

PARALLEL WORLDS
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A SPACE OF LOVE

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Parallel Worlds: Nothing is as it seems
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*For my daughter, the real Amelia.
And for every human being dreaming love into this world.*

Forward

Parallel Worlds is the second book in this series, and though it begins with the same premise as the first book, Children of Light, the story quickly begins to unfold in a parallel reality. (Though you may enjoy reading Children of Light first, each book stands alone.) This story is inspired by the teachings of a remarkable woman named Anastasia who currently lives in the Siberian wilderness.

Chapter 1

Amelia lay on her back watching clouds effortlessly shape-shifting as they drifted in the gentle breeze. The day moved along as any day would. The sun traced its customary path across the heavens, yet it never seemed to set. Sounds of nature surrounded her as the creek bubbled and splashed in the hypnotic way that creeks do. Moments, hours or days could have gone by – in timelessness it's impossible to tell.

But there is a moment everyone experiences in death. The moment when you finally realize... there is no death. There is only life. And then the grand irony collides with everything you once believed about being able to control your life: Life has a life of its own.

Amelia snapped her thoughts to attention, hoping she would somehow awaken herself from the hypnotic spell swirling through her mind. As she traced back to what must have been only the day before, her memory was perfectly clear – yet from her current perspective everything seemed surreal and incomprehensible.

It started as a weekend camping trip to Canyonlands National Park with fifteen other high school seniors. They had left Friday at noon, and after three hours on paved roads and another bumpy hour down a dirt path, their old yellow school bus rumbled into their campsite spewing noxious black clouds of exhaust that quickly dissipated into the crystal clear evening sky of southern Utah.

The students and teachers scrambled to pitch their tents and

start the campfire before dark. The moment the sun set, a chilling breeze caused the group to huddle by the fire in jackets, hats and gloves. Their dinner was comprised mainly of roasted hot dogs on sticks and gooey s'mores for dessert, but no one lingered for long. The wind picked up, driving everyone into their tents, and deep into the warmth of their sleeping bags.

A thin veil of frost covered the ground the next morning, but by mid-day it was seventy degrees. Amelia didn't know her hiking partner, but she'd noticed him at school on her first day. Matthew was tall and athletic with dark hair, ruddy cheeks and grayish-blue eyes. Despite his obvious popularity, he was a bit shy and unassuming as well – Amelia thought that was the nicest thing about him. She could hardly believe her luck when he was randomly chosen to be her partner by their geology teacher.

Though it was still wintry and overcast just a few hours north, there was a comfortable warmth and delicate fragrance in the air, characteristic of springtime in the high desert, and the cacti were in full bloom amidst coarse grass, sage and prickly pear. Other than a hawk circling in the distance, the only creature they saw was the occasional lizard – that is, until Amelia reached for a rock at the base of a juniper tree and baby rabbits burst from their nest, spreading out like cottontail buckshot.

The plan was for all the students to be back at camp by mid-afternoon. But in the middle of their hike Amelia and Matthew realized their cell phones didn't work, and neither of them had worn a watch, so they had no idea of the time.

The radiant sun, more golden as it flowed toward the horizon, merged with the boundless energy they felt, imparting a feeling of false confidence. They hiked along dry streambeds and scrambled

over boulder fields in their gradual ascent to the top of a high mesa where red rock canyons rose majestically above the desert floor. The air was slightly cooler now, but didn't breathe what was to come.

Matthew had hiked in this area before and suggested an alternate, shorter way back. As they descended into a deep canyon labyrinth, time seemed to stand still. Surrounded by earthen walls, Amelia could only see the vibrant indigo sky overhead with no indication of the sun's proximity to the horizon. Yet in her mind's eye, she kept seeing the sun setting more quickly than they imagined. Though she said nothing to Matthew, she kept hearing in her mind, Turn back... Turn back... Trust yourself...

Soon they came upon a gradual incline of a narrow canyon wall that led to the top of a plateau. As they emerged from the enclosed space, a profound and hypnotic beauty appeared before them, the sun falling slowly toward the horizon, washing deep oranges and fiery reds over the land.

"It's much later than I thought," said Matthew, a hint of anxiety in his voice. "You've got a flashlight, right?"

Amelia shook her head. "I didn't think to bring one. I didn't think I'd need it."

"You're right, we probably won't," Matthew said reassuringly, "but we should hurry. There's a cliff up ahead with a metal cable where we can climb down."

Amelia looked anxiously at him.

"It's not as bad as it sounds. Come on..." Matthew said trying to sound confident, but he was fairly sure he'd been overly optimistic in saying that they probably wouldn't need a flashlight.

His heart began to pound heavily and he broke into a run.

Racing at top speed across the plateau they finally made it to a towering rock cairn that Matthew knew was just a few hundred feet from the trailhead. He stopped abruptly and said, breathlessly, “OK, we made it! The cable is just ahead. We’ll be back at the camp before dark,” he added, offering Amelia a drink of water.

They paused for a moment, relieved, out of breath and invigorated from running in the cool, crisp evening air. The sun was setting, lighting up towering red rock bluffs as the wind drove gold-tinged clouds across the deepening blue sky. It was a picture of perfection, and just like any sunset it would be gone forever in matter of moments; so they stood and stared as if under a hypnotic spell.

Suddenly Matthew’s body jolted leaving him wide-eyed as he gasped in surprise. “Sorry,” he said shaking his head, “I must have been really out there. Ok, we gotta go.”

They walked with long, quick purposeful strides, but when they reached the trailhead, they saw that the sandstone on the cliff face had cracked and the top portion of the cable was dangling from a metal post twenty feet below where it should have been. From where they stood it was an eighty foot drop to the desert floor. They couldn’t go forward, and there was no sense in going back. Though it wasn’t much, a large boulder provided a tiny bit of shelter from the wind. So they sat next to it and watched the evening sky transform.

The clouds turned from gold to brilliant magenta, and now appeared ashen as the last glimmer of sunlight withdrew leaving in its place a deep cobalt blue. The temperature dropped rapidly as stars began to appear. The merest crescent moon hovered in velvety blackness at the edge of the horizon and quickly vanished.

For some time, they sat quietly huddled up, Amelia with her feet flat on the ground and her arms wrapped around her knees, spaced a few inches apart. Neither spoke as they both contemplated, each in their own way, the effect that death might have on the plans they'd made, or hadn't had the chance to make. Much too quickly the wind picked up. The cold was sinking deep into their bones now, numbing their fingers, freezing their noses. Matthew couldn't even look at Amelia, her teeth chattering loudly. This might have been, he figured, the worst he had ever felt. And from the perspective of this being a first date, he probably would have been better off accidentally setting her house on fire.

But right as he had condemned himself to spending the rest of his – probably very short – life in solitude, he felt Amelia fall gently against him and lay her head upon his shoulder. Awkwardly at first, he put his arm around her, and though she instinctively moved closer to him, Matthew knew this wasn't enough to help either of them stay any warmer.

“I hope I'm not being too forward,” Matthew said with some difficulty, his cold throat catching on his words, “but I think if we just... rearranged ourselves a bit...”

Amelia could feel him gesturing with his hands, and turned to find him pantomiming the action of her sitting in front of him, but he looked more like a man on a jet-way using both hands to guide an airplane taxiing to a parking spot, which in this case was the ground between his legs. She let out an unexpected, stuttered laugh, and felt a moment of warmth, even if it was only toward him.

With no small amount of stiff, cold, awkwardness, she sat in front of him and slid back, pressing herself against his chest.

And as Matthew's arms wrapped around her, Amelia smiled while sniffing uncontrollably. Despite the gusting, cold winds which bore the chilling promise of hypothermia, she knew that this was the most romantic thing that had ever happened to her.

Amelia had never had a boyfriend. There simply wasn't time. Prior to her move from New York City she'd been in a private school for the performing arts. She took singing and acting lessons as well, but her passion was to be a prima ballerina, and every spare moment of her day was dedicated to ballet.

For all the confidence that Amelia exuded onstage, she possessed a charming, natural quality in that she seemed to have no idea that she'd finally exited her caterpillar stage and had emerged as a magnificent butterfly.

Her braces had been removed and though she had a dazzling smile, she seldom wore lipstick or any makeup unless it was necessary for a ballet performance. This was mainly a knee-jerk reaction to her mother's insistence that, as the daughter of an upper-class family, it was Amelia's duty to participate in a debutante ball at eighteen. Amelia flatly refused and, much to her mother's chagrin, went to great lengths to establish herself as a tomboy – wearing only sneakers, jeans and t-shirts whenever possible.

Her mother's response was to go shopping at Saks Fifth Avenue where she purchased her daughter an eighty-five thousand dollar white, Valentino ball gown. Upon her return home, Amelia's mother made a point of explaining that the dress had been tailored to fit Amelia's measurements, and couldn't possibly be returned, so Amelia would simply have to wear it.

She had ignored her mother, but delighted in putting on the

dress six months later and wearing it to breakfast. Amelia had grown five inches during that time, and the original floor length gown was now halfway between her knees and her ankles. Her mother leveled an icy glare in her direction and said nothing but the chill in the room spoke volumes. Her father never even glanced up from his newspaper.

As Amelia's core temperature plummeted, she could no longer feel her arms and legs. In that moment she would have done anything to be at her coming-out ball wearing a Valentino gown. She would have worn makeup and danced and been so very, very happy. She imagined how proud her parents would have been, and suddenly all the petty things she thought were so important really didn't matter anymore.

Over the next few minutes her mind became more and more confused: She couldn't decide if she was cold or hot, she couldn't remember why she was there or who she was with. Somehow she knew they wouldn't survive the night, and at the same time she had slipped past the point where any of that seemed to matter.

All at once her shivering stopped. Amelia heard a strange pattering sound, but she couldn't figure out where it was coming from or how to make it stop. With great effort she pressed her palms against her ears, only to discover it was her own heartbeat racing frantically in a final, desperate attempt to keep her body alive.

Suddenly Amelia felt warm and lightheaded. There's nothing to worry about... she thought as she peacefully drifted out of her body. A magnetic radiance drew her towards it as the physical world was absorbed by a new spectrum of color, sound, and feeling that flowed seamlessly together, each becoming the other

as she passed into a realm where time had no meaning.

After a moment of blissful unawareness, the sensations all around her merged and universes of creation sparked into existence in every corner of her imagination. Spiraling dream worlds of incomprehensible vastness and stunning beauty flowed through her – countless universes filled with master creators who knew how to intentionally ‘dream’ new creations into existence.

Ordinary people create worlds – universes, even – every night as they sleep, but that’s unconscious creation, because they fall asleep never knowing where they’ll be or what will happen. These ‘master creators’ created worlds and universes as we dream, the difference being that they were able to remain in their worlds indefinitely – changing and adding to their creations to fulfill their desires as quickly as they emerged.

Still absorbed in the vision, Amelia watched as one of the master creators did something that had never been accomplished before or since: Her dream materialized as the physical universe, with a Garden of Eden called Earth as the crown-jewel of Her creation.

This marked the beginning of time – for without matter there is no space or time – and in that moment the most omnipotent master creators in existence discovered they were, for the most part, powerless in this new world: They couldn’t touch it or change it, let alone understand how to create a physical world of their own. A deep-seated avarice arose amongst the master creators and began to play upon their thoughts. This bond of envy would ultimately unite them in a scheme to either discover the secret to physical creation, or utterly destroy the world that had been created.

Before Amelia could see further into what had happened, her attention was drawn away. It felt as if a gentle mist was falling silently around her. She knew she was waking up, but she felt the truth in what she had seen. She knew that the master creators had somehow influenced humanity, and she desperately wanted to know what had taken place. The answer began materializing out of the mist before her, but just as she was about to grasp the full implication of what she was seeing, the image began to dissipate, disappearing completely as she found herself awaking to a cloudless dawn.

Amelia's eyes flitted open. Was it real? she wondered. In that moment, the feeling of what she had seen lingered with such intensity that it seemed there could be no other answer: Somewhere out there, she was convinced, in a place where time is of no consequence or meaning, there existed these... master creators... jealous and spiteful entities who had been plotting to undermine Earth and the physical realm.

And not only that, she realized, a chill shivering up her spine, they had succeeded.

Amelia's gaze turned upward. High overhead the night sky was still in possession of a few stars, but it softened as it approached the horizon, now embracing radiant streaks of golden light ready to burst into the fullness of a new day. For a moment it was like waking between two worlds. The world she'd just left was fresh in her mind and seemed equally as real as the world she awoke to find herself in. Matthew was still sitting behind her with his arms around her and his head resting on her shoulder, breathing so deeply she knew he had to be asleep.

Amelia wondered how they'd managed to survive. Maybe

the night had become warmer – a wind from the south perhaps. Whatever it was Amelia felt warmth in her body and much to her surprise she wasn't stiff or uncomfortable. As she stirred gently, she felt Matthew awaken, slowly raising his head.

"I can't believe we're still alive... You are alive, right?" he asked, shaking her gently. "Okay, good, well that's a relief..." he added as Amelia turned slightly to smile at him. "Hey, are you feeling this too? It's like waking up in a warm bed. I'm not cold at all."

"Yeah," she said as Matthew stood up, placing one hand on her back and helping her up with the other. Looking into her eyes, he smiled and laughed, completely amused and utterly astonished at what seemed their good fortune.

"What is this?" he said, "It's like we're in another world."

Amelia nodded. She could feel it too. And for a moment, time seemed to disappear, as if being here right now, despite everything that had happened, was the most natural thing in the world.

Her gaze relaxed. Then her eyes widened with a sudden worry and she said, "We should head back now..."

"Yeah," said Matthew, hiding his own renewed sense of anxiety, "Mrs. Caldwell is probably having a heart attack."

They began retracing the path they'd taken to get there at a brisk jog, a knot tightening in Amelia's stomach at the thought of what might be happening at the campsite right then. After a few minutes at that pace, they broke into a full-on run, and Amelia was beset by the strange feeling that this world no longer operated on rules that she understood; she didn't feel the least bit tired, and the distance that it had taken them hours to traverse before seemed to pass in no time at all. She wasn't hungry or thirsty or even slightly

worn out when she arrived at the campsite, and Matthew had no trouble keeping up with her.

“Whoa,” she heard from behind, pebbles clattering down a steep slope as Matthew ground to a stop.

As she surveyed the scene in front of them, a tremor ran up Amelia’s spine, her lips parting slowly. Then, much to her own disbelief, she heard herself say, “There’s no one here... But, it doesn’t look like they left... It looks like they were never here at all.”

Chapter 2

She was right. There wasn't one spot where a tent might have been, there were no footprints, and no sign of the campfire they'd had the day before. As they looked around bewildered, Amelia climbed into an old gnarled tree and said, "I sat right here and had my breakfast. I remember this exact view, and I could see the road leading..." her voice trailed off.

Matthew followed her gaze and climbed up to a branch above her for a better look. Amelia's heart was already in her throat when Matthew climbed down and sat next to her, "I've camped here since I was a kid... but now there are no campgrounds, there's not a single tent and..."

"The road isn't there anymore..." Amelia said, finishing his sentence with a shocked tone in her voice. "Oh my God, do you think we're... Dead?"

Matthew sat quietly for a moment and then said thoughtfully, "No, I don't think so... It's strange, but ever since I woke up this morning, it's like my thoughts are more fluid. And like I know things I shouldn't... Like what's happening to us."

"You do?" said Amelia, perking up. "Then what is this place?"

"I can't say for sure," said Matthew carefully, "but I have an idea of what could have happened. You see, rather than there being a separation or a wall between the dimensions, it's more like a membrane," he went on, making broad gestures with his hands, "and... as I understand it, at least... from a mathematical perspective, it's possible to pass through this membrane without

even realizing it. And if that's true for the dimensions, then it could be true for parallel worlds as well."

She shook her head. "I dunno'... It sounds like you've been reading too much science fiction." But she got the feeling he was on the right track.

"You can never read too much science fiction," he replied, straightening up and feigning a haughty air. Then, with a look that said there was more to that thought, he chewed his lip and said, "It is surreal though, isn't it?"

Amelia looked around in a wide arc, taking in the disquieting stillness of the world around her. Quietly, she had to agree. "So... You think we've somehow ended up in a parallel world? What does that even mean?"

Comforted by her sudden interest in his thoughts, Matthew said, "We only think we know what reality is... In quantum physics it makes as much sense to say there are infinite universes as it does to say there is one universe – the mathematical equations can be interpreted either way."

"Okay..." said Amelia, trying to be supportive. She hoped he was going somewhere with all of this.

"Well, it's like this..." he began, getting his hands set for another round of wild gestures. "Out of an infinite number of possibilities, the universe, every second, collapses into one... which is the reality we're living in. Or it doesn't collapse... and all the possibilities happen at the same time... just, on different planes of reality."

"So, let me try to get this straight," she said, taking a deep 'here we go' breath. "For every possibility that exists... say, if you toss a coin and it could come up heads or tails... there is one universe

where the coin came up heads... and another where it came up tails?”

“Well, yes, that’s one way of looking at it.”

Amelia smiled, relieved to find that they were on the same page.

“The other... and this is more likely, I think...” Matthew went on, “is that only one outcome is created, and there is only one universe. So if the coin came up tails, the possible universe where the coin would have come up heads ceases to exist... along with all other universes that could have been created based on choices other people and beings were making, and chances they were taking.”

“Ah... So how does that help us?”

“Well...” Matthew began, tentatively, “There’s another way of looking at this, too... which is that the universe only splits at significant times. Not for every little choice that’s made... But for the big stuff... Like death.”

Amelia knitted her eyebrows together and squinted. “I thought you said we weren’t dead.”

“Well, yeah... not entirely. I mean, don’t you think we could be both alive and dead? Just in different universes?”

Amelia contemplated the idea, then lit up with understanding, “My grandma died in a hospital,” she began slowly. “She was dead for about four minutes before the doctors brought her back to life. And after that she used to say... death only exists in the eyes of the beholder. She said that the person who dies never experiences death, they go right on living. And she told me that when she... *died*... she floated up above the operating table and watched everything the doctors and nurses were doing to bring her back.

“In a way, it’s kind of like what you’re saying... she was alive and dead at the same time.” Then anxiously she added, “Matthew, do you think we’re dead... I mean, dead in the third dimension?”

“Maybe...” said Matthew, shaking his head thoughtfully as he tried to figure out how they could be sure. Then his jaw dropped slightly and he said, “Amelia, you said that your grandmother floated up and could see her own body on the operating table, and from the doctor’s perspective her body was dead... right?”

Amelia nodded.

“Then if we died...” Matthew’s heart raced with excitement. “Maybe we can find our bodies!”

The proposition startled Amelia, but it made a strange kind of sense, too; as if she had finally collided head first with reality. Then a sobering truth set in...

“You don’t think we would have noticed that when we woke up?” she asked. “Our bodies just lying there on the ground?”

“I don’t know. Your grandma might have expected to die, and that’s why she knew to look for her body. You and I had no idea, so maybe that’s why we didn’t see ourselves.”

As they went back down the trail, Amelia felt a renewed sense of hope – which was odd given the fact that they were headed off to see if they could find evidence that they had in fact, died. At the very least, it was good to have something to do... But as they neared the spot where they’d spent the night, a feeling of dread washed over her.

What do dead people do? Where do they go? Of all the things she’d ever heard about death, everything from heaven and hell to her grandmother’s story, she’d never heard anyone mention anything quite like what she was experiencing. Then, as they

approached the plateau, her thoughts quietly subsided, replaced by the unsettling realization that whatever she found there would most likely lead only to more questions.

“Well... great,” she said as they arrived. “There’s nothing here. That’s helpful...”

“I don’t know...” said Matthew slowly. “I think this is better than the alternative.”

He was right. Forlornly, Amelia looked to the southern sky and said, “I wish I could at least let my parents know I’m all right. They’ll be so worried...”

Matthew stood quietly looking at her, his mind clearly somewhere else.

After a moment, Amelia said, “What are you thinking?”

“I don’t know...” he said, shaking his head slightly. “I was thinking about my family last night. I’ve been sort of angry at them... like... all my life,” he added with a wry smile, his gaze roaming to meet Amelia’s. “I’ve heard of people going through near-death experiences and having some sort of cosmic breakthrough with their family... or coming out on the other side suddenly knowing who they are and what they want from life. But I don’t feel any different.”

“What do you mean?” asked Amelia.

Thinking quietly for a moment, Matthew answered, “I guess I’m saying that if we’re either dead or in another dimension... I thought my life would suddenly make sense to me.”

Amelia was staring at him, and though there was both kindness and understanding in her eyes, Matthew suddenly felt self-conscious for saying anything at all. He never spoke about his family, not even to his closest friends, and he felt uncomfortable

showing Amelia this side of himself. But he could tell from the way she looked at him that Amelia really did want to understand.

So he continued tentatively. “My family is quite... wealthy,” he added after a considerable pause. “I know that seems like a good thing to most people, but...”

“I know exactly what you’re talking about,” Amelia blurted out, then quickly added, “sorry... go on...”

Matthew smiled at her and continued, “Well, you see, I’ve grown up with ‘you’re the eldest; you have to set a good example’... and my dad has this bizarre habit of saying ‘we...’ don’t this or ‘we...’ don’t that... as if he’s talking for me as well. In my entire life my parents have never asked me what I want to do or who I want to be. They’ve had everything laid out for me – as if they’re doing me this big favor... saving me from having to think for myself.”

“It appears our parents went to the same parenting school,” said Amelia, her eyes twinkling.

Matthew laughed, and grinned broadly. “My parents planned out everything from my pre-school to what college I would go to and what degree I needed to get. There’s even this bizarre shrine my mom created in my dad’s den with two identical glass cases that stand side-by-side...” he slowed down, as if suddenly aware of the sobering reality of his family life. “One is my dad’s... all of his trophies and awards from high school and college. And then all the stupid stuff I’ve won so far...” He added, shaking his head.

“Why do you say that?” asked Amelia, not quite understanding what he was getting at.

“Because I don’t care about any of it,” said Matthew quietly. “I’ve never been allowed to do what interested me. It was always about following in my father’s footsteps... Impressing his friends,

making a good impression... and the idea that I should just put up with everything because someday I'll inherit the family fortune.

"Kids at school look at me like I'm some spoiled rich kid – like they know me because they know where I live and where my family came from. Or because I'm good in sports they think I'm just a 'jock.' But I don't care about any of it – sure, I like sports, but I'd rather try stuff I've never done before."

"Like what?" asked Amelia curiously.

"Well, I used to watch these old Fred Astaire movies with my grandfather and I always wanted to learn how to tap dance... Sounds ridiculous doesn't it?"

"No," said Amelia enthusiastically. "I love to tap dance. I learned math by tapping out numbers! Dancing taught me to count, actually. But Matthew, it's not too late – well at least I hope it's not – couldn't you just tell your parents what you want?"

"If I go home and tell my family I'm not going to be their perfect son anymore – that I'm going to quit baseball and start taking tap classes after school, and I'm going to take the classes that interest me – not what they say I 'need' to carry on the business and – do you know what they'll do? They'll send me to a therapist."

"My mom's a therapist," said Amelia supportively, "I'm sure she'd see your side."

Matthew laughed, "You don't know my family. They're not looking for the truth – they want control. They'd take me to as many therapists as necessary to get the results they want. And if I don't comply with their wishes, if I refuse to see things the way they want me to see them, they'll be sure I'm medicated until I do."

"Have they done that before?" asked Amelia, taken aback.

“When I was in kindergarten,” said Matthew, “I guess I was just like any kid... I had tons of energy. I was diagnosed as ADD or ADHD... one or the other. It’s as if having energy is a disability. My parents never questioned following the advice of the authorities – God forbid they should think for themselves, or allow me to have an opinion.

“I was medicated until I was twelve years old. I begged my parents to take me off of it, but they wouldn’t. And then one day, I just knew that the only way they’d take me off the medication was if I acted exactly the way they wanted me to. I started getting A’s and being good at sports. The day I brought home my first trophy, my father’s reward was to have me reevaluated by my doctor. So I have no doubt what my parents would do if my behavior changed to something they don’t like.”

In that moment, Amelia had a genuine appreciation for her mother, even though she was caught up in the whole social scene, cotillions and all – her mother always stood up for her.

“I was a lot like you when I was little,” said Amelia softly. “I was constantly bouncing off the walls. When I was eight, I’d been to the principal’s office so much my mom can’t even remember how many times she had to come and get me. Finally the principal demanded my mom take me to a doctor to be tested. He said that as a responsible parent she needed to have me treated for this ‘problem’ that was upsetting the whole classroom, or she’d need to find another school for me.

“My mom was furious, but in New York City it’s not easy to change to another private school. She ended up taking me to a pediatrician. He chatted with me and then he turned on the radio and he and my mom left the room saying they’d be right back.

“I didn’t know it, but they were standing behind a two-way mirror. The minute they left I jumped off my chair and started dancing to the music. The doctor looked at my mom and said, “There’s nothing wrong with your daughter. She doesn’t need drugs – she’s a dancer.”

Amelia smiled brightly, “The next day my mom took me out of the private school and put me in dance classes. I don’t know how she did it, but she got me into a school for the performing arts – even though it was the middle of the school year.”

Matthew sat quietly looking at Amelia, admiring her enthusiasm, and wondering what his life would have been like if his parents had really listened to him. A cool breeze gently tousled Amelia’s hair as streams of golden sunlight found their way through dense cumulous clouds, lighting up the cerulean sky like a Maxfield Parrish painting. The moment was perfect and surreal at the same time.

All at once they heard the distant laughter of a child. Both looked simultaneously in the direction of the sound... It was coming from beyond the edge of the cliff, and Matthew shot Amelia a questioning glance. She shrugged and shook her head in wonder, getting up to investigate.

As they approached the cliff’s edge, the laughter seemed to bubble up through trees surrounding a tiny creek.

Chapter 3

Matthew and Amelia looked over the edge of the cliff. There wasn't a cable, but somehow it didn't seem as steep as it had appeared the night before.

"Is it just me," asked Matthew, "Or does it seem like we could definitely climb down here?"

"Yeah," agreed Amelia, peering out over the edge. "I think you can totally make it."

Matthew sighed a loud, "Okay..." trying to cover his nervousness as he primed himself to climb down. Then, much to his surprise, he found that his feet clung almost magically to the rock.

"Whoa! Check this out, I'm like... Spiderman or something." He leaned forward at what seemed to be an impossible angle and waved his arms around.

Crying out, Amelia grabbed him by the shirt and tried to pull him back towards her.

"Oh, hey..." she said, breathlessly poised like a ballerina mid-posture, "...you're right."

Matthew felt his heart race at her touch and he coughed, clearing his throat, "Yeah, cool, huh?" He stepped back, held her hand and then headed down the cliff. "Come on."

Reaching the bottom, they followed the sound of the streaming water and soon found themselves standing directly across the creek from a little girl with brown eyes and long black hair that hung in loose curls around her face. She looked up at them and

smiled broadly. "Here you are!" she said enthusiastically.

Amelia and Matthew looked at each other and back at the child. "Do you know us?" asked Amelia curiously.

"I know you, but you probably don't remember me," said the girl.

"You know us?" said Matthew in amazement as he observed the girl curiously.

The girl laughed and said, "We had a... oh, how shall I say this? An agreement, but I know that won't make any sense to you. For now, I'll put it this way," she added with a slight, dramatic pause, "I know why you're here."

"You do?" Amelia exclaimed as she moved closer to the child. "Are we dead?" she blurted out, before taking a moment to think of what an odd statement that must seem to a child.

The girl giggled, "Of course you're not dead!" as if it was too obvious to mention. "But you are in another dimension."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Matthew, stepping closer to the child, "Is this a parallel world?"

The girl cocked her head to one side and said, "All worlds are parallel."

"No, I mean... Is this world parallel to the third dimension? Everything here looks the same as it did to us yesterday... but it's not the same."

The child looked at Matthew with an intense, penetrating stare. "You don't remember anything do you?"

Matthew stared at her, befuddled, but said nothing. Then the girl shifted her gaze to Amelia with the same question in her eyes.

She stood up, beckoning to Matthew and Amelia as she began to walk along the creek, tiptoeing from one large flat rock to the

next. They followed her quietly. Finally she said, “I know where you’ve come from and where you’re intending to go.”

“What do you mean?” asked Matthew. “And how can you possibly know where we’re intending to go if we have no idea where we are, let alone where we should go?”

“Well, try this,” said the girl, smiling. “Why do you think you’re here?”

“We don’t know,” replied Amelia quickly, with a tinge of urgency in her voice, “We were hoping you might know...”

“But if you DID know the answer, what would it be?” said the girl patiently.

Amelia shook her head as she thought for a moment. “You mean... just make up an answer?” asked Amelia.

“Yes. Just make something up.”

Amelia had certainly conjured up more than a few stories to stay out of trouble, but those stories had to, in some way, line-up with reality. And in school her answers were either right or wrong. No one had ever asked Amelia to make up an answer. So it took her a moment to stop thinking about whether or not her answer would be correct. She had to keep reminding herself, ‘If I knew the answer, what would it be?’

Then out of the blue an answer popped into Amelia’s head. She didn’t really understand it, but she knew she couldn’t be right or wrong, so she just came out with it.

“We’re here because this is a transition point...” As the words came out of her mouth, Amelia noticed she was making a statement, not asking a question. And the moment she said it she felt the truth of it.

“Yes!” exclaimed the girl.

Amelia's cheeks flushed slightly as a word popped into her mind. "Is your name... Shanti?" she said, somewhat stunned that she would even say such a thing.

The girl smiled broadly and nodded.

Amelia looked excitedly back and forth between Matthew and Shanti, and said, "how do I know this?"

"I'm not getting this at all," said Matthew, somewhat perplexed and feeling like a backseat passenger who couldn't quite see the view from his window.

"In this dimension you can create that you know... or that you don't know..." said Shanti. "Actually, the same is true on the dimension that you've just come from – there's just less density here... so it's easier to see. The trick is to stay out of your analytical mind and be willing to see beyond what appears in front of you.

"Try it, Matthew," said Shanti with a kind, yet penetrating gaze. Then, smiling, she added, "If you did know why you're here, what would the answer be? Don't think like a scientist... think like a painter... a modern artist. Close your eyes and imagine creating a painting in your mind... something new and fresh. What do you see?"

Matthew closed his eyes and said, "Well... it's not just one picture, it's... I don't know... it seems fluid. It's like images that are flowing... the way a movie flows, but it's different because the images are connected all at the same time. It's like standing in the middle of a hologram, but it's more than looking around at a three dimensional world... it feels like layers upon layers... time and space that seem to have no connection, and yet it's all deeply connected."

Although it seemed like a simple, imaginative game Matthew

was playing, he knew there was an underlying truth in what he was seeing and feeling, yet words were wholly inadequate.

Matthew opened his eyes. Looking at Amelia he immediately realized he might as well be trying to describe a symphony to a person who had never heard a sound.

Matthew tried to think of words that might help her understand. Yet for some reason, despite all that was happening, all that he was trying awkwardly to express, he was stopped struck by her beauty. It was as if the moment was frozen and his mind was taking a living picture: Her golden hair gently blowing in the breeze, her eyes more blue than he had noticed before, and her face alight with a keen desire to grasp something impossible to fully comprehend.

But it was more than her physical beauty that struck him. It was an awareness: A vivid impression one might try to capture, all the while knowing there are no words or images that can adequately express the feeling of that moment – or the fact that you are an integral part of it, because the moment would not exist without you.

As if suddenly awakening from a trance, Matthew realized he'd been staring at Amelia. Color instantly rose in his cheeks. Feeling somewhat awkward, and at the same time relieved that Amelia didn't know what he'd been thinking, he quickly recovered and said, "Uh... imagine a painting by Michelangelo. On the surface is one image, but in fact, he painted many paintings, one on top of the other... different images, different scenes, different people. But the one constant is Michelangelo himself.

"And what I'm seeing... or feeling... is like layers of images from different times in history... and there's something...

something here that connects all of these images. I just can't put my finger on it."

"What you're seeing doesn't fit into your current belief system," said Shanti softly. "It doesn't make sense if you think in terms of possible and impossible. If you will let go of 'yes or no' and think 'maybe'... what do you think you're seeing?"

Matthew's face relaxed, then brightened. "Past lives... I'm seeing past lives that I've lived," he said definitively. "The connection is that I know every image I'm seeing... because I've been there."

Though it was a completely foreign way of thinking for him, he knew, without question the accuracy of what he was seeing and feeling. "But what's the purpose of seeing past lives?" Matthew asked. "We need to get back to our own lives."

"You have to know where you've been, to understand where you're going," said Shanti. "You both chose this transition point because in this dimension you can focus on what you need and bring it instantly into reality."

"You see, you are both dead and not-dead at the same time. You were right, Matthew, there are membranes between the dimensions... between parallel worlds. And it's not too late for both of you to slip back into your own world. But there's a reason you've come to this choice point together... and that you're trying to return together as well."

"It has to do with other lifetimes the two of you have shared," said Shanti enigmatically. "In this dimension, you can be very specific and intend to know what happened in only your shared lifetimes – it will still be a lot of information, but the answers are definitely there, between the two of you... whether you know it or

not. You'll ultimately be able to put it all together.

"I don't have much time left with you. So before you decide whether or not you want to believe me – there are some things you need to know," said Shanti patiently. "You both agreed, before you were born, that you would either retrieve the information from your shared lifetimes, or you would not return to your own world – because neither of you want to live out your lifetime without being able to do what you came to accomplish."

"In order to move from this world back into your own... there's a resonant frequency that will allow you to pass through the membrane between the worlds. Your resonant frequency is controlled by how you feel. It's the energy that radiates from you, whether it's positive or negative. So it's not a matter of thinking you want to be in the third dimension... You have to feel your way back into it," said Shanti. "But remember, if you don't retrieve the information... if you don't carry the necessary memories – you won't be allowed back into your world. You'll simply go on from here..."

At that moment waves of shimmering golden light began to dance all around Shanti. As this luminous energy intensified, Shanti's appearance became more and more transparent until she finally disappeared before their eyes.

Chapter 4

In stunned silence Amelia and Matthew stared at the place where Shanti had been standing just moments before.

“You’ll simply go on from here...? What does that mean?” said Amelia, beside herself. “She’s telling us that if we don’t get it right... we’re dead... isn’t she?”

Matthew shook his head, deep in thought. “I guess all we can do is try and remember...” he said, his words falling away into the hopelessness he felt inside.

Nothing had changed and yet everything changed in that moment. The girl hadn’t died, they simply couldn’t see her anymore; yet Amelia had never experienced such a profound sense of loss. It was as if she had been set adrift in a strange sea, but survival was not the issue. There was no doubt she would survive – maybe even forever. But what did it mean to be alive if she could never go back home or see her parents or friends again? What were the chances that she and Matthew would be able remember a series of shared past-lives and then feel their way through some nebulous membrane back to their own dimension?

Looking into Matthew’s eyes, the thought of never returning home turned into an unfathomable, aching sadness. She tried to blink back the tears welling up in her eyes. Matthew gathered her into a strong embrace and whispered, “We’ll get through this, Amelia...I know we will,” he added with quiet conviction.

At last they sat down next to the creek on a large, flat rock dappled in sunlight. They weren’t hungry or thirsty or tired, but

it was hard to tell if this was because they were in a parallel world or if it was because they were too upset to feel those things. They both agreed that neither one of them really understood what Shanti was talking about, let alone whether or not it was true. She hadn't explained how they were to go about accessing their past lives. So they decided the only sensible thing was to stay next to the creek and see if someone else would come along ... hopefully someone more helpful.

Amelia lay on her back listening to the creek, watching clouds peacefully drifting by. Time stood still – or maybe time no longer existed – if it had ever existed in the first place.

Nothing could explain the events that had just played through her mind. No matter where she focused or what she thought, no matter how much she tried to understand what had happened, a simple refrain wove in and out of her thoughts, There is no death. There's only life. Life has a life of its own.

Until this moment Amelia felt like a fierce warrior, charged with emotion – a wild, tempestuous storm boiling in her, ready to attack. Who were these people? What right did they have to take her life away? Her heart raged and rumbled as hot, angry tears fled down her cheeks.

But the universe is infinitely patient. And sooner or later a wave of truth pulses wordlessly in the silence of space and time: How long can you be at war with yourself?

In the midst of her tears Amelia burst out laughing as these words flowed through her mind. She was relieved, even comforted to give up the fight. And as her mind let go of its quest to know why and how and who to blame, a current of energy surged through her body.

Amelia sat up and said with renewed hope, “Maybe Shanti did tell us how to access our past lives! She said, ...in this dimension you can focus on what you need and bring it instantly into reality.”

Matthew thought for a moment and said, “Let’s try it.” He stuck his hand out, palm up and added, “I need an apple.”

Nothing happened.

“Hmm. I guess that doesn’t really work after all.”

“But do you really need an apple? Are you hungry?”

“Well, no. I was just experimenting.”

“Well then you’re thinking, not feeling. You can’t feel the need for food if you’re not hungry. But the thing we do feel is the need to go home.”

“But Shanti said we can’t return to our world without the memories from our shared lifetimes.”

“Exactly! Then all we should have to do is feel the need to know our shared past-lives so we can go home,” said Amelia smiling enthusiastically. “The memories should just come to us.”

“If she’s telling us the truth,” said Matthew skeptically. “And IF this really is a world where we can focus on what we need and bring it instantly into reality.”

“Well, if she’s not telling us the truth – then we’ll know it, because the memories won’t come back to us and at least that will put an end to whether or not she’s telling the truth!” said Amelia triumphantly. “Then we can make other plans, or at least try to find someone to help us.”

“Okay... let’s do it,” said Matthew, not expecting anything to happen, but feeling relieved to be doing something.

Matthew sat on a grassy spot next to the creek and Amelia sat next to him, then they both decided that lying down might be

easier. Amelia felt a bit nervous about what might happen – or more, specifically, what probably wouldn't happen as she closed her eyes and tried to genuinely feel her desire to go back in time and remember her past lives with Matthew.

As she lay in the soft grass lining the creek, the bright desert sun saturating her eyelids gradually transmuted into pure darkness. Amelia thought it would take some practice to focus on her forgotten memories, but instead she felt a light, floating sensation separate her essential self from her body. As she floated higher and higher, an image emerged of Matthew lying beside her next to the creek... her body the conduit for something beyond her comprehension. Was some part of her still there in her body, or was all of her consciousness now contained in her 'second-self' floating above the Earth...if indeed, it was still called Earth in a parallel world.

It was a fascinating, peculiar feeling, like the feeling of being almost asleep and starting to dream, yet still having the awareness of being awake. Then all at once Amelia felt her second-self being magnetically drawn away from the image of herself and far out into the cosmos, her sense of self blurring as she shot through galaxies, stars hurtling past as streaks of light. An indefinable, suffocating, dark presence clawed at her mind. Amelia couldn't speak, she could hardly breathe, and when at last she found her voice and screamed, no sound was forthcoming.

Frantically she tried to figure out what she had done wrong, and how could she go back to where she had been only moments ago. But it was beyond her power to change. She was completely abandoned far beyond the edge of creation, in a space filled only with unmet potential and dark voices whispering into her mind;

unwelcoming to a being from the physical.

A sudden terror seized her as the turbulent river of lights gave way to an unsettling calm that fell over the rush, her every thought now echoing distinctly in the darkness of eternity. As if she'd suddenly entered the eerie silence of a river chute masking the waterfall to come, everything seemed serene. Yet, there was a sound, unheard by human ears, but vibrating all the same - barely perceptible as anything more than a premonition reverberating in the depths of consciousness – unnoticeable amidst the chatter of the mind.

Amelia's body stopped moving. Like a nightmare made real, a chilling mist enshrouded her, creeping into her mind freezing her thoughts instantly. Some distant part of Amelia knew she needed to stay calm, but she could only feel heart-pounding, gut-wrenching terror – and the certainty there was no way back from where she was going.

Before her a small moon, glimmered brightly in the reflected light of a nearby star. All was serene and peaceful, but a silent rumbling in her mind told her that things were not as they seemed. A small moon seemed to be drifting in front of her, like a feather being gently blown across a lake until it was swallowed whole by a dense, gossamer blackness shimmering before her.

Trembling with fear, Amelia felt herself moving relentlessly once more, toward the shadowy graveyard yawning before her, the spectral darkness consuming Amelia's mind even before it could devour her body. But suddenly, as if the wind was blowing from a different direction, Amelia felt herself moving away from the abyss and then falling into darkness, a feeling of vertigo causing her to feel as if she was spinning headfirst like Alice plummeting

down a cosmic rabbit hole at lightning speed.

All at once, Amelia felt she was nothing. Not as if she didn't exist – it was more like the nothing that causes everything to make sense. Like the space between written words, or the nothing in music – the silence, the momentary pause that allows creative genius to shine. She was not breathing. It was as if the universe had inhaled her and she was the nothing between the in-breath and the out-breath. How long she was in this place she would never know; without matter and space there is no time. Yet from the midst of nothingness and timelessness a sensation began to emerge.

She first became aware of the scent of pine, and though she had never smelled this particular fragrance in her current lifetime – she instantly knew she was in a Siberian cedar forest. Her eyes slowly opened to a steely gray sky still marked with the waning light of last night's stars, like softly glowing pin-pricks in a domed carnival tent. Cotton-candy clouds, pink in the reflected light of the predawn sun, infused the forest glade with a tender glow. Amelia was on a soft, fragrant cushion of pine needles beneath massive, ancient trees that towered over her, but she wasn't alone. All around her young men were sleeping in this woodland world, wrapped in capes to ward off the crisp night air.

As she reached up to push her hair away from her eyes she realized her hair was cropped short, and she knew she was a woman pretending to be a man. All at once, Amelia realized she wasn't remembering a past-life, she was actually in it; having the full experience, all the while knowing that part of her was still lying next to Matthew by the creek.

But here she was, suddenly inside a body she knew had been

hers in a past life, looking out through eyes that had been hers in that lifetime. She even knew her name was Sasha, but she couldn't quite understand how all the pieces fit together. Were they somehow sharing space? Did Sasha feel slightly possessed by her sudden entrance?

Even as these questions were going through her mind, she knew the answer. She'd been called back by Sasha – Amelia's past self – to this very moment.

Chapter 5

The only way to begin to understand what was happening to Amelia is to imagine that, not just in your current life, but throughout time, space and dimensions, you lose parts of yourself; either because you've unconsciously given your energy away, often to someone you deeply love, or a part of you has been taken from you.

These missing parts are often lost through shock, feelings of betrayal, or intense grief. Not only in the past, but because past and future are happening all at once, these soul fragments can be lost in the future as well. (Most people feel at some time or another that something is missing in their lives; what they don't realize is that the missing part is more often than not a part of themselves.)

Though Amelia wasn't conscious of missing parts of her soul, Sasha, the woman Amelia had been in her past-life, was completely aware of all parts of herself; past, present, and future.

In the moment Amelia's spirit was being extracted from her body and irrevocably drawn toward a black hole by forces beyond her control, Sasha saw the same event in dreamtime and woke with a start. Sitting bolt-upright, on-fire with anxiety, she could feel dark forces wreathing around her trying to annihilate her future-self. Knowing there is nothing more powerful than human intention, Sasha whispered vehemently, *I now call back all parts of myself, throughout time, space and all dimensions.*

In that instant, Amelia's unyielding path toward the black hole changed course and brought her to the moment where she

smelled the cedar trees Sasha was smelling, felt the soft bed of pine needles Sasha was feeling, and was looking through Sasha's eyes.

Amelia was a silent observer watching events as they occurred, and at the same time she was experiencing everything from emotions to physical sensations exactly as they were playing out for Sasha.

To understand what this feels like, try watching a movie without the music soundtrack. No matter how wonderful the actors are or how intense the plot is, it's the music that inspires emotion in the audience.

Amelia was experiencing everything happening to Sasha, but from Amelia's perspective, as the observer, there was no music – so she was aware of everything happening, but she wasn't emotionally involved.

As the silent observer, Amelia had no influence over what was happening, however, she had the unique perspective of knowing her future lifetime while observing herself thousands of years earlier. Yet what surprised Amelia the most was the strength and energy in her body, and how alert and quick her mind felt.

Amelia heard a whistle. It sounded like the early morning trill of a songbird, but all the men instantly and silently leapt to their feet. In moments horses appeared and stood patiently in front of their riders. Amelia scrambled to her feet as the horse that was obviously hers, a sturdy dappled, copper-colored palomino with a long white mane and thick, wavy tail, appeared before her bobbing its head up and down while eyeing an apple on the ground.

Two swords lay on the ground next to her. Sasha placed the swords in the belt around her waist, one sword on each hip, then held out the apple for her horse. The horse dropped its head to

take the apple from her hand and in one fluid motion Sasha swung her leg over the horse's neck – and as it raised its head, Sasha slid effortlessly onto its back.

Mostly riding bareback, the men left the campsite without a word. The majority of the men were in their twenties but a few were in their teens, so Sasha's lack of facial hair wasn't noticeable. Amelia realized that all the men knew Sasha was a woman, and respected her; she was simply hiding this fact because she didn't want to stand out in battle.

For generations the Vedruss had lived in peace, but war had been thrust upon them. Less than a hundred men had spent the night on the outskirts of a small village, and though the sun had not risen yet, children ran out to greet them with wreaths woven from a variety of grasses and fresh herbs.

A little girl running alongside Sasha reached up to hand her a wreath. Sasha smiled warmly and thanked the girl as she slipped the wreath over her forehead in the same fashion as the rest of the soldiers.

A few minutes after leaving the village they came to the edge of a flat rock plateau. Without even seeing the valley below Amelia knew it was a broad expanse with a river running languidly through it. Amelia knew that as Sasha, she would often watch the sun set behind the distant mountains and ride her horse home by moonlight.

In this moment, a gentle breeze sprang up out of nowhere, blowing the softening night sky into a softer blue. The soft, pink clouds had turned into vanilla cream and hovered high in the firmament, reflecting the golden tones of the morning sun shimmering at the edge of the horizon. This time of year the

meadows were speckled with colorful, fragrant wildflowers, but instead of the wind-swept scent of grass and flowers, a sickening burnt odor overwhelmed Sasha's senses.

The soldiers all dismounted and crept to the edge of the precipice, lying on their stomachs to observe the view below. Horror seized Sasha and took her breath away. A deep, unimaginable sorrow tugged wretchedly at her heart as she looked down at a small village, freshly torched to the ground, with smoke spiraling from ashen heaps that had once been homes and gardens. Just beyond the wreckage, extending as far as the eye could see, the landscape was dotted, not with wildflowers, but with tents and battle equipment crushing the delicate beauty of the once pristine land.

Over a thousand horses were in the cavalry and hundreds more were there for pulling the heavy equipment. Campfires were burning and thousands of soldiers were milling about, but they didn't seem to be preparing for battle.

Amelia had access to all of Sasha's memories and feelings, but in the same way that you don't think about all of your memories at once, Amelia found that relevant memories emerged along with Sasha's current thoughts and feelings. In this way, Amelia found herself gradually piecing together her life from that time period. The moment Amelia saw the village, she first felt sorrow and then Sasha's blood boiling; all at once she knew exactly what had happened.

At this time in history, the Vedruss people had no cities, but they had a vast number of settlements that extended throughout what is now known as Russia. Mystical accounts of a lost civilization, a Shangri-la of sorts, referring to the Vedruss' remarkable health

and longevity, and the extraordinary flavor, size and color of their produce, had gained the ear of the Caesar himself.

Hoping to avail himself of this acclaimed fountain of youth, and expand his empire in the process, Caesar sent an elite Roman legion of five thousand highly trained warriors to Russia. They set up their camp a mere stone's throw from the first small settlement they came to.

A homing pigeon delivered the news to Sasha's village -- the Imperial Roman Army had burned down the nearby settlement. The village elder had been locked in a cage and the villagers had been shackled as slaves for their fearless refusal to feed the dark forces of Rome with food from their gardens. Shortly thereafter, Roman military runners arrived with a message stating that each village was to send representatives to pay tribute to the most powerful country of all. Those unable to pay would be taken into slavery or die.

On the appointed day when all the elders were expected to gather at the camp, the last thing the commander-in-chief expected was ninety young men, including Sasha in disguise, walking into camp at dawn leading their horses. Though they had no armor, helmets or shields, it was obvious from the swords at their sides that these men were prepared to fight.

The young warriors all stood quietly in front of a large carpeted podium adorned with red silk fabric trimmed in gold. On the dais stood a throne and a massive metal cage where Rasa, the Vedruss elder, was imprisoned like a giant bird with nothing more than a bowl of water.

Duty-bound, the commander, well dressed but completely disheveled with his black hair at odds with his head, climbed

the steps and wearily flopped on the throne with a cluster of red grapes in his hand. One foot was propped on the velvet cushioned pedestal, while his other sprawled out, as one who had indulged his senses excessively the night before and had no business seeing the sun prior to noon. With a yawn and a loud belch he surveyed the men apathetically.

Much like a fat cat toying with a mouse, the commander tossed grape after grape at Rasa through the bars of the cage while indulging in his egocentric discourse. “Rasa, I’ve ordered the elders of your settlements to pay tribute and hear the decrees of our Emperor. Where are they? And why are these lads here?” he added, throwing another grape through bars. “Stand up when I speak to you!” he commanded.

White haired Rasa appeared to be no more than forty, but in fact he was well over one-hundred years old. When he stood up in his cage, he was impressively tall, even amidst the elite warriors standing on the platform. Though pitifully thin, he was nothing like a man starved and mentally beaten into submission; Rasa’s blue eyes were blazing and his passion was palpable.

With calm certainty belying the apparent hopelessness of his situation, Rasa responded in a surprisingly relaxed manner, as if he already knew the outcome. “The elders know what you want. They don’t like you, and they’ve decided not to meet someone they don’t like. You are here to do battle. These lads look ready to fight.” Then looking directly at the young men he added, “Is that so?” The young man leading the group gravely nodded in agreement.

“This is absurd!” bellowed the commander – thinking of what a waste it would be to end up with a bunch of dead bodies instead

of slaves for the emperor. “Old man, these lads will listen to you, tell them to surrender now and I’ll spare their lives. They will become slaves, but at least they won’t die senselessly.”

Rasa addressed the men. “As you know, these forces are unequal to your own.”

The commander relaxed a bit in the knowledge that Rasa would talk some sense into these impetuous young men, and whispered to a guard to prepare for the prisoners.

The elder continued, “My sons, your thoughts move swiftly – I ask that you spare the lives of these men. Do not kill them all. Teach them to put down their weapons and forever turn away from the games of war.”

Exasperated, the commander barked, “You have just ordered the death of all these men! I’ll give the orders now!”

“It’s too late. They understand what I’ve asked... and they won’t kill you.”

Before the commander could respond, the young warriors leapt onto their horses and galloped at full speed toward the main camp. The commander ordered a detachment of archers to shoot, and though they were ill prepared for the moment, they finally dispatched a round of arrows. But just as the arrows came within range, the warriors jumped off of their horses and ran beside them as the arrows shot past, a hissing blur just above their heads.

As soon as they got close to the Roman troops the Vedruss soldiers split into two groups. One group circled around the troops that had gathered together, and the other group, which Sasha was in, began cutting through the troops that were still hastily trying to come together in the midst of unforeseen chaos.

Amelia experienced Sasha’s childhood memories and another

piece of that lifetime began to fall into place. From childhood all Vedruss children played games and created artwork with both hands. They were not only equally adept on both sides of their bodies, but this also developed both hemispheres of the brain equally, causing their minds to be lightning fast. There was nothing considered more important in the world of the Vedruss than the ability to accelerate their thinking. They knew that no opponent, no matter how powerful, could outmaneuver one who could think more quickly.

Unlike their Roman counterparts who used ten percent of their mental capacity at best, the Vedruss accessed one hundred percent of their intellectual abilities. In so doing they could send and receive information telepathically; this was as natural to them as it would be for someone to speak their own native language.

To understand the speed of the Vedruss thought, imagine a bullet coming toward you. To a slow moving mind, the bullet moves with invisible speed. But if your mind moves more quickly than a bullet, then from your perspective, the bullet would appear to be in slow motion. This is why people often describe an accident as happening in slow motion – their mind has departed the confines of the body and is observing the event from an unencumbered mental perspective; hence, the appearance of the event taking place slowly.

Amelia wanted to understand more about the way children played with both hands and how that affected their abilities as adults, but her attention was brought back to the moment.

Still running on the ground, with a sword in each hand and without armor to slow her down, Sasha was able to disarm or wound her opponents without so much as a scratch on her body.

Yet she wasn't a trained warrior. None of them were.

Suddenly Amelia understood what was happening when the elder told the Vedruss warriors, your thoughts move swiftly... I ask that you spare the lives of these men; in that moment, in Sasha's mind, Amelia saw a living image of the sword games they played as children, followed by the more complex versions they played as adults where they relied on telepathy to outmaneuver their opponents.

While the Romans were hearing words, the Vedruss elder was simultaneously projecting mental images which were seen clearly by all the young warriors. From Amelia's perspective it was much like viewing a movie where she was being shown exactly how the entire battle would play out. Every Vedruss warrior saw himself and the other soldiers in this mental movie and instantly knew exactly what to do.

Even before she began fighting, Sasha knew they didn't need to kill anyone. The images in her mind, sent by the elder, showed disarmed and wounded troops littering the battlefield, subsequently stopping the reserve soldiers from making any headway or taking over for the original troops.

In her mind's eye Sasha saw her group cutting its way back to the tent of the commander-in-chief and taking him hostage. This was exactly what they did. They put a gunnysack over the commander's head, tied it at his waist, and threw him over the rump of a horse. In the meantime, Sasha released Rasa the elder from his cage and gave him a horse.

Communicating to his troops through mental imagery, the young commander of the Vedruss showed his warriors how they would get the commander out of the camp. Following the projected

images, they created a protective oval with the commander-in-chief at the center. But rather than return the way they had come, they pushed forward until they'd passed through the throng of soldiers.

In comparison to the speed of her thoughts as Sasha, Amelia felt as if she'd been sleepwalking through her entire life. To Amelia's amazement, Sasha paid no attention to the fact that she was surrounded by seasoned soldiers twice her size. She focused on each one as if she was playing a game.

In the same way that modern day children and adults play baseball or soccer, Vedruss children and adults played a game with a sword in each hand. The sword tips were dipped in vegetable dye, and the point of the game was to 'tag' your opponents with the dye, without harming them. The highest points were awarded not for tagging spots that were fatal, such as the heart or throat, but places that were the most difficult to access, such as fingertips or toes. As children they learned to play one-on-one, but as adults they played all at once – sometimes one against many, and sometimes in teams.

Having practiced this game her entire life, Sasha's mental focus caused her to be flawlessly accurate and utterly unafraid. From the point of view of an observer it would appear that all of the Vedruss had eyes in the back of their heads, but in fact, they knew how to go out of body while fighting.

Imagine sitting in a class and listening to a teacher while daydreaming at the same time – it's like being two places at once. In a similar way, the Vedruss were fighting while daydreaming that they were high above the battleground observing everything that was happening – except in their case, they were seeing exactly

what was occurring. And they were capable of seeing what was coming as if it was a battle scene playing out in slow motion.

Each one also held the mental image of themselves and all the other Vedruss warriors safely on the other side of the battlefield galloping away. Exactly as they'd envisioned it, they all jumped on their horses and galloped to the top of a nearby hill. All of the young warriors, except two watchmen, then jumped off their horses and lay in the grass with their arms outstretched, falling immediately asleep while their horses grazed nearby.

This may seem like something that could never happen in real life – because most people rarely experience anything in the way they pictured it in their minds – but in fact, this is part of Russian history that has been maintained in such strict secrecy that there are only a handful of people alive who know this is true. The Vedruss practiced a form of white magic that disappeared from the Earth thousands of years ago – along with unicorns and most of the faerie kingdom. To date, most of what has been called white magic is actually a form of black magic because it tries to bring about a change that does not include the best possible outcome for every living being.

True white magic is harmless – this form of magic cannot be tainted or used selfishly; it simply won't work unless the intention of those performing the magic is for the highest good of all. This is why Rasa the elder said, I ask that you spare the lives of these men. Teach them to put down their weapons and forever turn away from the games of war.

By asking all of the Vedruss warriors to intend the highest good for all, knowing that the Roman soldiers were simply doing their job and following orders, Rasa was activating ancient white

magic – which allowed the direct transmission of assistance from the unseen realms.

But the battle wasn't over yet.

Chapter 6

Back in the Roman camp the officers were blaming each other for the colossal fiasco that now ensued. Without their commander-in-chief they argued about who should take charge and what should be done next. At long last, after much arguing and deliberation, it was decided they would send the majority of their cavalry – nearly a thousand troops – after the Vedruss, with a few hundred in reserve following at a distance.

The moment the troops began leaving the camp a Vedruss watchman blew his horn waking the men and Sasha. Now well rested, thanks to the time wasted with all the internal chaos at the Roman camp, they immediately jumped up and began running alongside their horses.

It took some time, but the cavalry gradually began to catch up. When the Romans were nearly upon the Vedruss, they sounded their battle horn. The Roman soldiers whipped and spurred their horses—already frothing at the mouth from the strain of the riders and all the armor being carried—into a full gallop. But at the same moment the Vedruss stopped running, jumped on their horses and galloped easily ahead.

The Roman soldiers, fully ignited by their close proximity to the Vedruss, kept whipping their horses onward trying to close the ever expanding gap between them. Finally they slowed down as their commander realized there was now an impossible distance between them.

The Vedruss stopped and gave the Roman commander and

Rasa fresh horses. Once again they dismounted and rested while the horses grazed. During this time the Roman cavalry pressed on without a break or water for their horses. At last the Romans spotted the Vedruss not too far ahead. Again their battle horn blasted and the cavalry whipped their horses into a gallop.

Springing into action, the Vedruss ran alongside their horses, only jumping on to gallop away when the Romans were a little more than an arrow's shot behind them.

At this point the frothing cavalry horses, beaten to exhaustion, began falling to their knees; some horses fell over dead, pinning their riders underneath them. At last, the Roman cavalry commander called, All Rest! But it was too late. Horses were lying all over the field, and those that had not succumbed to fatigue were shaking from the energy expended.

The Vedruss warriors suddenly spun around and bore down on the fatigued cavalry. The Roman soldiers had no horses, and though they tried to retreat back to the reserve cavalry, it was hopeless. Many fell to the ground in exhaustion after a vain attempt to run in their armor. The few that were able to fight were wounded or disarmed by the Vedruss, but the Vedruss didn't touch the soldiers who had fallen.

Finally, seeing all the Vedruss fresh and well rested, with a sword in each hand, the Roman cavalry dropped to their knees, placed their swords on the ground in front of them, and surrendered.

The Romans anticipated the wrath of the Vedruss, but instead the Vedruss dismounted, removed the wreaths from their heads, and applied the grass and herbs to stop the blood flow from the wounded soldiers. Attending to their wounds the Vedruss spoke

to the Roman soldiers about a way of life in harmony with man and nature, and without war.

On the battlefield, the commander-in-chief was safely returned to his regiment. At the same time, Sasha was applying some of the herbs from her wreath to stop the blood flow from a gash on a young Roman soldier's head. Without a word he looked at her as she spoke soothingly to him and dressed his wounds.

He was tall, deeply tanned, and very rugged looking for one who was barely twenty, but his eyes were deep, liquid brown. It seemed to Sasha as if he could see right through her; and she felt strangely weak, though she wasn't tired.

There was a deep familiarity about him which made no sense. Sasha knew she'd never met him before, yet when it was time to move on to the next soldier, she felt a gripping feeling in her heart about leaving him, as if she was somehow meant to know him. She hesitated, looking into his eyes as he returned her gaze.

Amelia felt the familiarity Sasha was experiencing, and she wondered if this soldier could possibly be Matthew in the same past lifetime. But she was only an observer—she couldn't ask the soldier if he was Matthew anymore than Matthew could respond through the soldier, since he too would only have been an inner-observer.

Finally the Vedruss' horn blew calling all of them together. Sasha gathered with the other Vedruss warriors, but she couldn't help looking back to see the Roman soldier. Much to Sasha's surprise, he had removed all of his armor, and was walking away from the battlefield, following the Vedruss at a distance.

That night as the Vedruss camped out under the stars, Sasha wondered about the soldier. She fell asleep staring up at the stars

wondering who he was and why he seemed so familiar.

Suddenly Amelia felt the familiar feeling of moving out of her body as she floated up and away, and watched the Vedruss camp become smaller and smaller until it disappeared along with the Earth. As if she'd entered into another world, she found herself observing the creation of the physical universe, and the jealousy that ensued on behalf of the master-creators who were powerless to change it or create a physical world of their own.

This time Amelia could sense that the master-creators had devised a plot for the undoing of creation, but what was it?

Once again Amelia found herself at the Beginning of Time – but it was not at all what she'd been taught in school. The Earth was not a roiling mess of volcanic ooze – it was a pristine garden filled with every creature known to man. Even the most magical, supposedly-mythical creatures—like faeries, unicorns and dragons—were there as living, breathing beings upon the Earth. Amelia found herself in the middle of a lush, natural garden watching a man as he contemplated a faerie standing in the palm of his hand. The man didn't see Amelia because she wasn't there in a physical body, she was simply an observer. As such, Amelia was able to comprehend everything about her environment in an instant.

Surrounded by fruits and vegetables that grew year-round, the man had everything he could possibly need or desire. He could walk or ride a horse as easily as he could disappear from one place and reappear in another. He was capable of going anywhere in the universe with nothing more than a thought. If there was anything the man wanted, he had only to have a heart-felt desire and instantly the object materialized before him.

As Amelia watched, the faerie on the man's hand was pointing to a plump, fuzzy, striped insect that was laboriously climbing up and down, gathering pollen from flowers and, ultimately, returning to its hive in a massive banyan tree.

The faerie crossed her arms, stamped her foot, and flapped her gossamer wings. "Don't you see how much easier it would be for that poor creature if he just had wings?!" she exclaimed. "We faeries have been put in charge of all this," she added, stretching both of her arms wide to include everything in the garden surrounding them. "We can't change the blueprint of a bug and make his life easier, but you can! Look at the poor creature – he needs wings!"

The man looked at one of the bugs, closed his eyes in deep concentration and in the next moment the little creature had wings exactly like the faerie's. The man opened his eyes and was delighted with his creation, but the wings were so tiny the poor creature couldn't fly.

The faerie looked at the man, rolled her eyes in a very faerie-like way, and said in a high pitched voice, "Don't you see he needs bigger wings?"

The man thought for a moment, then smiled brightly, "I have a better plan! I'll add to the blueprint the command that these wings will defy gravity! Ha! That's it! This creature will be a reminder throughout time and space that we create our own reality with nothing more than a thought."

In the next moment every plump, fuzzy, striped bug had tiny, gossamer faerie wings that did indeed defy gravity. Bumble bees began buzzing around the garden, happily flying past the man and faerie, dancing from one flower to the next. The faerie shimmered

with pleasure and flitted back to the banyan tree, feeling extremely pleased with herself.

The man sat on the soft grass and felt complete gratitude and awe for his life and everything surrounding him. And in that moment a sweet, soothing feminine voice came into his mind. Though no words were spoken, Amelia could hear everything that was being said. It was clear that this unseen being had been in contact with the man for some time, and that she had befriended him. But Amelia knew instantly the one speaking was a master-creator trying to discover the secret to creating her own physical world – and seduce the man into destroying his world in the process.

Again Amelia felt the familiar misty feeling, a mental fog rising up before her eyes. She knew she was waking up and she tried by sheer force of will to see back into her dream. She couldn't see anything, but she could feel that it somehow had to do with a fundamental mistake on the part of mankind, and that it was directly connected to the seductive influence of the envious master-creators. But the vision began slipping away, back into the ethers of timelessness.

Amelia's mind was alert but she couldn't quite open her eyes. Normally the soldiers were awake and riding by sunrise, but the warmth of the sun told her it was unusually late. She woke with a start thinking she must have somehow been left behind. Amelia's eyes flashed open. She was sitting on soft grass, with morning sunlight sparkling on the pond in front of her.

At first Amelia couldn't make sense of what she was seeing. Where were the Vedruss soldiers? Was she still dreaming? Then she realized she was braiding her own waist-length brown hair.

Amelia knew she was still Sasha, but the length of her hair told her that several years had gone by. And as she observed her surroundings she could feel this was her home.

On one side of the pond was a forest with majestic cedar, birch, aspen and spruce trees. In another direction wildflowers grew amidst a small vegetable garden with a beehive. In the distance was an orchard with bird cherry and wild apple trees filled with fruit. Just beyond the orchard was a long fence composed of raspberry bushes which surrounded the property. The delicately scented air was fresh and cool.

In the next moment Amelia heard running through the forest. A barefooted five year old boy wearing a light woven tunic and trousers, shot out of the woods hotly pursued by a wolf. The boy ran up the side of a tree, pushed himself off with his legs and somersaulted over in a back flip. Landing on his feet, he ran off in the opposite direction, laughing as the wolf's inertia caused her to continue running past the tree.

Smiling the lad strode up to Amelia and said, "Mama Sasha, I have a present for you!" He dug into his pocket and produced a ripe, red apple which he handed to her. "Thank you Alexei," said Sasha tousling his curly, strawberry-blond hair as she looked into his sparkling green eyes.

At the same moment the wolf snuck up and licked Alexei's hand. Laughing he cuffed her on the neck and shot off in the direction of a huge cedar tree. He ran up the side of the tree and somersaulted as he had before, but this time the wolf knew what to expect. Before he reached the tree she slowed down and then sat on her haunches until he hit the ground, then she licked his arm and took off.

Alexei tried over and over again to outsmart the wolf, but he couldn't. Finally he flopped down next to Sasha, utterly frustrated. His mother said, "Alexei, first you need to train your thought. You have to think through any moves you're going to make, actually try to feel them before you do them."

"But I've already done that Mama," said Alexei, feeling hopeless.

"Well, sweetheart," replied his mother, "it's not just your thought – you have to take into consideration what the wolf is thinking. See it in your mind, and then act accordingly."

First Alexei tried running twice as fast, but the wolf was quicker, and no matter what Alexei did, the wolf knew the trick and could anticipate what was to come. As Amelia watched, through Sasha's eyes, she racked her brain for the solution to the problem, but it seemed obvious there was no way a five year old boy was going to outrun a wolf.

Finally he walked up to his mother, looked her in the eye and said, "Can you give me a hint?"

As Sasha, Amelia felt herself smiling warmly. "Before you can even ask a question, the answer must already exist."

Alexei kept staring at her. "In order for you to ask the question... 'What is two plus two?' ...the answer four already exists. If you think there's no answer to your problem, then you can't find the answer. But if you realize that an answer already exists, and if you'll think more quickly... you'll discover you can think faster than the wolf. And when you do, she won't be able to catch you."

Suddenly Alexei's face lit up. He dashed headlong toward the tree with the wolf only a few feet behind him. As he approached

the tree, the wolf slowed down to wait for him to leap into the air and somersault off the tree. Alexei did leap into the air, but this time his body passed within an inch of the trunk and he kept running while the bewildered wolf sat wondering where Alexei had gone.

Alexei came back glowing. "I got it! I thought quickly for myself, but I had to think more quickly than the wolf could think for herself – and then I put it all together at just the right time! The wolf will never be faster than me again!" He then took off and performed a whole series of tricks. The wolf was completely unable to catch him.

Finally Alexei sat next to his mother and said, "I know you have a secret – will you tell me now?"

Sasha laughed and looked proudly at her son. "Yes."

"Today's the day, isn't it?" he added.

"Yes it is my darling," said Sasha warmly. "Come lie next to me and we shall go together as our second-selves."

Lying in the fragrant grass they held hands and Amelia felt the warm sensation of leaving her body, but this time there was no sense of movement, she was instantly standing with her son in a place she remembered well. They were on the very same cliff where she first saw the Imperial Roman Army. To Amelia's astonishment the Romans had returned – this time there were at least ten thousand troops spread across the valley as far as the eye could see.

"They look like ants," said Alexei lightly. "Is this the same army the Vedruss warriors fought?"

"Not exactly," said his mother. "They are from Rome, but these are different men."

“How do you know some of them aren’t the same?” Alexei asked curiously.

“That is an excellent question, Alexei,” said Sasha smiling as she looked deeply into her son’s eyes. “Well, after the battle we formed a group... there are several of us who now keep track of what’s going on in Rome.”

“Is it dangerous?” asked Alexei, his eyes wide.

“No, sweetheart,” said Sasha comfortingly, “it’s not dangerous at all. We never leave the forest, we go to Rome as our second-selves so we’re invisible to the Romans, but we have access to everything from conversations to secret communications.”

“So how do you know that none of the soldiers down there were here before?”

“When the army left after the battle, we took turns tracking the commander until he led us back to Rome. We listened to everything he told Caesar. Not one man was willing to go to war... even the commander himself refused to ever fight again.

“When the commander left, Caesar ordered every man in the battalion to be sent to a different part of the empire, and each soldier was ordered to never speak of what happened or else they would be killed.

“For generations a secret diary had been passed down from one Caesar to the next. I saw it myself. In the diary he warned the future Caesars to leave the Vedruss alone. But when Caesar died, his successor saw him as a coward and decided to try again – but to be on the safe side he doubled the size of his army.”

“So you knew they were coming?” said Alexei, wide-eyed.

“Yes, we’ve known for quite some time,” said his mother warmly. “It takes a long time for an army to get here.”

“So what are we going to do?” said Alexei enthusiastically. “Are the Vedruss warriors riding into battle again? Can I watch?” he added hopefully.

“No, something much better than that,” said Sasha. “It’s just going to be you and me.”

“Really!” said Alexei, hugging his mother. “So what’s the plan?”

“I’m going to pretend to be your big sister,” said Sasha. “And we’re going to deliver a message to the commander-in-chief of the army.”

Alexei lit up as if every wish he’d ever dreamed of had come true in that moment, “Mamochka, people always think you’re my sister!”

“I know,” said his mother smiling, “that’s what made me think of it.”

“What about Papa? Will he be back in time to join us?” asked Alexei hopefully.

“No darling, your papa has been talking to many people... and those people have been helping us spread a special message to all of the Vedruss settlements.”

“I bet Papa will be disappointed that he can’t join us,” said Alexei glumly.

“But think how proud he’ll be of you,” said Sasha smiling brightly at her son.

Alexei beamed as he thought of his father and said, “When do we go?”

“Let’s get our ponies and go now,” said his mother.

In the next moment they were back in their bodies. Alexei whistled loudly; two distinctly different sounds. In moments two

ponies came galloping down a path from a meadow bordering the forest. Each pony had a slender rope at the base of its neck, just above their withers. They stood attentively waiting, but still managed to playfully nip each other like a couple of squabbling children whenever possible.

Whistling to his pony, a plump, white mare appeared beneath a tree swishing her white tail as Alexei swung down from a branch and landed squarely on her back. Sasha jumped nimbly onto her own steed, the same palomino she'd ridden into battle years earlier.

Except for the fact that her hair was now long and in braids, Sasha could easily have passed for a young boy, as she did several years earlier. Imitating the dress of Vedruss children, she wore a simple, knee length tunic, belted at the waist, and she had woven flowers into her braided hair. Sasha was so petite, and small breasted, she appeared to be no more than eleven or twelve years old. Riding a large pony added to the illusion.

In a satchel that lay across her pony's withers, Sasha had packed water, fruit, and a small bottle of oil that had been pressed from pine nuts and herbal flowers. Using nothing more than the string around their pony's necks, Sasha and Alexei rode quietly through the forest until they were just above the Roman camp, but still hidden by dense undergrowth.

They left their ponies and set off at a quick pace on a trail leading downhill to the edge of the meadow, now buried beneath Roman soldiers and equipment. As they walked Sasha spoke quietly to Alexei. "All you have to do is keep saying that we're here because our parents are busy at a festival... and that we have a message for the commander. If anyone tries to talk to me... and I have to respond... start arguing with me. Keep saying that you're

the one who's supposed to deliver the message. The less I talk, the better," his mother added with an inscrutable smile. "The Romans won't expect us to know their language..."

"But Mama, we can speak and understand any language... can't they?"

"No darling."

"You mean their parents only speak to them in one language... they don't grow up speaking in all different languages the way that we do?"

"Well, most people only speak the language of their own country, and that's why they would never think that we would know a language other than our own. We will understand everything they say, but they'll assume we know nothing. So don't use too many of their words.

"But when we talk to the commander, here's what you'll say. 'Our parents are too busy to come. But they want you to know there's a storm coming and you need to go and never come back.' Can you remember that?"

Alexei nodded his head vigorously, barely able to contain his enthusiasm for getting to play such a fun game.

Before they reached the meadow a Roman soldier stepped out from behind a tree with his sword drawn, yelling, "Halt!" Seeing they were only children, he motioned for them to go back up the path.

Instead of obeying Alexei yelled loudly, "Message for commander... We..." he added putting his palm to his chest, "have message. Commander. Message!"

Alexei played his part with such conviction the soldier finally took them into the camp. Sasha held Alexei's hand, and just like

siblings they jostled and pushed at each other; a pinch here, an elbow there... they made faces at each other and when one would get ahead, the other would try to take the lead without getting into trouble with the guard.

As the observer, Amelia was stunned. She thought of herself as fairly brave, given some of her experiences in New York City—the ones she hadn't yet confessed to her parents—but she was always nervous and anxious. But as Sasha, she wasn't courageous; she was totally fearless.

She could feel Sasha's feelings. One part of her was playing with her son while holding an image of herself as ten years old. Another part of Sasha, her second-self, was floating above the Roman camp taking in everything that was being said, done or thought.

Sasha knew she was being perceived as a ten-year old girl by the soldiers who saw her; she could read their minds easily. She also saw a dark cloud looming in the distance. In her mind Sasha focused on the cloud, then imaged it right above the camp, beckoning for it to come closer.

Though there wasn't even a hint of a breeze, the cloud formation began to move. If any of the soldiers had been looking up at the sky they might have wondered why the massive cloud was so dark amidst such a clear blue sky.

Finally they reached the platform outside the commander's tent. From within they heard the commander bellowing, "What is it now? I sent out orders for the elders to pay tribute! You're telling me they sent a couple of CHILDREN?"

Standing massive in the doorway of the tent, looming menacingly above Sasha and Alexei, a tall, cloaked man with a

stern, ominous face surveyed the children, sphinx-like, from beneath dark, jutting brows. Bright sunlight glinted harshly on his hawk-nosed face as he hissed, “When they’ve delivered their message we’ll take them as slaves.”

Then with an angry sweep of his arm, he seized his cloak, swung it dramatically round as he strode menacingly up to the children. With a haughty smirk he said scornfully, “Your parents were supposed to come and pay tribute. Tell me little girl, why have they sent two children?”

Sasha stood with her head down and peered up at the man as if she was extremely shy. “Our parents are busy...”

“Wait! Wait!” yelled Alexei, “I’m supposed to give the message. It’s my turn! You got to give the message last time!” Back and forth they squabbled as ominous, roiling black clouds drew closer and closer.

“STOP!” bellowed the commander. “If you two argue any more, I’ll throw you in that cage myself!”

Alexei looked questioningly at his mother as she gave him a slight nod, “Our parents are too busy to come...” he said. “They’re at a festival. But they want you to know there’s a storm coming and you need to go and never come back again.”

In that moment several things happened. Sasha pulled the bottle of oil out of her pocket and poured it on Alexei’s head and her own head. The repugnant odor was so repulsive the commander and the guards surrounding them took an involuntary step backwards. The black cloud formation was now hovering directly over the camp, blocking the sun, causing everything to darken as a deep, disturbing hum vibrated through the camp.

All at once screaming and yelling could be heard throughout

the camp as the commander and soldiers were attacked by millions of bees descended upon every person and creature in the area. Soldiers tried to tear off their armor as horses bucked and reared, pulling out the stakes they were tethered to and galloping away unencumbered by armor or riders.

In the ensuing pandemonium, Sasha held Alexei's hand and they slipped away, unnoticed. Despite the wild chaos in the camp, Alexei's piercing whistle caught the ponies' attention. Galloping down the path, across the meadow and into a safe pocket around Sasha and Alexei created by the stench of the oil that they had now wiped onto their arms and legs, the ponies skidded to a halt. Sasha helped Alexei onto his pony and then jumped onto her own. No one tried to stop them as they galloped through the camp and into the woods. Finally, they reached the cliff and could see the valley below.

Alexei surveyed the frenzied chaos at the Roman camp and said grimly, "Now they look like mad ants."

"Yes they do!" Sasha agreed, looking at her son proudly.

"I bet that Caesar person will think twice before sending his soldiers back here again!"

"I'll bet you're right," said Sasha smiling broadly, ruffling her son's hair.

As they rode home, Amelia reflected on the defeat of the Roman army by the Vedruss – not once, but twice – and realized these events had never been recorded. And over fifteen thousand soldiers were involved; so how was it possible that these extraordinary incidents had been erased from history?

Then an even more disconcerting thought crossed Amelia's mind. She'd never heard of the Vedruss. She knew that her

lifetime as Sasha took place in Russia during the time of the Roman Empire. But she'd never read anything about the Russian people that far back in history; which seemed odd given that there was historical information about every other culture.

How could an entire race be wiped clean from history, as if they'd never existed? Amelia wondered. And who in the world is powerful enough to rewrite history and make an entire culture vanish into thin air?

That night as a full moon rose above the tree tops and shimmered over their pond, a tired but ecstatically happy Alexei fell comfortably asleep in his mother's welcoming arms as she sang him a lullaby. Just moments later a horse and rider emerged from the dappled moonlight on the forest path and into clear view. A tall, handsome, powerful looking man dismounted and embraced his wife while kissing their sleeping son on his head.

No words were necessary. As his second-self he had seen everything that had happened that day, and from this perspective there were thousands of invisible Vedruss who had communicated their desires to their bees. Though the Vedruss as their second-selves were invisible to the Romans, the bees saw them clearly, and each hive followed its master, in some cases for many, many miles, until they converged at the outskirts of the camp and created a massive 'cloud.' Then all the Vedruss combined their thoughts with Sasha's image of the bees hovering over the camp and the cloud moved accordingly. Though the Romans never saw them, the Vedruss were prepared to show up in physical form if anything had gone wrong on the battlefield, or if Sasha and Alexei had been taken captive.

Alexei's proud father laid the sleeping boy on his chest and

wrapped his arm around Sasha, kissing her tenderly as nature sang its nighttime lullabies and moonlight sparkled diamonds on the dew-tipped grass.

Chapter 7

The moment Sasha began to dream, Amelia became more and more aware of a hard, cold surface beneath her body and a strangely flickering light. As her eyes opened, torch light from a golden holder on the wall to her left revealed a shadowy chamber of smooth stone blocks rising around her in the angular, sloping shape of a pyramid – the ceiling was so high it dissolved in eerie blackness.

Immediately Amelia knew four things: She was in another lifetime, she was a man named Alex, a prisoner in the Great Pyramid of Giza, and she was dying.

Since she had to wait for Alex's memories to occur naturally, Amelia was afraid she'd have trouble piecing together her lifetime as Alex. But the opposite occurred: With death close at hand Alex was contemplating his life, and Amelia found herself in a whirlwind of images and feelings.

As Alex's memories traced back over his lifetime, Amelia was shocked to recognize the pond and surrounding forest where she'd fallen asleep the night before; but there wasn't an orchard or a garden or the raspberry bush fence. All at once, she realized Alex must have lived there before it was a homestead: She had gone further back in time.

As the memories continued, Amelia saw Alex meet the woman who would become his wife. He took her to the forest glade and they sat together every evening imagining where they would plant a garden and an orchard, as well as fragrant flowers

that would fill their home with sweet scents, no matter which direction the breezes blew. They imagined planting a long row of raspberry bushes, side by side, surrounding their property – a fence that would last forever, give them fruit and privacy while keeping deer out of their gardens, yet this fence would feed their neighbors and passersby as well.

When the vision of their homestead was complete, Alex and Jenica visited every home in each of their villages and invited all of the families to their wedding. As they were enthusiastically welcomed into each home they complimented the owner on something they admired: a particularly beautiful tree or hardy plant, even an animal that served their host's family.

Alex, sitting on the cold stone floor of his cell, remembered his wedding day with such perfect clarity it could have happened the day before. Amelia not only saw the images going through Alex's mind, she could feel all the love he was feeling for Jenica and the guests at their wedding. But Amelia knew this memory was from many, many years prior to the present moment. She observed the wedding guests all dressed in soft, woven clothing, carrying seedlings or saplings from a plant or tree that Alex and Jenica had especially appreciated on their visit to each person's home.

Some of the guests brought animals. There was a puppy and a colt, as well as bear, fox and wolf cubs, and baby squirrels. All of the young animals came with their mothers, and they were all put in one pen together. As Alex remembered that day, his memory paused on the babies and mothers all together harmoniously in one pen; then his memory jumped ahead to the time when all the babies were first taught by their mothers to respectfully wait until

they were called upon for a task or to be stroked.

This may seem odd by modern standards, especially given that these were mainly wild animals, but the Vedruss had a very different relationship with animals; and plants and insects, for that matter.

No one really knew when this kinship with animals began, nor did they question the time honored practice of putting the baby animals together so they'd always be friends. No one remembered when mother animals first began training their off-spring to serve humans, or how that came to happen in the first place. This was not forced servitude, the way that animals today are treated. (And the idea of eating an animal to the Vedruss would be like eating your family pet). The animals lived happily and freely, and more than anything they all loved being given a task.

At the snap of a finger, a dozen squirrels would rush down from the treetops with the enthusiasm of a dog playing fetch. The young ones especially would push and jostle each other, hoping to be the one who'd be noticed first and invited closer with their pine nuts.

Alex remembered the first time the baby squirrels came to give him food – they had watched their mother and other squirrels feed humans countless times, but now it was their turn. As their mother carefully watched over them, Alex held his hand out, palm down. A baby squirrel quickly removed the shell from the pine nut, and waited, quivering with excitement until the moment when Alex turned his palm upward. In that moment, the squirrel rushed at top speed to Alex and placed its pine nut in the palm of Alex's hand.

But the other baby squirrels didn't approach until they were

invited, though it took a couple of motherly-reminders for a few of them. In thanks, Alex tickled the baby squirrel on its sweet-spot. Every animal had its own special sweet-spot—it could be on their back, belly, under the chin or behind their ears; Alex knew what each animal preferred, whether they wanted to be tickled, scratched or stroked gently.

The wolf, fox and bear cubs learned how to protect the family and gently play with children. In addition, the bear cub learned how to dig holes for root cellars and how to prepare the ground for a garden in the spring. The puppy was trained by its mother to bark with discernment and come when called, among other things.

Alex remembered the first time he rode his three year old colt. To go forward he simply squeezed with his legs; to stop he leaned backward; to back up he'd lean back a bit farther. Alex needed do nothing more than look in the direction he wanted to go. His horse would feel the slightest shift in his body and automatically go in the direction of his gaze.

All at once, Alex's memories returned to his wedding day. He remembered standing on a small hill, speaking of the vision he and Jenica had for their land and pointing to the place where they envisioned each tree and shrub. As Alex spoke, a wedding guest, holding the corresponding sapling or seedling, walked to the spot he mentioned. When all the guests were in place they planted their gifts; in less than half an hour all of the trees and bushes had been planted on the homestead. And since everyone from each village participated in this way at every wedding, there was never any envy or jealousy toward a neighbor because they all felt directly connected to the beauty of each property. Any time a neighbor

would pass by they would particularly notice the flourishing tree or bush they had planted, or how much everything had grown since that first day.

The only thing left to plant was their vegetable garden. The fruit and vegetable seeds were given to them, but never planted by others because every family would put a few seeds under their tongues and let the seeds soak for nine minutes. This allowed the seeds to absorb the DNA of each family member. When planted, these seeds would communicate to the rest of the garden the unique hereditary needs of the family. No disease existed among any of the Vedruss; their food prevented illness and the need for medicine.

Although families often shared with each other, no one grew fruits or vegetables to sell to others, nor would anyone dream of stealing from a neighbor. Their plants were meant for their family's needs specifically. Every family had only the property they needed. Alex and Jenica, like every other young couple, settled on about three acres. This gave them the space to have a forest, an orchard, a garden and a pond. And because the Vedruss only took care of their own families, no one worked—there was no need. All of their needs were provided for effortlessly by their natural surroundings.

After the wedding, Alex remembered standing with Jenica and seeing their home for the first time; it had been erected by the most talented carpenters in their villages in just two days. Amelia could feel herself as Alex, full of love for Jenica, all the villagers, his home and garden and animals.

As Alex's bright memories continued in the midst of his cold, empty chamber, Amelia saw herself, as Alex, conceive a child.

But it was nothing like anything she'd ever heard about or read. Alex remembered leaving his body as Jenica left hers, and as their second-selves, dancing among the stars, they were joined by a boy so radiant, he looked like a star himself. Dancing, laughing and singing – they conceived each other as the best family they could possibly imagine. Nine months later their shining son was born.

On that bright, spring day with his son cradled in his arms, Alex sang as he walked through the garden. Radiant with love for his newborn son, Alex noticed a solitary, ruby colored bud sprouting from a rosebush. In that moment he felt an intense desire for his son to smell the fragrance of a rose. Without thinking, Alex closed his eyes as he sang and imagined the rose in full, fragrant bloom. When Alex opened his eyes a few moments later, much to his surprise, the rosebud was completely open with a fragrance as delicate and sweet as he'd imagined.

Though he didn't understand how such a thing was possible, Alex was nonetheless delighted, and sat next to the rose hoping his sleeping son would dream of fragrant roses until he awoke to see the real one. Smiling at the thought of his son dreaming of roses, Alex closed his eyes again. Still singing softly, he imagined his son's delight in a few months hence when all of the wildflowers would bloom like radiant, colorful stars bursting all around the pond. He was so caught up in his vision he didn't realize he had fallen asleep until his son stirred in his arms. Alex opened his eyes and before him all the wildflowers were in full bloom. The meadow seemed to have been kissed by a rainbow and flecked with white flowers glowing like captured starlight amidst the explosion of color.

It was not unusual for Alex to close his eyes and imagine

something, but this was the first time that something had appeared before his eyes; not once, but twice in a matter of minutes.

Over the next few days Alex tried to understand what he had done. Suddenly he realized he was feeling more love than he'd ever felt before as he held his infant son; and he was singing at the same time. At this point Alex's memories moved more swiftly. Amelia saw herself, as Alex, practice creating through imaging, deeply feeling and singing until he had it down to a science. Imagining himself across the pond, he would instantly disappear from where he stood and reappear on the opposite side of the pond. But it was more than just imagining himself to be elsewhere.

First Alex visualized all the cells in his body, and then imagined the cells dispersing into space and gathering together in the place he desired. This took diligent thought and practice because he had to visualize every single aspect of his body down to the most microscopic detail—and in a single moment visualize the cells dispersing and gathering together perfectly. Even the tiniest error in mentally re-picturing his body, all the way down to the atomic level, would prevent his body from reforming properly after being dispersed in space.

Once Alex understood every aspect of teleportation, he realized he could go anywhere on the planet, in fact, anywhere in the cosmos. To avoid materializing at the bottom of the ocean, for instance, Alex traveled as his second-self first, then decided whether or not he needed to teleport. Finally he practiced going to other planets, though initially as his second-self, which was unaffected by lack of oxygen or any other unsuitable environment. But if the planet would sustain human life he could materialize on the planet as well.

As Amelia witnessed these events she couldn't help but wonder how she, as Alex, with the ability to come and go from other planets, could possibly be stuck in a prison, dying. But the memory rushed forward as Alex remembered in great detail teaching the Vedruss how to create using thought, feeling and sound; and then he moved on to teleportation.

Though Amelia had some experience of her second-self, it seemed to be out of her control. Leaving her body happened randomly, mainly when she was dreaming, but she had no idea how to consciously go into her second-self and travel. So when Alex remembered teaching the Vedruss how to move into their second-selves, Amelia gave his instructions her complete attention, hoping she'd be able to remember what she was learning; even after she was back in her own world.

Amelia's memories of her own recent past were more like snapshots – an image here and there, some images were clearer than others, but most of her memories were cloudy with only a brief, momentary light shining through. But Alex's memories were so detailed he remembered what he taught, word for word; and so did the Vedruss, who continued his teachings until his lessons in mental creation and teleportation spread throughout all of the settlements in Russia.

Before she could think about it further, a painful memory began to stir. In Alex's second-self travels he began to see a world filled with violent battles and constant destruction that had never existed for him. Alex believed with all his heart that if he could just share what he knew with others, they would benefit the way the Vedruss had, and their lives would be happy and prosperous.

And then Alex knew the best way to protect his family, the

Vedruss settlements, and further generations was to help others in the world find relief through the same methods he'd been teaching. The day he left his family he knew he might never return home.

And while for Alex this was a memory from years earlier, Amelia could feel the anguish of that decision. But even in her wildest imagination, she could never have conceived what was to come.

With his understanding of the science of imagery – which in the simplest terms would be understanding how to work with the vibration of thought, feeling and sound all at once – Alex was able to bring together six of the most powerful warring tribes.

First he showed each leader his unparalleled abilities, and then promised that he would teach one priest from each tribe how to do what he had demonstrated. He showed the leaders the fruitlessness of trying to dominate each other, and helped them see what would happen if they joined together using the tools he would teach them.

Alex taught the science of imagery to the six high priests. Using these techniques, along with their combined mental force, Alex and the priests built the pyramids of Egypt; without slaves and without physical force. Thought, feeling and sound were all that was required to create and move the massive stones into place.

The permanence of the pyramids was due to the potency of Alex's thought. The priests could create in the short-term, but Alex could create so powerfully that his creations withstood the test of time.

Alex's eyes opened as the torch flickered dimly in a tiny breeze caused by a single brick being removed from a doorway that was otherwise completely sealed with smooth, marble bricks. A low

voice, solemn and haunting said quietly, “Tell us how to create in perpetuity and we’ll tear down the wall and save your life.”

Weakly, Alex replied, “You cannot save my life for it is not yours to give or take. I told you the answer before you sealed me in this tomb and it has not changed. The power to create lasting creations that will be here thousands of years in the future...and to create more powerfully than any other man... is the power of love... desiring only to benefit all of mankind, and not just your selfish lust for power.

“I shall abide here. Do not touch me, or remove these walls.”

Amelia knew that as Alex she had chosen to die in the pyramid for a very specific reason, but as she tried to grasp what it was, she felt herself being drawn into a tube of spiraling white light.

Chapter 8

In the next moment Amelia opened her eyes. Lying beside her was Matthew with his eyes closed. Without thinking Amelia threw her arms around him, whispering breathlessly, “Matthew!”

Matthew’s eyes flashed open.

She continued, “Oh my God, I wasn’t sure what happened to you... or if you were okay!”

Surprised, he said, “What are you talking about? Nothing happened. I mean, at least not for me. We’ve only been at this for a couple of minutes – can’t you give me a little more time?”

Blinking in the bright sunlight, Amelia sat up without stopping to think what had happened or how it had happened. In a flash of inspiration, as if all of her lifetimes were coming together in that moment Amelia jumped up and said, “Matthew, I know exactly what to do! Come on!”

Swept away by Amelia’s enthusiasm, Matthew jumped up and followed her without question. She tried her best to explain what had happened to her as they hiked up the hill and traced their way back to the canyon labyrinth, to a place that Amelia remembered well.

“This is the spot where I had this feeling to turn back, but I couldn’t bring myself to tell you at the time. I can’t explain this, but we’re going to see ourselves coming along this path, and when we do I’m going to try to change what happened... Will you just sit with me and try to remember how you felt when you were in this part of the canyon?”

“Alright,” said Matthew gamely as he sat beside Amelia.

Amelia closed her eyes and drew on every thought and feeling she could access from her lifetime as Alex. In the next moment they heard their own footsteps and voices. But the third dimensional pair weren’t talking to each other – Amelia and Matthew were hearing the thoughts they had been thinking on that day, as they passed through the canyon.

Suddenly Amelia remembered something she had known about the Science of Imagery in her past lifetime as Alex and said forcefully, “Matthew, listen... we have to stop ourselves from going any further down that path. We can’t touch them... and they won’t be able to hear anything... but we can send images with our minds.

“But I don’t just mean ‘thinking in pictures’... we have to feel what’s coming if they don’t turn back... focus all of your thoughts and feelings toward what’s going to happen. Really feel how it felt to be dying and then focus all of that energy directly toward yourself as you hike, and I’ll do the same for myself.”

Just as the third-dimensional Amelia began wondering if they should turn back, her non-physical self – Amelia in the parallel world – closed her eyes and began visualizing the plateau – the broken cable, sitting in the dark with the temperature dropping, shivering uncontrollably in the cold, knowing she was dying. Amelia had complete access to all of her feelings – physical and emotional – as if she was right there having the experience again. She imagined squeezing everything together and then took this concentrated energy and felt it with every cell in her body while directing the feeling at her third-dimensional self.

In that moment the third-dimensional Amelia instantly felt a

chill go through her body and gasped as she saw in her mind's eye a clear image of them both dying on the plateau.

Matthew, hiking just a few steps in front of her, stopped and asked if she was alright. Catching her breath, Amelia said nervously, "I think we need to go back..."

As the non-physical Matthew focused on what was to come, he too discovered he had access to all of his thoughts and feelings as if he was actually there on the rocks holding Amelia, feeling utterly helpless, praying they wouldn't die. He felt everything so powerfully his heart began to thump wildly in his chest as a feeling of dread hit him in the solar plexus like an iron fist. He focused on his memories with such intensity he began shivering uncontrollably – it was as if he was dying all over again. As he directed these concentrated feelings toward his counterpart on the trail, the physical Matthew was gripped with fear.

A moment before, what the third-dimensional Matthew could only describe as a premonition, he was just about to explain to Amelia that they were much closer than she thought and that she could trust him because he'd hiked the trail many, many times. But another part of him naggingly reminded him that they were off the trail and no one could find them if something did go wrong. On top of that he was quite sure he'd been assigned as Amelia's hiking partner because he had the most experience hiking and she had no experience at all, being from New York City – so he felt that added responsibility as well, and without a word he simply agreed to turn around and go back.

As the third-dimensional pair headed back down the trail, Amelia, in the parallel world, turned to Matthew and said in anguish. "They're leaving without us!"

“How do we get back into our bodies?” said Matthew.

Amelia took a deep breath and started to hum.

“What are you doing?”

“Just give me a minute – I’m using the vibration I feel when I sing to help me think.”

A moment later Amelia said, “I think I know what to do. Remember Shanti saying we had to match the vibration of the third dimension to pass through the membrane?”

“But how do we know what that is?” asked Matthew, trying to hide his feeling of desperation.

“I think we have to genuinely feel love for ourselves, who we are, and for our lives...”

“But what if you can feel it and I can’t?” said Matthew, embarrassed by his own hopelessness. “What if you make it back into your body and I don’t... or what if I make it and you don’t?” Matthew paused for a moment, then straightened up and said, “It doesn’t matter... we have to try.”

Amelia nodded her head. Looking deeply into each other’s eyes, knowing they may never see each other again, they embraced. And in that moment, Amelia knew without a doubt that Matthew was the Roman soldier she was drawn to after the battle, and that in that lifetime he was the man she later married.

The feelings she’d felt in her lifetime as Sasha flowed so powerfully through Amelia that Matthew – though he didn’t see or experience that lifetime as Amelia had – felt all the love that had passed between them. Instantly he knew Amelia in his heart, and in the next moment they were both back in their third-dimensional bodies.

Matthew spun around and stared at Amelia for a split second

wondering if she was back in her body. Amelia grinned broadly and said, "I'm HERE!"

Matthew grabbed Amelia and without a thought they kissed. Not the tentative, somewhat embarrassing kiss between two teenagers who barely knew each other; it was the type of kiss that contained a yearning desire to merge into one being. Their souls embraced through the radiant warmth of their bodies touching as everything dissolved into a feeling of boundless bliss and connectedness.

Yet somehow in this opening of love, fear rose up tightly grasping Amelia's heart. 'What if this was just a momentary release of fear and anxiety, and had nothing to do with her? What if Matthew had other girlfriends? Why wouldn't he? He was incredibly handsome and popular. Amelia saw how girls reacted to him at school. Even an unconscious glance from Matthew in the direction of a girl would send her blushing and giggling into the midst of a little circle of friends. Girls surrounded him all the time. If he really liked her, he'd had plenty of opportunities to talk to her before.

They had a class together and they shared the same lunch hour, yet he'd never even spoken to her. But with the rapid beat of her heart, came a wave of pleasure, radiating through her body, silencing her mind.

Matthew was both submerged in ecstasy and feeling completely out of his element at the same time. Just like every other guy in their high school, Matthew noticed Amelia the first day she walked through the doors as a new student. And just like the other guys, he was too terrified to speak to her.

In truth he had no experience at all with going up and talking

to girls because the only girls he talked to were the ones who approached him. There were a lot of beautiful girls who wanted to chat with him, and though he was always charming and polite, he wasn't really interested in them. It wasn't that he didn't like girls, he did, it was just that none of the girls had much to say. Their primary interests seemed to converge on clothes, makeup, manicures, bodies, who-was-dating-who, and driving the nicest cars their fathers could afford.

Amelia seemed completely unaware of her beauty or how she affected others. She made no effort to look appealing for the guys at school, which was of course part of her appeal. She didn't wear makeup. But then again, makeup was completely unnecessary – Amelia's cheeks and full lips were naturally rose-colored, and her long, black eyelashes framed her bright, blue eyes more perfectly than any mascara or eyeliner. She rode her bike to school, she was tall with long legs, and years of ballet had sculpted her body in such a way that it didn't matter what she wore – she was undeniably beautiful.

Time and time again Matthew had tried to convince himself that he should say hello to her. But she was so beautiful he was afraid she wouldn't find him attractive, or maybe she had a boyfriend who went to a different school. It was even more likely, given Amelia's confidence and sophistication – and clear disinterest in the high school guys around her – that her boyfriend was already in college. Matthew decided that had to be it, so there was no sense in embarrassing himself by saying hello and being instantly rejected.

Amelia's sense of herself was of course quite different. She'd spent years in ballet classes in tights and a leotard just like

everyone else. She looked at herself in the mirror for hours every day, but she wasn't obsessing over her body, she was focused on her performance, and hoping she wouldn't grow too tall to be a professional ballerina.

In the end, it wasn't her height, but her breasts that had caused her to get kicked out of ballet – and no matter how loosely she wore her clothes men whistled at her as she walked through the streets of Manhattan. As if that wasn't embarrassing enough, none of the guys at her new school would even speak to her; or the girls for that matter. Breasts, Amelia had decided, were nothing but a disadvantage.

But in this moment, kissing Matthew, feeling the warmth and strength of his arms around her, Amelia felt the ecstasy of being in a physical body. As a dancer she thought she knew what ecstasy was: the feeling of power and weightlessness, her spirit soaring... but this was beyond anything she'd ever experienced or imagined.

For the first time in her life she truly wanted to be seen. Not the way her mother wanted her to be seen in a ball gown at a fancy party, but all parts of herself. She no longer wanted to hide her body, she wanted to stand completely naked in front of Matthew; and she wanted to feel the warmth of his body entangled with hers.

Nothing had prepared either of them for this moment – they could not have planned it or prevented it, let alone think of what they would do. Were their feelings physical or spiritual? Or was this spiritual connection they shared radiating through the medium of their physical bodies?

Feeling light-headed, Amelia stopped kissing Matthew and laid her head on his shoulder as he stroked her hair and continued

holding her. She took a deep breath. She knew what she wanted, but her emotions were like waves moving in and out from the shore. One minute she wanted to be Matthew's lover, but... she'd never made love before. It would mean something to her, but what if it didn't mean anything to Matthew?

Of course, it was hardly the time for Matthew to mention if he had a girlfriend; or for Amelia to ask the question. She didn't know what to do, but she did know that saying anything would definitely ruin the moment. Amelia took another deep breath, trying to calm her mind... breathing even more slowly and deeply... But this time she noticed Matthew was breathing with her, in time with the rise and fall of her chest.

Breathing together became a silent dance of energy pulsating between them. The urgent feeling to connect sexually began to dissipate as the energy rose through their bodies. Amelia noticed warm, radiant energy begin to spiral at the base of her spine; then the spiraling energy moved up her spine and into her neck. As the energy coursed into her head she felt impossibly lightheaded, but as Amelia inhaled again she discovered that by simply imagining the energy moving down the front of her body, in an egg-shaped spherical pattern, the energy followed her thoughts down to the base of her spine, and then again up her spine and into her head.

As they continued breathing together the boundaries between their bodies dissolved into oneness – and though it wasn't the physical act of lovemaking, it was sexual and spiritual, intimate and safe all at the same time. Finally Amelia raised her head from Matthew's shoulder. He stepped back slightly, and holding both of her hands in his, looked deeply into her eyes.

At first it seemed to Amelia that Matthew was looking at

her and trying to make a decision, but almost as if they were in a trance, or maybe connected to some past life memory, they continued looking unwaveringly into each other's eyes.

Amelia had never experienced anything so intimate in her life. Emotions surfaced and swirled around her; she wanted to shrink back and look away, but she forced herself to stay in this moment, allowing fear and anxiety to spring up and wash away like waves, until there was nothing left except a feeling so extraordinary she couldn't describe it.

Amelia hadn't been raised to believe in God, nor had she been raised to not believe in God – her parents had decided to leave the whole religious-spirituality question up to her. Since Amelia had never gone to church she had no idea how to define God, let alone whether or not God existed; but in that moment she thought that if God did exist, she would have sworn He or She was looking at her through Matthew's eyes – with love so unfathomable it penetrated her to the depths of her being.

Amelia's eyes were wet, and much to her surprise, Matthew's eyes were glistening as well. They smiled meaningfully at each other, and then quite unexpectedly they both burst out laughing. Tears of laughter and relief splashed down their cheeks. It was the type of tearful, belly-laughter that made Amelia's nose stuffy, and then because she was laughing so hard she started to snort. At that Matthew began laughing even harder, tears raining down his cheeks. Laughing until they could no longer stand, they both rolled on the soft, sandy ground amidst joy-filled tears.

Much like the crashing waves of laughter that are the direct outcome of knowing you shouldn't be laughing – because you're in a church or at some serious function like a graduation or a funeral

– there is a type of laughter that simply will not be suppressed until it has had its way with you. You may think you finally have it under control – you try to take a self-congratulatory deep breath, and then you hear a laugh like a strangled hiccup or a goose honk, and off you go.

That’s how it was for several minutes with Matthew and Amelia. It was getting late. They knew they needed to get back to their campsite, but it didn’t matter – they had to wait until finally, finally they could breathe again. Matthew gave Amelia a hug, then jumped to his feet and, taking her hand, helped her up. With a smile and a large, sweeping gesture he motioned for her to go first, and they took off down the trail at a sprint, racing as quickly as they could back to the campsite.

Though the sun had already set, they could see the campfire burning and could make out the faces of their friends and teachers eating dinner in the glow of the firelight. They each breathed an involuntary sigh of relief, knowing without a doubt they were back in the third dimension.

As they stood in line for their dinner, their teacher, Mrs. Caldwell, clearly relieved that they’d made it back, half-heartedly reprimanded them for being late and causing her to worry. But other than that, no one seemed to notice they had been gone very long, or that there was anything different about them.

Amelia looked at the chattering faces, glowing in the firelight, but somehow no one looked the same – nothing looked the same! Every single person was surrounded by a radiant glow of swirling colors that constantly changed depending on whether a person was laughing, or tired or introspective. Though the vibrant colors were so clearly before her, Amelia couldn’t understand how she’d

missed seeing them prior to this moment.

Everything was more alive. When one of the students picked up a guitar and began to sing, Amelia could see the sound as a vibrating, golden light, expanding beyond the campsite and drifting up like smoke. And though the golden light dissipated into the night, the sky held a slight shimmer that hadn't been there before.

The sun and moon had long since set, and there was no light beyond the reach of their campfire, yet Amelia noticed tiny, dancing lights shimmering in the darkness of the trees. Magnetically she was drawn into the shadows looking for fireflies, but as she drew closer she saw tiny, flickering globes, so bright she could barely make out the diminutive faeries that were emanating the luminous glow.

Has this world been here all along? she thought. How could I have missed this? Where did they come from? The faeries were right in front of her as obvious as they could be. Matthew could see them, or at least he could see tiny lights, but no one else seemed to notice at all.

Late into the night Matthew and Amelia sat by the fire talking about how different everything seemed. Amelia told Matthew everything she could remember from her experience in their shared past lives. Though neither of them could understand the purpose of what Amelia had seen and felt, they reasoned that she must have the information they needed or they wouldn't have been allowed through the membrane back into their current dimension.

It seemed like a lot to go through just for the experience of a few past lives and now being able to see faeries in the trees and

colors around people. But before they could discuss it any further, a teacher sent them off to bed.

Amelia wanted to kiss Matthew so badly she was sure she'd never fall asleep, but Mrs. Caldwell was watching them with eagle-eyes, so Amelia floated off to her tent on a little pink cloud.

Chapter 9

Before she knew it sun was strseaming into the tent and beckoning her back into her body after a night of sailing among the stars. Amelia woke to discover that everyone else was packed and had already had breakfast. She threw her things into her duffel bag and escaped from the tent just as the stakes were being pulled out of the soil. She was met with a quick, “Sorry, didn’t know anyone was still in there.” But Amelia didn’t care.

Right away she saw Matthew sitting under a nearby tree holding out a cup of hot chocolate in one hand and a bagel in the other. “There you are sleepyhead,” he said with a smile as he handed over her breakfast.

Even while eating Amelia could hardly stop herself from smiling at Matthew, who warmly returned her gaze. Just as she finished her breakfast the old, yellow school bus roared into action and sat put-putting in the red dirt, waiting patiently for the students to climb aboard.

Matthew helped Amelia with her duffel bag and said, “Come on, I saved you a seat,” and led her to the very last seat at the back of the bus.

As the bus bumped down the dirt road Amelia and Matthew found it impossible to talk without yelling, and neither of them wanted anyone to overhear their conversation, so they sat quietly side by side. Accidentally their hands touched as the bus hit a pothole, but rather than moving his hand away Matthew held Amelia’s hand. Her cheeks glowed warm with pleasure as she

looked at him and smiled. But mostly she was aware of the warmth radiating from his hand into hers. It wasn't just the physical warmth of two hands touching, it was a tingling feeling she felt moving quickly up her arm. The feeling then radiated out from her heart like sparks from a fire and traveled throughout her body.

Amelia glanced at Matthew; he was already looking at her. Their eyes locked. For a moment she felt the familiar feeling of embarrassment. At first her mind raced, but then she realized no one could see them, and even if someone did look in their direction, they were simply looking at each other – what was there to notice?

Amelia's hand was now tingling with such intensity it felt almost like an electrical charge traveling through her palm and up her arm, and yet she didn't want to let go. As she continued gazing into Matthew's eyes the strangest thing began to happen; Matthew's face seemed to change before her eyes. His eyes appeared luminous, deep-set and dark brown; his face was deeply tanned; his features more angular; and his hair was black, shoulder-length and somewhat curly. Amelia recognized him immediately from her past lifetime as Sasha. He looked exactly like the soldier who deserted the Roman army to be with her.

In her past life as Sasha she hadn't really experienced much of their lifetime together. Yet in this moment, the tingling, warm sensation traveling through her body communicated what they had shared in that lifetime, who they had been to each other, and the deep love that had so intimately connected them.

Until that moment Amelia had never been able to understand why people did what they did 'for love;' she saw herself as far too logical to be swept away by such emotions. But it was as if a switch

had suddenly turned on inside of her and she became aware of feelings she'd never felt before... at least, not in this lifetime. And then she wondered, 'Was the inexplicable connection between lovers not so much who they were in this lifetime, but who they had been to each other in past-lives? Was 'love at first sight' actually more of a re-connection that could span countless lifetimes which could be felt, but not logically understood?'

As they looked into each other's eyes, both Matthew and Amelia felt as if they were somehow outside of time – as if they had stepped through a window into another world. Matthew began to see glimpses of his own lifetimes, something he thought he was incapable of experiencing because nothing seemed to happen for him when Amelia went back in time, and also because they were no longer in that parallel world. 'How is this possible?' Matthew wondered, even as a hypnotic energy pulled him smoothly, yet unrelentingly, into the man he had been at one time.

Matthew was still looking into Amelia's eyes, but her face appeared to be shape-shifting before him. Her eyes had the same bright clarity, and she was still quite young and beautiful, but her face and hair were different. And then quite suddenly Matthew realized he was a soldier in the Imperial Roman Army; and he was seeing Amelia, as Sasha, attending to his wounds.

Matthew never thought about what Sasha looked like during Amelia's recounting of her past life, but there she was, the picture of health with glowing skin, slightly tanned and rosy-cheeked. Matthew had an immediate awareness that in the lifetime he was experiencing he was unaccustomed to women looking so naturally healthy. Wealthy women kept out of the sun and had an almost pasty-white appearance, whereas working class women

were deeply tanned from working outdoors, or if they worked indoors they lacked the feeling of health and wellness he noticed looking at Sasha.

She had wide-set, vivid, bluish-green eyes outlined by long, black eyelashes, her cheek bones were high-set, and her chin-length, wavy brown hair had been streaked golden by the sun. Yet as Matthew observed Sasha, he instantly recognized Amelia in her eyes. Even though their eyes were a different color, there was something about Sasha's gaze that was intense and gentle, loving, yet unyielding – it was unmistakably the same look he saw in Amelia's eyes.

Certainly Sasha could have appeared to be a young man at a distance, especially in the midst of the other soldiers, but up close she was without doubt a beautiful young woman. Matthew, as the observer of himself in that lifetime as a Roman soldier, was aware of an unexpected, unfathomable attraction for her the moment he looked into her eyes.

But something was horribly wrong. It was as if Matthew had been living his life with amnesia and was suddenly confronted with an irreconcilable memory of who he had been in the past. Though he didn't fully understand what he was feeling, Matthew knew that in his lifetime as a Roman soldier his name had been Damian and he was somehow part of a plan that would ultimately be the undoing of the Vedruss people.

As Matthew continued looking into Amelia's eyes, still seeing Sasha's face clearly before him on the battleground, he found himself fully present in Damian's thoughts and memories. In this moment, Damian was looking at Sasha as she put grass and herbs on his wounded hand, but his mind was returning to an earlier

experience.

Damian remembered himself standing before a full-length mirror with a sculpted pattern of intertwining snakes gilded in gold. He was in uniform; a tall, deeply tanned and handsome young soldier. As he looked at himself in the mirror a vision took hold of him. The mirror began to shimmer and then shattered into pieces. In the vision, as Damian bent down to look at the shards he saw images of himself spanning back hundreds of years. As he picked up a shard he saw not only his image from a prior lifetime, but the kind of person he had been, how he had lived during that time.

As he saw who he'd been – every lifetime he'd lived without kindness or compassion – the shard burned in his hand and he dropped it to the ground, unwilling to see any details. Damian picked up one shard after another trying desperately to find a worthy lifetime, but over and over the shard burned his hand and each time left a small incision across his palm.

The vision passed. Damian was still standing in front of the mirror, but as he raised his hands, palms upward, he saw his right palm was covered with slender scars matching the amount of shards he'd picked up during the vision. Yet this wasn't part of the vision, the scars were real.

Damian's thoughts returned to Sasha as she attended to his wounds. His right hand had been cut, his palm deeply slashed. Sasha had stopped the bleeding, but then she noticed the tiny scars spanning his palm. She looked deeply into his eyes, as if she knew him intimately, and put both of her hands around his injured hand.

Radiant warmth flowed through Damian's hand even though

Sasha was barely touching him. As if in a 'waking dream' Matthew realized it was the same radiant energy he felt holding Amelia's hand, and he recognized the same unfathomable feeling looking into Amelia's eyes as he felt in his lifetime as Damian looking into Sasha's eyes. There was something deep and enduring between them, something no one else could possibly comprehend, yet it seemed to be radiating from somewhere outside of time.

In that moment Matthew's attention came back to the bus, back to looking into Amelia's eyes – but at the same time he had full recall of himself with Sasha on the battlefield.

It made no sense. But it was as if the love he felt from that time on the battlefield was coming forward to this moment. Matthew felt like he was in two places at once. The warm, tingling energy, moving from Amelia's hand into his as they rode on the bus, was the same feeling moving through his injured hand as a soldier. With this simultaneous awareness he experienced Sasha removing her hands as Damian looked at his palm. There wasn't a single scar. His hand was perfectly healed.

In that moment, Matthew, as the observer within Damian, knew he could never carry out his original plan, but he also knew that the plan would be carried out with or without him. Sitting on the bus, looking at Amelia, Matthew suddenly felt sick with remorse. He knew he had done something – maybe he hadn't gone through with it – but he could feel in every fiber of his being that he had set something in motion; something truly horrible and unforgivable.

A wave of guilt and shame passed through Matthew. One part of him knew that no matter what he had done, he was a different person in that lifetime, and that as 'Matthew' he wasn't responsible

for whatever had happened. Yet despite that knowledge, an unidentifiable feeling emerged out of the deepest, darkest place in his soul—a cellular memory... the feeling that he didn't deserve Amelia's love.

Matthew knew it wasn't rational; still, he squeezed Amelia's hand before releasing it, smiled, and then as casually as possible looked out the window as if nothing was wrong. But inside he was a tangle of emotions. In truth, the past life memory wasn't really the problem. It was actually his sudden realization that Amelia already meant so much to him.

At home with his family Matthew knew exactly how to act in order to appease his parents and be in control of his own life. But with Amelia he was awash in the unfamiliar world of emotions. Whether his feelings were solely from this lifetime or a combination of other lifetimes... it didn't seem to matter – he simply knew he was standing on a precipice ready to jump. Staring out the window Matthew wondered if he would ever feel in control of his life again; and the thought terrified him.

Chapter 10

Amelia instantly felt pain grip her heart. What just happened? She could feel it; a sick feeling, as if she'd been punched in the stomach, and then a hot, burning feeling of shame and guilt flooding through her body. Amelia quickly looked around. No one was staring at them. What was it? Was she wrong to have looked at Matthew in that way? It was intimate, yet comfortable and warm at first, but now she felt awful.

Until that moment Amelia had been dancing with the idea that she was falling in love with Matthew, and even more importantly, that he was falling in love with her. But when he squeezed her hand and let go—the moment he suddenly looked away—she knew something was wrong. Amelia thought, *It's me. There's something wrong with me...* What did I do wrong?

Amelia had been wide open, radiant and warm like the summer sun, but the flowering of her heart began to wither, and a wall sprang up encasing her, in an attempt to protect her from any further pain. Though she was still sitting only inches away from Matthew, Amelia withdrew so completely it was as if they were suddenly worlds apart.

They sat in silence looking away from each other until the bus mercifully sputtered, popped, and ground to a halt on the dusty, deserted road. Too embarrassed to even look at Matthew, although she didn't fully understand why, Amelia hastily stepped into the aisle and joined the other students as they clambered out of the bus.

Some of the students stood around while others flopped down on the ground waiting for a verdict as the bus driver looked under the hood. Amelia busied herself talking to one of the girls in the group, as if nothing had happened with Matthew, but she kept track of him out of the corner of her eye, curious to see if he would look at her.

An engine belt had broken, and since they were in a particularly desolate area, not one cell phone in the group could get reception. There was nothing to worry about; a big, yellow school bus would be easy to spot from the air as soon as anyone realized they were missing. They had plenty of food and water, so the teachers decided to make the best of it, and the entire group headed toward outcroppings about three miles away while the driver stayed with the bus in case help came along.

As Matthew began talking with a friend, Amelia hung back a bit and walked by herself. Inside she wanted him to ask her what was wrong; but in truth she didn't really know... still, it would have been nice if he'd asked.

What was it about love that made everything so confusing? Amelia knew she and Matthew had been in love before. She knew they'd had a child together. But she didn't remember anything about falling in love. Why was she suddenly so sensitive? Why did she feel such deep pain over nothing – absolutely nothing! What had he done? He held her hand, looked into her eyes, then squeezed her hand, smiled and looked away. What was the big deal?

And yet she had felt it physically as a wave of nausea. Why? And why did she expect Matthew to have an answer? Amelia took a deep breath, but as she trudged through the desert trying to

make sense of something totally illogical, she began spontaneously seeing other lifetimes with Matthew.

These weren't the lifetimes she was already familiar with, and she wasn't the observer in the way she had been before – this time it was more like watching a movie. Again, it was the feeling of being two places at once: She was hiking through the desert and fully aware of her surroundings, yet the past surrounded her. Unlike her imagination, this was more like seeing her life flash before her eyes; but it wasn't this lifetime, it was a lifetime in the early eighteen hundreds.

It had never occurred to Amelia that she could see prior lifetimes, other than the ones she had already experienced when she was a Vedruss. And though she felt the truth of what she was seeing, it seemed quite odd that this information would be coming to her as she was hiking through the desert – as if in answer to her question about love and relationships. But unlike a movie, Amelia was highly sensitive to everything she saw and felt. In a way it was as if silent music underscored the movie in her mind – but it was music of the heart – and each person had their own silent, theme song, which indicated how they truly felt; no matter what was being said or what had been left unspoken.

First Amelia saw herself growing up as an only child in a small town in the Welsh countryside. She didn't know the exact year, but she noticed she was wearing a long, fitted dress and boots that laced up the front. Her boots were dusty from walking on the dirt roads in the village, and she noticed she was holding a package from the market which was wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. And though Amelia couldn't explain why, she knew that this lifetime was in the early eighteen hundreds.

In this lifetime Amelia's father was a retired professor, and her mother was the teacher in a one room school house. She had known Matthew since childhood. He was the oldest in a family of six boys. He was bright, charismatic and handsome, but more than that he adored Amelia, and she never loved anyone else.

Although it only took a moment to see all of this occurring, Amelia felt everything in an instant. She found she could slow down the 'movie' in her mind and focus on specific details, so she looked more closely at their wedding.

It was springtime. They were outdoors on soft, green grass beneath a canopy of ancient oak trees. Sheep dotted the hillside and clouds drifted like wisps of white smoke. Each person in the wedding party held a single, silky ribbon, and every ribbon was a different color. Women and girls were skipping and dancing clockwise around a 20 foot pole, as the men and boys moved counterclockwise, everyone ducking under ribbons coming toward them. They danced, weaving a rainbow colored pattern from the top of the pole down to the very lowest point where they could all still move in and out with the sparse remnants of ribbon left in their hands.

Amelia discovered that she could 'zoom-in' on the tiniest detail: she could see the roses on her wedding cake, or Matthew's unabashed gaze as they said their vows to each other. Though his eyes were different—now hazel—and more widely set beneath heavier brows, there was no question this was Matthew... Amelia could feel the 'silent music' that identified him in any lifetime, no matter how he appeared before her.

She noticed, oddly enough, that when she was the 'silent observer' as Sasha or Alex, she didn't seem to have access to this

type of ‘over-view’ – or at least she wasn’t consciously aware of it. But as she watched this all-sensory movie as it played through her mind, she could tune-in to any thought or feeling of any person, and instantly know the truth of the situation.

Just as easily as tuning into details, Amelia could ‘fast-forward’ into future events. She saw their move to England, the countryside speeding by from the train window until they arrived at the main terminal in London; then on to their new home amidst the hustle and bustle of the city. It was a humble dwelling, but they were not poor by any means, and her father had leant his financial assistance as well as extending his business and social connections.

In contrast, Amelia observed the quiet elegance of the horses and riders and carriages in Hyde Park, where she and Matthew often walked together, hand in hand, radiantly in love.

All at once, it occurred to Amelia to focus on that moment in Hyde Park when she was holding Matthew’s hand – specifically on the feeling in her hand – and there it was; the same tingly energy she felt in the bus. It wasn’t as intense in that moment, but it was the same current of electrical energy, and though slightly diminished, it was as recognizable as the sun sailing in and out of a thin veil of clouds.

As if the movie in her mind had a will of its own, time began moving forward quickly. Amelia understood every nuance of their life together. Her father’s connections, combined with Matthew’s brilliance and charismatic nature, had him at the top of his class in London’s best college. He was well-connected socially and in business. Amelia saw herself dancing and dining with Matthew at elegant parties where he was sought out for his acumen on a

variety of subjects. Yet regardless of the amount of attention he received, nothing changed Matthew's humble nature or his deep love for Amelia.

Everything in the sparkling world of Matthew's rising star paled in comparison to the day Amelia gave birth to their daughter. Even at night after a long day of work and study, Matthew would untiringly hold his infant daughter in his arms and sing lullabies to her until she fell soundly asleep. He would return to bed, gently placing the baby between himself and his wife, and though he should have been exhausted, he could barely sleep from all the love he felt for his wife and daughter. Surely he was the luckiest man in the world.

Again the movie in Amelia's mind moved quickly forward to a time when their daughter was two years old. The little girl looked like a painting of a cherub with pink-cheeks, rosebud lips and eyes the shade of bluebells. As Amelia thought back to her own childhood in that lifetime, this little girl looked more like an identical twin sister than her daughter.

On this particular day Matthew was galloping, two-legged, through Hyde Park with his daughter perched on his shoulders, her shiny, blonde, ringlet curls bouncing in time with his stride. Matthew whinnied and snorted, shaking his head like a stallion, while pausing to paw the ground as his little rider giggled in delight. Amelia saw herself basking in the pleasure of that moment. Then all at once pain gripped her so intensely she doubled over in anguish.

In the next moment Amelia saw Matthew grieving as he buried his wife at her family's church in Wales. Though the daughter he had so loved and cherished was crying and clutching

at his leg, it was as if he was in another world. From the outside it appeared that Matthew had forgotten all about her, but Amelia knew that their daughter reminded him agonizingly of his wife. He simply couldn't bear to look at her. Before the ceremony was over, Matthew wandered away from his family and friends, leaving the churchyard in a state of shock.

Mindlessly he boarded a train bound for London; but nothing was the same. He had no desire to live and wandered aimlessly through the city streets, sleeping in doorways or under bridges, until at last, mercifully, he died.

Chapter 11

As Amelia walked along, following the other students across the desert, she first tried to understand what she was seeing. Although her lifetime ended with her premature death, the movie in her mind didn't stop there: it went on to show her what happened to Matthew. But even more puzzling was trying to understand the purpose of that lifetime. There had been love and joy, and everything a person could ask for, but it all ended in utter desolation, like a horribly cruel joke. What possible purpose could there have been for living like that? Were they being punished for some past mistakes in a lifetime long forgotten?

But that made no sense. Why should they suffer for something they couldn't even remember?

As Amelia thought about all she had seen and felt, she began to feel somewhat guilty – as if she'd been eavesdropping into Matthew's private world. It was, of course, her own lifetime she was seeing, but it went beyond that; she was feeling Matthew's feelings as intensely as if the emotions were her own.

Amelia felt Matthew's devastation when she died; his anguish and guilt flowed through her in the present moment like an illness. She felt his world fall apart, and his body and soul with it. It was so intimate it seemed wrong – it was worse than looking into his mind, she could feel his sorrow deep in his soul. But the movie in her mind continued playing, as if it had yet another message for her to decipher.

She saw their next lifetime together. From what she could tell

it seemed to be the late eighteen hundreds. In this lifetime Amelia was in her twenties, her father was raising her alone, and had lost his fortune. To save him from poverty Amelia had agreed to marry Matthew, a wealthy landowner twice her age and crippled.

Matthew was a capable man, but his mother had been running the estate all of his life and had decided it was time for him to marry so she could train his wife to eventually take her place as mistress of the estate. Amelia watched as the movie in her mind played out the day she arrived at her new home. She saw herself riding in a carriage through miles and miles of property surrounding an immense three story stone manor, with over one hundred rooms. Nearly twenty staff members were lined up in the driveway to greet her, but there was no sign of the man she was to marry – or his mother.

When Amelia was ushered into the study, Matthew was sitting in a wheelchair with his back to her, but even as she approached she could tell he hadn't been confined to a wheelchair for long. He looked remarkably robust and his legs were not emaciated the way they were with people who had been crippled for quite some time.

Amelia had no idea what to expect. In fact, Matthew was so reclusive no one outside of the estate had any idea what he looked like – and this led to much speculation and many harsh rumors amidst the elite social circuit, linked to both his physical appearance and his demeanor.

Amelia had prepared herself for more of a monster than a man. But the moment he turned and looked at her she was shocked; not only was he still quite handsome, but there was a strange recognition she felt when he first looked at her, as if they had met before. For an extraordinary moment their eyes locked

and Amelia felt the same inexplicable connection she felt before looking into Matthew's eyes in her current lifetime. The intensity took her breath away.

Even though they were about to be married, it was impolite to continue gazing into Matthew's eyes, yet Amelia couldn't take her eyes off of him; and he looked unwaveringly at her as well.

A loud, fake cough, "Ah hem!" from his mother broke the spell and Matthew quickly turned away. At first Amelia felt confused, then embarrassed – thinking she had imagined the whole thing – and then she mistook his reaction as one of arrogance.

But from her current movie-perspective, lifetimes away from that moment, Amelia realized Matthew wasn't arrogant or egotistical; rather, he was intensely shy. And, furthermore, she realized she had 'access' to his mother's thoughts and intentions. Amelia could tell that his mother had manipulated him from childhood as a means of maintaining control. She taught him to believe that his birth defect (a minor malady which could have been highly improved if not cured over time) would cause any woman to reject him.

This belief was so firmly engrained that Matthew was uncomfortable looking any woman in the eye. So he was as shocked as Amelia when they gazed upon each other with unexpected recognition.

Yet as Amelia stood next to him on the day of their wedding, listening to the minister repeat a marriage ceremony he had doubtlessly given until it was rote, Matthew had withdrawn into his lonely world without the slightest glance in her direction. Amelia thought forlornly of her girlhood fantasies and what she thought her wedding would be like – the carriage and horses, the

splendor, the dancing and royal guests... but just as quickly she banished the thought, determined to make the best of her new life.

In that lifetime Amelia had been raised by a loving father. She'd always been kindhearted, and in some ways Matthew seemed like one of the many stray animals she'd taken in over the years. As his wife she felt she'd have the opportunity to love him and that he'd soften.

But Matthew wanted nothing to do with Amelia. She was young and beautiful, and even though they were married he knew Amelia would have nothing to offer him other than pity; and he was too proud to be pitied.

As present day Amelia stepped around a flowering cactus, she marveled over the fact that she could see and feel each 'character' in this mental movie of her past lifetime. Each person was playing out their part; they were all bound by etiquette and tradition, even the laws of the day, but as Amelia watched her lifetime, every single thought and feeling was laid bare before her.

It was shocking in a way. It made Amelia wonder if all thoughts and feelings were somehow 'captured' – never really disappearing. In her science class she'd learned that light travels into infinity, never ceasing to exist. So was it possible that human thoughts and feelings continued into infinity as well?

It was strange and disturbing to think that her own thoughts – thoughts she believed were completely private – could be accessed in the future, and she couldn't lie about it or try to make up a good story, because the truth would be right there. Anyone accessing the information would know the truth – exactly as it happened.

The vision of her lifetime continued. Directly following their wedding Matthew retreated to his bedroom suite and Amelia

was given her own suite – at the opposite end of the house. His mother proceeded to instruct Amelia as to her duties in running the estate home.

From her desert vantage point, Amelia felt a profound sadness as she watched years go by. Only she knew her true relationship to Matthew... and that they had once been deeply in love. Matthew, determined to never be pitied, treated Amelia with politeness, but never allowed an actual conversation to take place. Amelia felt like a caged bird.

The door to her cage flew open when Matthew's mother suddenly became ill and was bedridden in a wing of the house far from the daily activities. There was nothing the doctor could do for her and the staff was told to keep her as calm and quiet as possible for the remainder of her days. All at once Amelia was the mistress of the estate, and she effectively turned the household staff upside down and inside out with her new plans for how she wanted to live.

She no longer sat alone at the mahogany dinner table that seemed to reach to infinity. Much to the initial shock and dismay of the head butler, she decided to dine with the household staff. This of course was unthinkable, and simply never done – there was no protocol for such behavior. At first everyone was uncomfortable, but by the end of the meal gay laughter began to echo through the halls of what had been nothing short of a mausoleum.

Amelia began singing and playing the piano, which had never been allowed by Matthew's mother. She gardened and learned all about the farm. Amelia insisted on being there for the birth of the farm animals, even if it was the middle of the night. In no time at all she could deliver a calf or a colt as easily as milking a cow.

Smiling at this memory, Amelia reflected on her life as 'lady of the manor.' She had been married into the highest position in society, yet her delight came from participating in activities that were relegated to servants and farmhands. She wasn't social enough to have friends that would criticize her, and everyone in the staff adored her, so it really didn't matter what the outside world would think.

In that lifetime Amelia never considered what Matthew thought, she assumed he simply didn't care. But from her current perspective she was able to feel Matthew's feelings. She watched him sit at the top of the stairs at mealtime listening and smiling as laughter pealed out of the downstairs kitchen.

He swore the staff to secrecy as he moved from room to room watching Amelia gardening or playing with the young farm animals. He'd close his eyes and listen with delight as she played the piano and sang. In truth, he adored her, but he was afraid to let her know. The more he loved her, the more he felt unworthy of her loving him in return. She could feel him wanting to be part of her life, yet afraid she wouldn't find him attractive.

In the present moment, Amelia suddenly felt as if she understood Matthew more deeply. It seemed that the more he felt love for her the more he withdrew for fear she wouldn't love him in return. Strangely enough, the feeling from that lifetime was similar to the feeling she felt on the bus. There was no rational, reasonable explanation in either lifetime, but that made Amelia wonder, Is it possible we carry our feelings from past lives in to our current lifetime? Are feelings connected to cellular memories from past lifetimes – and if that's true, how do cells 'remember' where we 'left off?'

“There may be a scientific explanation, or maybe one will be discovered some day,” she thought; but even without a scientific explanation it seemed obvious there was an emotional carry-over from one lifetime to the next. It wasn’t that Matthew didn’t love her in that lifetime... he was afraid to love her. More specifically, he was afraid to lose her – again.

As years went by Amelia watched as her desire to love Matthew and have his child turn into her love for the farm animals and nature. Every spring her love poured out to all of the new babies on the farm and she spent the summer and fall delighting in their growth.

Amelia wondered why she was seeing all of this. Even though she had finally let go of what she thought her life was supposed to be and become quite content, she felt a profound sadness that Matthew never allowed her to love him. But as she continued watching the movie playing through her mind, Matthew suddenly became extremely ill. The doctors predicted he was going to die in a day or two at the most, but Amelia sat with him resolutely, day and night. She ate her meals in his room, and though he was unconscious, she read poetry and prose, and sometimes sang songs.

Knowing he couldn’t hear her, Amelia finally told him everything in her heart. She spoke of her favorite flowers in the garden and described the sunlight glittering on the pond where swans sailed elegantly throughout the day. She told him charming stories about the staff or the animals on the farm. Then one day Matthew’s eyes flickered open. For the first time he smiled at Amelia. His smile was weak but it was genuine, and love filled his watery eyes as he said, “You’ve been with me all this time. I heard

every word and I felt every beat of your heart.” Amelia watched herself as she dissolved into tears, laying her head on Matthew’s shoulder. He reached out tentatively and stroked her hair.

Matthew was miraculously in remission. They didn’t know how long they would have together so they made every moment count. They shared poetry and painting, Matthew joined Amelia in the garden in his wheelchair, and for the first time they ate their meals together. At night Amelia would lie next to Matthew with her head on his shoulder and her arm across his chest as he stroked her hair.

One morning upon waking, feeling his hand gently resting on her shoulder, Amelia looked into Matthew’s eyes. The light in his eyes flickered as he smiled faintly and looked at her warmly - in the next moment he was no longer there.

Chapter 12

Though Amelia was marching through the desert, deep, abiding love from her previous lifetime mingled with overwhelming sorrow. In that lifetime, she consoled herself when Matthew died by thinking she would see him again in some heavenly reality – that was what the church taught – but she always secretly wondered how they would find each other, or if they would end up in the same heaven since they had different beliefs. It never occurred to her that they would see each other again, not in some heavenly dimension, but in another lifetime.

All at once, Amelia could no longer see Matthew with confusion or hurt feelings. She'd heard of 'love at first sight' but now she realized there was more to it. In meeting someone she had once loved, there was also the feeling of loss that came with it. They both felt it – the love and then the fear of loss. Yet the fear of loss, when unchecked, could easily strangle the love before it could blossom, before either person realized who they were to each other.

But in each lifetime they could make new choices: Matthew could have opened himself up to her, but the truth Amelia saw from her new perspective was that she too had the ability in that lifetime to break down the barriers Matthew had erected – if she'd had the courage to overcome her own fear of rejection. And here she was once again afraid that he was rejecting her when he squeezed her hand, let go and looked away. It didn't matter why he was feeling what he was feeling – her last lifetime with him

showed her that she could waste years of her life by never speaking up, or by waiting for him to speak to her.

Maybe nothing would change, Amelia thought, but she could at least try to let go of her fear. It seemed like a noble idea, but in reality she didn't know how to release a feeling. Amelia walked along thinking about things that people say all the time, things like 'forgive and forget' or 'just let go,' as if it were something she should just know how to do, like brushing her teeth or something.

As she contemplated this further it seemed to Amelia that while people were quick to offer this type of advice, they rarely, if ever, applied it to themselves. Even in her own experience, time had healed many wounds, but that wasn't the same as being able to let go, right here in this moment. And that was what Amelia really wanted – she wanted to be completely free of feeling hurt or betrayed; she wanted to feel that she could love freely without worrying whether or not she was loved in the same way in return. Yet there was still a knot in her stomach.

Her mind wanted to let go and stop being afraid, but something, some deeply buried emotion, simply would not release its grip on her. It's not safe to love; the message coursed through her body, no matter what her mind was contemplating. And then all at once a thought occurred to her; a voice spoke as plainly in her mind as if someone was talking to her in person.

“Love cannot be possessed.”

At first the thought seemed ridiculous. She knew for sure her parents loved her – so obviously she 'possessed' their love. But then she began to wonder, if she truly 'possessed' their love, where was it? She couldn't show it to anyone, or prove that she was loved. Amelia then began to think about her experience of love – not the

emotion of love, but how did love feel when it was directed toward her or when she was giving love.

Strangely enough, she realized she could feel love, but at the same time it was as if love passed through her ... like the warmth of the sun, or a piece of music that moved her. She could feel love, and she could return love or pass it on to others, but she couldn't hold onto it. The thought was oddly liberating, and instantly Amelia felt wonderful and totally free. She realized she didn't have to worry about 'how to let go,' because in the moment she focused her attention on what she loved about Matthew – her feelings of hurt and betrayal vanished. He had done nothing more than help her see that she had all the love in the world.

A tingling feeling swept through Amelia, the strangest mixture of gratitude and grief as she fully realized that the man she had loved – in more than one lifetime – the man who had died with endless love for her, was walking just ahead of her. He was so close all she had to do was call out to him. But what would she say – where could she even begin?

Chapter 13

As they headed away from the bus and into the desert, Matthew knew Amelia was upset and that he was the cause of her disappointment, but he didn't know what to say. Trying to collect his thoughts he walked with one of his friends. Bob was strangely comforting because his behavior was so predictable – he would talk non-stop on subjects that so entirely lacked content Matthew knew he wouldn't be required to think or respond; and that was perfect because all he could focus on was Amelia. He wanted to possess her and push her away; he wanted to love her and let her go, all at the same time.

He'd only known her for, what, a day or two? Or was it several lifetimes? Amelia was like no one Matthew had ever met, or even heard of. Her honesty and openness made her even more beautiful and this was both attractive and unnerving. He sensed she could feel his feelings. How much did she know?

Matthew glanced back at Amelia, but she seemed buried in her own thoughts. The idea of admitting that he felt anything was completely foreign to Matthew, let alone trying to express emotions that were completely illogical. He began to imagine what his conversation with Amelia would be like. “Well, you see, Amelia, I had my own memory of that lifetime when I was a Roman soldier... but I remembered more than you know. I wasn't such a nice person. And, uh, well... I think I did some terrible things.”

It sounded as ridiculous as he thought it would even without

saying a word.

Maybe he could say something simple and direct, like, “I really like you... I may even love you... but there’s an even bigger part of me that’s afraid of you. Sorry, I can’t explain why.”

His explanations were only getting worse – saying nothing at all was starting to feel better.

Matthew was both afraid and in awe of her, and somewhere even deeper he felt the most astonishing, inexplicable love for Amelia mingling with a profound fear of losing her. It made no sense. He barely knew her, yet it was as if she was a part of him that had always been missing – he just didn’t know it until he met her.

It reminded Matthew of a time when he put together a 1,000 piece puzzle. He worked on it for days and when he was finally had the entire puzzle put together, there was one missing piece. He had 999 pieces in place, but that one small missing piece looked like a gaping hole in an otherwise beautiful scene. Suddenly that one little piece was all that mattered.

For Matthew, Amelia was the missing piece, but part of him would rather throw out the puzzle than admit such a thing. Even the thought of her as a ‘missing piece’ to a puzzle seemed insipid – and yet the feeling that Amelia was much more than she seemed took over his thoughts, and a strange sensation trickled down into his body.

He felt happy and sad, achingly lonely, bursting with love and at a loss – all at the same time. Matthew tried to stop thinking about Amelia. Yet Bob, yakking in his ear, only reminded him of the banal drivel that comprised most of his conversations with his guy friends. Matthew never said very much, a trait which

his friends mistakenly interpreted as him being a good listener; when in truth, he was totally disinterested, he just had a charming way of nodding and smiling at appropriate intervals; a habit he'd successfully developed at home with his parents.

But it was different with Amelia. She was a kindred spirit. Matthew wanted to be her friend and her lover, but her friendship alone held an intensity he could hardly fathom. He'd spent his life yearning to be understood and now he'd met someone who seemed to understand him perfectly. And in all likelihood she was sensitive to his emotional state as well.

Matthew had noticed Amelia's silent response on the bus when he let go of her hand and looked out the window. He'd tried to be casual about it, but he knew that Amelia was feeling his feelings... And wasn't it bad enough to feel his own emotional ups and downs without knowing that he was subjecting Amelia to his feelings as well?

What if she's feeling my feelings right now? Matthew thought, again glancing back at Amelia as inconspicuously as possible. Stop, stop, STOP! Matthew said silently to himself, as Bob droned on without the slightest hesitation.

"Yo! Dude! Are you listening?" said Bob as he landed a punch on Matthew's left shoulder.

Matthew flashed a quick, somewhat uncomfortable smile and nodded in Bob's direction without having the vaguest idea what Bob was talking about.

"Yeah... 'Wayne's World' is my favorite movie... I've seen it like two hundred times. Ya know, I'm thinking about changing my name to Wayne... it's only like a hundred and fifty dollars to change your name legally... did you know that?" Matthew nodded

again, and Bob moved on to yet another mind-numbing topic.

All at once Matthew understood it wasn't just the love he felt for her, or his attraction to her beauty, she was the only person in the world he could talk to openly and honestly, knowing Amelia would listen and they could talk about everything. Though neither of them fully understood what was happening to them, one thing they both knew for sure was that anything was possible.

In that moment Matthew knew he had to make a choice. He could either remain aloof and retain at least a semblance of control in his life, or surrender to his feelings for Amelia, knowing it would change him forever. It was a frightening void – a place where it was impossible to know what would happen or who he would become. And though Matthew didn't know it at the time he was choosing (as he had in many lifetimes) whether he would live in the mystery and uncertainty of life, or begin to die.

Chapter 14

All at once, Matthew didn't care if he lost control; with all he'd been through it seemed obvious he didn't have the control he thought he did. Suddenly it didn't matter who he had been or who he would become – he only knew he wanted to be a part of Amelia's life, and that he wanted to be with her more than anything.

Matthew wanted to walk right up to Amelia and hug her, but given the fact that they were surrounded by students and teachers he decided to simply join her and say hello – and then see how it went from there.

At the very same moment, though she had no idea what to say, Amelia made up her mind that she would hurry and catch up with Matthew. But before they could do anything, they heard a voice ahead of them shouting excitedly, "Hey, over here! Come check this out! You have to see this... It's a cave!"

All of the students and teachers scrambled over rocks, and gasped when they saw a hidden entrance leading to a man-made cave. Though the entrance was tall enough for a semi and wide enough for two trucks to pass through easily, it would have been impossible to see the entrance from the air because of the rock configurations concealing it.

"Everyone!" Mrs. Caldwell shouted from the back, "Wait until I get there! We need to stay TOGETHER!"

A large expanse of black stretched out before them. As they went deeper into the cave, the students' flashlights danced around what looked like an immense space. Even with twenty flashlights

soon playing upon the sloping ceiling and clearly carved out sections of wall, they were still engulfed in darkness.

A ledge had been carved into the rock about twenty feet above their heads. Some kids wanted to climb up and take a look, but Mrs. Caldwell got there and nixed the idea, “NO climbing without ropes and a harness!” she proclaimed, her voice echoing loudly.

One of the students tugged on Mrs. Caldwell in the dark and practically dragged her to something he desperately wanted her to see, saying “Look at this... look at this... you’ve got to see this formation!”

“Yes, yes, I’m coming,” she said briskly as she plucked his hand off of her sleeve.

Excitedly he said, “Look at how this boulder is positioned in this stone wall! It doesn’t look natural.”

Mrs. Caldwell looked at the section of the cave the student was pointing to and agreed that it was indeed unusual. It appeared that a boulder had been enveloped in lava and after it cooled had been sliced down the center. She suggested that the students take samples from the boulder and the surrounding rock.

In a singsong voice, Mrs. Caldwell trilled, “Everybody! Gather ‘round, please,” as the students assembled around her. “It looks like this is the end of our excitement for today. I know the cavern extends beyond this point, probably for quite a ways... based on how black it looks down there,” she added peering into the darkness as many of the students shown their flashlights in the direction she was indicating, “but I’d like each of you to get samples from this boulder and the surrounding rock. Then we’ll head back to bus and have some lunch, hopefully someone will have come along to help out, and we’ll be on our way.”

There were a few grumbles from those who wanted to stay longer and go deeper into the cavern, but for the most part everyone was looking forward to being outside again and the prospect of lunch. After collecting their samples the students all began moving through the cavern toward the tunnel when huge spotlights hidden from view on the ledges above blazed in their faces from several directions. They all froze in their tracks like animals stunned by headlights on a dark country road.

A man's voice blasted over an audio system and echoed in the cavern, "Stay where you are. Follow our instructions and you will not be hurt." With that, the darkest recesses of the cavern, about a football field away, lit up revealing an immense door, thirty feet tall and twenty feet wide, which began moving slowly open with a loud, blaring sound, cautioning anyone in its path to clear the way. The exterior door looked exactly like the surrounding cave walls, but as it swung open it was four feet thick and the interior door looked like a steel vault.

And at the same time soldiers appeared out of nowhere with automatic weapons pointed directly at the group, barring them from escape. Amelia looked desperately for Matthew, but the lights in her eyes made it impossible to see him.

Squinting in the bright lights as she turned her head in the direction of the speaker broadcasting the man's voice, Mrs. Caldwell yelled as loudly as she could in a shaky voice, "Excuse me sir. I think there's been a terrible mistake. These are just high school students."

But her voice couldn't be heard over the deafening sound of the vault door opening. When it was fully open, and the ear-splitting noise finally ceased, a feeling of dread swept silently into

the space, accompanied by the sound of muffled cries, quiet voices whispering desperately to calm each other, and the click of safety locks being disengaged.

Beyond the door way yawned another cavern, dimly lit with cool fluorescent light. Military vehicles in all shapes and sizes could be seen driving back and forth. A tall, broad shouldered man, around forty years old, with a thick shock of hair that was already completely white strode briskly through the entranceway, his voice echoing loudly in the cavern as if he were talking into a bullhorn, “This way.”

Again Mrs. Caldwell tried to speak up, but the sight of a gun aimed in her direction got the message across and she fell silent as the entire group moved in quiet terror deeper into the cavern and through the doorway into the military base.

Inside several guards in dark blue jumpsuits stood silently with automatic weapons pointed at the group. Trembling, Amelia watched the door shut tightly and then heard thick steel bolts slide solidly into place, along with the rushing sound of an airlock. In the commotion Amelia hadn’t been able to catch up to Matthew. Now she couldn’t even see him.

The white haired man began walking toward the group in a slow, calculating manner, as if he was looking for someone in particular. But there was something else, Amelia saw three figures that seemed to float just above the ground, like dense mist. Where their heads would have been, she could only see thin slits that looked like green fiery eyes.

In a panic Amelia looked around at the other students and teachers, but they all seemed dazed as if they’d been hypnotized. Then she felt all of the green eyes blazing in her direction, the

otherworldly beings surrounding her like a mass of shifting shadows, trying to penetrate her mind and body.

Instantly she felt weak, as if she was frozen to the spot. Though she was trembling with fear, she suddenly felt Matthew's presence right behind her. Had he been there all along? He carefully reached out and held her hand, his touch traveling up her arm and into her body, giving her strength. As they held hands, she felt her mind break free of the psychic invasion. Though her body was still frozen, her mind flashed to Matthew, sending him a mental warning about these unseen energies. But then she instinctively knew she needed to still her thoughts and blank out any image of him, because these men - or whatever they were - had access to her thoughts and feelings.

The white haired man walked along the line of students, examining each one, before stopping in front of Amelia. He looked at her with such intensity she wanted to look away, but couldn't. Her head ached and she instantly felt weak as if all of her energy was being siphoned out of her body through her eyes and somehow being 'downloaded' into the man. He seemed more and more powerful as she became weaker - to the point she thought she would pass out.

Then, as quickly as it began, the feeling released its grip on her, the man giving an order to a guard. "Take this one." Amelia no longer felt light-headed, but her headache still pounded and now a feeling of nauseous fear washed over her as a guard quickly approached.

Amelia felt Matthew step protectively closer, his chest now touching her back; she squeezed his hand tightly, her look of alarm quickly shifting into warning as she turned and stared fiercely into

his eyes. Matthew understood what she wanted and he knew she was right. Amelia's face flickered with an almost imperceptible, resolute smile as Matthew released her hand and contained himself as a burly guard with pallid skin, a shaved head and square jaw took Amelia's arm and led her to a steely gray hummer.

The hummer didn't have the shiny look of the trendy ones Amelia had seen before on tv. This one had no doors, and though it was so large Amelia barely had to duck to get inside, her guard still placed a protective hand on her head with more pressure than she thought was necessary.

As she climbed in, with her guard right behind her, she saw another guard was waiting, sitting by the open doorway with handcuffs in his lap. Amelia was forced to sit between them and it seemed the guard waited until they were beyond the sight of the group to put the handcuffs on her. Next a black, nylon hood was placed over her head. Amelia's world went black.

Chapter 15

The hummer drove over several different types of ground, first smooth, then something uneven, the way it felt when their bus drove over a wash, and then really bumpy, as if they were crossing over cattle guards. Once again it was smooth and the hummer stopped, then the motor was turned off. But no one moved or got out. They just sat there. And then Amelia realized they were moving, but they were going down inside an elevator.

Down and down she felt herself dropping, but after awhile she had no sense of speed, only that they were going down for what felt like forever before coming to a slow stop. Amelia heard the elevator doors moving open with an oddly familiar ‘ding’ as if she were in a hotel and not in some deep, underground military outpost.

The vehicle engine started up and then they were moving again. If they were on the surface Amelia would have calculated that they’d driven for several miles, but she couldn’t imagine anything this extensive underground. At last the vehicle came to a stop. The strong hand of her guard grasped her right arm firmly, guided her out of the hummer, then led her along a cement walkway and ultimately into a large echoing chamber where her handcuffs were removed. Then she heard the solid, thudding stride of the guard leaving the chamber and the bang of a door.

Shaking, Amelia removed the hood from her head, only to find herself in pitch darkness. She strained to listen for a sound, like a small animal sensing a nearby predator, every muscle tensed,

ready to take flight. But there was only the ringing in her ears. Amelia tried to walk, but instantly felt dizzy and slowly dropped to the floor. She crawled cautiously until she came to a wall. For a moment she sat there trying to calm herself, the feeling of panic rising in her, her heart pounding, nausea bringing bile to the back of her mouth. But a voice coming through a loud speaker caused her to jump.

“Strip down” said a voice that echoed in the expanse of the room.

“I will NOT!” yelled Amelia, suddenly incensed, her anger quelling the panic she’d been feeling. But she couldn’t say anything more.

In the dark she heard the sound of boots marching toward her, and though she tried to fight off the hands that reached for her, she couldn’t resist them. Her arms were held as her blue jeans were removed, then her underwear. Her shirt was yanked off in the next moment. And almost before it began, Amelia was left sitting on the floor in the dark, shivering and completely naked.

A mist filled the room and though she couldn’t see it, Amelia felt an ultra-violet light surrounding her, as if she were being sterilized, then the room lit up with a red glow. The voice said, “Put on the clothes.”

Amelia saw a heavy blue jumpsuit laying on the ground. Shuddering tears of rage and anger welled up in her as her body shook uncontrollably. Through sheer force of will she tried to make her body appear calm and defiant, but she felt like a shivering, small animal, her body weakened by fear, as if she was nothing more than a puppet dangling from strings with no control over anything, not her body or her emotions. Her breath came fast

and shallow as she grew dizzy and dropped to her knees. With all the determination she had she forced herself to focus, and with a deep, breath she tried to steady herself as she reached out to grasp the jumpsuit, then stood up and stepped into it.

The suit was a bit too big, and the sleeves were laden with heavy bracelets, sewn into the fabric of the suit, that instantly tightened to the size of her arms. Instantly, a dullness came over Amelia. Her brain fumbled to make a connection with her emotions, but she felt nothing. All of her anxiety and fear slipped away, leaving her in a gray lifeless world where nothing mattered. And then, as if she had no will of her own, she thought maybe this world was better, less complicated; and that it felt good to feel nothing at all.

The door to the chamber swung open. Two specters stood waiting in the hall – ghostly psychic soldiers. But she wasn't afraid of them, she simply knew what they were without harboring any feeling about them whatsoever.

The guards seemed more like shadows than human beings, waiting for Amelia in their out-of-body forms. She felt drawn to walk between them, her mind unquestioning, her heart still, as they escorted her down a dimly lit corridor of roughly hewn stone. They seemed to drift on either side of her, but Amelia did not question what she was seeing nor where they were headed.

After some time, they came to a tall, metal door that opened into an immense subway system. A train was just leaving. It appeared as if it were moving through a body with no organs, along a spine surrounded by a perfectly round ribcage lit sporadically with lights. In a moment, the train shot like a flash of light down the tracks – one track above and one below - until it was nothing more than a tiny spark in the distance evaporating into a black

hole the size of a pinprick.

Like a shaft of light slipping under a doorway, fear gripped Amelia and she tried to run, but her body was instantly beset with an extraordinary feeling of fatigue. At the same time, she had the feeling, much like a mouse in a cage being observed by scientists, that her escorts were pleased to see that she had the ability to overcome the suit's suppression of her emotions, even if only for a moment.

Droning electromagnetic energy could be heard from a distance, growing louder and louder on her left side until a single train car appeared and slammed to a dead stop in front of her in what seemed to be a single moment. Doors silently opened and the three of them stepped into the empty car.

In moments the train was rocketing down the railway, instantly enveloped in darkness, like a terrifying ride in an amusement park. Amelia felt herself swallowed in hiccupping blackness as the interior light of the car flashed off and then briefly on again, then off for so long she thought it would never be light again, but then there was a brilliant flash of light and a whole system of train rails burst into view as the ground below the car disappeared and an immense cavern sprung into view.

A massive, multilevel hub of cold, steel platforms and elevated trains sprawled beneath Amelia's car, and what looked like a city of bleached light sat glowing lifelessly up at her from the bottom of the cavern. A few cars passed through the streets, but mostly she saw massive, covered trucks and larger, ground level trains.

More rails were suspended in the air, like the one Amelia found her train rocketing along at that moment, and she soon felt quite certain that they were the main way that people got around

because on every train platform she saw perfect rows of people, each clad in matching monochromatic jump suits – red, yellow, green, orange – all boarding trains and taking off, this way and that.

Thousands of people were standing in an organized fashion, single file, quiet and impeccably efficient as they boarded their cars. Every train had multiple cars, except Amelia's, and she couldn't help but wonder why her car was running alone.

Moments later, her train passed into a remote hole, high up in the wall, and stopped in front of a decrepit looking old building which she quickly realized was a prison. Yet she felt nothing. It was as if she were marking off the events on a notepad in her mind: boarded the train, went to prison, walking to my cell...

Though she felt nothing, she did notice that everything in the prison had fallen to neglect: all around, the paint was peeling, and water dripped from the ceiling into little puddles or drizzled down the wall; everything metal was tarnished with rust, and there was a dank mildew smell covered only slightly by the scent of ammonia and bleach.

Amelia was locked in her cell, but she felt totally apathetic. A glance at the floor revealed a sticky area from a soda that had been spilled in the hall and then ran under the doorway into a pool, where it magnetized dust and dirt as it evaporated. She could smell urine on the floor, and then saw that someone had peed on the walls, leaving a crude, yellowish stain on the cement.

The bed had a dirty blanket and no sheets, just a deeply stained mattress where years of body odor commingled with an underlying scent of urine and vomit, and the chemical odor of Lysol. As Amelia tried to decide which was the lesser of the two

evils, she heard a voice calling to her from an adjacent cell.

“Hey, I designed those suits! ... you know...” The old man’s voice was loud at first, but then dropped away, as if he had the sudden disappointing realization that she wouldn’t be able to speak with him.

Amelia put her hands on the bars of her cell and peered kitty-corner across the hall. The light was dim, but she could see the wild visage of a grey haired man, with stubble on his face and the bare crown of his balding head smudged with dirt. His clothes were disheveled, but it was impossible for her to discern how long he’d been in the cell as she peered through the shadowy darkness from her limited vantage point.

“Interesting model you’re wearing though,” he said thoughtfully, stroking the small growth of stubble on his chin. “Yes, yes, they must be afraid of you. That, or they really don’t want you to escape... high priority... yep... hmmm.”

“What do you mean?” asked Amelia, her mind fighting back a confusing haze that had her wanting to drift into sleep instead of speaking, thinking, or doing anything at all for that matter.

“You can still talk... and ask questions, no less!” the man replied in astonishment. “Well, it would seem they made a wise choice! Most people would be a drooling mess by now.”

Then, noting Amelia’s puzzled expression he added, “That is a psycho-suppressive, hyper-suggestive outfit meant to strip you of your free-will even as it clothes you in a 100% cotton lining... everybody around here wears them, even I am locked in a fibrous jail of my own construction... But yours! Yours is special – it was made for extra strength psychic distortion!”

Amelia put her head in her hands. It was getting more and

more difficult for her to think straight, and now she felt such an urge to fall asleep she could no longer stay standing. As her knees gave way, she slumped to the floor in a mental miasma, her strange world drifting away to the sound of the old man's voice, chattering blithely onward, as she was slipped out of his world and into a place somewhere beyond consciousness where hopefully, she thought, she'd be able to finally rest.

When Amelia awoke the man was still talking, seemingly unaware that she'd been asleep. She heard his voice before her eyes had even opened. "So I gave him two fingers and a twist, and I said, 'that's soddin' right you'll go get your own alien doomsday device! I'll have nothing to do with this insane business!' Then I stomped out of his office and into the welcoming arms of his guards... ahh yes. I suppose I could have handled that better... But anyways, that's how I got to be here with... Oh, you're awake!" he added as he saw Amelia open her eyes and look at him.

"Oh..." Amelia groaned, looking around dazedly. "What time is it?"

"Ooh, that's rough, kid. Here... I got something for you."

The old man threw Amelia a small package which landed just outside of her cell. Reaching groggily for the object, she half expected something horrible to happen as her arm passed between the metal bars framing her cell; but there was nothing – no electric shock; no alarm. Just the eerie silence of the prison as she pulled the light, paper and twine wrapped package into her cell.

"It'll help... trust me," he said, then musing quietly, almost to himself he added, "What an odd thing to say... 'trust me,' as if those two little words should satisfy your... discernment... The

only people who need to say ‘trust me’ are probably people you have no business trusting.”

Grimacing, Amelia said, “You aren’t making a very good case for yourself.”

“Aha! But you see, I am the exception!” he declared jauntily, “Perfectly trustworthy.”

Amelia opened the package and found a small glass bottle, padded around the outside with cotton. She removed the lid, unsure of what to expect, only to find it was a horrible smelling liquid, and her nose rankled at the pungent scent. Immediately she decided to put the lid back on the bottle and throw it out, but a thought somehow made it past the gray, feelingless world she was in and played through her mind saying, ‘It will help you in ways you cannot understand right now.’

She decided to trust the feeling, she put the bottle to her lips and drank the bitter, foul tasting liquid as quickly as possible.

The man watched her and then chimed, “Oh, by the way, my name’s Phil.”

Before Amelia could say a word she started coughing. The liquid was having an immediate and startling effect on her. Her head felt as if it was detaching from her body, as if she needed to reach up and pull it down to reattach it to her neck. She felt trapped suddenly, an emotion she had not felt since putting on the jumpsuit; her mind dashing around her cell like a wild bird trapped in a cage, moving up and down, bashing herself against the bars of her cell, trying wildly to get out. But her body remained motionless until bile shot up the back of her throat and she vomited until there was nothing left, and she passed out.

Amelia’s essential-self left her body and she flew from her

prison cell like a bird set free. Up, up into the sky and then shooting like a star into the south until she found herself drifting down, down, down, deep into the Amazonian rain forest. In her underground prison, she'd lost track of time, but here in this place it was late at night, and Amelia found herself hovering in front of an elderly man with a deeply lined face painted with red, circular lines.

His brightly colored feathered headdress, countless strands of multi-colored beads, and an unusual feathered ornament through the piercing on his face, indicated his status as a tribal shaman. He was tending a small fire, brewing a plant spirit potion in a pot hanging above the fire. As if expecting Amelia, he looked up for a moment and motioned for her to sit across from him.

"You have drunk ayahuasca," he said in a deep voice, crinkling with age as he puffed mapacho, wild jungle tobacco. "We call it the vine of the soul... teacher of the teachers," he added as he blew the smoke down onto the crown of Amelia's head, then into the palms of her hands. "We use this to access higher dimensions and higher knowledge," said the shaman telepathically.

"But it is not wise to take this medicine without proper ceremony," he added as he poured a cup of an acrid smelling thick, brown liquid and ceremoniously handed it to Amelia. He then said a lengthy prayer in a language Amelia did not understand, but she felt a tingling vibration move through her body as he spoke.

Acknowledging the shaman, feeling that she had known him before, and somehow done this before, she bowed her head and when he finished the prayer she reverently took a sip from the cup. It tasted exactly like the tea Phil had given her in prison, the same bitter after-bite that caused Amelia's face to scrunch up

involuntarily as she swallowed. Though her physical body had reacted violently, it was different for her essential-self; she could taste the ayahuasca, but it didn't make her nauseous, and rather than leaving and flying away, she immediately moved inside herself while connecting to everything around her.

For a few minutes she sat quietly listening to the sounds of the jungle. A lone owl hooted, cicadas whirred and rustled in the leaves with a thousand other unseen insects, a bird whistled sharply as frogs croaked in the nearby river. Snakes slithered through the leaves on the ground only inches from where Amelia was sitting.

Gradually a warm, buzzing feeling began to course through her veins. Simultaneously the shaman shook his shacapa, a rattle made of leaves, and began singing ancient tribal medicine songs, in a language no longer spoken, but full of feeling. The vibration of the song painted pictures in the air, and called down spirits from the plant, animal, bird and insect kingdoms to guide Amelia through her visions. As the buzzing vibration became stronger she felt as if she'd been infused with the spirit of the ayahuasca – somehow she was being guided by its extraordinary intelligence into the divinity behind all creation; the transcendent field of infinite, ever present love.

As if she had returned to her past life, Amelia saw the world of the Vedruss swirl into being in the present. Had her logical mind been engaged she would have thought it was impossible, but she enjoyed seeing the world she had known so intimately in her lifetimes as Sasha and Alex... and yet, she now realized, it was in a different setting. It wasn't in the Siberian cedar forest, it was someplace else, but she couldn't tell where exactly. And as she

felt the joy of returning home, the sight made her sad too, seeing something so beautiful that had been snuffed out and would never exist again in the midst of modern society and scientific technology.

Complex patterns spun through her mind as animal and insect silhouettes appeared, then blurred into unrecognizable shapes, and reappeared as tiny snakes in bluish hues, darting in and out of her vision. Her in-breath sounded like wind howling through trees in a cold, desolate place.

Suddenly Amelia saw Earth, not the pristine Earth she'd seen at the beginning of time, but a world filled with wars, disease, pain and chaos. Tremendous upheaval was taking place as the tectonic plates shifted, causing volcanic eruptions, earthquakes that tore the planet and towering tsunamis that wiped out entire cities. Ice caps at the poles were melting at an alarming rate, even as gaping holes in the ozone layer became larger and more apparent.

Then out of the chaos Amelia saw the Great Pyramid of Giza. And she saw that there was something about the shape of a pyramid that caused an energetic double to point down into the Earth, connecting all pyramids with each other through the electromagnetic grid system of the planet.

Then she saw people standing around the base of the pyramid, shoulder to shoulder, looking up and singing – not a song, but a single note – the sounds of ah and ohm. Above the apex of the pyramid shimmered a light, vibrant energy.

Amelia knew there was a message in what she was seeing, it had even penetrated her body, trying to get her attention, but she didn't understand what it meant. Why was she seeing this?

Amelia opened her eyes and looked at the shaman, hoping

he'd have an answer for her, but there was a black hole where his face should have been. As if reading her mind the shaman reached for her hand, grabbed it and began shaking her arm with an energy so intense her entire body began to vibrate – drawing her spirit back into her body.

Suddenly Amelia saw a white light glowing around the shaman as he sang hypnotic notes filled with complex patterns; at times sunny and joyous, at other moments frightening and mournful.

When he stopped singing the shaman turned to Amelia and said telepathically, “Remember who you are and create with Love as you were meant to. Know that you don’t have to join the chaotic dream of others... create your own world as you want it to be.”

Bile inching its way up the back of her throat brought Amelia suddenly back into her body. She didn’t know whether she’d been gone for seconds or hours as the old man’s voice said, “... Yep, it’s quite a thing this journey... Oh, don’t worry about the hurl, it just comes with the territory. You’re getting rid of a lot of stuff right now... things you carried with you, emotionally and physically... not just your lunch.”

Amelia lay on the floor feeling desperately ill, vomiting again and again while Phil kept talking. Despite her wretched physical state, her mind was clear and as she listened to Phil his story made a strange and horrifying kind of sense.

“You see... I know, and you know, that you shouldn’t be here! For God’s sakes you’re just a kid,” said Phil thoughtfully. “And what’s worse is that I’ve seen what happens to kids here.”

“What do you mean?” asked Amelia weakly.

“You don’t know anything about this place do you?”

Amelia shook her head, feeling queasy as she did.

“Alright, I’ll tell you,” said Phil with a pained look in his eyes. “This is a military base, but it’s black ops. It’s funded secretly, and regular military, the CIA and the FBI know nothing about it.

Phil paused for a moment, vomited loudly, cleared his voice and said, “Hah!! Now that’s better! Ok, where was I? Oh yes... well there are hundreds of secret military underground facilities around the world, but this place that we’re in... we call it the HUB, not very imaginative, but it’s like all roads leading to Rome. Actually, I like to think of HUB as an acronym for Hellish. Unbelievable. Bullshit. I think that kinda’ puts what we do here in a nutshell.”

“How are they connected?” Amelia asked. “By electromagnetic trains, like the one you came in on. But what you don’t know is that those trains can move at the speed of Mach 1. And they can go anywhere in the world without having to refuel because they run off the electromagnetic energy of the planet.”

“Where does all the money for this come from?”

“Money gets ‘lost’ all the time. You think anyone could really keep track of all the trillions of dollars that go into fighting wars alone? And... Oh hey... I’m starting to see things, little visions are poppin’ into my mind... and man if I’m not seeing you! Huh... you are special aren’t you?”

Amelia vomited again, not feeling special at all.

“Oh wow,” he said in a tripped-out voice, “you really need to get out of here before you get killed. Alright then,” said Phil with the energy of one trying to pull himself together under dubious circumstances. “Here’s the deal. There is no such thing as regular warfare... what you see on CNN is just little skirmishes to make

you think the world is still the same... a little warring here, a little terrorism there... but the real war is being controlled right here in the HUB.”

Amelia picked her head up off the floor and looked at him.

“The real war, my friend, is created through what you think are natural disasters... but there is nothing natural about those disasters. Everything from hurricanes and tornadoes to volcanic eruptions to earthquakes and tsunamis... we control it from here.

“I cannot begin to explain how it’s done... but the reason might be to show a country that we can do whatever we want, thereby forcing them to support what we want, or a hurricane or tsunami might be a way of getting public attention away from something the military doesn’t want them poking into, and get their focus onto a disaster.

“There’s something in Alaska called HAARP... well, you don’t want the details, but we are capable of controlling not only the planet... we have devices set up all over the world that can influence people in an entire city, we can control the mood of thousands of people or we can focus on one individual... you’ve already encountered our military psychics. It’s hard to escape from them. We can make your life hell inside or outside.

“But I want you to know, I am not proud of that,” said Phil, only a moment before vomiting copiously. “And one thing you have to understand is that anyone who comes to work at this facility doesn’t know what they’re getting into... and they never leave... if they die, they’re cremated here.”

“You’re telling me I’m going to die here?” said Amelia weakly.

“No, I’m not saying that you’re going to die... at least not right away. But, I do know one thing,” said Phil, “pretty soon you’re

going to pass out... I gave you one powerful dose of this stuff... I'm sorry... you're gonna be really sick. But that means they'll have to take you to the infirmary, and there they'll remove your suit. But you'll understand soon...

"Now listen to me," he added with a new strength in his voice, "this facility is protecting something. I don't know what it is, but I've heard the sound of birds and I've smelled flowers coming through the ventilation system. We're far, far underground, but if you... get the chance to escape," he said, something in his voice hinting that there would be no 'chance' involved, "get yourself into the ventilation system. You'll feel a breeze and just go toward it. I don't know what's there, but I know there's something.

"No one has ever been allowed in there, but I know we're protecting it... whatever it is... And I would try myself, but, well... I have an implant that makes me easy to track. But you don't have an implant, the suit you're wearing is all they need to keep track of you." With that last effort, Phil suddenly passed out.

Amelia lay on her side in the fetal position with her head on her arm, feeling nothing but the desire to die. Yet this feeling brought up a memory of her mother.

Along with being a therapist, her mother, Elaine, had done volunteer hospice work where she visited people who were in the process of dying. And one night, just before New Year's Eve, she told Amelia and her husband, Amelia's father, that she was going to spend the next year as if she only had one year left to live. Amelia's mother went on to explain that she noticed how differently people lived their lives when their doctors gave them a limited time to live, and she decided she wanted to start living as if she was about to die.

Chapter 16

Amelia's mother went to grief support groups, made out her will, cleaned out her closets and organized her paperwork. She sent cards to all of her friends and family telling each one what she appreciated about them. She traveled a bit, but more than anything she spent time with Amelia; not the hurried, I'm in a rush and I'm trying to fit you into my schedule type of thing, but she was genuinely present, as if she had nowhere else to go and nothing else to do. Amelia noticed her mother would listen to her without trying to fix anything or psychoanalyze her; she would just listen to whatever Amelia wanted to say. When her mother responded it wasn't from a place of 'knowing better' because she was older and wiser, and a therapist, her response was more thoughtful and kind.

And then one morning the following December, when the year was almost up, Amelia walked into her mother's room. Her mother was sitting up in bed looking at Central Park blanketed in fresh, sparkling white snow with tears glistening in her eyes. Amelia rushed to her mother and climbed next to her on the bed. "What is it?" she asked, feeling deeply concerned because she almost never saw her mother cry.

Her mother turned to her and said, "This view from my bed, especially when there's fresh snow on all the trees, and everything in the park seems fresh and new... it's always brought me such joy... you know," she said blinking back tears. "But today I feel this pain, knowing that I'll never see this again, and I'll never see

you again sitting next to me as you are right now. And I know, sweetheart... I do know I'm not really dying... but someday I will die, and I already know how it feels to be saying goodbye. And even though it's sad and painful, I'm so glad I have the chance to say goodbye."

Tears flowed down her mother's cheeks and in a stuttering voice she said, "I'm the happiest and the saddest I've ever been... because there are people who die suddenly and they never get to say goodbye... they never get to see the people they loved. But I've spent a whole year just loving you... and that makes me so very, very happy." Her mother grabbed a tissue and blew her nose. "I could have been right here and missed out on the most important person in my life. I used to go to your recitals and my pager would vibrate. I sat in the back so I could slip out and return phone calls.

"But this year, I sat right up front, no pager, no cell phone, and I saw you in a way I'd never seen you before. You are so beautiful and radiant, and I'm so proud of you!" Elaine dabbed her eyes and sniffled, but her eyes were warm and smiling. "I was always rushing, rushing from clients to hospice work, then off to the PTA and home to bake cookies before dropping into bed at 2 a.m. as if I was going to be on Oprah for some Super-mom series, and all that time I was missing out on you."

And with that Amelia flung her arms around her mother and they both cried long and hard, till there was nothing left but the profound joy that they had each other, and that they might have each other for a very long time, or they might not. But there would be no regrets for either of them and no sorrow for anything left unsaid.

Amelia smiled weakly as she remembered that moment with

her mother. Then the jail cell evaporated and she was once again at home. She was really there, sitting in bed with her mother looking out over Central Park; clean and sparkling with untouched snow. Light danced all around her as she hugged her mother. This was reality! She was home, wide awake, whatever else had happened was only a dream. Amelia jumped off the bed, walked over and climbed up on the window seat. She then flung open the windows and said, “Mom, it’s a perfect day for flying, I’ll be right back!”

Her mother smiled and waved as Amelia jumped out of the window.

Chapter 17

Amelia's body jolted like a patient in a psychiatric ward being given an electroshock treatment. Her body lifted off the bed, but her wrists and ankles were manacled to the metal frame causing her to drop back into place. Her eyes flashed open. She was in a dimly lit hospital room. She had only been dreaming about her mother, she was living in a nightmare.

Amelia forced herself to focus, and suddenly recalled how she'd come to be in the hospital. As Phil had predicted her blue jumpsuit had been removed and she could once again feel her own feelings. Then she remembered Phil telling her to find the air ducts. She looked up at the ceiling and saw nothing; and though she couldn't see the floor from her position, in her mind's eye a metal grate materialized, and she found she could move through it, and down a shaft and into the main system. Had the drug Phil gave her made her super psychic, she wondered, or was she making it all up?

In that moment a short, Hispanic man with a shaved head and intense dark eyes, dressed as a nurse, walked in with a needle and syringe in his hand. Amelia's body tensed as she prepared for him to give her a shot, but instead he looked over his shoulder, drew the bed curtains around Amelia's bed, capped the needle with a plastic lid, and slid it into his pocket as he pulled out a key from his other pocket.

He unlocked her manacles and handed Amelia a note:

"Don't talk. Phil sent me. None of us can escape from here."

Everyone is either wearing a suit that can't be removed or has an implant. But we knowingly chose this life; not like you... and I know it will ease some part of my conscience for the horrors that have taken place here if I am able to help you escape. Phil thinks you can make it. I believe in you, too...

There's a grid in the floor that leads to the air ducts. There's enough light to see and no cameras. But once they know you're gone they'll send psychics into the tunnels to find you.

I've blocked the camera in this room, but you'll only have a few minutes. I removed the screws already and I'll watch out while you climb in there. Your clothes and shoes are under the bed.

Run as far and as fast as you can. The minute they know you've escaped from here, they'll be looking for you. No one has ever escaped. Just go in the direction the air is coming from. If there's more than one choice, go where the air smells fresher. I'm not sure what's there, but it's where our air comes from, and no military personnel are allowed in there, not even the out-of-body psychics. So if you make it, they can't follow you.

If you somehow get back to the surface...will you mail a letter for me? Angel

P.S. I had to guess your size, and sorry I couldn't get you any underwear at the commissary without being noticed. In the pockets there's a penlight, a screwdriver and a bunch of different heads, a Swiss army knife, and protein bars."

After reading the note Amelia looked up at Angel and nodded that she understood, as she held out her hand, palm up. Angel handed her an envelope with an address and took the note back from her, stuffing it in his pocket. He then stepped outside of the curtain to give her some privacy.

Shakily she got out of bed in her hospital gown and kneeled on the floor. She had a fever and wanted to just lie on the cool tile, but she forced herself to keep going. She had already seen the clothes in her mind's eye, hanging from the metal springs. Without even looking, she reached down to the exact spot and pulled on the clothing with a brisk jerk. Army fatigues and a pair of regulation boots landed on the floor with a slight thud.

She quickly put on the pants, and a tank top that clung tightly to her body, while tying the arms of the shirt around her waist. The pants were a bit big, but the belt kept them up – which was a good thing because the pockets were heavy – and the shoes were snug, but Amelia would have left naked and barefoot if that had been her only choice.

When she stepped out from behind the curtain Angel was holding the grid for her in the exact spot she'd seen it in her mind's eye. He handed her a bottle of water in a pouch and showed Amelia how to connect it to her belt. With a flashlight he silently showed her foot and handholds where she could climb down.

Amelia surprised Angel with a quiet kiss on his cheek, and then stepped down into the shaft. As he was replacing the grid and screwing it back into place, Amelia climbed carefully downward. When she reached the bottom of the ladder she found herself in something that made her think of an immense drainage pipe – the floor was flat, but the sides and top were round and about 12 feet high. It was strangely clean and fresh smelling, and Amelia headed in the direction of what she hoped was a breeze, but she couldn't tell for sure, except for the fact that in her mind's eye she was seeing nature: tall trees, singing birds and blue sky... not at all like the desert, but still, it seemed to be the way she should go.

She began running slowly at first, expecting that she might not be completely over her drug induced nausea, but just as Phil had said, it was as if she had gotten rid of a weight – mentally, emotionally and physically – and now her body, mind and spirit felt alive and free. It felt incredible to run, though a bra would have been nice, but at least her t-shirt was tight, so that helped a little.

Amelia gained speed as she tried to distance herself from the hospital wing. With her new second-sight, she hoped she would be able to see whatever was necessary for her to get to where she needed to be. But she didn't know how long it would take for the drug to be totally out of her system; and when it left, would she lose her current abilities? As a backup plan, she hoped she could at least find out where the trains ran so she could throw herself in front of one... just in case her plans went astray. It sounded fatalistic, but there was no way she was going to let herself be stuffed into that blue jumpsuit again.

She didn't know how close she was getting, or how she would know when she got there – she just knew that the air would smell fresh. And for a moment that's exactly how it seemed. She would have sworn she could smell eucalyptus trees, something she remembered from a trip to California with her grandparents. But there weren't eucalyptus trees in the desert, so that made no sense.

But what else could she do? She ran toward the fragrant air, feeling revived, as if somehow she might survive; and though she didn't know how, she was determined to help the others as well.

Amelia ran and ran. With every split in the tunnel she could sense and feel, and smell the proper direction to go. She knew without doubt that she was on the right path and getting closer

and closer to her destination.

She paid no attention to the tunnels passing by until she came to an unusual split in the pathway, one branch leading into total darkness. She thought it must be for an area that was no longer in use, but just as she had walked by it, a sudden image of Matthew and some of the students from their group flooded into her mind. Instantly she felt overwhelming pain and shock and she knew something horrible was happening. She could feel that they were close, but that she would have to go into the darkness to find them.

She stood hesitantly looking down the tunnel. The air was unmoving and dank with a putrid odor underlying the smell, as if something had died farther down the tunnel quite some time ago, its stench lingering. As she stared into the darkness, there appeared a subtle golden glow of light about 30 feet away.

Every muscle in Amelia's body tensed. What could it be? she wondered. After a moment of staring at the soft light, curiosity overcame her fear and she walked towards it, her steps prickly with caution. And though several times she had to fight the urge to go back the way she came, she soon arrived at the source of the light – a round, metal grid, a bit larger than a manhole.

Peering through the grid she could see a warm, golden glow emanating from beneath, but a putrid smell rising on a current of warm air overcame Amelia with a wave of nausea and she fell to her knees. It wasn't just the smell. She could feel death; and it wasn't the death of an animal, but something unimaginably worse. Her psychic side tried to flash an image of what she was feeling, but she opened her eyes wide, willing herself not to see the vision that was floating on the edge of her conscious thought.

Every cell in Amelia's body wanted to run back – to the light,

to the fresh smells of nature and the promise of safety. Away from the horror that was clawing at her and beginning to materialize in her mind. And besides, her mind argued, she was a fugitive; she had left an empty hospital bed behind, and that couldn't go unnoticed for long. Her only chance to help the others was to reach her destination first.

But she knew she couldn't go. She would never desert Matthew. And so what if she survived, if she did nothing to help the others?

Telling herself to take it one step at a time, Amelia forced herself to slide her fingers through the square holes in the grid and take a deep breath; then, with a stiff tug she got it to move. It was extremely heavy, but the metal was rounded and didn't cut into her fingers the way flat edges would, and when it slid a short ways she knew it wasn't bolted into place. Still, it took all of her strength to shift the grid; back and forth, pushing, pulling, heaving until a metal lip on one side released and she was able to drag the grid across the floor of the air duct, just enough so she could see more clearly what was below.

Panting from the effort, Amelia dropped down flat on her stomach and peered inside the opening, but rather than the air shaft she had expected to see, she found light faintly glimmering on the hand carved rock walls of a round tunnel. And while she couldn't determine its source, the light glowed more brightly on the rough hewn stone floor about twenty feet below, which meant it couldn't be too far away.

Every nerve in her body still cried desperately for her to turn back, but in her mind's eye she saw Matthew and the others in unimaginable danger, and she knew without a doubt that this

passageway would lead her to them.

If she'd taken the time to think about it, she would probably have stopped herself, knowing there was nothing she could do even if she did find them, but something in her pushed her to move through her fear and go beyond the limits she thought she had, like a mother lifting a car off of her child with seemingly inhuman strength.

The grid was easier to move now that it was sliding along the floor – though it did so with a disconcertingly loud scraping noise that echoed in the tunnel – and Amelia opened it enough so that she could squeeze through the opening and then hang on the grid, but first she clicked on her flashlight to find the first foothold. She climbed in and then breathed a sigh of relief as she realized how easy it would be to climb back out. But her reprieve was short lived – it wouldn't take them long to find her, she knew, if the grid was left open, laying on the floor of the air duct for all to see. But it was her only way out, so she had to leave it open.

Still holding the grid, a searing, stinging pain throbbing in her fingers, Amelia walked her feet down the wall until she felt the next foothold, then she let go with one hand and groped the wall until she found a handhold.

A loud stuttering bang reverberated loudly down the air duct, as if an entrance to the tunnel above was being accessed, and bright lights were switched on. There was no going back. Her only hope was to stay ahead of whoever was coming. Going as quickly as she dared until at last her trembling body reached the solid rock floor and Amelia found herself in a low, hand carved tunnel dimly lit by a flickering light from a round room about ten feet away.

Slowly, tentatively, Amelia bent down to walk beneath the low

tunnel ceiling, clinging to the wall for security, until she found herself in a taller chamber also hand carved out of red rock where she could finally stand up. An amber colored electric light was flickering brightly from a metal and glass casing that hung on the wall, as if it would go out any moment. Just below the light was a staircase, hand carved out of stone.

As Amelia moved cautiously closer to the staircase, the stench of burnt hair and other putrid odors commingled oddly with the sweet, pungent fragrance of burning pine resin wafting up heavily on a warm, rising current from somewhere below. Instantly, her eyes began to water and her body was filled with a horrible fear as a sickening, rancid taste burned at the back of her throat. Her heart thumped wildly in her chest, wishing her away from that awful place. But there was nowhere else to go.

Chapter 18

Standing completely still, Amelia counted thirteen steps down to the next landing. She took a deep breath and told herself she just had to take one step at a time, which seemed almost comical to her until she saw a rat shoot past, and, with a barely stifled squeal, nearly fell down the entire stairway. Taking a deep breath she grabbed the pocket knife out of her pocket and stepped down. The shadows flickered in eerie formations across the walls from the barely functioning electrical light above and what appeared to be torchlight below.

She tried to overcome her fear, saying “One more step; you’re almost there,” in a hushed, quivering tone. Looking nervously down the steps, ears straining, willing her eyes to see in the dark, Amelia stepped down only to have two rats squeal under foot and run down the steps in front of her.

Amelia stood still, shuddering, her heart racing and her head hurting from the noxious smells. Once again, the acrid sting of bile rose in her throat, and she put a hand over her mouth, trying to breathe deeply and calm herself; but the foul odors made that nearly impossible. Her head swimming, she looked carefully at the next step. She was so focused on avoiding rats, she didn’t pay attention to where she was placing her hands on the wall until they came to something soft and sticky. And with a slow settling terror, she realized she had put her hand into a massive spider’s web.

Involuntarily, she let out a horrified scream, and screamed

again, even louder, when she saw the blackly lurking fist-sized spider that lived on the web, only an inch from where her hand had been.

Amelia was mortified – someone must have heard her. But she knew there was still only one way she could go, and she felt her resolve strengthen at the thought. In the same moment, she was sure she could hear drumming coming from somewhere beyond the landing below. Shaking uncontrollably, Amelia pressed onward, the sound of drums becoming clearer as she reached the bottom of the stairs. She found herself in a long, narrow passageway with no lights. Amelia reached into her pocket and pulled out the penlight. She was standing on a dirt floor and though she tried to move quickly in the direction of the drumming, the ground was uneven and the yawning tunnel before her seemed to swallow her tiny beam of light, making it difficult to move without tripping or falling.

All at once, Amelia saw light coming in through a series of holes in the wall allowing her to see into a great cavern from different positions without being seen.

It seemed like a stroke of luck, but then she worried about what would happen if she came upon the person who normally used the secret passageway in the first place. She took a deep breath and tried to cast the thought from her mind, but there was a new anxiety in her now and every sense was alert and watchful as she focused on what was on the other side of the wall.

Before her was an immense cave lit with torches in black metal holders molded into grotesque shapes, and filled with benches that could seat hundreds of people. The ceiling was so far out of sight that it was enveloped in darkness. As Amelia moved along

the passageway, peering through holes in the wall, she saw crude tribal masks and relief carvings depicting horrible acts of violence.

Erratically placed statues of smiling skeletons, snakes, gargoyles, and other creatures all with vicious faces molded out of gold, silver and copper caused ghostly shadows to dance eerily across the cavern walls. Farther down the passageway she was able to see the drummers, their eyes closed, their heads bobbing and swaying, all bare-chested and black skin shining with sweat.

Then chanting began, the voices of hundreds of men erupting from a location Amelia couldn't see. Soon after it began, she saw a man walking in a slow, ceremonious manner down the center aisle between the benches, wearing a black robe and the head of a mountain goat with a black candle burning between the ram's three-foot horns.

Following him were four girls Amelia recognized from her class. They seemed to be in a hypnotic trance, wearing necklaces laden with gold and dressed in long, black sheer dresses silhouetting the forms of their naked bodies beneath as they passed the torchlight.

The girls were moving slowly, so Amelia hurried quietly down the tunnel to get a closer look as they passed by.

The first girl wore a snake with emerald eyes, the next wore two salamanders with ruby eyes, linked at the tail with their heads meeting to form a V. The third girl had a necklace with a man's body and legs, the head of a goat and huge wings on his back. Between the horns of the goat was a golden torch – the flame of the torch was represented by a diamond. The last girl had a necklace with the sun, the moon and the planets. Small diamonds, emeralds and rubies represented stars and dangled from a golden

collar by gold threads.

The girls walked slowly down the aisle carrying black velvet pillows. Each pillow held a different object: the first, an ebony handled dagger; the second, a sword; the third, a wand; and the fourth a five-pointed star.

Hundreds of men wearing animal costumes oozed into the cavern temple, down every aisle, clamoring and crying, climbing over benches, howling, grunting and snuffling as they shuffled unsteadily forward, swaying wildly. As the freakish congregation assembled, the girls all lined up around a wide, central platform. Removing the goat's head, the priest placed it upon a darkly imposing altar. He then began the mass by holding an up-side-down cross in his right hand and making the sign of the cross with his left. The congregation also used their left hand to make this sign and they all repeated aloud, "Ghost Holy the and Son the and Father the of name the in." They then repeated the Lord's Prayer backwards with the exception of the opening line where they said, "Our Father which art on Earth."

The men howled, screamed, and made loud animal noises while dancing obscenely. The drummers rhythmically rattled crudely carved percussion instruments as towering drums suspended from high above, assaulted the senses, pounding heartbeats into submission.

From somewhere, drug-laced vapors crept into the secret passageway anesthetizing Amelia and cloaking her in a shroud of cold, dark apathy. As she felt herself begin to slip away, she dazedly thrust a hand out to support herself, but in moments she had slumped to the ground. And then, just beneath her hand she felt something cold and hard – it was a dagger.

The high priest raised his arms over his head as the congregation sat back in their seats. Some fell off the benches and struggled to get up. When they were all seated the priest walked around the altar and down to two circles on the floor. Without a word, the four girls followed him and stood just outside the circles.

Removing the five-pointed star from one of the pillows, the priest stepped into the middle of the center circle and placed the star on the floor. One at a time, in succession, each girl leaned forward proffering a pillow. First the priest took the ebony handled dagger and thrust it in the leather strap he wore around his waist. Then he removed the sword with his right hand and the crystal wand, wrapped in copper, with his other. The girls all moved in one accord backward to the altar as the priest held the wand and sword over his head and began chanting.

“Belial, Belial! To you I sacrifice the blood of innocence. I give you the blood of life for the blood of my enemy’s life!”

The priest’s voice was ominous and terrifying, but Amelia could feel herself losing consciousness, so she grasped the dagger tightly and drew it across the palm of her hand. Searing pain instantly pulled her back into her body as she struggled to stand up, desperately feeling her way down the wall of the passageway. There has to be a way into the temple!

Still in a trance, the girl wearing the snake necklace walked stiffly up to the stone altar. With a flamboyant swirl, the priest removed his robe revealing a broad well-defined chest and narrow-waist with impeccably toned muscles, which instantly aroused a deafening cacophony of animal noises from the crowd. Like a performer drinking in his audience’s mounting cries for more, he whisked the girl off the platform and into his arms and then

reverently laid her on the sacrificial table.

He stopped momentarily, taunting his devotees with the twisted promise of what was to come, and everyone went wild, their anticipation exploding in a fit of screaming, dancing, yelling and jumping as the drummers drummed louder and louder, faster and faster as he pulled out his ebony-handled dagger.

Then the priest threw both arms in the air and the room dropped into dead silence as he chanted, “This blood sacrifice is the atonement between man and Prince Lucifer.” The congregation began to chant his words over and over again as the priest swayed back and forth in a trance.

Suddenly the priest became still, and in one fluid motion he poised the dagger over his head, ready to plunge it into the girl’s breast. In that moment, Amelia found an opening, hidden from the temple worshippers by a heavy drape, and she burst out from behind it screaming STOP!

“AMELIA!” shouted Matthew in a clear, strong voice. He was wearing a black hooded cape and threw off the hood when he yelled for her and tried to run in her direction, but he was quickly caught by several pairs of hands as he struggled to get free.

As whinnies, grunts and other animal noises erupted from the congregation, all eyes turned back and forth between Matthew and Amelia.

The drumming stopped and the priest whirled around to see the disturbance. Upon seeing Amelia his face lit up, “Ah, there’s my true prize. I was hoping you would come... Won’t you join me at the altar?”

In that moment Amelia realized she had no plan. Even if she could disappear the way she had in her lifetime as Alex, it

wouldn't help Matthew, or the girl who was about to be sacrificed. What did she think she could she do? What was she thinking?

But it was too late to go back over her actions and try again. In little more time than it took her to regret her decision, she was roughly seized by two towering men, their faces masked by paint and tribal ornamentations, Amelia was paraded through the maniacal hordes. A man dressed as a horse and using his hands as hooves, reared up whinnying and pawing into the air like a stallion. But like a man, he made violent pelvic motions showing her his dark intent.

Yet no one touched Amelia, or even tried, and she was delivered to the priest, and held tightly in front of the altar.

The priest did not address Amelia, nor did he even acknowledge her presence, instead he began to chant in a deep, rasping voice, his eyes turned upward as if peering into his own skull.

"I conjure and command thee, oh Belial, to appear forthwith and show thyself to me, here outside this circle, in fair and human shape, without horror or deformity and without delay. Speak to me visibly, clearly and without deceit. Possess my mind and my body. Answer all my demands and perform all I desire. Do not linger. The King of Kings commands thee."

Immediately the priest fell into a deep trance, his chin dropping to his chest. A minute later his head jerked up, his eyes opened wide, and he stepped outside of both circles without touching either one as two men joined him at the altar.

One man handed the priest chalk and he proceeded to draw a triangle on the floor. Then the other man put evergreen boughs around the outside of the triangle along with some skulls from

horned animals.

The congregation began chanting as the priest took a drink of wine and then sprinkled it over the triangle. In the meantime one man ground up some herbs and powder with the mortar and pestle and handed it to the priest who placed it in the triangle.

“I work to the destruction of YOU – AMELIA!” the priest hissed, fury seething from him as he pointed his dagger viciously at Amelia, who had been brought within a few feet of the altar. His voice was softer now, like a feeble old man, yet filled with venom, as he took a chunk of clay and began molding it while saying Amelia’s name over and over again. When he finished, the priest engraved something into the doll and chanted, “In the name of Belial, and the spirit of destruction and revenge - Oh creature of clay I name thee Amelia.”

He then took the doll and placed it at the tip of the triangle. Next, using a scarlet candle, he dripped wax around the triangle and began chanting. Finally he stood at the tip of the triangle, crossing his arms over his chest and chanted, “It is not my hand which does this deed, but that of Belial.” He then took a long needle in his left hand, viciously stabbed the doll with the needle, and yelled, “SO MOTE IT BE!”

A sharp, burning pain tore into Amelia’s heart and knew she was dying.

Chapter 19

Pulling away from her body, Amelia felt herself moving up through the ceiling of the temple and then the earth. Swiftly, she flew above everything, beyond the atmosphere and into a vortex of energy that caused a spinning sensation in her mind; she felt light, nearly transparent. Her thoughts had perfect clarity, and she knew this wasn't a dream, a past-life, or a parallel world – this was death... and yet she had never felt more alive.

Amelia soon found herself standing on a cliff overlooking the ocean, surrounded by wildflowers in full, rainbow-colored bloom. Feeling a warm, glowing presence behind her, she turned to see an extraordinarily beautiful young woman with a wreath of wildflowers crowning her waist-length, wavy brown hair. The woman stood barefoot, wearing a long, flowing white dress; the bluebells and wild roses in the wreath matched her wide-set eyes and glowing cheeks.

A brilliant, golden ray of light radiated from the woman's heart and filled Amelia with love. But Amelia's body, though it seemed perfectly solid, was not physical. Her physical body had collapsed, her heart had stopped beating, and by all earthly standards she was dead.

Amelia had been terrified of dying, frightened she'd be alone and lost without the comfort of her friends and family. But in this place she felt love that was beyond anything she had ever known.

With a deep, knowing smile, the woman extended her hand to Amelia and they walked hand-in-hand on a soft path through

the meadow.

“You do know you need to go back,” she said gently, “it’s not your time yet.”

“I can’t go back,” said Amelia quickly. “There’s nothing I can do to stop what’s happening.”

“Take your thought off the problem and focus on love,” said the woman soothingly. “If you are focused on love, you cannot be focused on the problem at the same time.”

“I don’t see how I can do that... I mean, maybe you can’t understand. Here where you live, it’s beautiful and light – and all is well. But things aren’t that way where I come from.”

“I do understand your world,” said the woman gently.

“Know that I am a part of you, just as your heart is a part of your body, and I am no more separate from your experience than your sight is from your eyes. I know everything you know, and I hear your every wish.

“I have been with you your entire life; the experience you are having right now is simply you giving yourself permission to recognize another aspect of who you are.”

The woman smiled and turned to face Amelia, holding both her hands. “I am what some would call your ‘higher self,’ but the truth is that I am not separate from you. In a way, it is as if you and I have taken a boat out on the ocean; you with your diving gear and me on board the vessel, enjoying helping you to get the most out of your time in the water... warning you if there is danger, or telling you where you might turn to find a delicate, ocean beauty.

“As the diver, you always have the choice to do whatever you might like. I would never seek to change that. But from where I stand, everything through time, space and in all dimensions, is

laid out quite simply before me, and so for every desire that you have, I can help direct you towards your highest good, the things you most deeply, truly want in this life.”

As Amelia stood holding the woman’s hands, she realized she was seeing a reflection of herself. And so it was a little strange when she asked herself, “Then what do you see that I should do right now?”

A golden glow appeared around her reflection, sparkling with tiny, bright stars as the image slowly began to disappear.

“Remember your lifetime as Alex,” her voice whispered softly, “Feel your memories. Feel what it was like when you combined vibrations of thought, feeling and sound. And if you want to be reminded of our connection, you need only say Love is with me now, and focus on that love with everything you are.

Chapter 20

Amelia's eyes fluttered open and she found herself lying on the altar. Above her loomed the tall, ominous figure of the high priest – his unseeing eyes rolled back in their sockets as he swayed side to side in a trance, the black handled dagger poised over his head.

Amelia closed her eyes: Thought, feeling, sound... thought, feeling, sound... raced through her mind. But she couldn't think, and all she could feel was terror. SING! she heard in her mind, and then she could feel music! Angelic tones rang through her mind and vibrated her body, as if she were a grand cathedral. Amelia didn't know what to sing, but as Alex she used to sing AH on one note – so that's what she did. And as she sang she thought, Love surrounds me now.

Light began to fill her thoughts and in her mind's eye she saw herself floating high above the Earth. She saw a golden cocoon created by the Forces of Light. She slid down the threads of light emanating from the planet's surface. There she saw the ones who were feeling this light into existence with their loving hearts – their hopes and dreams and bright aspirations for the future. Yet every man, woman and child appeared to her not as physical human beings but as dancing, rainbow-colored Light.

There were pockets of darkness, but even in the darkest recesses upon the Earth – places dominated by deep-seated conflict, war, hunger and poverty – Living Light threaded its way into the space between the worlds.

As Amelia sang with her eyes still closed, she saw her song materialize as golden light – surrounding her, filling all space. And in that moment she began to feel, really feel, who she had been as Sasha, fearlessly riding into battle, a sword in each hand, both fighting and watching the battle out-of-body from above as her second-self, her thoughts moving so quickly the battle appeared in slow motion.

But she was more than fearless. As Alex, she not only loved her family deeply, she was selflessly moved to share her gifts with the world. Suddenly Amelia realized that the Science of Imagery – the combining of thought, feeling and sound – wasn't just something she had experienced thousands of years ago in another lifetime, it still existed in perpetuity in the unseen realms – in the space between the worlds – waiting to be called upon.

As if from a great distance Amelia heard the high priest chanting, “We shall be One with the night!”

Opening her eyes Amelia saw the priest had stopped swaying and was poised to plunge his dagger into her. Time stopped. Amelia saw a golden thread of Light rising from the center of her chest and she heard a voice in her mind saying softly. “Do nothing. Trust that all is well. All is exactly as it should be.”

But it wasn't just words, it was the feeling of letting go, of trusting Life: There is no death. I have nothing to fear. Amelia saw herself as she had lived in Russia as a Vedruss. She saw her pond and forest, the orchard and gardens. She vividly remembered the day she sang to her infant son and how it felt to see the rose bloom, smell its sweet, delicate fragrance, and then her amazement at seeing all of the wildflowers in bloom.

It no longer mattered to her what happened. Amelia knew

that she was seeing, feeling and singing her world into reality and that it would come about, as she had seen and felt it. Whether it was on Earth or in some other dimension, it didn't really matter: She knew, without doubt, that even as her forefather had given wings to bumblebees, her creation existed and would be given form.

Now in her second self, Amelia hovered just above her body, her mind processing everything so quickly it seemed like events were occurring in slow motion.

An earthquake violently shook the cavern temple. The priest dropped his dagger and grabbed the altar for support. The congregation dispersed, seeking cover as the ceiling began collapsing in huge chunks all around the room. But Matthew ran for Amelia, throwing off his cape as he struggled to reach her.

As she slid off the altar, the high priest came back into full consciousness and let out a terrible scream of rage and fury as he tried to grab her, but a ball of fiery blue light materialized between them. Swirling blue sparks shot out in all directions and the light seemed to have a consciousness of its own as it struck the man, causing him to stumble backward and trip over an immense slab of the ceiling that had fallen directly behind him, his arms and legs flailing until he landed flat on his back with his head striking the corner of the slab. He didn't move.

Matthew rushed to Amelia, helped her off the raised platform and then wrapped her in his arms. Amelia hugged him tightly, then kissed him full on the mouth, before yelling, "Run!"

The temple was still trembling as Matthew took Amelia's hand and ran up the aisle of the cavern temple, full force. The back of the temple was pitch black, and Matthew was relieved he could see

a shaft of light coming in through the door he'd left ajar.

Matthew slammed into the door, which flew open, revealing a brightly lit hallway, and then banged loudly against the wall. At first the light made it hard to see, but Matthew suddenly recognized the hall leading to the hospital elevators where he'd arrived in a truck.

"There are elevators this way!" Matthew yelled over his shoulder as they ran. He could tell Amelia was running without difficulty, so he dropped her hand, rounded a corner and then dashed headlong for the elevator control panel and bashed the down-button with his fist.

Amelia made it just as the doors on the elevator slid silently open, revealing a massive cargo platform, at least twenty feet high, with floor to ceiling ladders attached along the walls. Amelia and Matthew cautiously stepped inside as a panel of lights appeared on the wall next to the doorway. There was only one option they could think of that might work – Matthew hit the button for the lowest level, and the circle of light turned from red to green just as soldiers came running down the hall.

Instantly the elevator began to drop. Starting slowly it quickly picked up speed. On and on it went, Amelia couldn't imagine how far they'd gone when suddenly the elevator began to shake. Matthew slammed his fist on a button labeled, 'Emergency Stop.' The elevator ground to a halt, but continued shuddering and swaying as it dangled from its cables amidst the renewed surge from the earthquake. Matthew yelled urgently, "Quick, up that ladder."

Taking separate ladders up to the ceiling, they climbed out hatch doors and scrambled onto the roof of the elevator.

Emergency ladders glowed on each wall, lighting the entire width and breadth of the shaft, which seemed to go on forever. Alongside the ladders, only a few feet above them, were round portholes twelve feet in diameter.

“This way!” Amelia yelled, climbing up the closest ladder, then added, “wait! Let me see.” At the edge of the porthole she paused. The porthole was covered, but as she reached out to touch it, the cover instantly disappeared in a spiraling motion and Amelia could feel a small breeze combined with the slightest hint of eucalyptus. Her face lit up, “This is it...come on!” Matthew climbed up and joined her.

Once inside Matthew turned and saw a flat, fist-sized red button glowing next to the doorway. With barely a touch the porthole cover spiraled back into place. Unlike the ventilation shaft Amelia had been in before, this one seemed to have been made from some form of high technology – the walls were formed of a shiny, gray material that was soft and rubbery. Tiny lights dotted the ceiling and ran in a straight line along the length of the tube.

Amelia quickly explained what Phil had told her about following the fresh air in the shaft, and they both took off at a run. As they ran the air felt fresher. They both began to feel energized and ran faster and faster until Matthew suddenly stopped and whispered loudly, “Do you hear that?”

A bird song was echoing through the ventilation system. “Listen...” said Matthew quietly and with a look of deep concentration on his face.

Amelia smiled and nodded, “I hear more birds singing. This must be the way to the place Phil told me about!”

The sound got louder and louder as they continued on, as if hundreds of birds were singing all at once. When they finally reached the vent door, the sound was practically deafening. As Matthew reached to push the flat, glowing button next to the door, Amelia grabbed his arm fearfully.

Matthew nodded and peered through the tiny holes in the porthole, then he reached for Amelia, and wrapping his arm around her as she moved forward, touched the button. The door melted away in a spiraling motion, but this time it revealed a sight neither of them could have imagined.

Chapter 21

Amelia and Matthew stepped out of the porthole onto a rock cliff with large patches of soft, green moss fed by tiny trickles of crystal clear water. Behind them, the porthole closed up on itself, and blended seamlessly with the surrounding rocks and moss.

Emanating from just above the horizon, the most wonderfully warm sunshine kissed their faces. An intensely blue sky tinged with early morning dusty-rose was reflected in the soft, powder-puff clouds overhead. Even the dense forest canopy nearby was dotted in pink, but it was the hot pink of a raucous bunch of Australian galah parrots gabbling like hundreds of ladies at tea with their feathery white hats, speaking a language all their own.

An aftershock from the earthquake shook the ground and the flock rose all at once, circled above the tree tops and spun out of sight as Amelia and Matthew clung to the rock wall behind them for support.

Finally the tremor stopped and they both surveyed the scene before them. Matthew looked at Amelia and said in a stunned voice, “We must be underground... This must be some kind of... artificial environment!”

“But we can see the sun and the sky, and we’re not looking through glass,” said Amelia staring into the heavens, or at least what looked like the heavens.

“Well, I don’t know where else we could be...” he said with growing astonishment. “Maybe it’s a hologram.” He bent down and pressed his hand into the cool, dark rock of the cliff side.

“That’s real, at least...”

Amelia laughed, “Of course it’s real...” Then she paused and added, “It’s so beautiful. I wish we could just sit here, but we have to get away from this entrance. ”

“You’re right,” said Matthew, scanning the rocks for a way down as he was suddenly jolted back into the reality of their predicament. But Amelia saw it first – a path leading from where they were down the side of hill in a zigzag pattern to the bottom of the hill where they could see a bubbling brook winding its way through the forest below.

The path was a little rocky, but easy to follow and as they climbed down Amelia told Matthew all that had happened to her, the real purpose of the facility, the underground electromagnetic railway, and the help she’d received from Phil, even her whole experience with the ayahuasca.

Matthew briefly told Amelia about his own experience, and how he and the other students were taken in covered trucks to another part of the facility. All of the students and teachers had their watches and phones confiscated, and as far as he could tell, every person was given their own small room in what appeared to be a hospital.

“But it wasn’t like a regular hospital, it was more like a mental ward,” said Matthew, still trying to get his head around his experience. “My room was padded and soundproof. And as far as I could tell, no one was there...at least not in the hall. There were cameras everywhere. At first I thought it was a security thing, but then I started thinking we were being observed.”

“What happened to you?” asked Amelia, almost afraid to hear the answer after hearing Phil’s cryptic account of the HUB.

“Nothing,” said Matthew. “Nothing at all happened. I couldn’t hear anything, there was no sunlight, I had no watch... I could turn on a lamp, but I had no sense of time. When I woke up and turned on the light, I’d hear a clicking sound and a doorway in the wall would automatically open. There was a space of about twelve inches between the wall of my bedroom and the wall in the hallway. I couldn’t even reach through and try to knock on the doorway, everything was padded. I’d get food, but only if I put my plate, silverware and cup back in the space. The door would close automatically and lock until the next meal.”

“How did you and the girls end up in that... cave... temple place,” said Amelia hesitantly, not really knowing what to call the place, and cringing at the thought of it.

“I don’t know what happened to the girls,” said Matthew, “but I found a black cape in the cubby hole where my meals were put. I took it out, but I wasn’t going to put it on... but then they wouldn’t feed me. So I put the cape on and the door to my room opened.

“And there was no one anywhere in the hall, all the doors to the other rooms were locked, and then I heard this drumming,” said Matthew, retracing the experience in his mind. “I followed the sound, but I didn’t feel like I was escaping... there was no place else to go. All of the doors to other corridors were locked. I felt like some rat in an experiment, but anything was better than being in that room.

“When I reached the temple, it was strange,” said Matthew thoughtfully, “I didn’t think about it at the time, but I’d been walking down this regular hallway... you know like with florescent lighting and tiled floors, and everything smelled like a hospital... that chemical smell. I came to these two metal doors... double

doors... just regular doors, but when I opened the door there was this bizarre temple and ceremony going on. I couldn't see a thing. It was kind of like walking into a movie theatre... everything in the theatre is dark and you can see the screen, and the light coming in from the door where you walked in, but nothing else.

"So I left the door cracked so I could see... and so I could get out too if I had to. But now that I think about it... it just seems so bizarre that these double doors in a hospital wing would open up into a cavern," said Matthew, still trying to figure it out as he spoke.

"I could see the girls down by the altar... and even from where I stood I could tell they were hypnotized... or drugged... or something. I didn't know what to do, and I didn't know if I was part of some experiment, but I was afraid of what was going to happen, so I put the hood over my head and just started walking down the aisle. It was so crazy no one even paid attention to me... until I yelled out your name. And everything else you know about.

"In here..." said Matthew thoughtfully, feeling the strange contrast between his story and the unbelievable beauty that surrounded them, "everything that's happened feels like a dream... I mean, more of a nightmare, really... but the kind of nightmare where you're just glad to wake up and then you see it isn't true. That's how it feels here. Like it's the real world, and I'm awake."

When they reached the forest floor a feeling of peace swept over them.

"Matthew, I don't think anyone will be coming after us," said Amelia, her voice calm, "Phil said that none of the military personnel had ever been allowed in here, and it doesn't look like anyone followed us."

“Huh...” said Matthew thoughtfully, “I wonder how we got in? I know we’re not military, but it wasn’t hard to get in through the ventilation system...”

“I don’t know,” said Amelia, “everyone here seems very controlled in those jumpsuits. I wore one, and you don’t have much of a desire to do anything,” she added, looking longingly at the creek. “And Phil said that most everyone here has implants, so maybe they’d set off an alarm or something if they tried to get in.”

“Do you think we could drink this water?” said Matthew following her gaze. “I’m dying of thirst.”

“So am I,” said Amelia, “but why don’t we follow this upstream a bit and see if we can find the source... I think that would be safer.”

Heading along the stream, they nearly forgot about their thirst as light fell in filtered shafts from the trees above, causing sparkling rainbows to emerge from the brook as it bubbled and sang in the morning sun.

Finally they came to an opening in the rock where the water emerged as pure as could be.

Matthew and Amelia dropped onto their stomachs and drank the cold, crisp water as if they’d been thirsty for days. When they had drunk their fill they looked at each other astonished. Matthew blinked, “I can’t believe that’s water!”

“I’ve never had anything like it!” said Amelia staring at the brook, in amazement, “I mean, I feel almost light-headed... but like I’m alive inside. Or it’s alive inside me... but in a nice way... where it makes me feel alive.”

Matthew smiled, his eyes glowing as he looked at her.

“What?” she said, a little embarrassed by his attention as she

got up and sat on a large, flat rock about two feet high. Then she laughed, "I know... I get a little tongue tied sometimes. But you feel it too. I mean, how would you describe it?"

Matthew thought for a moment. Took another drink, swallowed, closed his eyes and said, "It's like drinking love."

He opened his eyes and they both burst out laughing.

"That's IT!" cried Amelia. "That is exactly it. Love in the form of water."

"Or maybe it's water in the form of love," said Matthew in a silly pose with his chin between his thumb and forefinger, left eyebrow raised. He then sat on the ground facing Amelia, being careful not to harm the daisies that were springing up right at the edge of the creek.

She giggled. "You know, I'll bet we could drink the water anywhere here. I can't imagine that it would hurt us."

"I agree," said Matthew confidently. "Maybe if we follow the stream and see where it leads, we'll find people."

"You think people live here?"

"There must be people here somewhere!"

But before Amelia could agree something slightly behind Matthew caught her eye. Quietly she said, "Turn to your left very slowly."

Matthew turned his head, but seeing nothing, he shifted his eyes back toward Amelia and raised his eyebrows, silently saying, "What?"

Amelia whispered, "Look at the daisy."

Matthew turned again and stared at the flower. Then with a confused shrug he said, "I see it. You're talking about the bee, right?"

“Look again,” said Amelia, eyebrows raised, motioning with her head.

He looked again, but before he could look back at her Amelia said, “It’s not a bee.”

Matthew looked at what he thought was a bee and saw that he was looking at a faerie. A real, live faerie was sitting on the golden center of the daisy, with her legs and arms crossed staring at Matthew, lightly tapping her toe on the soft white petal below her foot.

That was shocking enough for Matthew, but then she spoke. It wasn’t out loud, but it sort of seemed to reverberate in his head, like her thoughts had come over to his mind for a visit. “A bee!” she said, incensed. “A BEE? Do I seem that chubby to you? Do you see anything beelike about me, except my wings? And by the way, bees have faerie wings and not the other way around!”

With that the faerie spun around in a little huff and flitted away. Matthew turned to Amelia wide-eyed. She had heard the entire conversation herself and burst out laughing as soon as the faerie disappeared into the woods. In mock protest to her laughter, Matthew reached out to tickle Amelia, and though she did her best to tickle him at the same time, she overextended her reach as she launched herself toward Matthew, fell off her rock and knocked him over in the process.

Matthew flipped over her, pinning her to the ground as she giggled, and straddled her with his knees on either side of her body, while she stomped her boots on the ground in fits of laughter as he tickled her.

Suddenly Matthew stopped and just stared at Amelia, tears of laughter streaming down her face, and then he kissed her. Her eyes

flashed open, then she surrendered to the moment and returned his kiss. This could have gone on for quite some time, but there was some kind of faerie magic lingering in the air and with all her might Amelia pushed with one foot, twisted her hips and Matthew landed in the creek laughing so hard he simply leaned his head backward and allowed the enlivening water to flow over him.

Just as Amelia was about to tame her laughter, Matthew's arm shot out, grabbed her and hauled her into the creek with him. They splashed and played, and finally got out dripping and flopped onto a low flat rock already warmed by the rising sun.

Lying side by side, exhausted, they surrendered to the warmth below and above. In moments they were both lulled to sleep by the fragrance of nearby lavender and the sound of the creek trickling over rocks in its journey downward. When they awoke the sun was high overhead. Their clothing was dry and they both sat up simultaneously.

"I had a dream and you were in it..." said Matthew, raising one eyebrow curiously, "did you dream about me too?"

Amelia mimicked him and said, "Were we here in the biosphere swimming with tropical fish and dolphins?"

"Well no, I..." Matthew blushed. "We found a unicorn in the forest. It had a long, chestnut mane... not like the white unicorns we usually see... and its eyes were gold... What do you think it means?"

Amelia smiled and gazed off into the distance. "Maybe it doesn't mean anything," she said brightly.

Confused, Matthew replied, "You don't think dreams mean something?"

"No, I mean... Come with me," Amelia said, "Up this way."

Together, they climbed up the face of a steep hill, soft, grassy mounds squishing beneath their feet as they stepped carefully around wildflowers and over small rocks. Amelia had taken off her combat boots and slung them over her shoulder. Matthew, too, had wanted to feel the earth beneath his feet, though he followed gingerly over the rougher patches, careful to be slightly behind Amelia so she wouldn't notice.

When they had finally gone far enough to see over the towering tops of trees, Amelia said, "There... Look."

Matthew's eyes followed her outstretched finger to where it landed upon a sea of blue, and he caught his breath.

"The ocean!" he said in surprise.

"Just as it was in my dream," Amelia replied.

Matthew nodded knowingly as he drank in the sky, and felt a strange magic pulsing through the land. And even though he couldn't see his unicorn out there in the evergreen forests carpeting the hills and valleys, he knew what Amelia had meant in bringing him here.

After a long, reflective silence, Matthew smiled and said, "Well... shall we find something to eat? There's gotta' be food here somewhere."

"Let's start walking and see what happens," said Amelia. But as they walked Amelia suddenly started thinking about their friends and teachers, still being held captive. What would happen to them? How could she and Matthew even find them let alone bring them here. What good would it do if they left and were captured? Then, she remembered her experience with her higher-self and the idea of taking her thought off of the problem and focus on love. But she was desperately afraid for her friends, feeling

guilty even, that she had escaped and they hadn't.

How could she be expected to focus on love at a time like this? If love is so all-powerful, why isn't it here? Why isn't love helping my friends? she thought. But then she remembered to say to herself, 'Love is with me now.' So in her mind Amelia began saying, 'Love is with me now.' Over and over she repeated the statement, feeling a bit silly and fairly sure that it couldn't really work, but even so she repeated it to herself.

For several minutes, Amelia was so focused on saying quietly to herself, "My friends are surrounded by love... I am surrounded by love," that she looked only at the path in front of her as she walked. All at once she looked up. The noontime sun shone through the trees, their bright, lime colored leaves dancing in light, flitting contrast to the deep emerald all around.

Everything was so alive. The colors, rich and bright; the fragrances from the flowers and the trees so delicate and so sweet; even the air had never seemed this fresh or felt this energizing. Suddenly Amelia saw the deeper meaning of what she was saying reflected in the world around her. Everything emanated love. Every sense in her body experienced love. She was seeing the sky, the forest and the creek with her eyes, but she was feeling love. She was hearing the trill of the songbirds hidden high above in the trees, but she was feeling love. She felt love as she smelled the fragrance of white jasmine and magnolia bushes.

And as they walked along, they found wild berries growing everywhere – raspberries and blueberries spilled from their bushes, plump and juicy. Fruit trees, too, were plentiful all along the riverside path. Amelia had never tasted anything so sweet an unexpected flavor bursting in her mouth. She closed her eyes and

felt love.

Had she always been surrounded by love and not known it? It was easy to miss in a large man-made city, but in nature...what was it about nature? Could it be that love was capable of taking on a material form, and that all of creation was there to remind her that she was always surrounded by love?

“This is amazing!” said Matthew, “There’s so much fruit! Oh my God, you have to try this apple... It’s nothing like what you get in the store!”

Taking a bite, Amelia nodded in agreement. “I didn’t know food could taste this good,” she said with a bright smile. “And we don’t even need to pay for it... I hope not, anyways!”

Joking and playing around, they felt so free and light. The military base was like another world to them now, and Amelia felt completely safe with Matthew and in this beautiful, peaceful place. Even as the sun dropped lower in the sky, she could only smile as she thought of what the stars might look like.

Eventually, the creek side path brought them to the sound of heavily rushing water, where they found a magnificent waterfall cascading into the rocks below. Matthew saw a path leading out to a hillside and from there they looked down into a valley full of tropical fruit trees. Bananas, mangoes, papayas... there was pineapple and star fruit, too, and all kinds of vegetation and trees filled with nuts.

Matthew surveyed the scene and laughed as he said to Amelia, “You’d have to make an effort to starve here!”

But Amelia didn’t say anything for a moment, her mind racing with memories. Then she turned to Matthew and said, “Do you think the earth was like this at one time? Where there is more than

enough to take care of everybody? Like this is the way things are supposed to be?”

“Yeah, I guess so,” said Matthew, “I was thinking about it earlier when we were eating from the trees and bushes... We didn’t have to worry about being on ‘someone’s property.’ Which is an idea I guess we take for granted, but it seems really crazy here.”

“And the food is like the water,” said Amelia, “Like it’s here as much because of love as anything else.”

As the sun sank lower in the sky, birds seemed to appear from nowhere, flying in from all directions and congregating in the trees. Their songs rang out so loudly Amelia and Matthew could barely hear each other. There were still a few hours before it would be dark, so they hiked down the hill, each grabbing a banana as they walked by, and a papaya for later. Then they sat down on a cliff that overlooked the ocean and ate their food.

Nothing in their lives had ever tasted as delicious as the fruit they found here. Unexpected flavors burst in their mouths, and everything from the sun on their skin to the water they drank, the air they were breathing, and the food they were eating... everything made them feel alive and energized. Neither of them could even imagine sleeping. But they also didn’t know exactly where to go. So they just sat and admired the endless beauty around them.

Animals were completely unafraid of them. A rabbit sniffed Amelia’s hand, tickling her with a lick of its pink tongue. Deer walked by, flitting their tails, and squirrels came right up to them curiously. A wolf trotted past without giving them much notice, but they both sat up in fear when a bear lumbered over and sniffed Matthew on the back of the neck.

Amelia froze and whispered, “Don’t move, just be as still as you possibly can be.”

In the next instant they heard a little boy’s voice, “Arnold, leave the nice man alone. Come on, buddy.” The bear padded softly away, and the boy said, “I hope he wasn’t bothering you... he’s ever so curious.”]

Amelia and Matthew turned to see a young boy. He said, “You’re not from around here are you?”

Bright blue eyes shone out at them from beneath sandy blonde hair, a sweet dimpled smile gracing the tanned features of a patient, relaxed looking child who had propped himself up against a solid walking stick and now stood staring intently at the two new arrivals in his mysterious and enchanting home.

“No we’re not,” said Amelia, smiling. “The truth is... we have no idea where we are.”

The boy smiled amusedly. “You don’t know you’re in a biosphere?”

Incredulously, Matthew said, “A biosphere? But this is amazing! I’ve never seen... or even heard of anything like it!”

The boy smiled, “The dome is one hundred and fifty miles in diameter and six miles high - the sun and sky are holograms, and we use a weather control system to create rain and whatever else we need.”

“I didn’t think this kind of technology existed!” Matthew replied, amazed and somewhat stunned.

“Most people from the surface know nothing about what’s really available...Oh, I forgot to introduce myself, my name’s Gabriel,” he said, as he stepped forward, thrusting his hand out with an ever widening smile.

Each of them shaking his hand, Matthew and Amelia introduced themselves, but before they could say anything more, Gabriel declared, “You need to see Father, he’ll help you.”

Gabriel whistled three distinctly different sounds, and in a few minutes two horses and a Welsh Pony appeared, each with a slender string tied loosely at the base of its neck, and raced to where he stood. Standing side by side, directly in front of Gabriel, they nipped and played with each other until a high pitched whinny and the sound of galloping hoof beats preceded a Welsh Pony colt dashing to catch up with his mother.

As the colt pattered to a stop next to its mother, a dapple-grey Arabian with a long, thick mane and tail, followed Gabriel to a stump where Amelia was able to easily climb onto its round, furry back. Then, with a quick, fluid motion, Matthew swept himself onto the back of the black Andalusian stallion. As he landed, he was instantly grateful for the horse’s broad, padded physique, and hoped its movement would be as graceful as its appearance. Secretly he felt like one of the Three Musketeers riding such an elegant horse with a broad chest and hindquarters, a wavy, black mane reaching nearly to its knees, and a tail that swept the ground. He hoped he’d be able to stay on once they started moving and subtly wound his fingers into the horse’s mane, just in case.

Gabriel sprung lightly off the ground and onto his plump, white pony, then showed them how to direct their horses to go forward, stop, turn or back up. Amelia was quietly amazed that the horses were trained exactly as her horse had been trained thousands of years earlier when she was a Vedruss, and felt sure it couldn’t just be a coincidence.

As the horses and pony, with her brown baby in tow, trotted

along a soft, smooth, grassy path going away from the ocean and back into the forest, Amelia closed her eyes and felt the slightly moist, warm air on her face. At first she smelled only jasmine and eucalyptus, but as they continued through the forest the faint fragrance of jasmine mingled with the delicate scent of fresh rain painting pictures in her mind.

Flickering light and shadows danced across her closed eyes until Amelia opened them to see velvet rolling hills bearing vast stretches of wildflowers ranging from sapphire blue to the most luminous golden-green. In the distance were dense mountain forests that seemed to embrace and protect the valley below.

Soon, the path gave way to a steep rise in the land, and as they came over the crest of a lush hill they were met with the sight of a sweeping, emerald valley, a river running languidly through it to where it poured itself into a sparkling clear lake. Nestled within the valley was a settlement composed of widely spaced plots of land with houses built upon them, surrounded by green leafed trees and gardens.

As she observed each homestead Amelia saw that everything had a natural quality to it, nothing was pruned or maintained, yet all the plants looked as beautiful and balanced as anything in nature. In some cases they could see a log home, but for the most part it seemed that the homes were either hidden by trees or perhaps some of the people lived underground. All around the homes were living fences composed of raspberry bushes or colorful bougainvillea, beyond that there were acres and acres of lush fields shared by everyone in the settlement. The pasture land had no fences and horses could be seen dotting the landscape, contentedly grazing in the warm sunshine.

Some people were gardening or collecting fruit in their orchard, others were riding horses or out walking. There was no indication that anyone needed to work. As she looked beyond the living fences Amelia could see where people were sun-drying tomatoes, mushrooms and fruit. She recognized everything she was seeing from her own past lifetimes and she couldn't help but wonder how the world of the Vedruss had been reborn in this place.

As they rode into the small settlement, children ran up to greet them, peppering Gabriel with questions, and staring wide-eyed at the newcomers. Many of the children were accompanied by wolves, bears, squirrels, rabbits, ferrets, ducks, geese and some wild creatures Amelia couldn't identify. The creatures tagged along like tame pets, and seemed equally curious about the new, odd-smelling people in their midst.

At last they came to a homestead at the outside edge of the settlement. As they rode onto the property Gabriel called out in a singsong voice, "Father! Father!"

"Gabriel!" a voice sang out from the orchard, as a tall man with a large mustache waved from beneath a tree where he was gathering apples.

Striding toward them with long, purposeful steps, the man approached, grinning from ear to ear. "Here you are!" he said heartily to Gabriel, Matthew and Amelia, all at once, as if he had been expecting them.

As they climbed down from their horses, Amelia noticed the man was a good five or six inches taller than Matthew – who was over six feet tall himself.

With a long nose and angular jaw and short-cropped, jet-

black hair, parted down the middle, framing deep-set eyes and black, bushy eyebrows, there was a certain intensity about the man's appearance, but all this was softened by his dark-brown eyes, sparkling with kindness and permanently creased at the outer edges by smile lines.

Matthew leaned toward Amelia and whispered, "He looks exactly like Nikola Tesla when he was young!"

The man beamed at Matthew, "That's because I AM Nikola Tesla."

Matthew's jaw dropped. "The Nikola Tesla I'm talking about was born in the mid-eighteen hundreds..."

"Eighteen fifty-six to be exact," said Tesla warmly.

Matthew stared at him skeptically, "The Tesla I'm talking about died as an old man in the nineteen-forties."

"I know. That's what most people believe," said Tesla patiently. "Excuse me." Then, turning to Gabriel, putting his arm around the boy's shoulder, he began talking quietly as they meandered slowly in the direction of a pond.

When they were out of earshot Matthew spoke excitedly to Amelia. "Do you know who Nikola Tesla is?"

"A little bit... not much really," said Amelia, shaking her head.

"I wrote a paper on him last semester. He's one of the most brilliant men who ever lived ... he's like the Father of electricity!" said Matthew, his voice filled with admiration.

"If this man is Tesla, he's the one who really invented the first radio, the AC motor, vacuum tubes, and hydroelectric generators. He developed a way to give free electricity to everyone in the world – but the funding was pulled out and the power plant he was building was closed down before he was able to finish – and

the plans disappeared.”

Matthew thought for a moment and added, “Wait, there’s more. Let me think...” he then rattled off, “Tesla discovered, developed or invented things like loudspeakers, fluorescent lights, radar, microwaves...”

“Supposedly all of his papers and experiments were ‘stolen’ by the FBI when he died... but maybe everything just came here,” Matthew added in amazement.

“I mean, it makes a strange sort of sense, given everything else we’ve seen today,” he said to Amelia. “The military wanted his work. Tesla’s technology and discoveries are connected with missiles, particle beam weaponry, satellites and nuclear fission... It makes sense that he’d be here and they’d cover it up by faking his death.”

Her voice low, Amelia said, “Phil told me that they can cause earthquakes anywhere in the world...”

Before she could finish her sentence Matthew blurted out, “Tesla built an earthquake machine that fit in his pocket! Or... so I’ve heard, anyways.”

“Why would someone who wanted to give away free electricity go and create an earthquake machine?”

“Apparently, he didn’t create it on purpose – he was experimenting with resonant frequencies and accidentally caused an earthquake... nearly flattened an entire city block.”

“But that doesn’t explain how he could be a hundred and fifty years old and look like he’s forty – at the most,” Amelia added emphatically.

“I know – that’s the part I don’t understand either” confessed Matthew. “I’ve seen pictures of Tesla as a very old man. I don’t

know,” he added, shaking his head, his optimism sinking a little, “Maybe I’m wrong... Maybe this man is a look-alike relative or something.”

“But what if he is telling the truth?” Amelia puzzled. “What could explain him becoming young?”

Lightening up, Matthew thought for a moment, “Well... Tesla won a Nobel Peace Prize in medicine.”

“Medicine? I thought he was a scientist, not a doctor,” said Amelia.

“It had something to do with deep-heating tissues with high frequency, alternating currents. I don’t remember exactly, but I think it was all about increasing blood circulation in a specific part of the body and getting rid of tumors.”

“Very good,” said Tesla as he rejoined them. “Now you can guess my secret! The truth is that your body has brand new cells replacing old cells constantly. Some organs are completely replaced in weeks – your brain requires about a year to replace itself.

“A perfect cell gives birth to another perfect cell. The problem is that cells begin to malfunction, and then they pass along this misinformation to the new cell. And that’s where disease and aging come from.

“It occurred to me that if I could get rid of tumors with high frequency, alternating current, then I could also get rid of cells passing along ‘misinformation’ and keep the cells that were perfect. I discovered a way to identify the resonant frequency of a diseased or aging cell, then with alternating current I was able to match the resonant frequency, and just like a glass shattering from a high-pitched sound carrying the same resonant frequency as the

glass – I shattered the cells carrying misinformation, and left only perfect cells to create more perfect cells.

“Because I was already eighty-six, I had to go slowly – gradually building up the healthy cells. But within a year I looked the way I do now.

“Needless to say,” Tesla added, “the man found dead in my apartment wasn’t me.”

Chapter 22

“I was given full control to create and maintain the biosphere, but this place is the most highly guarded secret on the planet – I couldn’t just disappear. So the powers-that-be arranged for my ‘death’ and subsequent cremation so no one could ever prove it wasn’t me.”

“Why couldn’t you have somehow shared your secret with the world?” asked Matthew.

“I will be able to share it at some point ... but if all goes well ... it won’t be necessary. No one here is aging and there is no disease,” he added enigmatically. “Infants and children mature, but they don’t age.”

“I know that’s possible,” said Amelia, unsure whether or not she should say more.

“Yes, you do know the possibilities, Amelia,” said Tesla, smiling broadly. “All of this has been built upon your world.”

Amelia blinked and looked somewhat taken aback, “What do you mean?”

Tesla looked back and forth between Matthew and Amelia, “Haven’t you wondered how you came to be here?”

“We only found the biosphere because we escaped through the air ventilation system.”

“You are here,” replied Tesla, “because I allowed you to enter.”

“You saw us?” Amelia gasped.

“I’ve been watching both of you telepathically for quite some time now.”

Matthew and Amelia stared at each other as Amelia said, “What do you mean by, quite some time?”

“It has something to do with remote viewing which allows someone to look psychically into the past or future, or other dimensions of the present. From time to time there are energetic anomalies... to a remote viewer it might look like a pillar of light shooting up from the surface of the planet.

“You both left a rather powerful trail of energy when you died, visited your past lifetimes, and then walked back through the membrane into the third dimension – as if you’d never left.”

Amelia stared at Tesla in total disbelief. “You could see all of that?”

“Yes,” said Tesla succinctly. “That’s why you’re here. This biosphere is based on the world of the Vedruss and both of you carry information from your past lifetimes that’s vital to the continuation of this way of life.

“But before we delve into that let me show you around and maybe explain a few things that will help you understand more about the purpose of the biosphere.”

Tesla led them along a fragrant pine scented forest pathway, dappled with early evening sunlight falling in slanted shafts through towering cedar trees. Finally they came to the top of a hillside.

Tesla motioned for them to sit down in the fragrant grass, sprinkled with wildflowers and said, “In my life as a scientist, I was always looking for ways to improve life for everyone on the planet. Yet every step of the way I was blocked. I was almost finished with a facility in New York that would have provided free electricity to everyone on Earth, but the building was shut down

when my billionaire benefactor realized the electric plant would benefit humanity, but not put money into his pocket.

“I created machines and technology that would correct weather problems around the planet. I could activate rain where there was a drought, cool down unseasonably hot weather, or warm a cold snap so crops wouldn’t be lost from ice or frost. But instead my technology was stolen and misused for the purpose of weather warfare.

“I had no support. No one seemed to care about humanity or the vitality of the planet. And then one night I had a dream. I was paddling upstream in a small boat. There were flat rocks along the river and as I would pass each rock one of my inventions would materialize on the rock, but as I continued paddling and looked back to see my invention, I’d watch as water flooded over the rock and washed the invention into the river. It was incredibly frustrating, but it wasn’t worth turning back since everything was already at the bottom of the river.

“Finally, after paddling upstream for hours and setting up hundreds of inventions that were immediately washed away, I gave up. I pulled in my oars... and lying on my back in the boat, I fell asleep. I woke up – I was still in the dream, you know – and I saw what you see below,” said Tesla with the wave of his arm, indicating the homesteads in the valley below.

“I got out of my boat and I was taken on the most extraordinary tour by a lovely young woman. In the dream she told me I was heading in the wrong direction... that every advancement of technology only serves to further enslave humanity. Then she showed me a way that people could live without working... just like the people here in the biosphere...” Tesla added, “and educate

their children without books or curriculum...because the children are encouraged to follow their intuition and their natural interests.

“When I finally woke up, I felt as if I’d been in the dream for days... or maybe even a lifetime. I wrote down everything I remembered, and all of it has been applied here in the biosphere.”

Chapter 23

Matthew and Amelia looked around. They would both have sworn they were outdoors. The sun was warm and a slight breeze gently delivered the fragrance of gardenias from a nearby bush.

“You’re both Vedruss,” said Tesla, “but you’re not the only ones. The Vedruss are now incarnating on the planet, but for the most part, they don’t know who they are.

“I’d never heard of the Vedruss until I saw them in my dream. Then through astral-travel and remote viewing I began piecing together how they lived. Everything here in the biosphere is based on this. And that’s part of why you’re here.

“You see, remote viewers can go anywhere in the dimension of space-time. From what I saw of you in your lifetime as Alex,” said Tesla gazing steadily at Amelia, “I knew you had the ability to physically disappear from one place and reappear in another. And that made me wonder why you let yourself die in that pyramid, given that you had the power to create a protective shield around a pyramid and the ability to teleport... and then I realized it had to have been your intention to die there.”

Amelia stared blankly at Tesla. “Wait. Stop,” said Amelia firmly. “You’re talking as if you brought us here. I mean, I know you allowed us into this place through the air duct, but you’re talking as if you were planning on us coming here... but that was just a coincidence.”

“There’s no such thing as a coincidence... there are no accidents... and it’s no accident that you’re here. Every ‘coincidence’

is programmed before you were ever born,” said Tesla. “In fact, your experience of ‘dying’ and reentering the third dimension without even being missed was programmed.”

“If it’s all ‘programmed’... and I’m not saying I believe that,” said Matthew skeptically, “... but just for the sake of argument... what would be the point of making any decision?”

“Imagine you’re playing a virtual reality game – no matter what you choose, no matter which direction you turn, there are going to be elements that are programmed into the game. You can spend all the time in the world jumping back and forth between two rocks, and nothing seems to happen, but the minute you decide to go into the dark cave,” Tesla said in a mock-ominous voice, “... the one you’ve been trying to avoid... out come the scary monsters. There is no coincidence... they’ve been programmed to appear as soon as you wander into the cave. They’re not programmed to come out of the cave and get you, they’re programmed to materialize when you enter the cave. Until that moment they do not exist – except within the program.

“Going in a day earlier or five years later would make no difference – it is your presence in the cave that activates the program. But if you float down the river instead, you activate a different program, and never experience the monsters in the cave.”

Tesla stood up and said, “Come walk with me,” as he headed slowly toward a pathway running through the forest, “and I’ll explain.” Though they both felt a bit confused, Matthew and Amelia hurried to catch up.

“What I’m going to tell you will sound very ‘cloak-and-dagger’... hmm... no it’s far beyond that. Well, you’ve heard of... what is it you call it? Conspiracy theories, yes?”

Matthew and Amelia both nodded.

“The people who believe in such theories all point to a secret society or a small, powerful group of people, but I can tell you that there are only six people behind everything that you see. They have been on Earth for thousands of years...”

“How is that possible?” said Matthew abruptly.

“Actually, even the Bible recorded stories about people who lived for eight or nine hundred years, but to live for thousands of years these six Egyptian priests developed a technique based on what you might call conscious death. Even today there are Buddhist monks who meditate and consciously leave their body behind... if consciousness does not return to the body, the body dies. The priests did the same thing, but upon leaving their bodies they would inhabit the body of someone else. And in this way they have lived for thousands of years. They are known to each other, and they communicate telepathically, but they never meet and almost no one knows who they are.

“But one of them, the high priest, came to me. He is the driving force behind this biosphere. And he is the one who used the Science of Imagery to bring you both here. I know this because I keep an eye on him. And I watched him use imagery to cause the bus driver to take a wrong turn, and then the high priest imaged the bus breaking down in the exact spot where it sits right now.

“I don’t trust him. He’s able to shield his personal thoughts from me, so I don’t know his true intentions, but I’m forced to deal with him.”

“I don’t understand how any of this is possible?” asked Matthew, shaking his head in total disbelief. “I mean, if these high priests have really been around since the time of Egypt, there

must be some record of them... some proof of this... Science of Imagery you're talking about.

Tesla smiled at him and said, "There is proof. You've heard of Moses haven't you?"

"Well, yeah but..." he trailed off, wondering what Moses could possibly have to do with any of this. "Ten commandments guy, right? From the Bible?" he finished, just to make sure they were talking about the same person.

"Yes, that's right. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses is the most famous example of the Science of Imagery because his story was recorded in the Bible," said Tesla. "And that's why I want to use this as an example – I don't want you to just take my word for it, I want to give you something that's fairly well known and accepted by hundreds of millions of people as a true event.

"I take it you aren't very familiar with his story?"

"Pretty much, yeah," said Matthew.

"Okay then, we'll start at the beginning. Moses was raised by an Egyptian princess, who found him as a tiny infant floating in a reed basket down the river. The princess didn't realize that Moses' mother was keeping an eye on the basket from the shore, or that the woman she hired to be his... nanny... was actually his real mother, but that's a long story.

"I don't know whether the priests somehow set up or influenced the original event, but I do know that they were fully aware of the fact that Moses was an Israelite being raised as an Egyptian prince... and that they had a unique opportunity to influence his mind from childhood by training him to be priest.

"As a teenager Moses murdered an Egyptian and ran away to escape punishment. Years and years later, according to the Bible,

'God' spoke to Moses.

"But here's something important to understand, the Bible tells us that Moses didn't believe it was God's voice speaking in his mind. And the reason he didn't believe it was God speaking to him, is because it wasn't. The voice in Moses' mind was the voice of one of the Egyptian high priests pretending to be God and projecting this thought into Moses' mind."

"How can someone speak into another person's mind?" asked Amelia.

"This ability was part of the Science of Imagery, but the priests never taught this to Moses, so he had no idea they had this ability, or that they could use it to manipulate his thinking."

"But you said Moses didn't believe it was God. How did the high priest convince him otherwise?" asked Matthew.

"First you have to understand that the priests were capable of teleportation. This could be done with the physical body, but they could also leave their body and go as their 'second self'... out of body.

"According to the Bible 'God' spoke to Moses and told him to throw down his staff; the staff then turned into a serpent, and when Moses picked up the serpent it then turned back into a staff.

"But understand this – every priest who had been trained in the Science of Imagery knew how to do this. In fact, everything that Moses experienced... until he was finally convinced that 'God' was actually speaking to him... from a staff turning into a serpent, to a bush that suddenly burned and then returned to its original state... was actually conjured up by the high priest pretending to be 'God'.

"Because the priest was invisible in his 'out of body' state,

Moses had no idea that the priest was influencing both his mind and his external experiences. Ultimately he believed that it was 'God' speaking to him and finally he acted on what the high priest was telling him to do, all along believing it was God's wish.

"When Moses tried to convince the Pharaoh to release the Israelites, he threw his staff on ground and it turned into a serpent. Without hesitation the priests threw their own staffs on the ground and their staffs turned into serpents as well.

"Doesn't it seem odd that not only were the priests unimpressed by Moses' staff turning into a serpent, but that they all knew how to do the same thing? Why? Because it was part of their training in the Science of Imagery. But the high priest was invisibly present imaging Moses' serpent, and when Moses' serpent devoured all the other serpents, it indicated that the high priest's abilities were more powerful than the abilities of the priests.

"Pharaoh, however, was not convinced that he had anything to worry about from this God of his slaves. The resulting plagues recorded in the Bible, are attributed to "God"... but the plagues had nothing to do with God at all. It was the high priest... using the Science of Imagery, pretending to be 'God'... who imaged everything... beginning with turning the Nile into blood."

"The Nile River was turned into blood?" said Matthew, unbelieving.

"Yes... but the Egyptian priests were able to turn water into blood as well, because that too was part of their training in the Science of Imagery. Every priest knew how to hold an image in consciousness and – by feeling it with all of their senses – cause it to instantly emerge in physical form... vibration turning into matter.

“Now think this through for just a minute. If a man today said ‘God’ was speaking to him and that God was going to take vengeance on a particular group of people... What would you think of such a person?”

“I’d think he was a bit of a nutter,” said Matthew.

“Exactly,” said Tesla. “But if that man turned a river into blood, then what would you think?”

“I’d probably pay attention then,” said Matthew.

“Using the Science of Imagery, it wasn’t difficult for the high priest to turn the Nile into blood – it was just a thought materializing. But by convincing Moses that ‘God’ was speaking to him, Moses truly believed that the river turning to blood was God’s punishment upon the Egyptian people.

“But what the high priest was really doing was using Moses as a ‘spokesperson’ in order to access the human fear of the masses to magnify what he was imaging. The next thing the high priest did was create a plague of frogs. The lower priests imaged frogs as well, and the frogs did appear, but they weren’t as powerful in their abilities because the high priest now had human fear assisting him, so the lower priests were completely unable to stop the plague.”

“But why didn’t the Egyptians just kill Moses since he was connected to all that was happening?” asked Amelia.

“Well, this is how clever the high priest was. He convinced Moses that ‘God’ was speaking to him...and that what was happening was God’s judgment. With plagues as ‘proof’ that God was speaking to him, not only did people believe Moses, they were afraid of harming someone chosen by God.”

“But it was even more than that... the Egyptian people added the power of their own fear – thereby magnifying and intensifying

everything that Moses was saying... and the high priest was doing... with the power of their own thoughts and feelings.

“By attributing everything to ‘God’ – and being God’s chosen messenger – Moses became untouchable. The Egyptians could deal with a man... but an unseen, all-powerful Deity, bent on vengeance? They felt powerless against Him.”

“But how could his image have been so strong?” asked Matthew. “Or, I guess, how did the Egyptians’ fear add to the power of Moses’ image?”

Tesla bowed his head in acknowledgment. “Yes, yes, that is the question, isn’t it? To understand, think about how people would react today if CNN reported that a river had turned into blood and next there was an infestation of frogs by a man saying that God was speaking to him and causing all of this due to the sins of mankind.

“Do you think there are people who would react fearfully, thereby adding the power of their own fear to the image?”

“In this way each plague became worse, and more incurable, as human thought became intensified. What began as trepidation over a river turned into blood, developed into a wave of terror which only added energy and power to the high priest’s imagery and to Moses’ belief that God was indeed speaking to him.”

“So the high priest was speaking into Moses’ mind and pretending to be God... and every ‘prediction’ of what would happen was something the high priest was already imaging. And Moses ‘predictions’ simply helped to spread the image into mass consciousness.”

“But... wait... how did the thoughts of the Egyptians add to what Moses was predicting and what the high priest was imaging?”

The Egyptians didn't want any of those things to happen," said Amelia, struggling to understand.

"If human thoughts and feelings are destructive or cruel – if the goal is a 'dark' one – the unseen dark forces take over, magnifying these dark intentions in human consciousness. You can imagine how the Egyptians felt toward Moses? Now imagine how they must have felt about the 'God' that Moses worshipped. Can you even imagine the amount of anger and vengeance they must have felt when they were plagued with everything from swarms of flies to epidemic diseases killing all of their animals, followed by incurable boils, hail, locusts, darkness that lasted for three days, and, finally the death of every firstborn child and animal?

"How much do you think the Egyptians were appealing to their own Gods to bring about vengeance of their own? So, intense feelings are either drawn to the forces of light or the forces of dark – giving one or the other 'permission' to act according to each person's desire.

"This becomes exponentially magnified when you're dealing with mass consciousness – and this is the same fearful imaging that made Nostradamus famous. He wasn't predicting the future – he created future possibilities with his own thoughts, but it was through persuasion that others began to accept this so-called 'future' as the truth. One frightened thought after the next caused a certain momentum and brought about the implementation of Nostradamus' mental image of the future. He may have planted the 'seed,' but it was human focus and fear that provided the fertile soil and all else that was needed to produce and materialize the image in our world.

“This type of energy still hovers over the Earth frightening people, but that is only because they don’t understand that a prophecy is simply one man’s attempt to set a direction for mankind. But only the thoughts of mankind as a whole can support the manifestation of that prophecy.

“There’s an ancient saying. ‘That which I feared the most came upon me.’ How that can happen isn’t really such a big mystery. Whenever you couple feeling with belief, you will create whatever you’re focused on. Every time, without exception. So the more accurate statement would be, ‘That which I really, really believed in happened to me.’

“But if thoughts keep building, and the thoughts of people throughout time are gathered – and dark thoughts are creating dark events – how do you stop it?” asked Amelia, trying not to feel terrified at the prospect.

“Pay no attention to it, and it won’t be part of your experience. If you’re afraid of something – focus on the opposite thing. Put your attention on the warmth of the sun or the fragrance of a flower.

“The Israelites weren’t concerned about the plagues – Moses was one of them; they felt protected. So while the Egyptians were feeling victimized and angry, the Israelites were feeling more and more freedom until at last they were set free – quite literally.

“Now ask yourselves this... why weren’t the Israelites set free sooner, if it was mass consciousness that brought about their freedom?” Tesla asked, looking closely at Amelia and Matthew to see if they were following him.

“Their thoughts and feelings hadn’t come together like that before,” Amelia ventured, “they didn’t know they had that kind of

power.”

Tesla nodded. “It never occurred to the Egyptians or the Israelites that their own thoughts and feelings were directly connected to their experiences. Do you know why?”

Matthew nodded, “Maybe because both sides were focused on what they were being told.”

“Yes,” said Tesla emphatically, “And more importantly they believed every word that Moses said. One group believed while feeling desperately afraid - the other group believed while feeling protected. It never occurred to either group that their experience had nothing to do with ‘God’... It was the high priest using the energy of the masses to manifest two diametrically opposed outcomes.

“Do you see? The Egyptians and the Israelites were living in their own worlds, created by their own thoughts.” Leaning toward Matthew and Amelia, Tesla added, “Just as you live in your own world. Thought creates... so pay attention to what you’re thinking and believing.”

“But I don’t understand...” said Matthew, genuinely trying to get his head around all that Tesla was saying, “why would the high priest pretend to be ‘God’ for Moses’ benefit and then bring about plagues on the Egyptian people in order to set all of the Israelites free? I mean, they were all slaves... and there were a lot of them weren’t there? So why would the high priest want them to be freed... wouldn’t he lose his own slaves too? And wouldn’t that have made him sort of a ‘good guy’... well maybe not as far as the Egyptians were concerned, but at least he wanted the slaves to be freed?”

“The body can easily be enslaved, but enslaving the mind is a

far more challenging issue. The high priests wanted the Israelites to be 'freed' for the purpose of controlling their thinking."

Chapter 24

“You’ve lost me,” said Amelia. “You said that the high priests were using Moses as a ‘spokesperson’... so he was already influencing his people right there in Egypt. Why would they need to free the slaves to control their thinking if they already believed that Moses was God’s ‘chosen’... person... or whatever you’d call him?”

“The high priest wanted a leader capable of influencing all of the Israelites. You see, there were twelve tribes, and each tribe had its own leader... so to find one man who could lead all of the tribes was no easy feat. And the high priest also needed a man who was susceptible to his mental influence – this made Moses the perfect choice because he was trained by the Egyptian priests from childhood, and the high priest was intimately familiar with the way his mind worked.”

“Unfortunately, I don’t know the motives of the high priest... I do know there was a long-range plan that spanned thousands of years and affected every person on the planet – one way or another.”

“Why would the high priest even care what would happen thousands of years in future?” asked Matthew skeptically.

“As I told you... the six Egyptian high priests who were fully trained in the Science of Imagery are still here today.”

Before Matthew or Amelia could question him, Tesla held up a hand to stop them and added, “Trust me, it’s possible! And that’s why the high priests were very much interested in what would

happen thousands of years in the future.

“But let’s go back to what happened. When the Israelites were finally freed, the pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to retrieve his slaves. According to the Bible, Moses parted the Red Sea and his people crossed through to the other side, but the sea ‘swallowed’ the army. By now you know it was the high priest who parted the waters and closed them on the army, so this tells us that the high priest was not taking orders from the pharaoh, and that all he did was in secret... from both the pharaoh and Moses. Both believed that Moses’ God was behind the miracles and the devastation... depending on the perspective.

“Now, let’s forget for a moment that I’ve seen this myself through remote viewing. Let’s consider just what the Bible tells us... The Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years. Where did thousands of slaves get enough cattle and supplies to live in the desert? And during that period of time we’re told they conquered cities on their circuitous route... how did slaves come into possession of enough weapons to accomplish such a thing?

“If you think about it, their ‘release’ had to have been a part of a bigger plan. Now here’s another thing to consider... you already understand the power of negative focus in human consciousness. If I say to you, ‘there’s only one thing I want you to do in this moment... do not think about a pink elephant!’ What are you thinking about?”

“A pink elephant,” said Amelia with a laugh.

“So now imagine this, one of the first things Moses does after the Israelites have been freed is write the Ten Commandments. These aren’t just ‘suggestions’ for how to live a happier, healthier life... they are what became known as Mosaic Law – and there

were all kinds of punishments, many ending in death, that accompanied the breaking of these laws.

“Now remember, ‘God’ told these laws to Moses, but we know that ‘God’ was actually the high priest speaking to Moses’ mind. The laws Moses delivered to his people were based on what they should not do, and just like trying not to think about pink elephants, their focus on these laws caused them to become even more fearful. And you’ve already seen the results of mass consciousness when it’s fearfully focused.”

“But what’s the point of that?” asked Amelia.

“Well, Moses was the ultimate authority, was he not? But the one suggesting everything to Moses was the high priest. So, the high priest, through Moses, had complete control of the Israelites. And just to be sure that no one would ever question Moses’ authority... as ‘God’s’ representative... the Children of Israel wandered through the desert for forty years before settling down. They were told that this wandering was God’s punishment on them for not listening, but the truth is that the high priest wanted to be sure that not even a single person was left alive with a memory of what happened in Egypt.

“But even more than that, he had forty years to fully program the consciousness of an entire people, and this ‘program’ was passed down from one generation to the next.”

Amelia took a deep breath as she tried to take in all that Tesla was saying. “I kind of understand what you’re saying because my mom’s a psychologist and when I was a child she never told me what she didn’t want me to do... she stated everything in a positive way... like ‘please put your shoes in the closet’ instead of ‘don’t leave your shoes on the floor.’ So I guess that’s kind of the

same idea. But you'd think that over the course of thousands of years someone would have come up with a more positive way to say these things."

Tesla smiled warmly at Amelia and said, "You're right... someone did. And there is a certain paradox here. Jesus taught something called the Beatitudes. Instead of saying 'thou shalt not'... Jesus taught 'blessed are they.' So it would be like your mom saying, 'blessed are you for putting your shoes in the closet...'"

Amelia grinned and added, "Instead of 'thou shalt not leave thy shoes in the middle of the floor!'"

"Exactly!" said Tesla with a laugh. "Now here's the paradox... 'blessed are they' were words powerfully chosen to 'deprogram' the mental focus on 'thou shalt not' because along with what should 'not' be done comes guilt, worry, fear and judgment, and there is nothing more destructive in human consciousness than these emotions.

"So ask yourselves this question, if Jesus was trying to bring about a change of consciousness for his people – a change that would release them from fear and guilt, and bring about a focus on blessing and kindness, why did Christian religions trace back before the time of Jesus to include the Ten Commandments and all the focus on God as vengeful and man as guilty, when this was never part of what Jesus taught?"

"The reason is this – the six high priests, in their mission to control the thoughts of men, knew that people would be far easier to influence if they were in conflict with themselves. But, when Jesus began to deprogram them, the priests realized that the only way to continue that conflict would be to combine their teachings and Jesus' teachings into one book, keeping people from

distinguishing the two from each other.”

“Religion, war, and education were essential to the high priests’ plans. Because rather than try to control the thoughts of individuals, they knew that they only needed to control the thoughts of the most powerful, influential ones. And through these men, they attacked humanity’s sense of oneness on the physical plane – through war – and on the spiritual plane – through separate religions all meant to convince Man that he was somehow fundamentally different from those around him.

“But the most insidious of these splits was created on the mental level, through education. You see, your mind has two important sides – the analytical, or ‘left brain,’ side and the creative, or ‘right brain,’ side. But the educational system focuses almost entirely on the left brain... I am sure you have heard of schools experiencing budget cuts, so what program always goes first?”

“The art program,” said Amelia.

“Correct. But have you ever heard of a school cutting math to save money for painting or dance? Of course not, and so people are broken in half, the creative ones struggling to fit into a system that was made to crush their sense of self; to make them believe that they are inadequate—and to believe that life itself is struggle, and that’s just how things are, creating a pattern of thought that is then carried forward into their own lives—while at the same time keeping everyone else focused on the importance of their own analysis, demanding that they always feel the weight of responsibility, expectations, and the need to perform... keeping them out of touch with the creative spark that breathed life into all things in this universe.”

“And the ultimate conclusion of these splits in consciousness

was that many people lost their sense of the inherent perfection in life. Why else would a man, surrounded by the beauty of this world, instead opt to live in pain, fear and misery, waiting out the days until death when he could finally reach the Kingdom of Heaven?

“Now,” Tesla continued, “What do you think would happen if I told people I had created a miniscule device that they could put in the ground and have grow into an unlimited source of food, and that all it would require was the application of water? Do you not think that any ‘food crisis’ would be over? That people would celebrate their new freedom by thanking God for this creation and the liberty to create everything they needed to live on their own? And yet... Every fruit on every tree falls with a seed inside.”

Tesla paused and took a deep breath, “I began by telling you about the Science of Imagery so you could start to understand how you came to be here... in the biosphere... and that it was no accident.

“The high priest brought you to the military facility, but I have no control there, I can only observe, and even then, I’m limited... there are psychic guards that stop me from accessing parts of the facility that are... I don’t know how you’d say this... top secret? And because I cannot read the high priest’s mind I do not know his intentions.

“I knew you were both here, and a sensor was activated when you were outside the air duct. I released the locks on the tunnel entrance and the entrance to the biosphere.”

“We’re glad to be here...” said Amelia hesitantly, her brow furrowed in concentration, “and I understand that you saw us in our past lives, but why did you let us in? Were you just trying to

save us? I mean, where do we go from here... how do we get out? How do we help our friends and how do we get home?"

Tesla took a deep breath, "There is no way out... you can only go back the way you came in. But there's another reason that you're here.

"In a way it's my fault," said Tesla sighing heavily. "Upon my carefully created 'death' the military seized all of my papers and experiments. I unwittingly believed that the full extent of what the government wanted from me was to create this biosphere. I had already completed the experiments to provide free energy – not just for the biosphere, but for the entire planet. I wanted to believe that the powers-that-be were finally 'awakening' to the plight of humanity... and because of this frailty – my wishful thinking – I did not suspect that my other experiments would be used in such an appalling way."

A grief-stricken look passed over Tesla's normally bright and cheery face like a heavy cloud. Finally he took a deep breath and continued. "You see, I developed a technology – an electric beam that can ionize or de-ionize the atmosphere over a given area. My intention was to be able to control the weather for the advancement of mankind, but the technology was stolen from me and used without my permission. The military euphemistically refers to what they're doing as 'weather modification,' but it's nothing short of warfare – and it goes far beyond weather.

"By modifying the climate they've been causing the polar ice cap to melt or destabilize. They're using the planet's energy fields to cause ozone depletion, earthquake engineering, ocean wave control and brain wave manipulation. And all of this is virtually undetectable by the victims.

“That is, of course, unless the military wants their victims to know. You see, it’s a strong-arm tactic. The military says to a country ‘you side with us, do what we tell you to do, and we won’t cause an earthquake at your nuclear power plant,’” Tesla added in an ominous tone.

“Subtle force causes even opposing countries and governments to join together in a common cause – and that is why this facility is under attack. These governments – the ones that banded together – spent massive sums to find this particular facility and to obtain our technology. They targeted us without realizing the magnitude of what they were doing, and have now done.

“You see, when that earthquake hit this morning, it wasn’t a natural occurrence... it was caused using my own earthquake technology. The governments involved are trying to destroy this facility because it’s the hub of all of the secret underground military facilities around the world. In fact it’s called HUB.

“What these governments failed to realize is that if the mainframe computer here at HUB is ever destroyed, the other computers in the matrix are programmed to automatically begin a series of global ‘events’ that would cause the planet to self-destruct. At the time of the programming, global nuclear war was the main threat – something this planet would never recover from.

“So the idea was to destroy the Earth naturally with volcanoes and earthquakes, whereby the planet could completely recover in less than fifty years. The military never expected their own technology could be used against them... let alone be the target of an earthquake of this magnitude.”

“Is that the purpose of this biosphere...” asked Matthew, “to keep a select group of people alive underground until the Earth

recovers?”

“Certainly that isn’t what I was led to believe when I created it,” said Tesla, “but this morning the mainframe computer was damaged beyond repair, and this has set in motion planetary destruction around the globe. At this point, the biosphere has not been affected, but if there are more earthquakes I don’t know what will happen, and the military facility has been greatly damaged.”

Tesla paused for a moment, then looked at Amelia, “In your lifetime as Alex I believe you were using the Science of Imagery to create a thought-form that would materialize thousands of years in the future... something that might save us now. You created the Great Pyramid of Giza, and put a protective shield around it, and I believe that is why you died there... you were using the shield to protect your secret so that it could materialize in the future without the high priests being able to see it coming or stop it.”

“I remember bits and pieces of that lifetime, I don’t remember anything like that,” said Amelia shaking her head. “I don’t know of any secrets.”

“But the information is within you, held in your DNA,” said Tesla in a neutral voice. “I’m quite sure the high priest knows this as well... and my guess is that this is why he brought you here.”

“I’m sorry, I honestly don’t remember!” said Amelia exasperated. “I can’t... truly... there’s nothing I can do.”

A deep voice came from behind them. “You don’t have a choice.”

Chapter 25

A man with intense hawk-like features and deep-set eyes, shadowed by black, heavy eyebrows stepped into the clearing with six armed soldiers directly behind him.

Tesla whirled around angrily and said vehemently, “You’ve broken the agreement! You’re never to step foot in here! And what are you doing coming here with soldiers? It’s forbidden!”

The man said, “My plans have changed, Dr. Tesla, it is impossible to abide by our agreement any longer. The world is changing more rapidly... and more dramatically than I had anticipated. I am sorry to have to take your new-found friends with me, but I can wait no longer,” he added as two soldiers stood on either side of Tesla and the other four surrounded Amelia and Matthew, as Matthew reached out and held Amelia’s hand.

“Now it’s important you know I am not here to harm you,” said the man with an impenetrable expression on his face. “Dr. Tesla, these men will escort you to your home – they will not touch you if you do not make an effort to resist them.

“You two may continue holding hands,” he added, addressing Matthew and Amelia huskily, “or you can proceed separately in handcuffs – the choice is yours. The guards will guide you on the path as long as you follow them. If you try to run, you do it at the risk of never seeing each other again.”

Amelia’s body began to shake uncontrollably. Matthew tightened his grip on her hand, but even that bit of comfort did nothing to assuage the sick feeling that seemed ready to engulf her.

Two soldiers were in front of them and two soldiers immediately behind, with the hawk-nosed man walking a few steps behind them.

For twenty minutes they walked silently contemplating their fates on the forest path until they came to a clearing and onto the edge of a cliff. Before them, in the midst of a green, lush valley, rose a magnificent pyramid. Amelia's body shuddered involuntarily, instantly paralyzing her in fear.

"Come," said the man, stepping in front of them, waving his hand without looking at either one of them.

"I can't," said Amelia breathlessly, suppressed terror resonating in her low voice.

"Yes," said the man in a low, soft voice, "I know it seems frightening. This pyramid built exactly the way you built it – using imagery and sound. I believe you died with the secret to the true use and function of the pyramid and that this secret could save us all. I hope this will jog your memory."

Amelia stared. "It doesn't," she said flatly, looking away.

"I see," said the man in a low voice, "maybe Matthew will have some memories then," he added looking at Matthew as if this was a reasonable request.

Matthew looked unwaveringly at the man and said, "I have no memories of this pyramid – in this lifetime or any other."

"Ah, well maybe the inside will seem more familiar," said the man enigmatically.

Matthew and Amelia glanced at each other apprehensively as they were escorted down the hill and into a barely noticeable entranceway. They walked down a flight of stairs and then into cool passageways dimly lit by burning torches flickering ominously

on the smooth internal walls of the pyramid. The tunnel came to a plateau where it split – one tunnel leading upward, the other descending into shadowy gloom.

The man said, “I’m afraid this is where the two of you must be parted. You each have your own memories, and you must be alone to access those memories. I am sorry for the inconvenience, I truly am, but this is how it must be. I have tried to recreate the rooms to jog your memories. This is not meant to be torturous. If all goes well you’ll see each other again in no time at all. But as you can see, there is no point in struggling, so let this be a civilized departure.”

Matthew hugged Amelia and kissed her on the lips as if there would be no tomorrow. She burst into tears, not wanting to ever let go.

“Come, come, children,” said the man, “you’ll both see each other again soon, I promise. If all goes well your reunion will be in this lifetime... rather than another one henceforth.”

With that two guards escorted Matthew along the upper passageway while the man and the other two guards descended with Amelia as she looked over her shoulder trying to see Matthew for as long as possible.

They walked in near darkness until they came to a small hole in the wall. Amelia was ordered to climb through the hole and into the chamber beyond. As she stepped inside she recognized everything in the room – down to the smallest detail it was exactly as she remembered it, just before her death as Alex.

Through the hole in the wall Amelia peered out at the hawk-nosed man icily, “You want me to save you? Even if I knew what to do – do you really think I want to help keep this secret military

outpost going? You had me sacrificed in a satanic ritual. I DIED! And now you think I'll help you... for what? The greater good?"

The man reached out his hand and touched Amelia's shoulder. "Come with me," he said in a quiet hiss.

Amelia felt herself being torn from her body as her second-self rose above her head, hovered for a moment just below the ceiling and then shot through the pyramid. In the next moment Amelia found herself in an enormous bunker made of cement slabs with immensely high ceilings. The man – or at least his second-self – was standing by her side, but he left momentarily and teleported back with his physical body.

He said, "I've returned with my body so I can show you something."

He stepped behind a hidden panel in the wall, and with the flick of a switch the room instantaneously transformed into the cavern temple complete with music and drumming, and all the props necessary for a satanic ritual. The man then turned the switch off and everything disappeared.

"Your satanic ritual was nothing more than a hologram," said the man frankly.

Amelia stared at him with a mixture of rage and utter disbelief.

"Yes, I know, you were thinking that Phil was so helpful and that male nurse too. And they thought they were helping, but let's say... I was able to give them a few suggestions. It was important for you to believe that you got there all on your own.

"I know this is hard to understand, but we had to know that you were truly a Vedruss. You see, there are many Vedruss who've been born at this time. And some, like you, have lived lives of mastery... but they don't know who they are. Just as you had no

idea who you were.

“Your... journey, shall we say... was influenced by me. All the way back to Matthew’s idea that you go back to the camp taking a different path. I made sure the cable was broken.”

“You were trying to kill us?” said Amelia hotly.

“No, I wanted you to die, but it was more of a test... an initiation if you will. I had to be sure who you were... that you were indeed Alex. I observed everything that you experienced in your past lives, and I watched you return through the membrane to your own dimension.

“But it isn’t just a matter of me knowing who you are... it’s important for you to remember your own capabilities. I made sure that you found your way to the military base, and every experience you’ve had here was set up to test you and to activate your intuitive abilities.

“I was watching to see how you dealt with fear. How you would react to suppressed emotions... and if that dulled state of mind would create a contrast to the expanded consciousness that comes from ayahuasca... giving you an even more heightened sense of awareness.

“I was the one who showed you the mental pictures of your friends in the temple. They weren’t real, you know... except for Matthew,” he said, flicking on the hologram again, this time showing her the ‘scene’ where her friend was lying on the altar with the priest poised to plunge his dagger into her body. Even knowing it was a hologram didn’t make it look any less real to Amelia, and she felt hot with anger that she was being treated as nothing more than a human lab rat.

The man continued without paying the slightest bit of

attention to Amelia's reaction to his revelation. "Interestingly enough, I had nothing to do with the earthquake, it would appear that the earthquake was in response to something you were thinking and feeling, but the hologram is programmed to react to according to physical reality. So when the earthquake hit, the hologram responded accordingly."

"Now, I know you're still angry about dying," the man added, as if causing her death was quite insignificant, "but those with high levels of mastery have the ability to die and bring themselves back to life. It is the one way I can know for sure when I've found a 'master.' But I only cause death through fear. In this way, the master can return with no harm to the physical vehicle.

"But what if you're wrong? What if they don't come back to life? What if they don't have mastery? Then you've just killed an innocent person!" Amelia snapped back furiously. "And just so you know – I didn't bring myself back to life – I was 'sent' back... I had no choice. The next thing I knew I was waking up in my body!"

"It doesn't matter if I'm wrong, you know that... Death is a bridge to what some might consider a better existence – it's just all that fear leading up to the moment, that is unsettling. After that it's even... exhilarating. You came back with more information did you not?"

Amelia stared blankly at him and said nothing.

"In any case, once you came back to life I made sure that the path was clear... no guards in the hall... certain doors locked so that you'd end up in the elevator. I even made sure it stopped at the perfect place for you to go through the tunnel and arrive at the biosphere. I also knew that Tesla had programmed the entrances

to allow you both in... for I watch him, even as he observes me.”

The man sighed, “The military is here to protect the biosphere. The problem is that the biosphere has developed over the years into a perfect utopia, but the people on the surface aren’t ready for this world.”

“Oh,” huffed Amelia sarcastically, “now you want me to believe that the military are the ‘good’ guys. Please, don’t bother!”

“I’m not here to convince you of anything,” said the man patiently, “I’m here to tell you the truth – you can do with it whatever you please.”

“Fine!” said Amelia indignantly. “Then who are you? You can’t just be some military person... why is it that you know how to teleport? How did you bring me here like this?”

The man was quiet for a moment and seemed to be trying to decide how much he should reveal. “I am a high priest.”

“A high priest?” Amelia responded hotly. Then with a sarcastic laugh she added, “And now I’ll bet you’re going to tell me you’re thousands of years old, right?”

The man looked at her with a penetrating gaze and said, “What do you think?”

A sick feeling washed over Amelia as a remembrance of the man flashed through her mind. She didn’t remember his face, but she remembered how this man felt. Suddenly images flooded into her consciousness and she realized this man was indeed the high priest named Bast, whom she had known thousands of years earlier in her lifetime as Alex. In the light of the room the man could see this recognition flickering in Amelia’s eyes.

With an almost imperceptible nod, he said in a low, raspy voice, “I see you remember now.”

“There’s nothing I can do for you,” said Amelia, her cheeks hot with rage.

“Well, there is something you must do,” sighed Bast, “if you want your friends and Matthew to survive.

“I must?” said Amelia resentfully. “I have no idea what you expect from me! I can’t change what’s happening. Your brilliant plan to ‘activate’ some past life knowledge in me has failed. I still don’t remember anything. And even if I could – you and your military people are the last ones I’d try to help.”

“There is no place for you to go... don’t you understand? The tunnel leading into the military base has collapsed – outside the world is falling into chaos.”

“I don’t believe you,” said Amelia bitterly.

In the next moment she was flying high above the Earth. Tornadoes and hurricanes swept over the land and sea. Tsunamis rose and fell as sixty-foot walls crashed over everything in their path. Volcanoes were spewing hot lava into the air, even dormant volcanoes had been fully activated. In some places earthquakes moved the land at two-hundred miles per hour. It didn’t matter where they went, this was happening worldwide – every continent was being affected simultaneously.

From this perspective high above the planet, Amelia yelled, “What do you want from me? I’m not afraid of death... So what do you want?”

“I want to preserve the biosphere – if that’s at all possible,” said Bast grimly. “These people are living as mankind was intended to live... they are the hope of humanity.”

With an angry laugh Amelia said, “You and the other high priests caused all of this. You don’t care about humanity, you just

want to live underground in the biosphere until it's safe to come out and start over again.”

With eyes cast down, Bast shook his head, then with a deep sigh he looked directly into Amelia's eyes and said, “Please let me explain.”

Amelia shook her head angrily and said sarcastically, “By all means...explain...and while you're at it...explain why you killed me when I was Alex...if you can remember that far back. Or maybe just killing me once wasn't enough,” she added bitterly.

In the next moment Amelia and the hawk-nosed man were inside the pyramid. She could see him clearly in the smoky golden light of the only torch burning in her chamber.

“We were wrong,” Bast said simply. “Everything we did was wrong. We don't expect your forgiveness, or even your understanding... we just want to do what we can to change what is happening on the planet.”

In a mocking tone Amelia said, “You created it... you mastered the... the... The Science of Imagery,” she added quickly. “You wanted to take over... be the most powerful human beings on the planet. You wanted billions of people to be powerless... and you did it! So why come to me? You think that because I was Alex thousands of years ago that I can fix this?”

“Even if I knew what to do – do you really think I would stop what's happening just for you and your high priest friends to live happily ever after in this biosphere? Do you really think everyone here is just going to want to take care of you? Dr. Tesla didn't seem very happy to see you... I doubt that anyone else would want you!” Amelia added sanctimoniously.

The man's lips twisted bitterly as he said, “We were seduced

by power. We thought if we disempowered humanity and brought the planet to the brink of destruction that we could manipulate the Creator into doing our will. We thought we could undo cosmic law. It took us thousands of years to realize that we were wrong, but by then it was as if we had set an avalanche in motion. We could see what was coming, but we couldn't stop what was happening."

"So why am I here?"

"In your lifetime as Alex, we believe you saw what was coming... what our misuse of the Science of Imagery had put in motion. We also believe that you died intentionally in the pyramid, because you had a remedy for what we have done, and you didn't want us to know what you were planning... obviously so we couldn't undo it.

"When we realized we couldn't stop what was happening on the planet we began building this biosphere. We wanted to... in some way... begin to undo what we've done... and help people reconnect to their true power. And though the biosphere has been a tremendous success, the vast majority of the surface population isn't ready to live like this."

"Then why the soldiers? Why this... secret base?" demanded Amelia. "I don't buy it that all of that is here just to protect the biosphere."

"I work within the systems that exist. I told you the true purpose of the base, the reason that I allowed it to be built, but other people – the ones who could make it into a reality – didn't have any frame of reference that would allow them to understand the importance of the biosphere the way you and I do, and since I had to work through them using my power of mental suggestion,

I had to had to suggest ideas to them in a way that would sense within the framework of their beliefs.”

“And as such, most of them thought it was all here for National defense – for weather warfare and mass mind control, a large part of the military’s counter to the threat of nuclear war; or, they thought the biosphere was being built for them for when the bombs started to fall... they heard what they needed to hear to sign off on projects...”

“The problem is this...” said Amelia sullenly. “I don’t trust you, and I certainly don’t trust your methods. You’re still doing everything for your own selfish reasons and in your own way. Even now you’re planning to seal me into this chamber for your benefit without asking me – and I don’t even know what you’ve done with Matthew. You haven’t asked for my cooperation, you’ve just told me how it is – what’s going to happen whether I like it or not.

“So please don’t tell me how good you are,” Amelia said as rage flowed through her body like hot oil. “For all I know, you just put this biosphere here for you. And maybe you can influence the minds of these military people, but you can’t influence me! So just know I have no intentions of helping you, even if I can remember anything!”

“Then everyone here will die. And all that has been remembered and accomplished will be lost,” said Bast, as he turned and motioned to one of the soldiers with a jerk of his head and said, “Seal it up.”

Chapter 26

Amelia stared at the opening, seething with fury as each brick was added. Even though the chamber was immense, Amelia felt claustrophobic when the last brick slid into place, like the last nail being hammered into place on the lid of a coffin.

Over and over Amelia told herself she wasn't afraid to die. But in the silence of the chamber she suddenly realized she was terrified of dying alone and even more frightened about what was happening to Matthew.

Without thinking about it, Amelia sat down in the exact spot where she sat in her last few hours of her life as Alex. And though she'd been unaware of it when she originally re-experienced her lifetime as Alex, all at once Amelia remembered how it felt to die of starvation – the feeling of her organs gradually shutting down, and the moment of her last breath on Earth. Amelia sat in stunned silence.

Finally she stood up and began to pace like a wild animal. There was a table and a chair in the center of the chamber with bowls of nuts, seeds and dried fruit, plus a few apples and there was plenty of water in a large wooden barrel with a ladle hooked on the side. There was enough food and water to live for a few days maybe, if she was careful. But if the predictions of the high priest were correct they would all die before she ran out of food and water.

There was also a blank parchment with a quill and ink. Amelia wondered how long it would take for anything to come to

her that was worth writing down, and suddenly realized her time was more limited than she thought because the torch wouldn't burn indefinitely. It was just a matter of time until she'd be sitting alone in the dark waiting to die. Amelia's heart began to pound, she felt nauseous and lightheaded and her breathing was shallow. She grabbed the back of the chair and sank into it, putting her head between her knees to keep from passing out.

Breathe, breathe, she said to herself. It had been years since she had a panic-attack, and though she hated getting them at the time, she now felt a sense of relief that she knew what to do, otherwise she would have thought she was having a heart attack or something even worse. Finally the attack subsided. Amelia knew she had to distract herself and get her mind off of her fear. She closed her eyes and tried to practice walking around her space as if she was in the dark, but she had to either cling to the wall or crawl on the floor to avoid losing her balance.

The chamber was so enormous Amelia discovered how easily she could miss the table while crawling across the floor with her eyes closed. The table and the barrel of water were too big to move, so she dumped a bowl of sunflower seeds into the bowl of nuts, and filled the empty bowl with water. Then she walked back and forth setting the various bowls along the wall as well as a trail of dried fruit that would lead her to the water barrel. In this way, she'd only have to follow the trail of dried fruit to the water barrel once a day and then simply return to the wall with her bowl replenished.

Once her job had been accomplished Amelia began pacing around the room. Think, think, think! she told herself over and over again. There was nothing – absolutely nothing she could

think of. She tried to remember anything she might have missed in her recent experience as Alex – but even the familiarity of the chamber did nothing to jog her memory.

Why can't I see it? Amelia wailed out loud. And though she knew her frustration was pushing the answer further and further away, Amelia couldn't help the feelings that were raging within her. Finally she picked up the chair and started whacking the newly sealed bricks in the wall until the chair fell apart and she was left with just a leg in her hands. The wall didn't budge, no matter where Amelia struck, and with each whack she screamed, What... am... I ...supposed... to do?!

Over and over she screamed the words like a chant, and when her hands developed blisters she started throwing the broken bits of chair and then dashed over to the table and threw the fruit and the bowls. In her anger and frustration and all the exertion Amelia began taking short, shallow breaths until it sounded like she was panting, and though she didn't know it, she was beginning to hyperventilate.

Her panting breaths made her so dizzy she had to lie on the floor, but as she continued breathing this way, going more deeply into hyperventilation, her body began to seize up. Her legs and arms went into a state of paralysis and the panic Amelia felt caused her shortness of breath to become even worse.

Unable to move, Amelia burst into tears as her life began to flash before her eyes, highly emotional moments starting with her birth. Suddenly, she was surprised she could actually remember the day she was born, let alone the fact that she was angry. She was expecting a warm, loving reception, but instead there were men and women in uniforms and everything smelled of chemicals. She

wasn't placed in her mother's arms, she was whisked away and a suction tube was stuck in her mouth and up her nose. From there on Amelia saw everything in her seventeen years on the planet that had caused her to feel upset.

Lying on the floor, feeling hot and cold, angry and sad, Amelia yelled and screamed at every person who had ever harmed her. Breathlessly she let everyone have it, from her parents to her nanny to her school friends and teachers, any person who had ever hurt her feelings or been unkind. Then she expanded her rant to include the government, the military and the people who had caused her most recent upset... especially the satanic priest and Bast for making her die; even if it was a hologram, he was still a horrible, despicable person – and she told him so.

Still in a state of paralysis, Amelia went on and on, panting, crying, screaming and yelling until there was nothing left. She'd gone back in her mind to a few different people and said some things she'd forgotten to say earlier, but now she couldn't think of anything that was left unsaid. And then, she was spiraling down into a black tunnel surrounded by pain.

Amelia couldn't see or hear anything, but the pain moved over her as if she was falling weightlessly through a dense mist that was neither cold nor damp, but felt strangely luminous. Amelia had her share of painful experiences, but she'd never stayed with her painful feelings, the way she would have stayed with a friend who was sad or lonely.

Instead she'd talk on the phone or watch television or rummage through the refrigerator, but the thing she never did, not once in her entire life, was to sit with her pain and fully feel her feelings until the feeling changed. For some reason it seemed safer to run

away from pain and do whatever it took not to feel anything.

But now, it was as if her pain was befriending her, stroking her face, touching her arms and legs, silently whispering something tenderly that she couldn't quite hear.

It never occurred to Amelia that pain could be gentle or that her pain might love her the way her mother loved her when she pulled a sliver out of her foot or put rubbing alcohol on a cut – that strange combination of necessary pain and motherly tenderness.

Down and down she fell in the unfathomable darkness of her mind, floating like a feather, no longer caring what would happen. All at once she was no longer afraid; in fact, Amelia was now curious. What was at the heart of pain?

And then, as if in answer to her question, she saw it; something she would not have guessed even in her wildest imaginings. There before her was a radiant golden light and Amelia felt nothing but the purest love she'd ever known. It was powerful and incandescent, and it was filled with joy. The love she felt was beyond anything she'd ever experienced with her parents, or even Matthew, yet she'd found it buried in the midst of her pain.

In that moment, she instantly saw what she had never seen in her world. Starting with her birth she saw that the hospital room had been filled with radiant beings of light, all cheering her on. But she didn't see them because she was so angry at the rough treatment she received. And then she saw that every single time she was lonely, upset or angry, there was always an invisible, silent companion with her – and sometimes there were many companions – loving her and whispering that all was well.

Gradually her breathing slowed and became deeper, and as this happened, the paralysis began to slowly melt away and her

tears were no longer tears of anger and despair, they were the tears of one who feels truly, deeply loved. Amelia opened her eyes. Nothing had changed, but she felt as if she had died and had been reborn in that moment.

Quite unexpectedly Amelia thought of her mother as she opened her eyes and surveyed the damage. The room looked like it had been hit by a whirling tempest, but it was actually a way of ‘venting’ that Amelia’s mother had taught her when she was a child. Of course, she wasn’t taught to break things, but under her current circumstances Amelia had to make do with whatever was at hand.

With a weary laugh Amelia thought how very different ‘venting’ was without her plastic bat and a pillow to bash as she observed the pieces of the broken chair strewn about the chamber and the bowls lying on the floor where they dropped after hitting the wall. Yet in the midst of everything, she had never felt such a deep sense of calm and well-being; in fact, she felt strangely light and happy, as if she hadn’t a care in the world. And with that feeling came a strange, new openness, as if the doors of her mind had been flung wide open.

Suddenly an odd, lightheaded sensation began snaking through Amelia’s body as if she was hypnotically watching a cobra gracefully weaving back and forth just before striking. But then the movement intensified and the entire chamber began to shake and everything remaining on the table slipped off and fell crashing to the floor. Amelia’s eyes flashed open in terror as another tremor, far more severe than the ones before, hurled up from below her, hitting the floor like a giant fist and sending everything, including Amelia, straight into the air six feet off the ground.

A moment later she slammed onto the floor and everything went black.

Chapter 27

Matthew was taken to an immense chamber with high ceilings, dimly lit by torchlight. Before him, in the center of the room, were seven identical chairs facing each other in a circle. Each chair was fashioned from gold with large inlaid gemstones on the seats, backs and arms.

Nothing looked the least bit familiar. As he sank into a chair trying to understand why he was there, Matthew felt energy begin to pulsate from the beneath him – though there was no physical motion it gave him a feeling similar to that of lying in a boat that was rocking as the ocean gently swelled in a rhythmic, trancelike way.

Matthew's consciousness instantly began to drift. He could no longer sense his physical body as he moved into a tunnel of swirling, white light. He couldn't tell if he was going back in time or deeper into himself, but his conscious mind was losing its grip and in the next moment he found himself in a cool, dark place, standing on a rough marble floor, looking at his sandaled feet.

As if waking up from a dream, Matthew became gradually aware of his surroundings. He was standing in a torch lit passageway with a single brick in his hand, staring at a brick-sized space in the wall before him. He was torn, but finally he slid the brick home and sealed it into place.

Matthew was horrified as he realized he was the one who sealed Amelia into her tomb, in her lifetime as Alex. Amelia told him she'd felt like an observer of her past-selves, but Matthew felt

like a captive – helplessly watching his past choices without any ability to change what was happening.

Footsteps swiftly approached as Ammon – the man Matthew now knew he had been thousands of years earlier – tried to clear his mind of what he had just done. A tall, dark, cloaked figure stopped and silently observed the wall; every brick was now in place. In a low, rumbling voice the figure said, “Ammon, we have all gathered and crave your presence.”

They strode purposefully up the passageway to a chamber identical to the one where Matthew was being held prisoner years in the future, with the same golden chairs inlaid with precious stones, but it was no prison here, in this lifetime – it was a secret and highly guarded meeting place. Torches thrust into golden, snaking brackets flickered in the hazy smoke, their amber light dancing eerily on the four shadowy, hooded figures within as Bast took his place among them in a chair to the right of what was clearly Ammon’s chair.

Matthew instantly knew he was the high priest; the extra chair had belonged to Amelia in her lifetime as Alex, and this small group of men had held vast power. But unlike Alex’s desire to assist humanity, theirs was a cold and calculating dominance, with the subtle supremacy of a cobra hidden in the dark, rearing hooded before a defenseless victim.

Ammon’s face was hidden in the shadows of his hooded cape as he motioned to a slave who bowed and quickly removed the seventh chair. Once in the passageway with the chair, the slave bowed again and closed the golden doors as Ammon slid a bar into place, locking the room.

The five men, shrouded in capes, with their hoods pulled so

far forward it was impossible to make out their faces, waited in shadowy silence as Ammon took his place in the sixth chair. As the observer, Matthew realized that not even their slaves knew the identities of these six men.

With the door securely locked and Ammon seated, the men raised their heads with a slight deferential inclination in Ammon's direction, but they didn't remove their hoods. It seemed to Matthew as if they were all in constant meditation, and that the hood somehow provided a dark, secluded space for them to tap in to other dimensions and information.

"My brothers, it is unfortunate that our brother and mentor, Alex, has to die in such a manner," said Ammon heavily, deeply feeling the burden of what he had just done.

"He could simply have revealed his secret to us. However, we will accomplish what we've set out to do – it will take longer, but we know how to live in immortality. And in truth, though he will no longer be among us... it is impossible for Alex to truly die." With that statement Ammon seemed to have purged his conscience of any wrongdoing and continued with renewed vitality.

"For many nights we have gathered here, combining our strengths, and this has yielded great insight for each of us individually, and now there is nothing more powerful on this planet than our brotherhood.

"We have fathomed the unknown and now it is time to delve into the unknowable. There is only one thing we do not understand – and to truly be the Gods that we were created to be, we must grasp the secret of creation.

"The master creators and all the diverse elements of the universe believe that we are weak and imperfect – less than the

Goddess Herself. Though the Goddess has assured us that we have ALL of Her abilities, She has kept from us the Secret of Physical Creation in the Non-Physical. The master creators whisper among themselves that She does not trust us with the ability to create outside of her dream.

“So it is time to prove that we are and always will be superior to the master creators. And it is time to prove ourselves to the Mother Goddess as well. She needs to see that she cannot keep our true power hidden from us without facing the consequences... until we are given our birthright, she will be forced watch in silence as we cast a growing plague of darkness over her creation.”

The other priests looked dubiously at Ammon, unable to conceive of anything that could possibly motivate the Mother Goddess to change Her Mind, but they waited silently for him to speak once more.

“This plan will take some time,” said Ammon after a short period, “but we know how to live here in immortality, so it will be nothing to us. We have the ability to bring this planet to brink of destruction, if needed – we have seen its seeds already sowed across the land...”

“But, of course, it will not come to that,” he added with a wave of his hand. “The Mother Goddess’ compassion makes her weak. She will soon feel the pain of her children and that will be unbearable to her...”

“And it is this weakness that will ultimately be our greatest strength. As you know, the Mother Goddess loves all Her children completely and without exception. We have nothing to fear from Her... What mother would harm her children for doing what she created them to do?”

A heavy silence hung over the room. Finally, a gravelly voice emerged. “Ammon,” said Siris, “I can see you have meditated on this for some time. However, I fear there are certain things you simply haven’t considered...”

“Go on brother...”

“No matter the wars and the disease already spreading across the land, Man will always have his connection to the Mother Goddess and he will always be reassured of that connection through Nature.”

Ammon smiled darkly to himself. “My brothers,” he said with utter conviction, “I have looked into the future as Alex taught, and I have already seen how their minds can be weakened by destroying the connection between Man and the Mother Goddess... We distract him from looking within for answers – and we replace nature.”

A murmur erupted from the other priests as Bast countered, “Replace nature? I don’t see how that can be done. Nothing can rival Man’s connection to the Earth, save for Man’s connection to the Mother Goddess Herself.”

“What about fear?” Ammon said with a self-satisfied grin. “We will use our cities... expand them. With nothing more than an intention we can search out fearful and power-hungry men and influence their minds through the power of suggestion. We will be the invisible cause behind wars, and when people’s homes are burnt to the ground, when their gardens and livestock are destroyed or stolen... they will quickly discover the value of living within walls.

“Fearful men will be made to believe that cities provide safety, and they will be shown that they can earn a living and be protected

as a tradeoff for the nature they leave behind.

“Given time, our cities will disconnect Man from nature. He will no longer fall asleep staring up at the stars – too busy and too afraid from clinging onto his safety – and this will disable his ability to tap into the Eternal Mind of the Mother Goddess. Even the men who are seated comfortably within our system – the business men and kings – will function as our slaves.

“They will be bound by money or bound by duty to make something of themselves or fulfill their divine role. Their thoughts will be devoted to the purpose of making money and living in glory, often under the guise of helping humanity, and they will never see that they are just pieces on our playing board, edging us ever closer to the answers that we seek.”

A stunned silence held the room and Ammon could sense his five hooded brothers coming into an understanding of the plan’s brilliance. They had already seen the first seeds of its creation in the cities that they had and the fear that had been planted in the hearts of men... but the scale of what he was suggesting was truly awe inspiring.

“It will take time,” Ammon went on. “Generations upon generations for them to forget... to adopt fear as their natural state of being. But once we move them into the cities by influencing their need for ‘security,’ their vanity, their desire for power... make them take the world they have known for granted... their children, and their children’s children will forget their love of nature and forget how nature loves them back. And the Mother Goddess will feel the pain of their disconnection.”

“If you have any doubt left in your thoughts, let me remind you that I have already imaged this into the future; I have seen

where the world is headed... join me in my vision.”

In that instant, all of history beyond that point seemed to flash before Matthew’s eyes, though he could see that the accuracy of Ammon’s vision only extended a little over a century.

Matthew realized that Ammon had not intended for his thoughts to bring the world to the brink of destruction; he had been sure the Mother Goddess would reveal her secret as soon as She saw what he and the other priests were capable of. But over the millennia, Ammon’s image had taken on a life of its own.

Matthew saw how what had started as a seed of an idea planted by the priests – the simple notion that there is not enough for everyone, more is better, and people have no choice but to accept that ‘that is just the way it is’ – slowly snowballed over the years as people who were lost in their quests for more lost sight of the truth of how much they were loved.

The further people distanced themselves from the truth, the more fearful they became – they put their faith in doctors and religions instead of in themselves and nature’s divinely devised remedies and insights. They created seemingly necessary inventions, things they said they couldn’t live without, that polluted the natural beauty of the world and that needed resources which would someday disappear, adding immense fear over time and feeding ever more into the priests’ dream.

Most of all though, Man was made to worship money. He was shown that money was freedom, money could buy love, and money was power. And whether individual people loved or resented money itself, they believed in its supremacy; and because of that, they believed in their own powerlessness.

Matthew felt the room slip into focus as he came out of the

vision, and he saw the skepticism on the faces all around him.

A couple of the priests leaned forward as if to speak, but Ammon put up his hand to stop any questions, then continued, “We must begin by creating a mental advantage over everyone else – using our most loyal priests, trained in the Science of Imagery, we will spread false beliefs about the Mother Goddess, in turn teaching them false beliefs about themselves. Soon, they will forget She ever existed.”

“You intend to stop the Child from loving its Mother...” Bast said contemplatively.

“Not only that... I intend to give them a Father to fear as well. And through this Father God we will control people’s thoughts... If war doesn’t break them and if they can’t help but love the Earth, then we will create fear in their hearts by showing them glimpses of the unknown – our powers that they do not yet understand – and by convincing them that this power to manipulate objects in the physical is really the power of a Father God, bent on their destruction. By comparison, the Mother Goddess and her love will seem weak and powerless.”

“But this Father God is invisible...” said Thoath with a wheezy voice. “And the abilities of only one of our priests amount to little more than magic tricks that will dissolve into rumor and soon be forgotten... What proof will we give that this mythical ‘Father God of Destruction’ really exists?”

“Destruction itself will be our proof. The terrified thoughts of man will band together, and as they unknowingly activate the Science of Imagery through their fear, infestations will arise... even the hint of an incurable disease will bring about a plague delivered by mass consciousness. They will destroy themselves

and their own loved ones without knowing it's their own creation, and our priests will teach that it is our Father God's punishment for all of their 'sins.' Of course, we are the ones who will define sin so it is not difficult to create a world full of sinners," he added wryly.

"And what about people who truly do no wrong?" a voice reverberated in the chamber. "What about those who live harmlessly and naturally in the world, and who will undoubtedly inspire others to do the same?"

"We will convince mankind that anyone loving nature is worshipping the devil and our priests can back it up with hail storms or an infestation of rats," said Ammon. "Do you see? We can't lose. Mankind is more motivated by pain and fear than a feeble belief in love.

"The all-loving Mother Goddess will be forgotten – and those who don't forget will be removed from the equation. And not just by our priests – Mankind will be so terrified of the vengeful Father God of our creation – they will hang and burn their own neighbors."

"Yes, yes..." rumbled the deep voice of Bast, "But even one person with Alex's influence...his ability to rally the support of others... could turn everything against us."

"Of course," Ammon replied. "And so we must get to them first and must drive that fear so far into their hearts that they wouldn't dare to follow someone in opposition of the Father God... And we will do this by making the ramifications of their actions extend beyond this life, by telling them that if they do not heed our wishes they can expect to go to Hell – a place where the most horrible things imaginable actually happen..." Then with a smile

he added, "... Forever! We will use their belief in immortality against them – as mankind begins creating 'Hell' here on Earth, it will seem obvious that 'Hell' exists after death as well!

"It will only be a matter of time before the Mother Goddess will be desiring for Her children to return to Her, and she will come to us knowing that only we can make that a reality..."

"I see the brilliance in your vision Ammon, that cannot be denied. But I have one reservation..." said a strong, clear voice coming from the hooded form directly across from Ammon. "Men most assuredly can be fearfully influenced to follow our will, and their desire for power will bring about that which we desire – but what about women? They naturally nurture – they will not go along with the path of war required to bring the Mother Goddess to submission... What if women act independently and influence men to do the same?"

"I traced along that path into the future," replied Ammon, "and saw women band together. It was so remarkably simple," he added with an ironic laugh, "we could have been stopped had I not seen it coming. Women began refusing to make love to any man who was a warrior or destructive in any way. It was extraordinarily powerful – as we all know women can be..." Ammon added in a voice mixed with pleasure and annoyance. "Men rather quickly changed their minds. Battle lost its appeal when they no longer received the hero's welcome or had a woman to share their bed.

"But I've solved this problem as well," said Ammon positively. "Using this Father God and the fear of 'Hell' we will create, we can subjugate women, and they will be suppressed at every turn. And through the government that will rule over them in the cities, they will become a man's property, and they will be bound to do

his will.

“However... there is one last thing I have seen coming in my meditations... There will be those who come here to this planet to teach the power of love, just as Alex did, who will take human thought away from the Father God of vengeance and remind people of the Mother God of love.

“But I have found a way to use this to our advantage,” he said with a wry smile, “We will place these people on a pedestal so high that people will love them, but hate themselves. We will bring all of the focus to the messenger, and away from the message, to the point that people will kill... in the name of someone who taught them to love.

Chapter 28

All at once light began to shimmer and Matthew saw his lifetime as Ammon move quickly forward. At first it was difficult for Matthew to understand what he was seeing, but then he realized Ammon had been living for hundreds of years. Even though he didn't appear to be older than thirty-five or forty years old, Ammon knew it was time to let his current body go.

Matthew expected to see his death as Ammon, but he was shocked as he saw the chilling truth of his capabilities in that lifetime. Though Ammon knew it was time to 'release' his body, he had no intentions of dying and going through the agonizing process of being reborn as a baby. Not to mention the years spent prior to adulthood where he would have no control of his own life.

Ammon had devised a far more superior plan. He knew that his soul would simply exit his body upon his death, just as the soul enters a new body upon birth. So he realized he could simply direct his soul into a healthy, adult male body, rather than an infant's body.

There were a few requirements, however. He wanted the closest genetic match possible. So Ammon waited for a grown son who possessed the qualities he most desired. He made this son his heir – leaving everything to him exclusively.

However, Ammon could not take over his son's body, unless his son's soul left voluntarily. In this particular lifetime, Ammon waited until his son was deeply in-love, then brought about so much emotional devastation his son was about to die from a

broken spirit and heart.

Ammon made a tremendous show of asking “God” to sacrifice him by taking his life and allowing his son to live. And that is how it appeared. But in actuality, Ammon’s son died, and as his soul left his body, Ammon’s soul ‘stepped in’ to his son’s place.

To those looking on, Ammon was dead and his son miraculously came back to life – inheriting all that had been his father’s. But in truth, Ammon simply carried on in his son’s body. For this reason Ammon was never close to his sons. The women he married were for a specific purpose, and nothing more. But this time, when Ammon took over his son’s body, he had devised an extraordinary plan.

Over a span of hundreds of years the six priests sent out their minions to sow the seeds of destruction into the minds of mankind. They infiltrated and powerfully influenced every major religion on the planet and converted ‘non-believers’ into fearful believers. But one group refused to pay any attention to their attempts to spread their religion – The Vedruss of Russia. Alex had taught them well, even as he taught the priests themselves.

The high priests had tried one thing after another, but to no avail. Ammon scanned the future until he saw a window of opportunity. He had waited over one hundred years for this, and having his son’s young, healthy body would make the event he had planned even easier.

Through what is now called remote viewing Ammon saw the battle between the Vedruss and the Roman army. He saw Sasha and knew she would tend to the wounds of the Roman soldiers. Ammon’s son was extraordinarily handsome, so the fact that Ammon had taken possession of his son’s body gave him even

more confidence in his ability to attract Sasha's attention.

But the moment Sasha had looked into Ammon's eyes something happened that Ammon had not expected. A feeling arose in him. Sasha reminded him so much of Alex that even though Alex had been dead for hundreds of years, Ammon felt pain rip through his soul as if he'd been stabbed in the heart by a searing hot knife.

He had never wanted Alex to die. Alex had been his teacher and mentor for years. They had different desires, and Alex stood in Ammon's way from time to time, but he never, ever wanted Alex to die. It was only a ploy to manipulate information from a man facing death.

Sasha had Alex's eyes. Ammon couldn't take his eyes off of her, and he knew that at some unconscious level she recognized him too. He followed Sasha, as he had planned. His idea was to infiltrate the Vedruss by marrying Sasha and having a child with her.

Ammon knew Sasha would be capable of reading his energy, and this was the very reason he took his son's body as his own. Ammon's face and body, prior to his 'death' exuded cold detachment, but in his son's body, the look in his eyes still carried the vibration of one who knew what it was to be deeply in-love – something Ammon had never experienced.

The plan Ammon had projected across his 'window of time' unfolded exactly as he expected it to. Sasha fell in-love with him. He had successfully kept his true thoughts and intentions from her. But in pretending to be a part of her world, Ammon never expected that he would fall in love with her and the world she lived in.

Oddly enough, his son was partially responsible for Ammon's 'change of heart.' Ammon's focus had been on taking over a body with the best possible genetic match, but his son's heart was full of love for his beloved, and that feeling of love continued without abating, even after his son's soul had left his body and Ammon had taken over.

The beautiful simplicity of Sasha's world and the depth of her love for him astounded Ammon. He had infiltrated the enemy camp, only to discover that his own life and ambitions were meaningless. He had no desire to go back.

On their wedding night, Sasha asked Ammon if he would like to have a son. He smiled warmly at her, knowing that he would never decline any wish that Sasha put before him.

The next morning Ammon felt as if he was floating above the ground. He kept looking down to assure himself that his feet were still solidly on terra firma. He remembered kissing Sasha the night before, and then the most extraordinary feeling took over. He couldn't stay in his body. As he rose up into the night sky, Sasha rose with him, radiant like a star. A blur of light shot toward them and materialized as a young boy who looked exactly like his son did in Egypt.

Ammon instantly felt the horror of what he had done – he was responsible not only for his son's broken spirit, but for the death of the woman his son had loved so deeply. For the first time in his life Ammon wanted to apologize, he wanted his son's forgiveness, but before he could say anything his son spoke.

"Father, do not fear. Love has its own plan – I see it more clearly than you do. If you and mother will invite me to be your son... a new star will light up in the heavens. And as we live

together, our combined light will go up to our star on the wings of love and be reflected back to everyone on Earth. A single glance at our star will fill hearts with unimaginable love.”

Ammon’s heart was ready to explode with joy, but the next thing he remembered he was waking up to the most glorious morning he had ever seen.

He thought it would be impossible to love Sasha more than he did, but when his son was born Ammon’s heart was as big as the universe and he loved Sasha even more.

He would have stayed forever and been content to be buried in the forest near their little pond. But once again the Roman army was planning to invade the Vedruss colonies. Ammon saw a plan which involved Sasha and his son. He knew the plan would work. He had anchored it across the window-of-time and saw the outcome clearly.

Years earlier, though it seemed a lifetime ago, Ammon had invisibly whispered to Caesar that he should invade Russia, but this time Ammon’s priests had taken matters into their own hands. He could feel their presence, he knew they wanted him to complete his ‘mission’ and return to them with the secrets of the Vedruss in hand.

Sitting by the pond one night on a large, flat stone, singing to his young son, Ammon suddenly felt a shimmering sensation around him. Immediately he saw Alex, sitting on the same stone, hundreds of years earlier, singing to his own son – knowing that he had to leave, just as Ammon knew he had to leave to protect the ones he loved.

That night Ammon told Sasha the true story of his life – explaining he’d made a horrible mistake and had to do everything

he could to stop the priests from what they were about to do.

In his absence another priest had taken over. Religion had not worked on the Vedruss, but Ammon saw that the new high-priest had devised another plan to which the Vedruss would ultimately succumb. The high priest was already sending priests to Russia in the guise of paying homage to several different Vedruss elders spread out across the settlements.

First they had to discover which elders were pliable. In the beginning there was only one, but that was all they needed. The priests appealed to his ego by lavishing him with elegant gifts – saying that he was praised and admired for his profound wisdom.

They asked if he would share his wisdom with others, and then erected a large, spectacular home capable of accommodating all that would come to see him. And the people came to him from the farthest reaches of the settlements.

“Ultimately the wise man will be asked to rule others,” Ammon warned Sasha. “People will voluntarily give up their sovereignty and this will destroy the Vedruss. The monarchy will take hold, as it did in Egypt – but make no mistake, the priests of Egypt will be in control.

“You’ll never see them, nor will you outlive them. They are a silent, invisible force. You can’t stop them, but I can at least try.”

Matthew then saw his last memory of that lifetime. Staring into the night sky until the stars blinked out and a rosy hue from the unseen horizon was mirrored in the pond, Ammon gently moved his arm from beneath Sasha’s head and laid their sleeping son in her arms.

As he kissed Alexei’s his curly head, Sasha’s eyes opened. It was as if Ammon were seeing her, truly seeing her for the first

time, and yet feeling as if he'd known her throughout all eternity. Tears filled Sasha's eyes as Ammon smiled and looked at her with all the love in the world shining from his own glistening eyes.

In that moment he knew why the priests would never understand. They were surrounded by the answer, but they would never see it, because they didn't know what it was to love.

But as Ammon looked proudly at his sleeping son, all-aglow after his day of battle, he suddenly understood. His son was only a young boy, yet there was already a look of nobility and accomplishment about him. Even in the boy's sleeping face it was evident that something had irrevocably changed in the way he saw himself.

If he, Ammon, had faced the Roman commander on his son's behalf – his son would have looked up to him, and seen his father as a hero. But as his father, Ammon wanted Alexei to see himself as strong and brave and incredibly capable, and that was why he and Sasha agreed that she would pretend to be Alexei's sister and only the two of them would meet the Roman commander.

Ammon realized the Mother Goddess wanted the same thing for Her children. They were heirs to the kingdom She had created solely for them. If She were to intervene in any way, because of the high-priests manipulation of the planet, She would be communicating to her children that they were weak and incapable.

In that moment, Ammon knew he was much more than he'd ever realized. The world around him began to shimmer in light, engulfing the pond, the forest, the garden and orchard, and his beloved wife and child.

The light became more and more luminous until it began shaking with such intensity it swallowed up everything. Matthew

opened his eyes to see the chairs around him dancing and skittering along the floor. He leapt up and then had to grab the back of his chair to gain his balance. A severe earthquake was causing the floor to sway and it was all Matthew could do to get to the doorway. At that moment everything shot upward with such concentrated force, Matthew's feet left the floor, but he had a solid grip on the door so he didn't fall when his body came hurtling back down. He heard a crashing sound just outside the chamber as a heavy metal bar bounced a couple of times on the marble floor. Terrified, Matthew banged on the door, only to have it swing silently open.

Chapter 29

Amelia opened her eyes. She was no longer in her pyramid prison, she was sitting on soft, fragrant grass and looking into the warm, loving eyes of a man she knew instantly.

“Alex!” Amelia whispered incredulously as she stared at him, unabashedly getting a sense of what she actually looked like in that lifetime. “Am I... Imagining you?”

“No,” said Alex warmly, “No part of you ever ceases to exist. Even though I lived thousands of years ago, the essence of who I am and what I know is still very much alive. You could think of me as living in another dimension of conscious awareness.”

“I’m so glad you’re here,” said Amelia happily, “maybe you can help me understand what I’ve been missing. I don’t remember my lifetime as you... only bits and pieces. There are some terrible things happening and I don’t know what to do.”

“What is unfolding today was planned thousands of years ago. And though you have retrieved parts of the information, we need to go back to the ‘very beginning’ for you to understand who you are... why you’re here... and what you’re trying to accomplish.

“Unfortunately words are totally inadequate for explaining things like ‘the Creator of All’ and ‘All that has been created.’ Words, by their very nature force you into analysis. Yet it is your ability to feel... really feel the truth behind my words that will allow you to understand.

“I would like to tell this to you as story...in sort of a faerie tale fashion, if you will. In the same way that you don’t analyze faerie

tales or myths or legends... see if you can allow what I'm saying to simply flow through you and speak to your heart, and not your mind."

Alex spoke warmly, saying, "Once upon a time...well, actually we're going to go back before time and matter and space were in existence, but I don't know how to properly start off a faerie tale without once upon a time..." Alex thought for a moment then said, "I've got it! 'Once Upon a Dream'... Oh, I like that!"

Amelia smiled and giggled as Alex continued. "Alright, here I go. Once upon a dream, back when dreaming was all that existed and every world and universe was dreamed into reality by countless master-creators, there was a very special Creator whose dream materialized into the physical universe in a split second of inspiration. And with the creation of matter came space and time... which also had never existed before. For this reason She became known as Dreamtime."

"Are you saying that Dreamtime is... God?" asked Amelia warily.

"Let's put it this way, She's the One who thought you up," said Alex smiling broadly.

"In the Beginning?... Dreamtime was the only one in her world. All of the master-creators were still in the non-physical dream-worlds of their own creation. They could see the physical world but they couldn't touch it or affect it in any way.

"Dreamtime created everything in perfect balance... a 'Garden of Eden' if you will. But even though Her world was perfect and every living thing adored their Creator and She loved her creation – Dreamtime longed for companionship. She longed for someone to co-create with Her. So She created a Man and a

Woman in Her image and likeness.”

“Isn’t this kind of like the Bible instead of a faerie tale?” asked Amelia. “It seems more like an allegory.”

“Well, that was it for the allegorical part,” said Alex laughing, “that’s just how it is with stories... they have a way of telling themselves and the story just doesn’t care whether it’s been told before or not.

“Here’s what’s behind the allegorical ‘curtain’... down at the bottom of the rabbit hole. Though they started off as a man and a woman, they were Dreamtime’s children, and just like any parent, Dreamtime wanted the best for Her children... and gave them ALL of Her abilities.

“This meant they were able to create with nothing more than thoughts and feelings, and the stronger the feeling, the more quickly and powerfully they could create whatever they wanted or desired. But this could also be problematic for children new to creating...in a moment of fear or anger they could just as easily create something they didn’t want... so Dreamtime caused matter to ‘move’ more slowly which gave Her children time to think about what they truly wanted.

“In order for Her children to enjoy the same free-will that Dreamtime enjoyed, She devised a marvelous plan. Half of Herself would exist in the non-physical world and the other half would be dispersed as a physical particle in Her children. This ‘divine particle’ would forever exist as a means of communication, and the particle could be activated by Her children with sincere feelings of love. So the more that Her children felt joy and happiness the more connected they were to Dreamtime.

“Then, as She dreamed, Dreamtime took on a form... just as

you take on a form when you dream. Her form ultimately became known as the human body.

Amelia furrowed her eyebrows and bit her lip as she tried to understand the connection between Dreamtime and human beings.

Alex smiled and added, "Try this... what's it like when you dream? And keep in mind there's no separation between you and that which you're dreaming."

Amelia closed her eyes and said, "When I dream I have a dream-body... that's having an experience... well, at least that's how it seems until I wake up.

"Wait a minute.... if Dreamtime is the One dreaming this physical world... and the human body is the form She takes... are you saying that my body is Her dream-body? Like I'm just someone being dreamed? Well, what fun is that?" said Amelia.

"If everything you're seeing is Her dream materialized, including you," said Alex, "then who are you when you wake up?"

Amelia was taken aback for a moment, then said hesitantly, "Well... then I guess I'd have to be... Dreamtime."

"Just as there is no separation between you and your dream self, there is no separation between you and the One who thought you up. You are one and the same. And that's why She loves Her children as Herself.

"Now, let me tell you about the master-creators," Alex said. "You see, they all wanted to create their own physical worlds, but they couldn't understand how to do it, and Dreamtime wouldn't tell them. So then these... Whisperers... convinced a few of the children to dissect plants and animals to see if taking matter apart would reveal the secret.

“But why couldn’t Dreamtime stop Her children from tearing apart Her creation?”

“Because She gave them free-will.”

“But She must have known what the Whisperers were capable of. Why didn’t She give Her children some form of protection?” asked Amelia, now fully immersed in the story.

“She did give them protection. Within every human being is a barrier to anything based on a lie and a constant desire to know the truth,” said Alex. “The other protection Dreamtime gave Her children was the particle of Herself. When that particle is activated by sincere love and in full contact with Dreamtime – that man, woman or child cannot be overpowered.

“You see, the particle is constantly relaying information through vibration... or what you might call intuition or a ‘gut-feeling.’ It feels like a spontaneous thought, something you think you came up with yourself in a moment of inspiration, but it’s really information being relayed to you through your feelings. The Whisperers and the dark forces try to prevent this information from being received, thereby preventing humans from acting in accord with the divine plan.”

“How can you have free-will and then be expected to act according to a divine plan?”

Alex smiled warmly and said, “Well if you remember that you are divine, then the plan would be your own. What appears to be a coincidence is something that was programmed by your desire...and that desire may be recent or it may be a desire you had before you were born.”

“Here’s another way to look at it. Pretend that you’re a child and you asked your mother to help you put on a play. First you’d

tell her which play you want to perform and the part you'll be playing. Your mother happily sets the stage, helps with costumes and props, and arranges for all the other children performing in the show. She'd make sure there was an audience and a director, and she'd provide everything necessary.

"Finally the big night comes, you're the star of the show, everything is perfect, the audience is waiting with bated breath... and you forget your lines... in fact, you can't remember what scene you're in or where the show is headed. Fortunately your mom has provided you with a teleprompter... with a quick glance you see your lines and it all comes back to you."

"So you're saying that this 'divine particle' is sort of like a cosmic-teleprompter..." Amelia said as she closed her eyes thinking about it. "Only it's something you can't see or hear... you can only feel it... like when your cell phone is set on vibrate. So this feeling or vibration doesn't get in the way of your free-will because it's a reminder of what you planned in the first place."

Alex nodded.

"But if we set this all up, like some cosmic play, why would we pick pain and unhappiness?"

"That's never your intention... you always come to perform, to play a part. You already have your part memorized. The teleprompter is there whenever you need it... Now though, the teleprompter is controlled by another aspect of you, and you're so finely attuned to these 'promptings' that you can 'feel' when you need to go left instead of right.

"So now you're onstage performing life's play, and you have this gut-feeling to go left. At first you hesitate because you've always gone right, but then you decide to trust yourself; yet the moment

you head in a new direction, the other actors tell you to go the other way, some even try to push you in the opposite direction, while the director jumps out of his chair waving frantically to get your attention. At this point you might simply decide that your 'inner teleprompter' is broken and go right, only to have a piece of the scaffolding fall on your head.

"Do you understand what I mean?" said Alex, observing Amelia closely. "The feeling to go left may not be rational or reasonable. If you go left you may never know why you had that feeling, because nothing happens. But if you ignore the feeling and go right you discover that some intuitive part of you was trying to guide you in a better direction... and sometimes, something you couldn't possibly have anticipated occurs.

"So you're saying that we don't plan to come here and experience pain," said Amelia thoughtfully, "but when we use our minds to analyze what we think we should do... or keep doing what we've always done instead of listening to our feelings... we cause ourselves pain. And because we have free will, nothing stops us from experiencing pain until we choose to have a different experience... which happens," Amelia added slowly, "when we begin to follow what feels good and brings us joy."

"So Dreamtime... or the One who thought me up" Amelia said with a big smile, "is always trying to communicate with me... through my feelings... the best path for me to take to be... happy."

Alex smiled and nodded.

"That seems much simpler than the way I've been doing it!" said Amelia with a laugh.

"Life is simple."

"But if the Whisperers can speak into my mind, how do I

know if my thoughts and feelings are from... the Whisperers or from the One who thought me up?"

"The Whisperers, the dark forces, will suggest that you think and act fearfully," said Alex. "But you'll know when you're hearing the One who thought you up," Alex added with a smile, "because you'll feel happy or inspired."

"But what about painful things that you can't stop... like someone dying... or maybe you're dying... why would anyone plan that?"

"Why would anyone plan to stay here forever?" Alex allowed Amelia to contemplate that idea for a moment and said patiently, "Shall I return to my story?"

"Yes..." said Amelia hesitantly, "but this is such a sad story... Dreamtime is nothing but loving, yet she's the one... in the name of 'God'... that people blame for all of their problems. I mean they pray and beg to Her... well... I think most people think of Her as a Him... but, never mind... they ask for some kind of divine intervention, but they never look at the fact that they're the ones who've created everything... including their own problems."

"To understand the plan and why it's unfolding now at this time, I have to tell you a bit more of the story of Dreamtime and the forces of light and dark. Now it's important to remember that all the elements, light and dark, are here on Earth, spread throughout the universe and within Man as well. Man is capable of being all things, the best of the best, or the worst of the worst, and everything in between... he constantly experiences the results of his own thoughts, feelings and actions.

"These 'results' cause either happiness or pain. So the dark provides a valuable contrast for the light, and this is how you learn

about your choices, and how your thoughts and feelings create your world.

“You don’t require anyone to teach you this,” Alex added, “because your experience will demonstrate this cosmic law over and over again. With every thought you are choosing love or fear, happiness or pain... but always, always the divine particle within you is communicating, showing you the path to happiness, if you will only listen to your feelings and act on them.

“And this brings us to the part of our story where Dreamtime’s children stopped listening to their feelings almost entirely. You see, the dark forces knew that if mankind could be directed into analysis and away from feeling, they would lose their ability to communicate with Dreamtime, and the dark forces could essentially capture Man’s soul.

“The Whisperers discovered they could most easily influence men who desired power, and there came a time when several Egyptian high priests had grown incredibly powerful due to their knowledge of the Science of Imagery. So the Whisperers devised a plan where they could influence humanity but work mainly through the high priests, activating their lust for power.

“The Whisperers began speaking to the high priests in the guise of their own thoughts, showing them ways that they could become more and more powerful while simultaneously disempowering humanity.

“Now, at the time when the high priests came into power the vast majority of the population in Egypt were slaves serving their entire lives for little more than food and shelter, building grand objects to ‘please the Gods and the Kings.’ Long after that had just become the way of life, the people had finally had enough...

And so when the high priest saw through remote viewing that the slaves spoke of rebellion, he devised an ingenious plan.

“Rather than try to control the slaves with force – for the priest knew they were greatly outnumbered – he ordered that the slaves be set free.”

“But how would that help him disempower humanity?” Amelia asked in surprise.

“Because the next thing the priest did was create something you are very familiar with, but which had never existed before... Money. He told the slaves that they were free to go, but that they were also free to keep pulling stones and that they would be given pieces of gold in exchange, and with these gold pieces they could buy homes, security, and anything they could imagine... even whole cities someday, if they worked hard enough.

“And do you know what these newly ‘free’ men did? They worked harder, pulled more stones, and completed jobs faster than they ever had before, their dreams now aligned with the priests’. Because you see, the true genius of the high priest’s plan was that by setting the slaves free of their captors, he saw that they would ultimately enslave themselves... for that was the only life they knew; that was *just the way things were*.”

“As time went by, gold was gradually replaced by nothing more than numbers and bits of paper. But that paper represented the gold in more ways than one – the hypnotic suggestion that this paper had value was so deeply engrained that no one questioned the fact that they were still functioning as slaves... and everything they desired in the material world came at the price of their own freedom.

“Mankind was then disconnected through many different

forms of religion. And one of the most clever things the priests did was to create icons... a symbol that instantly delivers a message far beyond what words can express. These icons represented the Divine or people who were saints. And people would stare at these images... sometimes with love and reverence, but more often than not, they stared at the icon while holding a powerful image of themselves as unworthy, as a lowly sinner..."

"But within the last fifty years people stopped worshipping the way they used to... but just as the pattern of slavery repeated over the years, so too did the icons transform into a new, much more subtle form, with the same capacity to cause people to think they were 'unworthy' and 'not enough'. You're no longer required to go to church to see these icons, and they're impossible to avoid. Can you guess what they are?"

Amelia shook her head, trying to figure it out quickly, but feeling puzzled nonetheless.

With a bright laugh, Alex said, "The new icons are on the magazine covers in the grocery stores! They're in the media. Now, think about the timing of this. Magazines used to be sold at newsstands, but as religion began to lose its grasp on the population, magazines began being displayed right at the cash register... because no matter what you believe or don't believe, you've got to eat!

"So even as a child you are raised with icons not in a church, but on your clothing, even on your underwear, the cups you drink out of, and most importantly the movies and television you watch. The older you get the more the icons 'tell' you what's popular... and that it's important that you're popular and attractive. They tell you what music is popular, how to dress, how to wear your hair.

“But even if the high priest’s educational system doesn’t ‘capture’ a child at a young age, eventually they will be ‘taught’ through images... that beauty is external, not internal... that the more ‘artificially’ you live... the nicer the car, the bigger the house... the happier you are. Richness and beauty go hand in hand...

“But behind the ‘smoke and mirrors’ is the fact that very few of these ‘human icons’ know much about true and lasting happiness. So then you get to read all about the drugs they use, the rehab they’re in, the latest divorce and the affairs they’re having. And, unwittingly, people judge what they’re seeing... once again holding an image in their mind.

“This is very subtle, but remember... what you ‘image’ in your mind, along with what you feel, is what you attract. So when people think it’s wrong to do drugs or have an affair or be fat...or if it’s ‘just terrible’ that someone is ill, or there’s been some form of abuse...and they hold that image long enough... they will ‘dish up’ for themselves the very thing they’re negatively focused on.”

“Are you saying that you would just start doing drugs or suddenly get fat?” asked Amelia.

“I’m saying it will show up in your experience... for example, if something doesn’t bother you... such as someone playing loud music... you won’t notice other people doing it. But if it does, it will seem to reappear constantly, and your experience will become focused on that thing that you dislike, even to the point that you feel unhappy...

“If you go deeper into the idea though, you see that not only do you notice the thing that bothers you occurring, it actually begins to happen more often. Whatever you ‘push against’ is what

you are attracting... because feeling always attracts experience. Just like the Egyptians attracting more disasters as they fearfully focused on the plagues.

“So you see, it serves the priests either way. They can hold up a seemingly ‘good’ icon to convince you that you are not-so-good, or they can hold up a ‘negative’ icon to cause to go into judgment and attract the negativity to you. Either way you will become more and more sure that you are separate from everyone around you... somehow better or worse than them... And that’s precisely where the priests want you to be—convinced that you stand powerless and alone in the world.

“In doing so, they keep the ‘myths of scarcity’ alive and well... and like a magician drawing your attention away from the trick, they make sure you focus only on what they want you to see. So the priests’ ‘magic,’ in the form of distraction, serves to ‘deaden the link’ of the divine particle between Man and Dreamtime...and they use mass consciousness to magnify everything.

“Mankind was persuaded to analyze instead of feel, and to tear apart nature and take ownership, instead of love and protect it.

“From time to time those with mastery came back to Earth. The message repeated over and over again by all the masters was quite simple... focus on love not fear... Because human feeling creates everything through attraction...

“But it’s important to understand that the high priests are Dreamtime’s children... dreaming just as they were created to. Dreamtime loves all of Her children, without exception... and She has given them the freedom and ability to create.

“If you feel the high priests are wicked and corrupt... you’ll

feel that every negative event on the planet is an attack on you and your happiness. But if you think of the ‘dark’ as creating contrast to the light, you’ll see that the most beautiful artwork in the world would be impossible to create without the contrast between light and dark colors.”

“Honestly,” said Amelia shaking her head, “My mind understands what you’re saying, but I just can’t feel it. I think of them and I feel nothing but anger.”

“So in order for you to be happy, you want the high priests to behave in exactly the way that you have determined... and if they don’t behave exactly as you have decided... you’ll punish yourself with negative feelings.”

Amelia laughed at the absurdity of Alex’s statement, but she knew he was right. She was feeling angry and resentful, outraged and hopeless, and it wasn’t changing anything – it only made her feel sick to her stomach and helpless.

“You see, this is true for everyone, not just the high priests. You have every right to protect yourself from the consequences of someone else’s negative actions or moods or whatever... and I’m here to help you understand how to protect yourself... but when you have expectations – your thoughts and feelings are demanding that someone change and give up their own free-will to suit your needs or desires or whatever it may be.

“The Law of free-will has existed since the Beginning of Time. Dreamtime Herself will not interfere with this law... so the negative feelings you’re experiencing... are caused by you banging your head against the metaphorical Wall of Free Will.

“No matter how angry or self-righteous you become, no one is going to change, or give up their free-will on your behalf.”

Amelia sighed heavily, like a child who had totally failed on a test and was staring at a big, fat F drawn with a red marker. “So now what do I do... just go down with sinking ship? Everyone has free-will...what a stupid idea that was! So there’s no way I can stop what’s happening... and nothing I can do to set all of this right.”

Alex laughed. ‘My dear... YOU have free-will.’

“So what? What’s my free-will against the high priests and everything they’ve created? I’m just one person! What can I do?” said Amelia filled with frustration.

“You’re in a dream. All you have to do is wake up.”

“How, exactly, do I ‘wake myself up’?”

“You say “no” and you protect yourself from the high priests dream of scarcity by living your life as you see fit.”

“But I’m in prison,” said Amelia fiercely. “How can I possibly live my life as I see fit?”

“You got yourself in here,” said Alex with a twinkle in his eyes, “you can get yourself out.”

“How?” said Amelia, though she was quite sure she had nothing to do with getting herself into her pyramid prison.

“Discover what it is you came here to learn... then the doors will fly open and the wall will come a tumblin’ down,” said Alex gaily.

“How do you know that for sure?” said Amelia doubtfully.

“Cosmic law,” said Alex with a grin. “No matter how deep and dark a dream may appear, no matter how long you’ve been dreaming the dream... when you wake up, it disappears. When you wake up to who you are... stop demanding that others change to meet your needs... and remember you are not separate from

the One Who Thought You Up... in this very moment you have access to All of the wisdom in the universe. You simply need to ask the right questions to get the right answers.”

“What? No... wait!” she said quickly, feeling that her time with Alex was almost up. Amelia’s mind fumbled for the right question. Then she blurted out, “What was the secret you died to protect? Everyone seems to think I know it, but I don’t!” Amelia added urgently.

Alex smiled, “First of all, stop telling yourself that you don’t know... you’ll have a lot more of ‘not knowing’ if you keep doing that.”

“But, why can’t you just tell me what I need to know? Why do I have to ask the right question?”

“The question you ask indicates what you are ready to hear,” said Alex warmly. “The answer has already been trying to come to you. Don’t you remember seeing the Great Pyramid of Giza in your vision and the people standing at the base singing?”

Amelia shook her head, “But why does that matter?”

“Wake up!”

Chapter 30

Amelia felt warmth as a fast heartbeat pounded in her right ear. Everything was black. She felt dizzy, but finally managed to open her eyes. She found herself cradled in Matthew's arms with her head against his chest, hearing his heart beating. Matthew looked deeply into her eyes, his distress melting into relief as he saw she was conscious.

"Are you alright?" Matthew whispered.

"I think so... my head's killing me though," she said, holding her hand gently on the back of her head, feeling as if she was hanging upside down and spinning at the same time.

"What happened?" he asked anxiously.

"The last thing I remember an earthquake hit..." Amelia said shaking her head slightly as she tried to remember what happened. "It must have hit directly below me because I went flying straight up into the air... I honestly don't remember coming down or hitting the floor..." she said shakily, "but obviously my head remembers." She paused and looked at Matthew for a moment, suddenly realizing that he wasn't supposed to be there. "How did you get in here?"

"I was taken to this other chamber and locked inside, but when the earthquake hit the doors came flying open," said Matthew, still looking at Amelia with concern. "I had no trouble finding you... they left mortar and tools on the floor... and the wall wasn't totally dry, so a sledgehammer was all it took to smash a hole in it."

Amelia smiled at him weakly. "So now we can get out of

here?” she said hopefully.

Matthew shook his head. “I’m afraid we’re trapped,” he said apologetically as he looked over his shoulder at an immense stone slab that had fallen from the corridor ceiling, blocking their only exit.

Covered in dirt and soot, her hair in a tangle, Amelia rubbed her eyes and looked hopelessly at Matthew. Matthew gazed at her tenderly and said, “I know this is bad timing...but I think I might love you.”

Amelia burst into tears and flung her arms around his neck. She wanted to say something sweet and romantic, but all she could do was hold on tight, as if he were a lifeline leading her to safety. Matthew gently touched her chin and, tilting her face up, kissed her.

In that moment Amelia found herself kissing the man she’d been married to many times before. The man who left her to change the world, the man who lost her when she died and then lost himself, and the man she loved, who died in her arms but somehow was always there in the dew on the grass or in the songbird’s trill. But this time there was no fear, there was only love moving through every part of their being uniting them heart, mind, body and soul.

Aching injuries disappeared, exhaustion gave way to exhilaration, and though there may have been tremors or aftershocks in the earth below them, neither felt a thing except their own connection. Then somehow they found themselves leaving their bodies behind and shooting up into the cosmos, but it wasn’t frightening because they could still feel their physical connection, the warmth of being in each other’s arms, yet they

were totally free, radiant and light.

Amelia didn't remember coming back into her body. She slept so deeply and peacefully she could barely awaken herself, but when she finally opened her eyes, Matthew was gazing at her. He was lying on his back and her head was on his shoulder with her arm across his stomach, in exactly the position they'd been in when Matthew died in their last lifetime together and Amelia felt indescribable joy knowing that he was alive and well.

Matthew stretched out an arm and retrieved a nearby apple off the floor, then rubbed it on his shirt and offered it to Amelia saying, "Breakfast in bed?"

Amelia giggled and sat up saying, "Why thank you," as she took a bite and handed him back the apple. Matthew bit into the apple, but he couldn't take his eyes off Amelia and she was looking at him unabashedly as well. As Matthew sat up and Amelia's focus was a few feet higher, she saw the torch close to being burned out.

"Matthew!" said Amelia frightened. "What if they can't get to us? Are we just going to die in the dark?"

Grabbing both of her hands, Matthew said, "Look at me... look into my eyes. It's not as bad as you think, we've still got some time. Let's gather what we can together so it's all in one spot."

"But we have no water," Amelia moaned, "the barrel broke."

"We have fruit for now... and at least this room is large enough that we won't run out of air. And just because there's a rock outside of the hole..."

"A 'rock' that we can't move because it's the size of a dump truck..." Amelia added.

"Doesn't mean the entire tunnel collapsed," Matthew said gently.

Amelia nodded in understanding, and soon they were both hurrying around the chamber collecting all the food and putting it along the wall where they could find it in the dark. Finally they both sat down, side by side with their backs against the wall. Amelia took a deep breath and closed her eyes for a moment.

Much to her surprise Amelia saw an image, like a movie replaying itself, of Bast taking her out of the pyramid as her second-self. Then he returned and teleported his own body to the room where he showed her the truth of the hologram behind the ritual. All at once, Amelia remembered on a cellular level what it was like to teleport. She had known how to teleport as Alex and now she could feel it as easily as she could feel herself riding a bicycle.

“Matthew,” Amelia said excitedly, “I remember how to teleport.”

“Really?” said Matthew in astonishment.

“Yeah,” said Amelia breathlessly. “I’m going to try it right here so I can see where I’m going.”

Amelia closed her eyes and completely relaxed. She began to imagine her entire body, then she used her mind to penetrate her body and see all of the cells, right down to the atoms, all at once. Then she imagined her body disassembling and instantly reassembling on the other side of the chamber. Instantly her body disappeared and reappeared on the other side of the room, exactly as she had imaged it in her imagination.

“Whoa!” Amelia gasped, completely stunned. “I knew I could do it, but I didn’t remember how it felt! What a RUSH!”

“Can you do it again?” said Matthew enthusiastically.

“Yes,” said Amelia nodding excitedly. And in the next

moment she was sitting next to Matthew in the exact place she had been before.

“So this means you can get out,” said Matthew in amazement.

“We can both get out,” said Amelia emphatically. “I can remember teaching others to do this... and though I don’t remember exactly how I did it... I do know that I’ve teleported other people before... it just needs to come back to me,” she added trying to sound confident, but not at all sure how she would manage it. “Let me start by showing you how it works.”

Matthew smiled and nodded enthusiastically, “Alright,” he said gamely.

Amelia took a deep breath. “Hmm... I feel like ... you know that story where a fish jumps out of a lake and sees trees and flowers and mountains, and then goes back into the lake and tries to describe what he saw to the other fish, but they don’t understand because they have no frame of reference...I don’t even know where to begin.”

Matthew thought for a moment and said, “Well, do you think you could explain it in terms of physics? Like how you might explain gravity?”

“I could try...” said Amelia hesitantly as she thought about it. Then suddenly she said brightly, “I’ve got it. I know exactly how to explain it. Ok, hold that quill in your hand...”

Matthew picked up the quill in his right hand. “Now don’t move your hand,” Amelia added. “If you think of this quill at smaller than the level of atoms and electrons...”

“The quantum level...” said Matthew.

“Yes,” said Amelia nodding, “from the quantum level – it’s pure energy and it has a unique vibration. If you think about it

like algebra, it's sort of like an energetic equation.

"Okay, now put the quill in your other hand."

Matthew put the quill in his left hand and looked at Amelia.

"That's a different quill," she said, staring at him, "it's not the same quill as before, because now it's in a different location."

"But it's the same quill that was here," said Matthew putting the quill back in his right hand, "it's just that now it's over here," he added as he switched the quill back to his left hand.

"Well, here's the thing," said Amelia. "An object... this quill... does not exist in a location – the location is one of the properties of the object."

"Here, let me show you," Amelia said holding her hand out as Matthew handed her the quill. Holding the quill in her right hand she said, "The 'vibrational equation' of the quill in one hand is NOT the same as the equation of the quill in the other hand," she added as she switched the quill to the other hand.

"The variable in the equation that has changed is the location... it's a different equation... and that's why it's a different quill. Are you with me so far?"

Matthew nodded.

"Now, teleportation is the same idea," said Amelia, pausing for a moment to choose her words carefully. "The idea is that any point in space has a locational equation to it." Amelia paused for a moment and said, "I don't know if 'vibrational' and 'locational' are real words... but you get what I'm saying, right?"

"I understand," said Matthew with a big smile, as he nodded to Amelia gesturing to her to hand him the quill. He held the quill out in front of him with his right hand and said, "Alright, I'm going to change the... locational... variable gradually..."

He then began moving the quill slowly in front of himself, “And the quill is now going from point to point to point... But what you’re saying... is that this quill is not actually an object – it’s a ‘vibrational equation’ that’s changing with each location. But then why does it look like the same quill?”

Amelia thought for a moment then said, “Well, it’s something the brain does... it creates this illusion... that everything is connected... that there’s this... uh... continuity... a connection from point to point. But that’s not what’s really happening.

“You see,” said Amelia extending her hand as Matthew gave her the quill, “When you understand that the location is a ‘variable’ of the equation... and location is a property of the object...”

“Then when the locational variable changes,” said Matthew excitedly, quickly grabbing the quill out of Amelia’s hand, “by definition this quill ceases being in one location and is now in another location,” he added smiling. “But that means this quill didn’t travel in between.”

“That’s what I mean,” said Amelia nodding enthusiastically. “It’s your brain that creates the illusion that the quill traveled from point A to point B...the quill is actually teleporting from here to here to here,” she said as she moved the quill slowly in front of her body.

“Now this quill has been teleporting from A to B to C... but all you have to realize is that you can go from the vibrational location of A to the vibrational location of Z and skip all of the letters in between.”

“Oh, I get it!” said Matthew laughing as he took a step to the left. “I just teleported, didn’t I!”

“Yes, you did!” laughed Amelia.

“Do you remember that movie, ‘What About Bob?’ with Bill Murray?”

Amelia smiled and nodded.

“Remember how he’d say...’baby steps... baby steps’...” said Matthew. Then he started taking long strides and with each stride he said, “Teleporting... teleporting!”

Amelia laughed until Matthew returned to her and said, “Okay, I’ve teleported back... now what?”

“Perfect,” said Amelia. “You are still an expert at teleporting from A to B to C... now we just have to get you to Z without getting you stuck in the middle of that pyramid wall.”

“Oh,” said Matthew suddenly looking quite sober.

“Now here’s the thing,” said Amelia slowly, her tone much more serious, “I know I can get us out of here. I explained this to you so you’d understand that teleporting is something we do all the time.”

“Just not A to Z... without stopping in between,” said Matthew.

“And that’s because our minds create barriers of space and time,” Amelia added.

“I can remember teleporting...” said Matthew quietly. He then told her everything he’d learned about his lifetime as Ammon, and finally said, “When you were Alex you taught me and the other high priests how to teleport. I can’t remember how to do it, but I remember the feeling.”

“Alright,” said Amelia nodding, “I’m sure that remembering the feeling will help, but before we try I need to go outside of the pyramid as my ‘second-self’... so I can see and feel the location of where we’re going.”

Once she had a clear image of where they were going,

Amelia took an extra moment to feel and sense everything in that location. Even though she was there as her second-self, she could feel the ground under her feet and a cool evening breeze with the fragrance of jasmine blossoms. When she could recall every feeling in complete detail, Amelia returned to her body in the pyramid.

But suddenly she was frightened. She knew she could teleport, and she knew that she had helped others teleport, but Amelia also remembered that when she was Alex it had taken her a long time before she could safely teleport another person, and now she wasn't sure that she could do it.

It was one thing for her to image herself dematerializing from one place and instantly rematerializing in another, but she'd have to do it for both of them at the same time. It was hard enough to do it for herself, but Amelia knew she had no choice.

“Matthew...” said Amelia trying to muster all of her courage, but feeling tears well up in her eyes despite herself, “I honestly don't know what will happen.”

He could tell she was frightened, and gathered both of her hands into his own as he looked deeply into her eyes and said comfortingly, “No matter what happens... it's better than dying here in this pyramid... and that's what will happen if we don't do this.”

Amelia nodded and took a deep, stuttering breath. When it came to herself, she had no fear of dying, but if she accidentally caused Matthew's death – the thought of losing him, again, was too much to bear. Amelia closed her eyes and tried to force herself to stop thinking about death. “Focus someplace else,” she said to herself.

With a weak smile Amelia said shakily, “Will you hold me?”

Matthew smiled radiantly and wrapped his arms around her as she held him tightly. “Now just close your eyes and imagine staying with me... wherever I go... you just need to have the intention that you’ll be going with me...”

Without thinking about it, they gradually began breathing at the same pace. As their hearts synchronized, Amelia felt herself floating back to the beginning of creation.

She saw a flame burning brightly, and then the flame split in two. The two flames were the same size as the original one, yet somehow she could feel the separation that had occurred. And then she realized that she was one flame, and Matthew was the other. Lifetime after lifetime they’d been drawn together only to be separated again and again.

But in this moment, as they stood there holding each other, she saw the two flames come together and spark into One. The feeling was so blissful Amelia began melting into the oneness she felt; their hearts beating together, breathing in and out so completely she found herself falling, falling into this hypnotic rhythm. Time stood still. And in that moment of timelessness and complete oneness, Amelia imaged them both dematerializing and rematerializing on the other side of the pyramid wall - seeing, smelling and feeling every nuance of the place.

Instantly they were both in the exact spot that Amelia had imagined, but she didn’t have a strong grip on Matthew’s body and he crumpled into a heap on the ground in front of her, completely unconscious.

Amelia knelt down and tried to see if he was alright, but there were no signs of life. She did her best to gather him in her arms,

then closed her eyes and prayed, “Please, please bring him back to life!” Amelia rocked back and forth begging for Matthew’s life, begging for him to come back. She wept huge, hot tears, knowing that she had no idea how to pray. And then as if the sweetest, most gentle song was singing in her mind, she heard words that seemed to be coming from far, far away and yet emanated from someplace within herself. “When confronted by sincere love, if it is strong enough, death retreats.”

Somehow Amelia knew that Matthew’s body had reassembled, but his soul had been left behind.

Chapter 31

She could feel him hovering around her, trying to get back into his body, but there was a dark energy preventing him that engulfed his body like a cloud.

Amelia closed her eyes and felt love. She put her hands on Matthew's heart and began to tell him everything she loved about him, and she didn't limit her conversation to the current lifetime. She told him everything she could remember from every lifetime they'd shared.

She laughed and cried and felt nothing but love as she shared every memory down to the smallest detail. Finally she said, "Matthew I know you're right here... you're right next to me. I know that you've heard every word I've said and that you must be feeling all the love I have for you."

Then her tone changed and she said vehemently, "I know how great it feels floating around in the ethers. I know that you may be seriously wondering why you should come back when it feels so good, but I need you here right now! I cannot do this alone. I need you... I need your way of thinking to help me see what to do. And on top of that I love you... I love you... I love you... I love you... and you have no excuse for not coming back here!"

In the next moment the etheric cloud dissipated and Matthew suddenly inhaled so sharply he scared Amelia half to death. He opened his eyes and laughed weakly as he saw the expression on Amelia's face.

"I hear you love me," he whispered feebly, along with a faint

smile and twinkling eyes.

“Oh Matthew,” cried Amelia, throwing herself onto his chest in tears of relief. “Don’t you ever do that to me again,” she scolded, then kissed him fully on the lips.

Though the sun was setting in the biosphere it was impossible to tell the difference between the hologram and a real sunset. The sky was unimaginably clear and dotted with magnificent, fluffy clouds; if anything it looked more like a painted masterpiece that had come to life. As the first stars began to appear and the night air became slightly cooler, Amelia turned to see candles, like warm golden stars, winding their way down the forest pathways that led to the pyramid.

Gradually they were surrounded by the people who inhabited the biosphere with Tesla gliding through their midst and up to Amelia and Matthew.

Smiling warmly at them he said, “I knew you would be here at this time,” he laughed and added, “the wonders of remote viewing...it’s a handy tool!” Then with genuine concern he said, “How are you, Matthew...feeling alright?” Matthew nodded.

Tesla then addressed them both. “What do you have to share?” he said softly.

Surveying the crowd Matthew and Amelia realized they were surrounded by hundreds of people, and neither had any idea where to start. Tesla quickly added, “You don’t need to yell, you can convey your messages through telepathy... and you don’t have to worry about taking turns or interrupting one another. Simply think in images and everyone here will accurately receive your message, even if you have trouble putting it together.”

“What do you mean?” asked Amelia.

“You and Matthew both have pieces to the puzzle. Part of where we’re trying to go and how to get there is connected to Amelia’s lifetime as Alex, and is somehow connected to this pyramid. But it’s also important to understand where we’ve come from and the mistakes humanity has made so these mistakes can be prevented in the future...and Matthew’s memories as Ammon will assist in clarifying this. Because Ammon could see ‘both sides,’ he created the plot to disempower humanity, and he also worked to turn it all around.

“Though you both hold important information, neither of you sees the picture in its entirety. For these people it will be as if someone put a ten piece puzzle in front of them. They will see the ‘big picture’ immediately and know exactly what to do. The information you provide will help everyone here understand how to image a world that will align with the highest good for all living beings – yet it must also align with divine law – which gives free will to all. Our challenge has been to create a world that allows free will, without one person’s will dominating another’s.”

Amelia said, “I can hold images in my mind, at least one at a time... and though I’m pretty clear about what I’ve seen, I don’t understand how it can possibly work.”

“Worrying about ‘how’ it will work is the fastest way to stop anything from happening!” said Tesla. “The ‘how’ is not up to you.”

Matthew shook his head and said, “Come on, this is serious...”

“No it’s not,” said Tesla with a grin. “Laughter always has been, and always will be the best medicine... it breaks all hypnotic spells. Now, son, let me give you an example of why you don’t ever... ever need to understand how the Universe works. Imagine

you're kissing this beautiful young woman here," he said, gesturing to Amelia. Matthew's cheeks instantly flushed hot, making him genuinely grateful for the cover of the evening sky and soft candlelight.

Tesla stopped speaking. Instead of describing something verbally, he used his mind to send a living image. When Matthew received the image it was like a movie playing through his mind, but it played through all of his senses. The moving-image was of Matthew kissing Amelia, but it wasn't just visual – all of his senses were completely activated. He could smell the soft, sweet fragrance of Amelia's hair, he could taste the faint flavor of coconut and peppermint from her lip balm. He could feel his arms around her and her embrace as they kissed, and his body growing warm with pleasure.

But then Matthew experienced the living-image of himself beginning to wonder 'How does everything work?' And immediately his mind focused on the functioning of Amelia's organs. He imagined her liver, kidneys and heart, then focused on her stomach and saw what she had eaten for lunch in a partially digested state.

Matthew blurted out, "I get it! I get it! Please no more! You're ruining the moment!"

Laughter erupted from those around him, and Matthew suddenly realized everyone could see the living-image. His initial embarrassment dissolved into an inner-laughter that showed up in the amused look on his face, but he didn't laugh out loud because he still had the tiniest bit of determination to be right.

"And that's exactly the point! Your power comes from being in the moment...living in the mystery," said Tesla.

Matthew took a breath, but before he could respond Tesla said, “Wait for it...Wait....for it!”

Matthew burst out laughing.

“That’s it! That’s the ticket,” said Tesla with an immense ear-to-ear smile. “I know you think you’re at this cosmic climactic moment. Your brain is thinking about movies you’ve seen, books you’ve read and how you expect things to tie up neatly... but dramatically... with a big bang. But have you ever noticed... in real life... that you have no appreciation for the wild and wooly, miraculous and magical moments when you’re in them? You’re trying to figure it all out... trying to understand HOW anything is going to work out the way you want it to. So you never fully appreciate what’s happening because your mind is always galloping into the future trying to ‘figure it out’... trying to do ‘damage control’... when all along the grand mystery of the universe is rolling out a magic carpet... and all you have to do is sit down. When you look back, you might be amazed, but going through it... well it usually feels like a downright inconvenience and you wonder how you managed to be in such an ill-conceived situation in the first place.” Tesla paused and looked directly into Matthew’s eyes. “Am I right, or am I right?”

Matthew chuckled under his breath and smiled, closing his eyes and nodding his head in mock-defeat.

“Are you both ready now?” asked Tesla.

Amelia and Matthew nodded and closed their eyes and simply allowed memories and images to appear. Together they began sending images and feelings of everything they had seen and felt that popped into their minds. Some of what they ‘sent’ made sense to them, some didn’t, but they didn’t judge one image

over another or try to decide what the people needed to know. If it came into their minds they let it go, as if each thought was a dove flying from their hands and into the sky, and they didn't worry where their images would land or whether people would understand.

Quite unexpectedly a memory of Amelia's ayahuasca experience came into her mind. She remembered seeing people standing side by side around the base of a pyramid looking up and singing together. Instantly Amelia felt a twinge of embarrassment because, after all, it was a drug induced hallucination and she was quite sure that this vision would be discarded by the group considering the source of the information.

Without a word, everyone began to stand around the pyramid until they completely surrounded it, facing it. But even though there were hundreds of people, including all of the children from the biosphere, except for babies and very young children being held by their mother or father, there were large gaps between each person.

In Amelia's vision she had seen everyone standing shoulder to shoulder, but it was obvious they would have to manage with a limited amount of people. Following the images they had seen, everyone looked up to a point just above the apex of the pyramid and began to sing AUM. The sound Ahh...Ohhhm resonated up the sides of the pyramid and into the enveloping night sky bejeweled with sparkling stars. Every face was alight, not just in the reflected glow of the candles, but radiant with love and joy as they sang. It felt as if they had somehow moved into timelessness – the moment was surreal and magical, even though nothing seemed to be happening. But all at once a glowing ball of energy

appeared above the pyramid where the people's thoughts and intentions converged.

The energy was so potent Amelia felt light-headed and a bit dizzy, yet she continued staring at the glowing ball as it continued to grow in size and intensity. Suddenly, Amelia saw an image of Alex. Her memory of seeing him after she hit her head on the floor of the pyramid returned as a bright, white flash of light lit up in her mind and then turned into shimmering, neon colors.

Alex looked deeply into Amelia's eyes and communicated, "Union of opposites...you need opposite modes of thinking." Amelia wasn't totally sure what he meant. "Dear one," said Alex, "simply send the message... you'll understand."

Amelia closed her eyes and sent the feeling-thought to everyone surrounding the pyramid and as she did this she saw a vision begin to reveal itself, like a movie affecting all of her senses, where she saw a bud quickly unfolding into a fragrant rose. And then found what was missing. The gaps between the people had been filled in by soldiers.

Chapter 32

As Amelia saw this image she simultaneously heard the sound of footsteps behind her. Whirling around she saw Bast, the high priest who had imprisoned her in the pyramid, now dressed in the robes and jewels of an ancient Egyptian priest, followed by the students and teachers from her school, and soldiers clad in army fatigues. Every person was carrying a candle instead of a flashlight. Streams of dotted candlelight were flowing toward them from high on the hill above them as hundreds of soldiers walked down the various paths that led to the pyramid.

Like Tesla, Bast too had seen these events unfold through remote viewing. Long before Amelia's vision of the soldiers standing between the people of the biosphere occurred as they surrounded the base of the pyramid, Bast had seen every nuance of the moment. He 'heard' Alex's message to Amelia, even before she did, in regard to opposite modes of thinking and knew immediately that soldiers were meant to 'fill in the gaps.'

With perfect precision the soldiers stepped into the first opening they came to between the men, women and children, and though they looked around uncertainly at first, they appeared to have been told what to do because as most of them eventually gazed upward at the ball of light above the pyramid, they began singing 'Ahhh-Ohhm.'

The soldier who stepped into the empty spot next to Amelia seemed so uncomfortable she reached out to hold his hand and smiled warmly at him when he looked uncertainly at her. For

a moment he seemed to relax, but then he quickly looked away. Amelia understood his mixed emotions.

Though she'd had many new experiences between her Vedruss lifetimes and everything leading up to this moment, even for her the energy swirling around everyone and penetrating them was more intense than anything she'd ever felt.

Some people experienced the energy as intense heat, others were freezing cold, some were shivering and sweating at the same time. And though some of the soldiers, like the one standing next to Amelia, remained rigid and seemingly unmoved by the intensifying energy, the vast majority of the troops and all of the others began feeling strong emotions as the dreams that mattered most to each of them, many long forgotten over the years, flowed into their imaginations. Some were laughing, some were crying, yet everyone continued singing to the best of their ability.

As they all stood, shoulder to shoulder, one of the soldiers looking into the intense, glowing light above the pyramid was so completely overwhelmed by the energy that now flowed through his body and seemed to radiate out from him, tears began to silently roll down his cheeks. In that moment a little boy with curly brown hair, looked up at him and reached out to hold his hand. The soldier looked down at the boy and smiled as tears of delight flooded down his cheeks, but he didn't care. All he knew was that he had never felt love like this in his entire life, and it was what he wanted more than anything in the world.

Then a little girl reached up and held his other hand. And if he had been above the pyramid he would have seen that children and adults were reaching out to the soldiers until everyone was holding hands all the way around the pyramid, and most of the

soldiers were feeling very much the way he did – a deep feeling of love and peace they had never known before, but which had been in their nature all along. When this happened, energy began to flow through them, a high, light frequency pulsing through their arms and hands and across their hearts where it radiated throughout their entire bodies. Their bodies felt lighter than air, as if the entire group was leaving the ground.

And in a way, they were leaving the ground as their second-selves began rising out of their bodies. All of the people of the biosphere were suddenly floating up into the air and most of the soldiers were surprised to find themselves there as well. They could look down and see their bodies, everyone holding hands, but their essential-selves, their consciousness was floating above.

Collectively they rose until they were surrounding the light above the pyramid, which was now shooting off sparks of bright, neon-colored strands as it whirled and grew larger and larger. And through that light, everyone felt the dimension that exists Between the Worlds – the place where Man lives along with the One Who Thought Him Up, where the dimensions of Light gather together and where every loving thought and every act of kindness is held throughout time, space and dimensions.

Something extraordinary was happening, and though Amelia felt deeply that nothing would ever be the same again for the people circled around the pyramid, she wondered what would happen to her parents. But before her mind had the chance to worry she felt her higher-self whispering in her mind, “Love dissolved in Space for one... can touch the hearts of many.”

Amelia didn't fully understand what it meant. Love dissolved in Space...Love dissolved in Space... And then she saw it. The

simple thought and feeling of loving another, went into the Space Between the Worlds, like a drop of dye in a clear glass of water. The dye didn't touch just one molecule, but flowed out and touched every molecule in the glass. And so it was with Love; It touched not just the people Amelia focused on, but she could see that Love dissolved into Space so that it also touched those surrounding the person she loved. This was the essence of Love, its purpose on Earth. But Love had to be consciously both 'sent' and 'received' through the loving hearts and minds of human beings on Earth, because nothing happened in opposition to Man's free will.

Amelia could feel her thoughts and feelings being communicated to the group effortlessly. She smiled as she saw Matthew by her side looking at her joyously and tenderly. Every person in the group was dissolving Love into Space, surrounding a loved one. But it was more than that, the idea had expanded in the midst of group consciousness. People were imaging prisons and dissolving Love for the entire population, prisoners and guards alike. And as this thought spread through the group the idea took on a life of its own. Love was dissolving into Space around every government on Earth. It was dissolving for the military in every country around the world, and around all of their loved ones and families. Love was dissolving for people who were suffering from disease or starvation. It was dissolving in crime filled cities, touching victims and criminals alike.

As Amelia watched in amazement through her second self, Love, being sent out by the hearts of every person around her, was dissolving into Space and completely surrounding the entire Earth. And as this happened she saw the Light above the pyramid expand, contract and turn a bright, neon blue. Then the orb began

to take form as something wholly familiar, yet unexpected – a small child appeared before them in a physical body, yet seemed to be clothed in pure light. When the child spoke, all that each person could see was this beautiful being looking deeply into their eyes, into their souls and into their hearts saying, “Thank you for loving My children.”

The love they felt was transcendent, something they would carry with them for the rest of their lives, but the feeling could not be contained within language for it was far beyond anything they had ever felt before - beyond the love of parents for their children, beyond the closest of friends, even beyond the most passionate embrace of lovers... it was beyond any form of love known before on Earth.

As they felt this new love wash over them, the child grew more and more radiant until all they could see was Light. And once the light dissolved around them, they felt their bodies join their second selves standing upon Earth in Her purest form.

As Amelia and Matthew opened their eyes, they found themselves standing in a wildflower strewn meadow in the midst of the most exquisite beauty either of them had ever seen. Mountains stretched above a forest of glimmering aspen and fragrant pine trees, and a crystal clear stream wound its way through a grassy meadow where fruit trees could be seen in the distance.

Love surrounded them and radiated from them, and Matthew realized he wanted to see his past life as Ammon from the perspective of Love. He wanted to see the moment when he sealed Amelia into the pyramid chamber, setting in motion the darkest period in the history of humanity, culminating in the near annihilation of the planet. Yet from Love’s point of view, he knew,

Ammon was pure love.

Before he was born in that lifetime Matthew, as Ammon, had agreed to play one of the darkest roles imaginable. In fact, every person born on the planet had chosen to go deeply into darkness for thousands of years because they were preparing to go further into the light than anyone on Earth had ever experienced.

Like a rubber band stretched near the breaking point, all of their energy spent pulling and straining for so long to hold themselves in the darkness, when the people finally let go, the momentum caused them to shoot very quickly to the other side and that much further into the light – strengthening their bond with All-that-Is.

Though there had been ancient civilizations that were far more aware of their deep and loving connection to their Creator, never before on Earth had humanity gone through the darkness and into the Light in this way.

From Love's perspective, Amelia and Matthew saw that every human being ever born on Earth – no matter how dark or light a role they were playing – all came with the intention to co-create and ultimately experience a world of Light that was unprecedented.

Matthew's eyes welled up with tears, any remnant of guilt washed away forever as he held Amelia in his arms. In that moment, every lifetime they'd shared loving and then longing for each other, every dark event, all the pain and sadness and every regret became filled with love – and then they saw that love had been there all along.

Matthew gently took Amelia's hand and led her to the top of a small hill. She sat down in the soft, fragrant grass, and Matthew sat behind her wrapping his arms around her.

He began describing where he envisioned an orchard, and a garden and their house surrounded by jasmine and gardenia bushes and roses too. He talked about how easily the creek could become a pond, and as Amelia closed her eyes to imagine what he was saying she saw a darling, blond haired, blue-eyed little girl smiling at her and waving to her from a boat in the middle of their pond.

In her imagination Amelia smiled and waved back. Matthew stroked her hair as she snuggled closer, thinking how this was the most romantic thing that had ever happened to her.

Epilogue

Not everyone in the biosphere had the same experience. The soldier standing next to Amelia had no idea why he was there; in fact, he'd had no idea that the biosphere even existed. Though he'd been named Dylan after a famous singer whose first name was Bob, he didn't consider himself to be much of a singer, and the idea of singing to a pyramid was the most ridiculous, un-soldierly thing he had ever heard of, let alone having to walk around with a stupid candle when he had a perfectly good flashlight in his room.

Never before had he been ordered to wear army fatigues but leave his weapons and equipment in his locker. His orders had taken him to the deepest level underground that he had ever been, with hundreds of other soldiers and, oddly enough, some high school students and a few adult civilians accompanied by two men in uniforms that were completely out of place – an old man in prison garb and another dressed as a nurse. They had all ended up in an expansive chamber with thirty foot ceilings composed almost entirely of cement with a massive vault-like metal door at its far end. Florescent lights emanated an eerie, unnatural glow and it felt as claustrophobic and lifeless as a mausoleum.

Strangely enough, their commanding officer ordered them to follow every instruction issued by a man called Bast. Dylan was sure his CO couldn't be serious when he saw the man dressed in a white linen tunic with a collar of precious and semi precious stones set in a flexible gold mesh that extended eight inches, draping slightly over his shoulders and covering his chest and

upper back. Dylan thought the man looked like an ancient Egyptian priest who'd just walked off a movie set, and he looked to his commanding officer to see if this was a joke, but was met with a grave look that communicated he was serious.

As candles were passed out and lit from one candle to the next, Bast told them that they would be walking to a pyramid and then he ordered them to 'fill in the gaps' between the people and follow whatever the people were doing.

As the vault-like door began swinging open Dylan immediately heard the sound of a towering waterfall crashing into a pool of water about twenty feet away. In single file they marched over the threshold, and Dylan discovered he was in a cave which was completely hidden behind the waterfall. In moments the rumbling sound was replaced by the light splash of water falling in small streams, glinting in what appeared to be the soft silvery glow of moonlight. As the streams became droplets, the water below drained so only a light shimmer of water remained on the rock floor.

As he stepped beyond the mouth of the cave and up onto the land, Dylan was shocked to discover that he was in a cedar forest wrapped the delicate scent of pine and the light of the moon overhead. The air was fresh and filled with floral fragrances and the sounds of insects and the occasional frog. He would have sworn he was outdoors, but he knew that wasn't possible. Even so he felt incredibly alive. Maybe it was the air, he thought, or maybe it was because he was no longer wearing his regulation jumpsuit... but that seemed crazy, how could a jumpsuit change a person's feelings? He decided that it couldn't, but that he was glad to be in nature.

At Bast's direction, the men's commanding officers led them along separate pathways, allowing them to descend quickly down the hillside. At first Dylan could only see the forest and moonlight filtering down through the trees; and though they knew they were heading toward a pyramid, no one was prepared for the size and scope of what they saw.

A large group of plainly dressed men and women circled the magnificent pyramid, and as Dylan stepped into an empty spot next to a tall, beautiful young woman, she looked at him and smiled as she reached out to hold his hand. Part of him hoped he would never have to go back to his post and that he would be ordered to stay in this magical place forever, but he reminded himself he was a soldier, and snapped his mind back to the moment.

As he looked around he realized everyone else was looking up at this weird ball of light and they were all singing; yet he just stood there, tight-lipped, and waited for whatever it was to be over. Any magic he had seen in the place didn't seem worth the embarrassment of being there at that time, but at least he had the comfort of knowing that he would soon be back at work and could forget the whole thing ever happened.

But he never made it back to work. He would never tell this to a soul, but as he gazed toward the top of the pyramid, smirking at the thought of how disappointed these people would be when nothing happened, he saw something beyond anything he had ever imagined.

The ball of energy grew larger and larger, turning different colors, and then it condensed, turned a neon blue, and in the next moment he would have sworn he saw a child – maybe seven years old – floating in the air above the pyramid. There was some kind

of light surrounding the child, and he couldn't really tell if it was a boy or a girl, but this child was so incredibly radiant Dylan burst into tears and instantly fell to the ground.

What had happened? He struggled to get to his feet, but the entire ground beneath him was shaking violently. He looked desperately around for a place to take cover because chunks of the biosphere 'ceiling' were crashing down from above. He tried to take some people with him, but they all seemed to be in a trance. So he ran into the pyramid and was joined by just a few other soldiers when a gigantic block of cement crashed in front to the doorway.

Dylan never prayed or talked to God – he didn't believe in God – but as Death was staring him in the face he really had no one else to turn to, so he begged that his life be spared. And in that moment the strangest thing happened. He heard a voice speaking directly into his mind saying “No one will ever change your destiny against your will. All that you desire for yourself will be allowed.”

“Then I desire to walk out of here alive,” Dylan whispered, his eyes shut tight as he huddled next to a wall with his hands covering his head, “... and in one piece,” he added wanting to be sure he covered all of his bases.

When the earthquake had subsided, they cautiously climbed over the rubble and discovered that the dome ceiling had fully collapsed. Everything was silent. Apparently there were no other survivors. They could see the edge of the earth several miles above and blue sky beyond that. Dylan stood and stared for a moment, unable to remember the last time he'd seen the sky. He felt lucky to be alive.

But at the same time he wondered what it was all for. As a soldier he had seen plenty of death, and he'd caused some of the deaths as well, but something had changed within him, and he began to question the purpose of a life that would only end in death. Instantly, in his mind's eye, Dylan saw the image of the child hovering over the top of the pyramid, but all at once he was seeing the child looking deeply into his eyes with profound love saying, "There is no death, there is only life." And though all the physical evidence pointed to the fact that everyone was dead and buried in the rubble, Dylan kept seeing images of everyone alive and well - but surely that was just wishful thinking on his part.

Dylan and the other soldiers tried to return to their barracks, but the cave with the waterfall had collapsed. The only way out was to climb up to the top of the biosphere.

It was twenty miles to the nearest wall and from there it was six miles high. Though they didn't have proper climbing equipment, they were able to salvage ropes and other things they needed by picking through the rubble at some of the homesteads.

Clearly everyone had perished at the base of the pyramid, because they didn't see a single person, dead or alive; yet in contrast there was so much life everywhere. Birds were singing high in the trees, and all kinds of animals, large and small, appeared around them - but they bore neither fear nor aggression. Dylan was secretly relieved that they had been ordered to leave their weapons behind. He wouldn't have said anything, but he would have felt awful if the others had killed these beautiful, harmless creatures for food.

Life reemerged so quickly, Dylan was amazed to witness the way that nature continued unperturbed, as if nothing had

happened and all was well. Water moved gracefully around the new obstructions, departing from old streambeds and creating new ones, but the underground source still provided an abundance of the most delicious, invigorating water Dylan had ever experienced – and combined with the fresh air and eating the most delicious raw fruits, nuts and vegetables every day, he felt more alive and energized than ever before in his life.

Once they had what they needed for climbing, it took them several more days to reach the desert floor. Yet when they finally arrived, Dylan felt a tug in heart as he looked down. He would miss this woodland world, but he was a trained soldier and knew he had the responsibility of reporting to a new commanding officer as soon as possible – his, it seemed, had died in the earthquake.

After discovering that the surface entrance to the military facility had collapsed, they hiked out to a road where an old, yellow school bus was sitting forlornly in the dust. Apparently it had broken down. In the back there were tents and sleeping bags, as well as water, but crackers and chips were the only things that were edible. Still it was something.

One of the soldiers was a mechanic, and finally with a bit of tinkering he got the bus running, but it didn't do them much good. Just a few miles down the road the earth had cracked and split apart into a deep ravine that scarred the land as far as the eye could see. They hiked looking for water and food. Here and there they found enough to get by in a garbage can at a deserted campsite or a water pump that was still functioning.

As time went on they met a few more soldiers who also seemed to have been cut adrift, and somehow their circumstances had separated every single one of them from their weapons. Even so,

as a band of trained soldiers, they were prepared for hand to hand combat. But there really wasn't much to fight for. Everywhere they went houses had collapsed and people had left the towns. The occasional stray dog or cat seemed to be the only things alive.

But the soldiers had no trouble surviving. They rummaged through the rubble of collapsed homes and restaurants and raided pantries for food. They found plenty of canned goods that they shared with each other. Ultimately they found all kinds of necessities, flashlights, batteries, even maps of the country. But due to the state of the roads after the earthquake they had no transportation, and they were in a small desert town, miles and miles from any other town. Their solution was to hike out with food and water, store it and hike back. They stock piled their resources until everything was in place and then set out again, going farther and farther each time, ultimately coming to another vacant town, and starting over again.

It was slow going, hiking back and forth, back and forth with supplies. They began to lose track of time, but soon winter was upon them and there was nothing to do but wait it out until spring. When they began their slow process again, they came to a town where frightened looking men and women peered out from behind stone walls or boarded up windows with a shotgun aimed straight at them. Having a gun was a tempting thought, but they discovered if they kept walking no one bothered them, so they decided to wait. And sure enough, one day they came across a shotgun and ammunition in a deserted barn.

They had rabbit for dinner that night, and because there was more ammunition than they could carry they took turns shooting bottles and cans off of fence posts. It was the most fun they'd had

in over a year since their journey began. The next morning they started their trek once again. They were headed for Denver, but who knew how long that would take? And then, like another miracle, they saw a barn, and grazing in a nearby pasture was a horse, a sturdy looking little palomino with a shaggy white mane and long tail. The little mare didn't look like much, but somehow she'd been well cared for and she was plump from eating the lush grass of early summer.

As they walked toward the pasture, a boy came out of the house and onto the porch. He was obviously surprised to see them because he yelled out in a panicky voice, "Papa!" But when he turned to go inside the soldier carrying the shotgun readied the weapon and yelled, "Stop or I'll shoot!"

The boy froze in his tracks. The soldier yelled more gently, "We don't want to hurt you, we just need your horse."

Without any fear at all the boy screamed, "No! No! She's mine, you can't have her." But as he realized there was nothing he could do he withered onto porch in tears crying, "She's all I have left."

Dylan was the one soldier who'd had a horse growing up. He felt for the kid as he now realized the boy had no father or anyone else as far as he could tell, but they really did need a horse to haul food and water if they were ever going to make it over the mountains and down the other side to Denver. He grabbed a halter and lead rope and walked quietly up to the horse holding his hand out coaxingly. The mare looked up at him inquisitively, but didn't move away when Dylan reached out to stroke her as he gently looped the lead rope around her neck and put the halter on.

In the barn, her tack wasn't in very good shape, but the saddle

would only be used to strap on bags of food and canteens of water. As he led the horse along the road behind the other soldiers, the land seemed to be bursting with the magic of summer. Flowers bloomed alongside the road, in a way he'd never noticed before. They weren't planted, and they seemed to have a carefree feeling to them, as if they enjoyed growing wherever they pleased.

Finally they camped for the night. They had rabbit again for dinner, and it was such a delicious treat after months of canned food. Dylan walked with the little palomino as she grazed on the long grass growing intermittently in the forest. He didn't dare allow her to graze by herself since they were still close enough that she might gallop back home. But after a day of walking, and now to stand and wait for the horse to eat, he decided he was just too tired. So he jumped on her back while holding the lead rope that was connected to the halter. The mare didn't seem to mind and continued grazing.

Reminded of his childhood days and his own horse, Dylan leaned back and stretched out on the horse's rump looking up at the clouds tinged with pink in the early evening sky. "I think I'll call you Dusty Rose," he said. "I know you're a palomino," he added with a note of apology, "but Dusty Rose was my horse growing up... and she was a fine horse... so it really is a compliment," he added, stroking her side as he enjoyed the warm, horsy smell of Dusty Rose.

As he lay on the mare, her rump for a pillow, Dylan was reminded of a day in his childhood growing up in Kentucky where he had done exactly the same with his own horse. The sky had been so very blue and polka-dotted with puffy little clouds. There was no breeze and the clouds barely moved, but he played a game

where he saw dragons or faeries or monsters in the clouds and then enjoyed watching the cloud transform into something else.

He was in a hidden place that he'd discovered. Right in the middle of a corn field the land suddenly dipped down into a pond with red-winged black birds swaying on reeds rising sturdily from the water. To one side was a forest and as he rode slowly down to the pond he saw a mother fox emerge from the cover of the trees with her kits, and after they left, a mother skunk appeared with her young clan; tails high in the air like striped banners proudly marching to the pond. There were baby cottontail rabbits too, but they were just here and there without a mother, and Dylan was relieved that the red-tailed hawk flying lazy circles in the sky above him seemed to take no notice. But then again, there was plenty of cover between the reeds and the undergrowth and the tall forest trees.

As the twilight sky began to darken, there was a moment when Dusty Rose suddenly jerked her head up and looked quickly to one side, pulling Dylan out of his childhood reverie. He thought she was about to bolt so he jumped off and hung onto the lead rope while giving her a quick yank to get her attention. He was tired and it was time to sleep, so he led her to a tree near their camp and tied her up for the night. A few times during the night Dylan sat up out of a deep sleep, his heart pounding, but each time he could make out Dusty Rose standing at the tree. He could tell the night sounds were making her antsy as well, yet he knew how to tie a solid knot and that gave him the confidence to go back to sleep each time.

But then something woke him. It wasn't a frightening sound, it was more of a low, soft stirring in the air. Dylan's eyes gently

opened. The moon had set and the sky was just a bit lighter than the dark of night so he knew dawn was approaching. He heard a twig snap. None of the men stirred, and Dylan told himself he wasn't going to sit up this time, and that Dusty Rose was still tied to the tree, so he lay there for a moment, just listening. But then he heard the soft sound of a horse walking quietly away.

Dylan leapt to his feet and took off in the direction of the horse's hoof beats, but her walk turned into a trot, and though he could hear her trotting away he couldn't see her in the dark grayness of the early morning. On and on he ran. It wasn't hard because the mare was following a forest path that had been created by other animals, deer perhaps. Dylan realized he'd never been in better shape in his entire life. He wasn't breathless, and though he hadn't caught up with the mare, he could still hear her enticingly just ahead of him, slowing for a moment to grab a mouthful of grass and then trotting on, as if she knew he was still following her. Gradually it became lighter. He'd been running for miles, but finally, just ahead in a clearing he saw her. Like a round, little golden Buddha surrounded by a sea of the greenest, most lush grass he had ever seen that rippled in the early morning breeze, Dusty Rose didn't even look in his direction as she flicked her long, white tail in the early morning sunshine.

Dylan stopped to catch his breath as he admired the scene, but then a familiar sound rang out through the woods and the next thing he knew he'd been knocked flat on his back with warm blood oozing from the buckshot holes spreading out across his shoulder and onto his chest. He didn't know who had shot him, he guessed it was the boy as he sat up to try to see for sure. But this action only made his blood gush out more quickly, and no

matter what he did or didn't do, he knew he'd be dying alone. No one knew he'd left the camp to run after the horse, and he'd run for several miles. Even if they heard the shot and started running he would die first.

But as he lay on his back watching shafts of sunlight angling through the aspen leaves as they sparkled a soft light green above him, and as he listened to the faint breeze rustling through the trees while songbirds trilled in the air above, Dylan suddenly remembered how much he had loved the forest in his childhood.

He'd grown up on little Kentucky farm with a stream out back, and a swimming hole where he and his friends used to climb an immense oak tree and swing out over the hole, dropping in with a huge splash. His family had chickens, two milking cows, a few goats, and even a llama which his mom brushed to collect its hair and spun wool which she knitted into sweaters and wove into blankets. But the love of his life was his horse.

He fed her every day, except in the summer when the grass was long and lush, and even now he could remember the warm smell of the hayloft and the light coming in shafts through holes in the roof. He always loved sweeping out the loft prior to getting a new load of hay, because he'd end up with a huge pile of loose hay below and he and his friends spent many happy hours jumping out of the loft into the hay and then climbing back up the ladder. He'd sit in his mare's cement feed bin on top of her hay and she would nibble around him as he scratched her ears and spoke softly to her of what a wonderful friend she was to him.

But the most fun he had was just riding through the fields and jumping over anything that got in their way and ending up at a quarry where he and his horse would swim in the warm water.

Quarry water was completely different than river water, which was often cold and polluted. The rock walls kept the water in one place where it spent the summer being warmed by the sun, and because there was no pollution he could see right down to the bottom. Swimming with his horse was one of his most cherished memories in his entire young life. He had to hang onto her mane because he was riding bareback and his body would float up to the top as her body undulated below the surface of the water. And then as she stepped onto land, he had to hang on tight as her body suddenly rose up beneath him. Nothing in his entire life had ever compared to all his days in nature, riding his horse and playing with his friends... How had he managed to forget something he'd loved so dearly?

Ever since the biosphere collapsed he'd spent all of his time in nature, first in the biosphere, then the desert and most recently in the forest, but never, not once did he simply relax and enjoy the peace and splendor of being surrounded by this completely natural world. No one would mourn the loss of him, and no one would be there in time to save him, if they even found him. For all he knew his body would just rot where it lay in the dirt. And then he wondered, something he'd wondered a year earlier when everyone was buried at the base of the pyramid... What was it all for?

And then he laughed. It wasn't a hearty laugh, it was more of a tiny chuckle, but even so it caused wracking pain to tear through his body. Still it was funny to realize that this was the most superb moment of his entire life, even though it wasn't lush and moist like Kentucky, the Colorado forest had its own beauty. But what made this moment different from his childhood was that he truly,

deeply appreciated everything around him, he took nothing for granted.... How had he missed it? Where exactly did he think he was going?

As a soldier, Dylan liked to think of himself as a ‘peacekeeper’ and to keep the peace sometimes you had to go to war. But there was no war. There was nothing going on at all, really. They were headed to Denver in the hope that there would be some kind of civil disturbance or at least something to do. But suddenly the whole idea was preposterous. No one in Denver was waiting for a ragtag band of soldiers to come marching into town; he knew it, they all knew. Still they marched every day, and if he was really honest with himself, Dylan would say it wasn’t so much about being a soldier or a peacekeeper – they just didn’t know what else to do with themselves.

But as the smell of grass mingled with the bark on the trees, the leaves and rich soil, Dylan knew there was no feeling that ever compared to the Earth beneath him while gazing up into a canopy of emerald leaves, dotted with blue sky. As he lay there he heard soft steps and then felt a blow of warm air coming from Dusty Rose’s nostrils as she sniffed him gently.

“Just like a woman to go and run off on me,” he said with a weak smile, being careful not to laugh even a tiny bit. “It’s ok, I forgive you,” he said as he stroked her velvety nose with his left hand. In that moment, as he touched the mare with genuine love and appreciation, expecting nothing from her – he saw the loving eyes of the exquisite child he’d seen at the pyramid, looking deeply into his soul, causing his body to feel warm and alive, even though he knew he was dying. And finally, finally he knew what he’d been searching for his entire life. Never had he felt more fully alive. It

was as if every cell in his body was singing. But he wasn't alone. The Earth was singing, the trees and rocks and flowers, the sun and the clouds were all alive with the Sound of Life.

The song was around him and inside of him. It reminded him of what he heard at the pyramid... it seemed like years ago... It didn't make sense at the time, but now that song was 'singing him' and this time he heard it with his soul. He closed his eyes, happy, truly happy for the first time in recent memory. He smiled as he saw that he'd been searching and searching for something all his life, going from person to person and then from one place to the next, but just like some cosmic joke, one he was loath to laugh at under his current painful circumstances, he'd finally come full circle.

He had spent his life wanting to feel something, anything, yet it didn't matter what he did. He'd been with countless women, felt the thrill and agony of killing in battle, he'd tried drugs and gotten as drunk as humanly possible, but it was all fleeting; nothing more than a momentary thrill – a rush of adrenaline and the moment dissipated back into some distant dream of happiness that never, ever materialized... at least not for any length of time.

Lying on the ground feeling what he could only have described as a divine sensation flooding through him, it seemed like a strange cliché that he should find the feeling he'd been looking for at the very last possible moment, and though he'd known it as a child, he'd forgotten and it had been buried inside him all along. Yet, he thought to himself, "I'm ready to die."

He closed his eyes and waited. The remembrance of the child's sweet voice echoed in his mind, "There is no death, there is only life." Dylan knew there was death, he'd seen it, he'd caused it,

and now he was about to experience it. Definitely he thought, “No. When you’re dead you’re dead and after that you’re just a rotting corpse until you turn into dust... but maybe there would be a tunnel of white light... that would be interesting,” he mused.

But as he lay there waiting to die, there was no tunnel of light; no smiling family members as his mother had once assured him... there was just this strange sensation that he was drifting in and out of a dream.

After some time, he began to feel as if he was waking up, and he opened his eyes to see why it was taking so long for him to die. But what he saw only confused him further – the setting sun was golden and low on the horizon, and he realized that a few hours must have passed. Everything else was exactly the same, except the colors seemed brighter somehow, and the song that had been singing through him and around him seemed more like a vibrant humming in the air.

Carefully he picked his head just slightly off the ground, thinking he must have misjudged how bad his wounds were. Dusty Rose was nowhere to be seen, but sitting next to him was a little girl, with luminous blue eyes and golden ringlets falling around her round, pink-cheeked face. She sat cross-legged, gazing at him, as if she’d been there for quite some time, and she was holding a bouquet of tiny, colorful wildflowers in her hand.

“I’m Asha. Are you hungry?” she said, offering him the bouquet. “Would you like to come to my house for dinner?”

A faint smile flickered across Dylan’s face. “Thanks kid,” he said, “But I’m kinda bleedin’ to death here.”

The girl silently stared at him with a puzzled look on her face. Finally he used his left hand to indicate the blood on his right

shoulder. Still she seemed not to notice. So he turned his head to glance at his shoulder. There was no blood. He sat up. There was no wound. Had it all been a dream, or was he dreaming now?

He scrambled to his feet and the child reached up to hold his hand. "Am I in heaven?" he said.

The child looked at him puzzled and said, "I don't think so. We call this Earth."

Together, they walked through a meadow dotted with wildflowers of every color imaginable, then splashed through a stream before taking a path to a small settlement nestled deep in a forest of aspen and cedar trees. Though he was dressed in raggedy military clothing and he knew he must be frightening to look at, and smelled even worse, no one seemed afraid of him. Mother's didn't shoo their children into the house, and in fact, as they walked along people waved and said hello, smiling at him with kindness while waving to Asha and offering them some extra fruit or vegetables from their gardens.

Unlike the other houses he'd seen which all appeared to have been through an earthquake, if they were even still standing, the log homes around him looked solid and in perfect condition. He marveled at the peace and serenity he felt as they passed by one home after the next. Each homestead had fragrant colorful flowers, a vegetable garden, a pond, an orchard and a forest, and oddly enough, most seemed to have fences surrounding the property composed of raspberry bushes.

What a clever idea, Dylan thought, as he remembered how they were constantly mending fences on the farm where he grew up, a fence that will last forever, feed your family and your neighbors and never needs to be repaired... how about that!

Between each home was a wide ribbon of rolling pastureland where horses and ponies were grazing. But this wasn't the type of space that was owned by the rich with signs posted saying 'No Trespassing.' It was land that was open and free to all, Asha informed him.

It struck Dylan that every homestead had the most extraordinary colors and fragrances, he had never seen so many diverse and unique designs in the landscaping surrounding a home. And rather than feeling that these homesteads were private and cut off from each other, he had the feeling of spaciousness. The homesteads had plenty of space, but no more than they needed, just enough to provide for their own families and plenty of open land in between. Not only did everyone seem to have enough, it was clear that no one was working and the children didn't appear to be in school. Yet he could tell that Asha was uncommonly intelligent, so he asked her if she went to school.

Asha cocked her head but looked confused. Dylan said, "Do you know how to read and write?"

Asha laughed gaily, "Oh I see what you're asking. I can read or write if I need to, but it slows your brain down. We pass stories down through oral traditions...it's much more challenging to remember every single word down to the tiniest detail, and that causes our brains to move more quickly, and this builds momentum in the mind of the thinker."

"Do you know math?" asked Dylan, now very curious, and hoping he might be able to actually test her abilities.

Asha nodded enthusiastically.

Fumbling through his pockets he finally found what he was looking for. "This is a calculator... don't really know why I kept

it... guess I just figured it would come in handy one day. I'll show you how it works."

First he showed Asha that it was solar powered and then he tapped in two numbers and showed her the button to touch for multiplying numbers, then he tapped in two more numbers, but in the moment he tapped the 'equals' button Asha told him the answer before the number appeared on the screen.

And this kept happening even when he was finally up to multiplying six digit numbers. Asha was faster than the calculator every time. But oddly enough she didn't seem to be having any fun, nor did she seem in the least bit pleased with herself, in fact, she appeared to be rather bored.

Dylan said, "How do you calculate all of these numbers in your mind?"

Asha shrugged and said, "Calculations are always the same on a dead dimension."

"What do you mean, a 'dead' dimension?"

"Well, nothing changes... the numbers are always the same... it's just not that much fun. I'd rather calculate numbers in a living dimension."

Dylan looked at her skeptically and said, "A living dimension? What does that mean? One plus one will always equal two."

"That's true on a dead dimension," said Asha, "but not in a living one."

"Can you show me how one plus one would equal something other than two?" asked Dylan.

Asha nodded and holding up her fist she unfurled her pointer finger and said, "Momma," then unfurling her next finger she added, "plus Papa," then straightening her third finger, she said,

“equals me.” Asha looked at Dylan ingenuously and said, “So one plus one equals three... and in a living dimension it could be even more.”

Dylan was stunned and couldn't help but wonder if there was anything this little girl didn't know. Responding directly to his thoughts she said, “I don't know what we're having for dinner.” Dylan burst out laughing.

As they continued walking Dylan realized that he recognized the landscape from the day before. “This is odd, but I'd swear I just came through here and this doesn't look at all the same. Where did all of these houses come from?”

“Well, it's the same scenery, but you're not exactly in the same place,” said Asha.

Dylan shook his head, blinking in disbelief. “What does that mean? Where did I go?”

“You didn't really ‘go’ anywhere...you changed your frequency... sort of like tuning in to a different radio station,” said Asha, looking at Dylan and noticing that he didn't quite understand. “You changed how you were feeling... right? And when you sort of ‘fell in love’ with everything... that feeling caused you to wake up here.”

He nodded, his eyes moist as the remembrance washed over him. He wasn't sure he understood, but the evidence was all around him, so he didn't disagree. “Then... what happened to my friends?” asked Dylan.

“They're on a ‘version’ of Earth that matches the frequency... or ‘vibration’.. of their thoughts and feelings... and they're experiencing what they most believed would occur.”

For a moment Dylan was taken aback, but as he thought about

what Asha was saying, an image appeared in his mind and he saw how the world he came from had felt as empty and aimless as he did at the time, and how this world felt as loving as he did while dying. Like a puzzle piece changing its shape, he understood that he no longer fit into that old reality; but just as he had become a match to this world, his friends were still a match to theirs.

“So, when I woke up and you were sitting there next to me, if I had gone back to where I was camping, what would have happened? I mean, could I have brought any of the others here with me?”

“If you had gone back, you would have found the place where you camped, but you wouldn’t have found your friends or any evidence that they had ever been there,” said Asha.

“But I know there are others who would love this world...” said Dylan, “it seems unfair that they didn’t have the same opportunity that I did.”

“They do have the same opportunity, everyone does, but in order to experience a new reality they have to let go of everything that keeps them in the ‘old’ reality.”

“How could they possibly know what to let go of?” asked Dylan.

“They just let go of anything that doesn’t feel good,” replied Asha.

“I guess that’s what I did...” mused Dylan thoughtfully to himself. During the past year, he had watched the things that he believed in lose their meanings completely. As a soldier, he had described himself as a ‘defender,’ ‘peace keeper,’ and ‘protector of our liberties’... But in a world without war, without people, without government... it was only a matter of time until he realized that

none of it meant anything anymore, and with that, there was nothing left to fight for.

But still he had held on, struggling to keep his sense of identity... and for what? He smiled to himself, wondering why he hadn't let go sooner. It felt like the most natural thing in the world.

"Are you sure I'm not dead?" said Dylan, grasping for any reason that he might be having this experience, short of a very long dream.

Asha burst out laughing. "You say the funniest things!" she said, her eyes filled with delight as if she were being entertained by a kitten. "Why don't we go have dinner?"

The little girl smiled up at him adoringly. Her eyes sparkled as she led him happily to her home. They lived in a modest log cabin, but he sensed they didn't spend much time indoors. A gentle breeze was blowing past the house and Dylan could smell the sweet combined fragrance of the jasmine and magnolias that surrounded their home, and when they arrived at the front door the lavender colored roses were as glorious as their soft scent.

To Dylan's surprise Asha's parents welcomed him warmly. The little girl was the image of her tall, beautiful, blonde mother, with the same full lips and intensely blue eyes. But there was something about her father in her too, something in her eyes or in the expressions on her face. He was taller than his wife and ruggedly handsome, and they both appeared to be in their mid-twenties, just a bit younger than Dylan. But what struck Dylan the most was how much they loved each other as they laughed and giggled while preparing the simple, but extraordinarily delicious meal, they would all share that evening.

They sat outside on the soft grass next to the pond to eat their dinner. Countless songbirds sang their evening songs as translucent dragonflies flitted in the golden, early evening light and danced just above the surface of the pond.

They didn't ask him questions, where he'd come from, how he'd come to be there – it was as if they already knew everything about him. They casually discussed things at dinner like the dragon that was nesting in their forest and how the earth faeries moved out of that vicinity and the fire faeries moved in.

Asha was so excited to have a real guest over for dinner she was an explosion of information. She told Dylan that she had befriended a unicorn earlier that summer and she explained what delicacies it liked to eat and how she planted everything in the garden with love so it would feel her love even more when it ate the carrots she planted.

He thought this was a childish game, with her parents playing along... until a living, breathing unicorn stepped out of the forest and walked gracefully up to the girl, bowing its head as she smiled and gave it a carrot.

She giggled and said, "He didn't like carrots in the beginning... he thinks they're 'horse food'... but I told him that was the easiest thing for me to plant, so he learned to like carrots... but he always says he just comes for the love."

Dylan laughed and suddenly found himself looking at Asha's mother, unable to take his eyes off of her. "There is something so familiar about you," he said candidly. "I know that's not possible..."

She smiled and said, "Yes, it is possible. You were standing next to me in the biosphere at the base of the pyramid."

"Oh my God," said Dylan taken aback. "You're absolutely

right! I remember now! But what happened?” he said, looking back and forth between Amelia and Matthew. “I mean, I’m not dead, right?”

Amelia shook her head, “No, you’re not dead.”

Dylan bit his lip and went on, “I understand about being on a different frequency – at least I think I understand – but what triggered all of this? I mean what was it about the pyramid and singing and looking up... and where did that ball of energy come from? I thought everyone died – but here you are – and you seemed so young, did you have your daughter then?” he blurted out, his words tumbling over themselves.

Amelia laughed, “Well, time doesn’t function quite the way you might think. This will probably be hard to understand, but everything happens all at once. All events and every possible outcome of every situation occurred in a single moment.”

“Whoa,” said Dylan, his mind reeling, “I don’t think I’m quite ready for this conversation. How about if you tell me about the pyramid instead?”

“Okay,” said Amelia gamely, “We’ll get back to that later. The pyramid in the biosphere was an exact replica of the Pyramid of Giza. The shape allows hundreds or thousands of people to gather at the base and focus on a single point, just above the apex, where everyone’s thoughts and intentions come together for whatever they desire.”

“We were all singing AHH-OHM because AUM is the Original Sound that sparked everything into existence,” Amelia paused for a moment, looking at Dylan and said, “That’s a little confusing, isn’t it?”

He nodded.

She smiled understandingly and said, “Why don’t you close your eyes for a moment and see if you can imagine this – try not to figure it out – just allow pictures to flow through your mind.”

Dylan nodded again, smiled and closed his eyes.

“Though you can’t hear it,” said Amelia continuing, “every organ in your body and every cell emits a unique sound or vibration. And this is true of the entire universe... everything is connected through harmonic frequencies... much like the way you can pluck a guitar string and if it’s the right frequency another string will vibrate or ‘sing’ at the same time.”

With his eyes still closed, deeply immersed in his imagination, Dylan smiled and nodded, as he remembered this phenomenon from playing his guitar as a child.

“Now imagine these sounds as different colors, and the sound AUM is equivalent to white light. So in the same way that white light contains all imaginable colors, AUM contains every vibration, every harmonic frequency that now appears in physical form. And in the same way that you dream and see a world instantaneously before your eyes, all that is was created in a single moment with the sound AUM.”

Dylan leaned back on his elbows and finally lay down on the soft, fragrant grass behind him. And then, without another word from Amelia, he saw it himself. There had been hundreds of people singing AUM around the base of the pyramid, and though that included soldiers who had no idea what they were trying to achieve, the sound itself clearly carried the vibration of the Earth as it was created in the beginning, and the intention to return it to its original state was magnified through a single point of focus.

Suddenly Dylan saw himself at the beginning of time, and felt

the sound AUM vibrating everything and every possibility into existence in a single moment, like a dream world to be entered into at the will of the dreamer... each dreamer becoming real in the dream they were choosing.

In the next moment, Dylan heard a deep snuffling sound and something wet and warm touched his cheek. He opened his eyes and instantly launched himself into the air and shot backwards so quickly he frightened Blossom, the family's massive bear, so thoroughly she ran several feet away, hackles up and then turned around to look at this strange, terrifying creature, unsure of what she should do.

Asha ran over to the bear and threw her arms around Blossom's neck as she whispered into her ear the way someone might try to calm a startled horse. Finally she convinced Blossom that Dylan was a friend and they walked up to him so that bear and man could try their greeting again.

Dylan's head was spinning. He'd given up trying to understand anything at all. In fact, he decided he knew nothing, and it was much better that way. He was looking forward to going to sleep because he hoped that in the morning everything would make more sense. And then he saw little lights that appeared to be floating in the distance.

"Oh come look, come look!" yelled Asha as she ran ahead down a path through the forest, constantly looking over her shoulder, beckoning him as she skipped and ran.

By the time they reached the end of the path it was nearly dark, but they could easily see the broad river before them flowing along languidly with tiny, handmade wooden boats, with a candle and a piece of fruit in each boat.

“Oh how sad,” said Dylan, “somebody must have died.”

Asha giggled, “No... nobody died... these boats are sent from girls upstream who haven’t found the man of their dreams yet.”

“You mean it’s sort of like a wish... like throwing coins in a fountain?”

“No...” said Asha with a sigh of laughter, and then she began to talk to him as if she was explaining the ‘birds and the bees.’ “You see when a young woman is ready to get married, she’ll sometimes meet a man in her village or at one of the festivals we have where lots and lots of people come together. But sometimes she hasn’t found just the right man. So about once or twice a year, all the girls in the village who are of marrying age and still looking for their beloved... Well, they get together and make these boats with candles they’ve made themselves and fruit from a tree that grows on their own land. They send the boats downstream and any man who hasn’t found his... goddess yet,” she added with a smile, “goes into the stream, takes the boat he’s drawn to, and then journeys along the shore up the stream to find his beloved.”

“What if she doesn’t like him, or vice versa?” said Dylan thinking the idea was both intriguing and terrifying, at least from his perspective.

“I’ve never heard of any couple not falling in love that way... there are no coincidences you know.”

“Well how does he know who she is? Is her name and address on the boat?”

Asha howled with laughter. “No...” she said with another sigh. “He takes a journey up the river and he can tell from the fruit in the boat which tree it grew from.”

“Wow!” said Dylan, genuinely impressed.

“Or sometimes he’ll just feel which woman it is... and when he sees her, he gives her back her little boat. And he’ll say something really romantic like... ‘You are the Goddess of my dreams...’ stuff like that... and then she’ll say something that lets him know she’s interested... and then they talk for awhile... and then they walk around until they find the perfect land to build their home.”

“How do they afford the land?” asked Dylan, especially curious because it seemed that no one ever worked.

“No one has to pay for land,” said Asha, “If no one lives there you can build a home and plant everything you need and start a family.”

“So you’re saying,” said Dylan slowly, “that if I just walked into that river right now and plucked out a boat... the woman who made it would most likely fall madly in love with me?”

Asha nodded.

“Well that’s just the craziest thing!” he said, feeling a bit stupid for even mentioning such a ridiculous idea.

“You’d only say that if none of the boats were meant for you.”

“So what if I grab a boat anyhow, just to prove that you’re wrong?” he said tickling Asha as she squealed in delight.

“Well, as my Mama says, ‘would you rather be right or happy?’” said Asha smiling broadly.

The boats had all bobbed past them in a merry procession and were now quite a bit further downstream, but there was one little boat that was tagging along at a slower pace and now it was stuck on rock with the current going past it. Dylan could see it wouldn’t come loose by itself and he felt sad to think that there might be a damsel somewhere waiting for her beloved and wondering why he never came. So he waded out into the river and picked up the little

boat with the idea of sending it on its way. But the minute he held it in his hands he felt a charge of warm energy flow up his arms and into his heart. The warmth was so powerful he felt it flooding through his entire body, even causing his cheeks to flush.

Dylan decided right then and there that he didn't care whether she was attracted to him or if he was attracted to her, he simply had to meet the woman who made the boat. Just holding it made him feel like he was madly in love, and though he didn't know how it was happening he'd have sworn he saw her face, heart-shaped, rosy cheeks, and bright green eyes, smiling lovingly at him saying, "Come to me, come to me..."

It was crazy, he knew, but it was a far superior 'crazy' to the life he'd been leading until now. So with boat in hand and the apple that came with it in his pocket, he held the candle in one hand and Asha's hand in the other, and they walked back up the path to her home.

That night everyone slept outdoors. The air was cool and fragrant with night blooming jasmine, and the scent of gardenias drifted by tantalizingly when the breeze shifted slightly and came a bit more from the east. He was given the softest bedding and he laid it in the grass a good distance from the rest of the family, just in case he snored. Asha brought him a fluffy pillow and sat down next to him as he stretched out on his back with his head on the pillow and turned to smile at her.

As if she was telling him a bedtime story Asha said quietly, "The stars and the planets and the moon are all reflecting the love we feel here on Earth back to us. So we sleep outside every night that we can see the stars and moon, and send love back to them." With that she gave him a goodnight kiss on his cheek and walked

over to her parents where she burrowed under the covers between them.

The man looked up at the twinkling night sky, and indeed he felt the love the little girl had predicted. As he lay there, eyes open, gazing into the sky, he heard, or rather felt, the heavens singing. The flowers and grass and trees joined in the chorus. He could hear the pond and all the nighttime creatures singing as well. And then without thinking he began singing with them the low, deep, resonant sound of AUM.

As Love surrounded him and shone upon him, sparkling across the ripples in the pond and on the dew dropped tips of grass he yawned and stretched, and felt that marvelous feeling of being so tired his bed felt like a cloud carrying him off to dreamland. He opened his eyes dreamily one last time to see everything drenched in moonlight, and said to himself, "What a beautiful space of love." Then he reached out for the little boat and held it in his arms as he fell asleep dreaming of an apple tree and a beautiful green-eyed maiden beckoning him to come home.

Afterword

I hope you've enjoyed *Parallel Worlds*: Nothing is as it seems. Please join us at our site where you can download a free conversation called "The Truth Behind the Fiction" (it brings a whole new light to the story! Click on the "Free Downloads" tab). www.aspaceoflove.com

Heather Macauley Noël

