computer, I decided to take some time off. Since it was the Christmas/New Year holiday season, I decided to go into the city, look at the holiday storefronts, and do some shopping.

When I arrived, I realized that I missed the magical-like displays that used to adorn the windows at Gump's near Union Square -- though I had found a lovely one that had a miniature town of little houses, people and other figurines in the lobby of the vast, hallowed out, ultra-modern Hyatt Regency.

And so Sushan and I wandered through the huge, dense crowds in Union Square, and saw the big Christmas tree and Chanukah menorah in the center of the square. We also enjoyed the large choir that gathered ever year amidst the palm trees in the refurbished quad, where they sang Handel's Messiah, as well as librettos and arias from a variety of Italian operas.

At one point, we walked into a charming little shop that had many of the same winter-scene figurines we saw earlier at the hotel. Then something interesting happened. When I reached out to touch one of them, I felt a thump from behind, and went sprawling forward, nearly knocking over the delicate display.

"What the hell..." I shouted out. Then I turned around, and found myself face to face with a woman who was desperately apologizing for what had just occurred.

As I muttered, "That's ok, that's ok" I suddenly realized who this person was: it was the wise woman I met months earlier at the Embarcadero who gave me the card for Growth Online!

She gave me an ironic smile, and then let out a hearty laugh.

"Well, well, we meet again!"

A few minutes later, we all sat together in silence in a little coffee shop between Neiman Marcus and Macy's.

Then I looked at the woman with the weather-beaten, yet serene face and spoke. The first thing I mentioned was that I had so many things to say, and didn't know where to begin: that ever since our first meeting, so many fantastic things had occurred.

I then settled down and began my narrative describing in detail recent events. Throughout my statement, she remained silent -- fully absorbed in what I had to say. I don't think she looked askance even once.

When I finished with my experiences at the pyramids -- including the meeting with Francine, and her description of the Sisterhood -- there was another pregnant silence. Then this woman with the compassionate face looked down, shook her head, took a deep breath, and smiled mischievously at me. It was the same look she gave me just before she hurried off to the Ferry building to head out across the bay.

"Your experiences are really astonishing. It is so wonderful that ..."

Suddenly her voice trailed off in mid-sentence.

"What is it? Is something the matter," I said.

"Well I have something to tell you. I'm not sure you are going to believe this."

"What is it?"

"I have a daughter. She is half-American, half Chinese. She is a member of the Sisterhood you have just described."

Six weeks later, I found myself sitting in a cramped hotel room in Athens recalling those startling words.

As I gazed out of my hotel window, I saw the Acropolis in the distance. As I watched it float blue-like atop the beautiful hill it sat upon, I still could not make sense of it all. The endless procession of coincidences and events. The startling connections and associations. The purpose of Excalibur. What my role was in the project. And on and on.

Feeling more confused than ever, yet at the same time elated at these unprecedented events in my life, I turned away from the window, and let out another deep sigh. I then looked down and noticed the mess of papers strewn across my bureau. I picked up one of the short reports that I had written, and then half-consciously flipped through the sheets, before returning to the bay window. There I looked out at the Grecian islands in the far distance, now bathed in a misty pale blue light. I then turned back again, and all at once remembered why I was in Athens.

It turns out that Jason has arranged for all of us to meet at the Acropolis that very afternoon at 1 PM.

I looked at my watch and my heart started racing. It was now 12:30. I only had a half hour to get up the hill.



6. Demonstration in San Francisco

As the lights were dimmed in Masonic Auditorium, a man walked down the main aisle toward the stage. He appeared to be holding a device of sorts -- perhaps a briefcase or a box. When he walked up the steps and ascended the stage, it became clear that he was holding a tablet-like device. The reason we knew this was the case was because his image was being broadcast onto a huge 100-foot screen located at the rear of the stage. And that in turn was being shown live on the Internet around the world.

At this moment, the camera operator moved in for a close shot, as the man walked slowly to the podium with his tablet-like computer in hand. His name was still echoing in the hall from the vigorous introduction he received from a fellow member of OzCom. As the applause died down, the man at the podium began to speak.

“Thank you for the nice introduction and your kind welcome. I am most grateful to be standing before you. To be honest, I have never been in front of such a large audience. Add the fact that this event is being webcast to five continents, well, you can understand my nervousness. But then again perhaps you are nervous too!”

The audience responded with a ripple of laughter. It was true; the crowd did not know what to expect! They had heard of the project, including the fantastic claims being made in the media. “A leap in human consciousness.” “A new species is born.” And, of course “Once again, we are being taken for a ride.” But what was the real truth behind the hype of Excalibur?

Satish Chandrasekaran continued:

“Ladies and gentleman I stand before you a slightly confused man. Yes, that’s right. I don’t really know what we have discovered. In fact, we don’t even know for sure if we have created anything! That is for you to decide. I can only present the evidence.”

Satish then began his demo. In the next one hour he performed a demonstration of a web-based program that had become the talk of the technology community -- no, the talk of the world. Satish's presentation would turn out to be clear and to the point. However, at the end of the hour, you could detect that the presentation had been somewhat of a letdown for the audience. In fact, as it moved into its final phase, there was a definite restlessness in the crowd. Several people even got up to leave.

Satish completed the nuts and bolts part of the presentation; the part the techies and hackers in the audience were most interested in. Still he had not gotten to the main event. Finally, after an hour, Satish came to the moment everyone was waiting for. After a long silence, he continued:

“So here is the situation ladies and gentlemen. When I get to the Grail part of Excalibur, something unusual is supposed to take place. Even I am not completely sure what that will be. Let us see what happens.”

The noise level in the auditorium fell to a whisper. Nervous laughter could be heard intermittently in the audience. Once again, Satish stepped up to his voice synthesis microphone and began to speak:

“White knight, allow me to pass.”

A voice responded. “Illegal operation; please restate your intention.”

A groan emanated from the crowd. Also, several catcalls could be heard from the back of the enormous room. Satish then turned toward his audience, humorously throwing his arms up as if to say “that didn't work; let's try it again.” The crowd responded with a wave of nervous laughter.

Satish then leaned forward again and spoke into his mouthpiece:

“White knight, holder of the Grail, allow me to pass.”

Suddenly an ethereal, melodic chord emanated from the computer; which was then followed by dead silence. In the audience, once again one could detect a smattering of disappointment. Satish gestured to the crowd as if to say “now what?” Someone in the audience then bellowed out another sarcastic remark.

Somewhat deflated, Satish shook his head from side to side.

However, just a moment after he had given up hope, he heard a murmur from the audience. Then he saw someone point to the right side of the screen located at the front of the room. Satish then quickly turned around to

see what people were gesturing at, and saw something moving behind the red curtain just to the right of the edge of the screen. It seemed to be someone pushing against the curtain from the other side. “What was it,” he wondered?

The curtain continued to billow, with what seemed like a figure behind it. Then all at once a woman suddenly emerged, and stood there on the stage in full view of the crowd. She was obviously shocked and embarrassed now that she realized that she had accidentally entered the stage in front of thousands of people!

Frightened and embarrassed, you could hear her cry out: “Oh my God! I am so sorry! What have I done? I feel like such a fool!”

Satish then hurried over to the young woman, and asked her what she was doing there. Unfortunately, she was too stunned to answer. In a tender gesture, Satish then began to gently escort her off the stage.

However, as the two of them exited left, a man suddenly leaped from his seat in the auditorium and cried out.

“No, this is not a mistake! She is the answer we have been looking for! She is the Life Response from Excalibur that we have all talked about! I know her! She is a member of the Great Sisterhood!”



7. Searching for the Truth

Satish and I did not talk very much on our flight from San Francisco to Bangalore. After we landed, we sat for a moment for tea at the edge of the terminal where we had a fine view of the surrounding area. After some cordial conversation, Satish asked me what my main objective was in Bangalore. I told him that the principle reason I was here was to speak with the programmers to try to uncover the mystery of Excalibur. With a wry smile, he wished me good luck. Then he got up, shook my hand, and walked off towards his rail connection. As he moved away, I sensed that he was still in a state of shock after the incident at Masonic.

The media had a field day with “the fluke event” that unfolded at Masonic Auditorium. It was not just in the print press, but on the Internet too, where people were snickering at us in blogs and discussion groups. Though some defended us, they were easily drowned out by the legions of debunkers. Only a sympathetic article from the religion writer in the San Jose Mercury was truly positive. She suggested that perhaps there was a mystical aspect to these strange events.

When I thought about it, I was reminded of Jody Foster’s character in the film *Contact*, when she returned from her mind-bending journey across space and time. When she arrived “back” from her journey, the empirical evidence indicated that she never left in the first place. It was only years later that the facts against her were proven to be flawed, and that she did indeed make that fantastic journey across the universe; and did make contact with a supernatural alien species. So perhaps there was some hope for us after all!

When I entered the offices of OzCom, I was greeted by Muhammad -- a friendly young Java programmer from North Africa. He escorted me down a

long corridor, through double doors, and into what looked like a secured training room. There at the front of the room was the very same tablet that Satish used for the demonstration at Masonic Auditorium. Excalibur was now going through its inscrutable paces. After some interesting conversation about his African homeland, we turned to the issue at hand:

“Muhammad, could you please tell me about the brain wave technology incorporated into Excalibur. Satish Chandrasekaran tried to explain it to me at the airport, but I didn’t really understand.”

Muhammad took out a yellow pad and began to draw a model of that subsystem of Excalibur that interacted with the user via the web. He explained that this part of the program sends out a pulse that can detect a major problem in the subconscious of any user who logged onto the application. If the user has such a problem, then the specific frequency of that issue is “copied” from the individual and is sent via the web to a back-end computer, where it is added and then analyzed by an advanced expert system.

Excalibur then calculates a response from its knowledge base, and comes up with and sends an answer as a pulse back to the person, where it enters into his subconscious. The vibration that is received by the individual reverses the very negative problem or quality that the person has, and thereby evokes a sudden positive response from life.

For example, if the person is hesitant to take an action in his life because of some fear, the program absorbs this signal, brings the information into its expert system, and then broadcasts a return signal with the solution, which enters the subconscious of that individual. That in turn untangles the knot of the problem in that person’s subconscious. As soon as that negativity dissipates, a positive Life Response is generated – i.e. sudden good fortune comes to that individual.”

Muhammad paused for a moment. “You know, we never intended to evoke these life response events through Excalibur; yet that seems to be what is happening. We merely intended a feedback mechanism back to the person. We expected nothing from the outside world to respond to that person’s inner reversal, however. In other words, it was to help the person move to the right consciousness, not to evoke a response.”

Muhammad then told me that he had surfed the Growth Online web site, www.growthonline.org, and had read that positive Life Responses occur in specific types of situations -- such as when we change a wanting attitude; or remain calm in the face of a difficulty, or intensely aspire for something to

happen in our lives. Muhammad explained that he, like Satish, had experienced this phenomenon several times over the last several months. And yet Excalibur now had the ability to do the same for a person *on its own*.

At some point in our discussion, I asked Muhammad if he thought that what Excalibur was doing was ethical. He laughed and said that we had now entered a new domain, and all bets were off. No rules had been devised because the phenomenon of Life Response -- at least as it related to technology -- had never existed until now.

I then argued that a person should be able to initiate his *own* change of consciousness. That an external compulsion by a computer was not a true inner change, but a *mechanical* one, even if it did evoke a positive response from the environment. Muhammad countered by saying that perhaps there really *is* a soul in this new machine -- paraphrasing the title of the famous Silicon Valley book, the *Soul of the New Machine*, which described the quirky atmosphere around the building of the first mini computers nearly a half a century ago.

Fascinated, but tiring from the debate, I walked over to the voice interface and asked Muhammad to show me some of Excalibur's programming code. Muhammad nodded his head in agreement, and swung the voice interface over towards his mouth. He then tensed his lips, and called out:

"White knight, holder of the Grail, *go into break mode*, and allow me to pass."

The program's view screen opened and dense coding appeared. And yet nothing else seemed to be happening. Muhammad smiled, and said, "We are in break mode, not runtime, so the program isn't really executing, though you can still look at the code."

Not being a serious programmer, I couldn't make heads or tails out of it. At 23 million lines, it would take an eternity for someone like me to understand. Flustered, I turned to Muhammad and asked him point black where the fundamental ideas behind the program came from, and what was the underlying technology that made it all possible.

Muhammad nervously responded: "You will have to ask Jason about that."

"Yes, but he sent me here to find out!" I said.

"I think Jason wanted you to see what was going on here in order to understand things a bit more. I'm not sure at this point he wanted you to find out the secret of what makes Excalibur tick. He told me that if you really

wanted to understand the principles behind the technology, then you would either have to speak to him directly, or experience the phenomenon of Life Response yourself. I mean *without* a machine. I don't mean to be harsh, but that's what he told me."

In the days that followed, I made an effort to understand the phenomenon of Life Response. More specifically, I tried to come to grips with *my own* limiting attitudes and reluctances that if overcome could trigger such a response.

As I confronted this reality head on, I began to ask several questions. E.g., was I truly ready to probe my soul, and look into the depths of my being in order to understand my strengths and weaknesses as a person? Was I ready to acknowledge that I have certain wanting attitudes toward others, and towards life? Was I willing to come to grips with my reluctances, procrastinations, and other faux pas?

In the days ahead, I plunged deeper into the matter. I began by trying to understand the concept of Life Response by reviewing the articles on it at the Growth Online site. Once I had a handle on the phenomenon, I began in earnest to plumb the depths of my own being to examine what was lacking there, and what needed to change in me in order to evoke these miraculous-like results.

Quickly I perceived several patterns in my life that I hadn't seen before. In addition, I began to perceive the correlation between my negative habits and opinions and corresponding negative circumstance I had encountered along the way.

One day out of curiosity, I made an effort find out what really made Life Response possible -- i.e. what was it about *life itself* that enabled this miraculous-like phenomenon to occur. In short order, I found the answer. It was the principle of "Inner-Outer Correspondence." This is part of what I read in an article at Growth Online on the subject:

"Has it ever occurred to you that whatever is happening to you on the outside is a direct reflection of your attitudes, beliefs, and feelings within? If you take any situation where something difficult or bad has happened to you in the past, you will be able to correlate it to a corresponding weakness or limiting quality within yourself. Even if there doesn't seem to be any direct

cause on the surface, if you look a little deeper, you will find a corresponding limitation in your being that triggered the sudden onset of the negative event.

The same holds true for positive experiences. If positive conditions suddenly move towards you, then you can be sure that it was due to some positive change in consciousness on your part.”

I then thought about my own situation. I wondered why was I running around the world like a chicken without a head, and feeling so alienated. Was it a reflection of a bad attitude on my part? And if so, what was it?

After mulling over the matter, it suddenly occurred to me that I had been reluctant to be involved in Jason’s project from the very beginning.

But why was I so reluctant? It wasn’t for lack of money, because the pay was good. And it certainly wasn’t for lack of excitement. In fact, that’s all there has been! Then what was it?

I then closed my eyes, and let the world fall away. After a moment, all thoughts ceased and I felt a deep peace envelop me. Several minutes later, I felt compelled to call out to the spirit; gently asking for its help and guidance to resolve my problem. I then fell into an even deeper state; and a profound richness and stillness engulfed me. Then everything disappeared, and there was only a white block of infinite peace.

I remained in this state for half an hour. Then slowly I came back to the surface, and felt the first glimmer of life around me. Slowly and with difficulty I opened my eyes -- for I longed to remain in that blissful state forever. Gradually I became aware of my surroundings -- the room, the writing pad, and my own physical body.

I looked around, and felt my mind re-engage. I then acknowledge to myself that I had just returned from an incomparable, blissful, timeless meditative experience.

A moment later, as I was struggling to come back to reality in full, it hit me. The fact was that I hadn’t enjoyed my involvement in the project because I never resolved that old conflict with Jason. I just let it fester for all of these years.

Over the next several minutes, I methodically went through the circumstances that occurred some thirty years ago. At one point, as I was making serious headway into the root cause of the issue, the phone rang. My first reaction was a slight irritation, since I was deep in thought and had just

begun to perceive the source of the trouble. I somewhat reluctantly picked up the phone.

“Hi, it’s Sushan! How are you?”

“Hi. Uh, this is not the best moment to talk.”

“Listen I have some good news for you. I got today’s mail and I believe you received a letter from Arcadia.”

Arcadia Construction was an organization that my project management company had done a lot of contract work for over the years. Unfortunately, in recent months they had left us high and dry, when they failed to pay on a very large invoice due to us.

“Sushan, can you open it.” I said. I could hear her opening the letter through the phone.

“It’s a check ... my God ... it’s for several million dollars!” cried Sushan.

“Are you serious?”

“Yes, yes! I’m looking right at the numbers!”

“No, that just sounds impossible.”

“No, that’s what it says. It’s actually for 7 million!”

I took a deep breath and continued. “Listen, I’ll be home in a few days, and then I’ll see if this is real or some hoax. In the meantime, please don’t say anything to anyone.”



8. Money and Morality

As I held the check for \$7 million in my hand, I thought back to the precise circumstance that were occurring when I received the phone call from Sushan.

I realized that at that very moment I had been thinking about the old conflict with Jason -- in particular, that I hadn't made the full commitment to working for him, and now wanted to resolve the situation -- I got the call from Sushan with the news about the \$7 million check. In other words, when I understand the situation, and then committed to overcoming my attitude of reluctance, life *instantly* responded in the form of a huge financial windfall!

I now clearly saw that when you make that inner adjustment in consciousness, life on the outside instantly responds in kind -- defying all normal notions of what is possible, and how cause and effect interrelate.

As I sat there with the check in hand, I then made another connection. I realized that the surreal event that took place at the end of Satish's presentation at Masonic was also a positive life response. Except that one came about as a result of the workings of *Excalibur itself*. When Excalibur moved into execution mode, somehow it evoked Belinda Tam from behind the curtain.

But why did that happen? Perhaps it picked up a vibration from Satish, or somehow knew to send out a pulse that would evoke that miraculous-like result. Or perhaps the intentions of Excalibur and Belinda Tam suddenly aligned in that moment of time.

When I thought further on the matter, it occurred to me that her sudden appearance was synchronous with events in my *own* life as well. After all, I had been in touch with her mother on several occasions, and now I suddenly saw her daughter appear before me in the most unexpected of situations.

Now my mind was racing in all directions. What were all these circumstance trying to tell me -- about my life; about my relationship to all the people I

had met; and about my association with Jason and Excalibur? Though I tried to put the pieces together, I just could not make them fit.

I then realized that I simply knew too little about the phenomenon of Life Response to draw any definite conclusions. Perhaps these events and unfoldings were related to other principles of life that I was not yet aware of. For example, maybe it was the “law of karma” at work -- i.e. that what you sow is what you reap. Or perhaps it was some type of synchronicity, or thought transference, or something else along those lines.

I finally concluded that I simply needed to let go of the matter, remain patient; and answers would come soon enough. For now, I just needed to relax, to refocus, and get on with my life.

After the commotion in my head began to subside, I walked over to my computer and loaded my email program. A moment later, I heard a pleasant computer voice that said, “You have received eighteen messages -- four are audio/video messages; one is urgent and active.”

I activated the urgent/active message. After a moment, a woman’s face appeared on the screen. It was Francine from Egypt -- her visage frozen before me, -- waiting for me to engage her call.

I shook my head again, muttered “*what now?*” under my breath, and clicked on the Play button.

“Hi, it’s Francine! Lucky you caught me, I was just about to head out.

I hope this message finds you and Sushan well! I heard about the money you came into when I spoke to Jason. You are very fortunate! You must be doing something right -- that is, right *inside* yourself!

As you know, we have been using the Growth Online articles to improve ourselves -- that is, to elevate our consciousness. Also, as you may recall, our desire is to make the physical transformation. However, we first need to make the *psychological* change; you know, to improve our character and nature, and grow spiritually.”

“Yes, I understand,” I said.

“I am glad you do!”

Francine continued: “We also have been using the final beta version of Excalibur. It is remarkable what is happening with the program! We could write a book on our experiences with it!

By the way, we do have a few suggestions for improvement, which we have passed along to Jason. I have attached a copy of the recommendations to this message. I hope you get to see it. I am sure Jason wouldn't mind.

"I hope not," I said, sardonically.

"I must tell you something else," Francine said haltingly, in a low voice.

"What is it?"

"Well, to be honest, I am not sure about the integrity and morality of Excalibur. I am sure you have discussed this fact with others: that invoking positive Life Responses by modifying people's subconscious through the workings of Excalibur is a highly questionable approach. Besides, one must ask if Excalibur's actions are really changing the person *permanently* to the good, or is it just a *temporary* crutch, albeit a cosmic one that evokes these startling life results. I'm not sure if Jason has considered this. Or perhaps that is *all* he thinks about!

"I wish I knew," I said with a hint of doubt.

"In the interim, believe me when I say that Growth Online has helped the people here enormously, and I thank you for introducing the site to me last year in Cairo. By the way, I should mention parenthetically that "The Sisterhood" is not really a sisterhood at all. That was just our original name, which we kept because that was what we were known as. We do actually have a number of men on our staff; as well as children, teenagers, and seniors. Also, our affiliates around the world are also of a similar mixed lineage.

We have been particularly intrigued with the Growth Online articles on "Inner-Outer Correspondence," and have been practicing it on a daily -- no, an *hourly* basis. I wonder if you have read it. It's very interesting!

"Funny thing you should mention that. I just reviewed that very article the other day," I replied.

"What a coincidence. Or should I say a life response!"

"Yes, I think so!" I answered.

Francine paused for a moment, and then continued: "Let me tell you how we have embraced the inner-outer principle in our own lives. Twice a day, we think about major positive or negative events that have taken place. Then we make the effort to try to connect these events and circumstances back to our own inner attitudes, intentions, points of view, decisions, actions and so

forth. We have made particular headway when it comes to linking *negative* circumstances back to corresponding negative propensities on our part. It's there particularly in the attitudes.

Once we make the connection, -- which is not so easy, since it is difficult to identify our own negative propensities -- we try to each come up with a plan to change it. When we then we carry out the plan, or at least make the first efforts to overcome that quality, it is often followed by a sudden unexpected positive result -- something along the lines of what happened to you when you attracted that \$7M windfall! When it happens, it is really magnificent! It is *pure magic!*

Inner-outer correspondence is really quite the cosmic principle. I.e. you find the corresponding element within yourself, change it, and the outer life *instantly* responds in kind! It seems like a miracle, but it really isn't. It is just the way life works! It's just that down through the ages we never took notice. That is, we never perceived this dynamic association between the inner and the outer.

In the end, the whole experience has helped us greatly. I thank you so much again for introducing us to the site!"

"I am really glad to hear that you have benefited," I answered.

I then continued. "So what do you think is going to happen with Excalibur?"

"Well, it's kind of like playing with God, fate, and fire all at once! But it is so intriguing, so fantastic! Most of the conversations during our meetings and through our correspondence have been about the inner workings and technologies of the program itself. Most of it is speculation of course. I guess only Jason knows the truth of things. At least, I think he does."

Francine hesitated, and then continued. "Perhaps the whole ordeal is bringing us closer to understanding the Mind of God."

"That is quite a big thought. It certainly is a great mystery -- though I am slowing getting a feel for the whole thing."

I paused once more, then resumed. "So how are things going otherwise?"

"Well, my tour guide work is still going quite well. I see life response results and the inner-outer correspondence that makes it occur happening all the time in my work! It is just marvelous.

You know, I think I have become a better person as a result of what I have learned at Growth Online -- from the life response experiences; and the

articles on attitude, energy, organization, and all. It is definitely showing up in the quality of my work. As you can tell by our discussion, I have so much more energy and drive!”

“Yes, I have noticed!” I responded. “Anything else to report?”

Francine paused for a moment to think, and then said: “Our work on the physical transformation is also going quite well. I cannot tell you much about what we are doing in this area because like the inner workings of Jason’s program, there are secrets that must be kept. Let me just say that we believe that our immediate group, as well as our affiliates around the world, are really making big strides in this area. We are really at the frontier of human consciousness in this field. Perhaps leading the way to an evolution of the human species. Is that too bold a statement?”

“I don’t think so, if that is what is happening.”

“It really is, and it’s immensely practical. For example, how would you like to live as long as you want? 100 years? 200 years? 2000? We are trying, through consciousness (not drugs and genes; that will also happen!) to live as long as we so choose. We call it unending life through willful intent. There are definite signs of progress.” Francine then paused. “My God, I just realized that I have already said too much!”

From her tone, I could tell that she was wrapping things up. “Anyway say hello to Sushan for me. We would love to have you visit some time. I know she loves Egyptian history and mythology. After all, her name is “Sushan,” which is Middle Eastern for “lily flower.” I know she thinks she has had a past life here, even though she has never visited. Perhaps she will discover old friends and neighbors. (ha ha!). Au revoir!”

Suddenly the message came to an end. I clicked the Stop button and logged off the live chat program. I then got up out of my chair, and walked over to the bay window. In the distance, I saw a flock of Canadian geese in “V” formation migrating from the winter snows in the Northwest to San Francisco Bay. The mountains in the distance were sharp. The salty smell of the bay was unusually intoxicating for a winter day.

I had but one thought at that moment. “It’s all too much!”

I then shook my head, took a deep breath, and returned to the pressing work at hand.



9. Dusk, and a New Dawn at the Marina

Months passed quickly. For the group, it was a busy time, as they were caught up in the minutia of building the OzCom site. For me, it was a welcome respite from the strenuous travel and circumstance of the past year and a half.

One day during a busy time at my own company, our staff manager Darlene came into my office and informed me that I had a visitor. I asked her who it was, and she shrugged her shoulders. I then put aside my work, and walked over to the receptionist area of our office in the huge Hacienda business complex. When I arrived, I looked around, and saw no one. Then, I peered over to the far side of the room and saw a woman sitting there quietly reading a magazine. It was Belinda Tam.

“Belinda how are you!” I called out.

“I’m doing great. You’ve got a real nice office here.”

“Thank you.”

“By the way, you can call me Liddy. That’s what everyone calls me.”

“OK Liddy. So what brings you out to the eastern edge of Silicon Valley?”

“Well, I thought we should talk.”

“Sounds good to me. Let’s see. How about if we take a little ride? I’m a little suffocated here with all of our deadlines pressing.”

“That works for me. Where would you like to go?”

“Let’s just see where the car takes us!”

“I like that!”

We headed west over the Bay Bridge to San Francisco, and out to the Marina district on the edge of the bay. That’s where I like to take visiting out-of-

town friends. It is also a spot I go to recharge my energies – physically *and* psychologically. It has one of the most spectacular views in the world, and if it weren't too windy, we would have a beautiful sunset over the Golden Gate.

At one point, Liddy reached into her bag, scooped up the sandwiches we purchased at a local deli, and we shared a late lunch together on a park bench at the Marina Green. We pointed to the v-shaped group of pelicans just hovering above the water as they headed out to sea under the bridge. In the distance towards Tiburon, wind surfers were bouncing up and down on the white caps. It was, as usual, a glorious site.

Then we got up and went for a little stroll. We walked over to Fort Mason, which contains several very long red-roofed piers that have been converted into art and cultural centers, such as Greenpeace, the Gorbachav Center, and others. Liddy told me that as an artist she had been to art exhibits at Fort Mason often in the past.

As we walked back to the Marina Green, I thought about the fact that we had never discussed the circumstances surrounding “the Incident” at Masonic Auditorium six months earlier. I decided however that it was not the right time to bring it up, though I admit I was eager to know the details. Not two minutes after withholding those thought, Liddy broke the ice.

”I know you are still wondering what I was doing behind the curtain!”

“Well I have thought of it.”

“I might as well tell you,” Liddy said somewhat mournfully. She then turned towards me and took a deep breath.

“Ok, here’s what happened. A week before the incident, I attended a large gathering of techno artist at Masonic. There were “geeks and freaks” gathered there, as we like to say. About a week later, I was about to go out to do some painting in the Presidio when I realized that my brushes and drawing materials were gone. After a momentary panic, I remembered that I left it in a locker at Masonic a week earlier at the gathering. So I headed up Nob Hill to Masonic to retrieve my stuff.

After looking in several locations, I was able to find it. Since I had a bit of time to kill, I wandered around to look at the exhibits in the lobby. Then I drifted toward the back office to see what other interesting things were going on.

After a minute, I got lost in one of the hallways. Because I was afraid that the guards would think I was a prowler, I decided to leave the premises. Then I

got lost again, until I found what I thought was an exit way out. I backed into the door at the entrance to open it because my hands were filled with my art stuff. However, as I pushed in, some twine I used to tie my brushes together got stuck about five yards behind me. As I struggled to free myself, I noticed that my back was rubbing up against some heavy material; perhaps some sort of canvass. When I then heard a rumbling of voices, I dropped my stuff and stopped struggling with the twine. I then fell back a bit, and realized that I was caught inside the hallow of a huge curtain. When I then heard several peoples' voices emanating from the other side, I tried to find an opening. I found one and forced myself to the other side.

Well the rest is history!"

"So *that's* what happened." I said.

"Yes, that's what happened!" Liddy replied.

Liddy and I continued our walk, heading inland several blocks from the bay to Moscone Park -- a place I had often played basketball and tennis at over the years. After we took a lap around the enormous green at its center, we sat down in the baseball stands. In front of us, there was a softball game going on, and behind that was a game of rough and tough touch football, consisting of mixed gender teams.

No words passed between us for five minutes.

"You know Liddy, you might find this a little surprising, but what happened at Masonic is not the main issue that's been on my mind."

"Oh no? What is it then?" said Liddy.

"Well, what I really wanted to talk to you about is the Sisterhood."

"Oh *that!* Well that's the inspiration for my art, for my life ... well... everything .. everything! It's why I exist!"

"I can see that."

Liddy then barreled right into it.

"I think my mother and Francine have explained it to you. There are so many things to say, but what I am focused on now is this technique we are practicing."

"You mean the physical transformation?"

No, not that. That's pretty far out there; probably best suited for the older members. What I'm trying to do now is integrate a new technique into my daily life that we call "consecration."

I know that sounds kind of religious, but that's not what it's about. It's more like a prayer; a self-offering to a Higher Power for the purpose of quickly attracting positive results. It is, in essence, a way of attracting the miraculous."

Liddy paused to consider the matter. "I know; here's a good example. A few months back I was about to teach a class at the Art Institute of San Francisco. In the past, I had some problems working my way through these classes. You know, people would arrive late; the individuals who showed up weren't properly registered; and so on. So this time I decided to practice the technique of consecration for my next classes.

A few minutes before the class began, I quieted myself, and then intensely "offered it up" to the Higher Power -- in my case to what I call the Divine Mother. Then I let go of that intensity and relaxed. The only other thought I had was that I had faith that whatever the spiritual Force brought me would be for the best.

Well an hour into the session, I realized that everything was going *perfectly*. Not because I was doing anything differently than before, but because I somehow had now garnered the cooperation of life."

"I don't quite follow."

"Well, normally we have a degree of control over our own lives, our own selves; you know, the skills we bring to bear in a situation; the quality of our feelings and emotions; our level of personal organization in a work; and so forth. But we have little control over *outside* circumstances; i.e. what life brings *on its own* -- such as a sudden requirement for a fire drill; or unexpected noise emanating from a construction site above the classroom. Well the idea behind consecration is to gain the cooperation of life -- i.e. to insure that nothing untoward takes place. It also attracts extraordinary positive circumstance as well. Where life just works in our favor. Well, it turns out that is exactly what happened in the class. No one was late. Everyone was registered properly. No disturbances came from the outside. No fire drills or overhead construction! There was perfect cooperation from life!

But there was more. I noticed right from the beginning that people seemed happier. There just seemed to be more smiling faces in the class. No one had a grumpy or sour look. I also noticed that the students were eager to learn,

and were very cooperative and involved as the lessons unfolded. Finally, there was this unmistakable calm in the room -- a palpable peace and serenity that I could feel permeating that place. It is hard to explain, but it was just so soft, serene, and still.

Well, that unexpectedly lovely atmosphere remained throughout the day. By the end of the class, the students were very pleased with the day's proceedings, and, as a result, they gave me outstanding evaluations!

All in all it was a wonderful day. I went home that evening light-hearted and feeling deeply fulfilled."

Liddy's words pierced me deeply. I felt the profundity of her spiritual-like experience.

I then looked up and stared into the distance, contemplating the meaning of her words. All of a sudden, I heard a cheer as one of the touch football teams scored a touchdown. An athletic woman caught a long pass just beyond the flagged end zone. I then turned back to Liddy, took a deep breath, and spoke.

"Liddy, would you mind walking some more?"

We headed back to the bay and then once again traversed the length of the Marina Green. We sat down again, this time to enjoy the sunset behind the bridge and mountains. We rested there for almost half an hour, silently taking in the magical scene. For a long time, hardly a word was spoken. After a very long pause, Liddy spoke up:

"So what's next for you? I heard that Excalibur is on the back burner."

"Yes, it's not a priority just now. Who knows where it will go. Just now we're working on a few other things for Jason."

"Jason. He *is* the mystery man, isn't he?"

"Yes, I guess he is," I replied with a smile.

"So what about you? What about you and the sisterhood, or is it "the Transformers" now? You people are doing some truly groundbreaking work. All of these ideas; you know, inner-outer correspondence, life response, consecration; plus all of that physical transformation business. It all seems so incredible!"

“Yes it is. But you know, there is something that is going on that transcends even these things. How should I put it? There really is a *new world* being born. There is a *fundamental change* starting to take shape in the makeup, the fiber, the consciousness of humanity.”

“How so?”

“I really believe that we are evolving as a human race; especially in the last several decades. There is a new type of individual beginning to form. It is a little hard to explain. For example, already we are seeing people expressing higher emotions – such as greater compassion, greater empathy, and deep gratitude towards others. We are also seeing higher forms of thinking -- such as a willingness to embrace multiple sides of an issue; the emergence of more penetrating insights into matters; even spiritual-like intuitions and revelations of knowledge and truth. Along with the emotional and psychological developments, these supra-human mental capacities are becoming more common.

We are also seeing people taking a deep interest in personal change -- trying to learn the keys to their own and humanity’s progress and evolution. You see that people are trying to discard old, outworn habits; shed negative attitudes and beliefs; and are trying to become one and whole in the parts of their being.

And then there are those who are serious about consecration -- i.e., opening to the spiritual Force before engaging in activities, issues, and problems. And as a result of making these inner transitions, they are seeing powerful, even life-changing results on the outside -- as negative circumstance suddenly disappear, and positive circumstances take their place. For a few, for those who are harbingers and leaders of this new way of living, they are witnessing a continuous life of the miraculous.

As a result of the changes that a core group of individuals are experiencing, we are beginning to move into a new evolutionary period. There seems to be a new type of humanity taking shape. In essence, a new world is being born.”

Those last words reverberated in my soul then as it does now. I remember the feeling I had that day, contemplating Liddy’s words about a new human existence. I vividly recall standing there contemplating these things as we watched the sun go down behind the Golden Gate.

Now I realize that even as I witnessed the end of that glorious day, I was also contemplating the possibility of a New Dawn on earth.



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