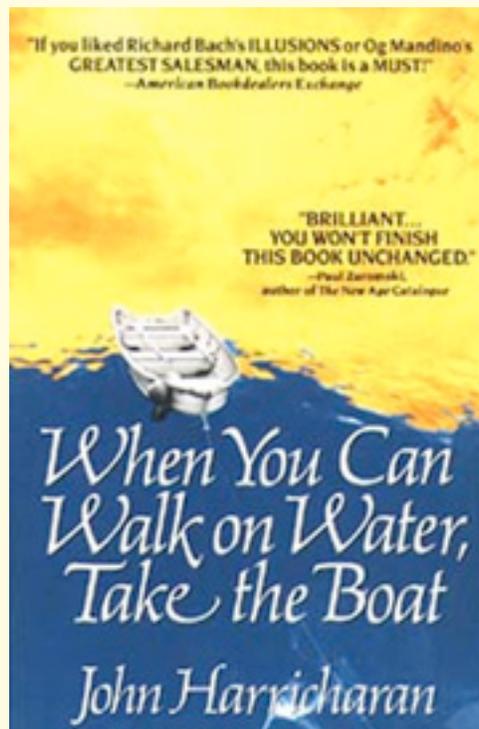
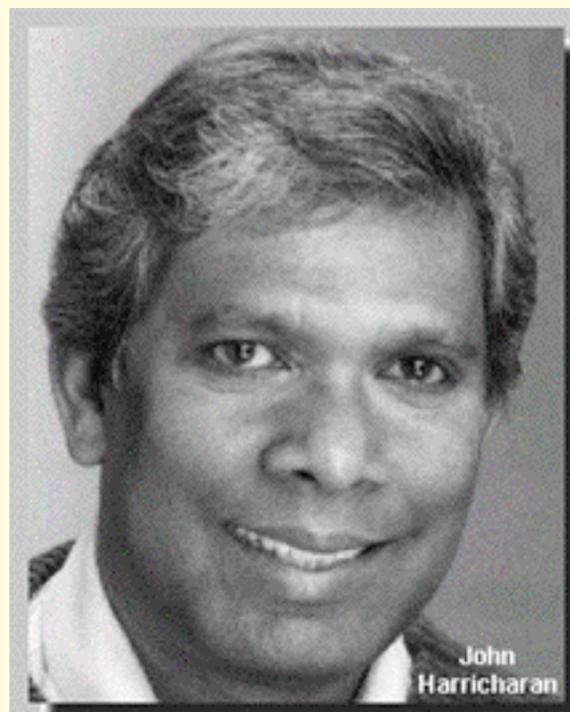


**“If you liked Richard Bach’s ILLUSIONS or Og Mandino’s
GREATEST SALESMAN, this book is a MUST!”**

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John Harricharan**



When You Can Walk on Water, Take the Boat

John Harricharan

WHEN YOU
CAN WALK
ON WATER,
TAKE THE BOAT

John Harricharan



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Other books by John Harricharan

Morning Has Been All Night Coming
Journey in the Fields of Forever
Remembering and Other Poems
The Power Pause

WHEN YOU CAN WALK ON WATER, TAKE THE BOAT

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Dedicated to

Malika Elizabeth, Jonathan Nian
and
Mardai Elizabeth Harricharan

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I am eternally grateful to Anita Bergen who untiringly shared the burdens of accuracy and coordination in the preparation of this work
and
a million thanks to Robert "Butch" James, a very special friend, who has made it possible for this revised edition to be published.

Introduction to the New Edition of

When You Can Walk on Water, Take the Boat

I think everyone enjoys the thrill of discovery, the inner joy of unearthing some previously undetected gem of thought, idea, or philosophical concept that one is certain will soon become immensely popular and widely heralded. I had that thrill and joy of discovery in 1985 when my dear friend John Harricharan sent me his "just finished" manuscript for my opinion.

The manuscript bore the superficially humorous, but spiritually challenging title, *When You Can Walk on Water, Take the Boat*. I knew from my first read-through that the world would soon be hearing a great deal about this beautiful little book. I perceived that this marvelous, modern parable would seize the imagination and the hearts of hundreds of thousands of readers. Today, more than a decade later, with its worldwide acclaim, its many awards and prizes, my initial assessment has been proven accurate over and over again.

In my Introduction to the first edition, published in 1986, I praised the manner in which John blended universal truths with effective storytelling techniques. The first-person narrative depicts a series of crises and triumphs within the world of commerce, which coincided with a pilgrimage of soul in the higher realms. Throughout the text, John Harricharan the author and "John," the narrator, keep encouraging us to continue to pay our physical dues and to continue to learn and to grow. Through a powerful progression of dramatic lessons, "John" comes to understand that all the pain, chaos, and confusion is actually trying to teach us that we chose to put on the fleshly clothes of Earth to fulfill a mission of spiritual growth. All of

the chaotic, swirling energy around us can be interpreted as quagmires of death and depression—or as opportunities for life and learning. And now, many years after I penned the introduction to the first edition of *When You Can Walk on Water, Take the Boat*, I am honored to have been asked once again to serve as the “host” who stands at the portal of this unique and fascinating work--and I am more eager than ever to invite new readers to explore its depths and wonders.

Just as we all love the thrill of discovery, I am certain that we would all like to meet some remarkable sage like the mysterious Gideon, whom John, our narrator encounters within the pages of this book. And that, of course, is the timeless enchantment of an extended allegory such as *When You Can Walk on Water*...Through the magic of entering the vision that John Harricharan has translated onto these pages, we may each of us join him on a spiritual pilgrimage that will lead us to the goal of higher awareness and greater enlightenment.

Brad Steiger
Forest City, Iowa

PREFACE

The question asked most of me by those who read this manuscript prior to its publication was, "Is it true?" The question still asked of me after all these years by many of those who've read this book is, "Is it really true?" My answer, now as then, is the age-old question, "What is Truth?" This is a book about you and me and others of our world. The ancient truths are as old as the hills, yet they shine ever so radiantly with newness whenever they are rediscovered.

It is no accident that you have picked up this book. Perhaps, it is by "divine appointment" that we meet in these pages to explore again the meaning of life. Perhaps, in the exploration and adventures that follow, you would rediscover and realize that you are a being of infinite power and potential, limited only by your own beliefs about yourself and the world.

What follows will mean different things to different people. For some, it will be a lovely other-worldly adventure, but for others it will be a powerful re-awakening, a life-changing experience.

Life is lived from within and one can never be hurt by what appears to be happening outside. You can change circumstances, if you so desire—for your only purpose in life is to make choices. Once the choice is made, the entire universe moves to bring into fruition that which you chose.

Read on then, with an open mind and let yourself ask *you* questions. Many of these truths you already know, but may only have forgotten. Let us remember together the true nature of our being.

John Haricharan

Chapter One

It was evening time. Not completely dark, but with traces of the day still remaining. Everyone had left the office and I was there all alone completing the few tasks that remain at the end of any day. It is not my nature to work late, but today was somewhat different. Mixed with a feeling of accomplishment was the frustration and disappointment of not having completed all I would have liked to do.

My office was at the end of the building, overlooking the parking lot. The lot was empty save for my little car, which appeared to be waiting so patiently. Always it seemed to be waiting for me, never complaining, always nearby. "Time to leave," I thought. "I'm already late." If there's one consolation, it was that there wouldn't be any traffic at this hour.

Glancing through the window as I reached for my attaché case, I noticed a blue car a few spaces removed from mine. The hood was raised and it seemed as if someone was trying to fix something. It wasn't unusual for cars to limp into our parking lot with some problem or other. I descended the stairs to the main door, set the night alarm and walked out of

the building.

The blue car was still there with its hood pried open. With the idea of seeing whether I could be of any help, I cautiously approached. Through the window in the dim light, I saw a bearded face smiling back at me. "What took you so long? I thought you might have changed your mind," he said. The nerve of the guy, I thought. A total stranger, and he wanted to know what took me so long. Ingratitude really bothers me. It struck me as somewhat strange, however, that he seemed to have been expecting me. A totally improbable assumption I felt, as I quickly dismissed the thought.

Peering under the hood I shouted, "Try the motor once more." He did, and it immediately sprang to life and continued running with a beautiful purr as if nothing ever had been the matter with it. The bearded one got out of his car, walked up to me, thrust out his hand and said, "Hi! It's good to see you again for the first time. My name is Gideon."

"Hello, Mr. Gideon, it's nice to meet you," I stammered, shaking his outstretched hand. "My name is John."

"Yes, I know," he said. This took me by surprise. I had never seen the man before. He wore blue jeans and a flannel shirt and appeared to be somewhere between the ages of fifty and sixty. He wasn't tall. His hair was jet black and neatly combed with one lock falling idly over his right brow. The beard which was as black as his hair was full and trimmed, but his eyes were his most noticeable feature. Even in the dim light of the street lamp, one could see those piercing orbs and know they had lived a legend. Such determination in those eyes, and yet, such kindness as well. Although I noticed all these things in a split second, I kept staring at him all the while.

He smiled. "Beautiful weather we're having," he said.

I nodded indifferently. I couldn't have cared less about the weather at that moment. "How do you know my name?" I quickly snapped.

"Oh, I guessed. Most everyone is Jim or John or Ron or Tom." He said it matter-of-factly, but there was something in his voice that seemed to suggest that he really knew my name. Maybe this was one of those set-ups I'd heard so much about recently. Perhaps he was intent on doing me harm—stealing or something. I had the overwhelming urge to leave that spot and remove myself from his presence as fast as possible, but those eyes held me there.

"I see that you're alarmed—concerned about your safety," he said, seeming to pull the very thoughts out of my head. "No need to fear. Thanks for helping me with the car. I thought no one would come at this hour, but there you were! People these days are so afraid of everything, of each other, of the dark, yes, even of themselves. My gratitude to you, John."

I figured that he had to be lying since I hardly did anything to help him start his car. It just appeared to me that the motor started the second I told him to try it again. "Anyway," I said, "I didn't do anything, but you're welcome nevertheless."

"Perhaps we'll meet again soon," he said as I moved toward my car.

"Perhaps," I muttered, thinking how unlikely that would be. He waved as I stepped into my car and drove out of the parking lot.

By now it was very dark, and my wife and children would be wondering where I was or whether I was stranded

on the road. It was the normal, short drive, no more than 15 minutes or so before I pulled up to the mailbox at the bottom of our driveway. As is my custom everyday, I collected the mail and started driving up to the garage. The driveway is long and curving and the thought occurred to me to make arrangements for snow removal for the winter. It was far from winter and, yet, my tired mind was already getting prepared.

I wondered about Gideon but brushed the thought away, having felt I'd done my good deed for the day and probably would never see him again. There were more important things to do now, like dinner, walking the dog and finally taking out the garbage. Dinner and then walking the dog would be pleasant. "Rajah," my collie, was a spirited, friendly animal, and a little run with him would do both of us some good.

As I walked into the house, mail in one hand and attaché case in the other, my son, Jonathan, was waiting for me. Only three years old, he had no concept of time and so was not too surprised to see me at that late hour. Laying aside the mail and attaché case, I picked up Jonathan and proceeded into the kitchen. My wife, Mardai, and daughter, Malika, greeted me warmly. The aroma of slowly simmering chicken stew made me realize how hungry I was.

"What kept you so late today, John?" Mardai asked as we sat down to dinner.

"Oh, nothing much. Just helped a fellow get his car started." Dinner over, I took care of the remaining chores, helped put the children to bed and discussed some of the day's activities with Mardai. Finally, we watched a short TV show and then I read for a little while. I love to read, but there never seems to be enough time. Generally I'm reading at

least five books at different stages, going from one to the other until I complete them all. It's certainly not the best way to read books, but this way, I do manage to get through them.

We decided to turn in, and only then did I feel the fatigue of the day. Reflecting on my strange meeting with Gideon, I fell asleep.

Chapter Two

It's my habit to wake up very early in the morning. I'm one of those ridiculous fellows who finds it almost impossible to sleep late. Whether I go to bed at eight o'clock in the evening or two in the morning, I still get up by five or six. This morning being no exception, I was up and ready to go by six-thirty. I said good-bye to my family and drove the short distance to the office.

A breathtaking morning it was, indeed. The rays of the sun streaming through the windows of the car warmed my very being and made me want to sing for joy. Actually, 'sing' is not the word to describe the sounds I make in the attempt, but in the car no one hears and there's the feeling of safety in that private cubicle. Except on those rare occasions when a driver pulls up at a stop light, looks at me quizzically and drives away, I'm not even conscious of the quality of my singing.

I pulled into the parking lot half expecting to see the

blue car of the night before. Of course, it wasn't there. "What a strange man," I thought, "I feel as if I know him or have seen him someplace before. Perhaps it was at a conference or a convention." It wasn't long, however, before I was caught up in the day's activities.

Things were not going too well for my business. We had designed and built a portable device that was of use to printers and photographers. It was an excellent machine, capable of recycling the valuable chemicals from their waste processing solutions. Although we'd received a large number of compliments about it, sales weren't increasing as fast as we had expected and, as everyone knows, compliments don't pay the bills. I had built an excellent management team and we were expanding our horizons. But still, at times I felt so alone in what I was doing.

The sound of the ringing phone woke me from my reverie. It was our plant manager calling to inform me that an entire production line had to be shut down immediately. "Do whatever you can. I'll be over shortly," was all I could say. Another phone call. The voice of my secretary heralded the type of calls I would receive all day. "It's Mr. Abe Ludic," she said. "Do you want me to tell him you'll call him later?"

"No, I'll take it," I replied.

She switched the call to my line and for the next five minutes I explained to Mr. Ludic why a past due bill remained unpaid.

Phone calls for the purpose of collecting past due payments coupled with the company's financial situation were enough to drive me to distraction. We had recently applied for a substantial loan from a local bank only to have the banker laugh at us.

Whenever I feel like becoming depressed, there is a game I play with. It always seems to work. I stop doing everything and say to myself, "Now, John, since you like to do everything well, take the next ten or fifteen minutes and become as depressed as possible. Wallow in your misery. Think of how terrible things are and how the entire world is against you. Note how everyone you know goes out of his way to make your life unpleasant. Think of how very unfortunate you are. Now, as soon as the second hand on your watch reaches twelve, start." When the second hand reaches twelve I try to become as miserable as possible. Within a few minutes I'm laughing so hard at the absurd nature of my thoughts that the depression vanishes.

Somehow or other, I was able to make it through to lunch time. We were able to get the production line back on stream and Mr. Ludic agreed to wait for another week.

I don't normally eat lunch. In fact, I could go without breakfast and lunch without ever feeling uncomfortable. Today was no exception. I had a strong urge, however, to leave the office and go for an invigorating walk. It would be refreshing, I thought, to get out of the office for a while.

I'd gone quite a few blocks when I decided to return by an alternate route which would take me past a quaint little restaurant. So demanding was my morning that I'd taken a longer walk than usual. As I approached a corner, I had the persistent feeling that there was an appointment I may have forgotten. I've been known to forget appointments before so, instead of returning to the office, I figured I'd use the pay phone in the restaurant, call my office and check whether or not there was an appointment.

I quickly walked up to the restaurant, opened the door

and entered, looking for a phone. Although the restaurant bustled with lunch customers, I located one on the other side of the room, went over and dialed my office. I asked whether I had an afternoon appointment and was assured that I didn't. I breathed a sigh of relief, but could not shake the strange, nagging feeling that I had to meet someone. Since I was already in the restaurant, I decided to have a quick lunch.

I approached the hostess who looked at me, smiled sweetly and said, "Mr. H., please follow me." As I followed her across the dining room, I thought how flattering it was that she recognized me. It's a small northeastern town I live in. It's an even smaller town that I work in. Almost everybody knows one another. She led me to a table over by the far corner near a window. I thanked her and even before I was properly seated, she said, "Your other party will be here soon."

"My other party?" I asked. I was surprised since no one, not even myself, knew I would be stopping at this restaurant. Noticing my surprise, she looked around and said, "Oh, here he is now. Enjoy your lunch."

Up to my table strode Gideon. Ignoring my questioning gaze, he seated himself, smiled and said, "Fine day it is."

"Fine day it is, indeed! But what are you doing here?" I asked not rudely, but rather out of surprise.

"Hope you don't mind my joining you."

"Of course not. But I certainly didn't think I was going to see you again so soon." I was becoming somewhat confused. First the incident in the parking lot, then the strange urge to walk past the restaurant, followed by my decision to have lunch and, finally, meeting Gideon again. "Did you make reservations or plan to be here for lunch today?"

"Yes, I made the reservations for both of us."

"How did you know I'd be here? Even I didn't know."

"Just had a feeling. You have these feelings at times, don't you? The phone rings and you know who's calling. You think of someone you haven't heard from in years and you receive a letter from that person. Just had a hunch that you'd be here and I took the chance."

"I was thinking about you. I wondered whether I was ever going to see the bearded man whose car broke down in our parking lot. By the way, is everything fixed now? Does it run OK?"

"Runs better than ever." His eyes seemed even more piercing than in our previous encounter. They seemed to probe the very depths of my mind, leaving me to feel that I could hide nothing from him. "Didn't think you'd make it this time either," he continued, as if speaking to himself.

"Pardon me?"

"Oh, nothing. I talk to myself sometimes."

"Well, since you're here, I'll say it's good to see you, again. Let's have a quick bite because I've got to be back at the office shortly."

"One of your problems, John, is that you hurry too much. Yesterday in the parking lot, you were in a rush. Today at lunch, you're in a hurry again. Take some time to enjoy life. Everyone has the same measure of time, you know. Twenty-four hours a day. It's what you do with your time that's important."

I really didn't think I needed to be preached to today, but I wanted to be as polite as possible. "It's easy for you to say," I replied, "I have responsibilities, you know. A business to run—things to do. Sometimes the burden of it all gets to me."

"Only if you let it. And everyone has responsibilities. Do you know that the word responsibility could mean 'ability to respond'? Do you have a business to run or do you have a business that runs you?"

For someone I was meeting for only the second time, he certainly had a lot of opinions about me. A good philosophical discussion, however, always brightens my day and besides, there was some truth in what he had said. "You seem to have things nice and easy," I quipped. "Where do you work and what do you do, anyway?"

A strange look came over those dark eyes. "Actually I'm a trouble shooter," he said, "a jack-of-all-trades, if you will. What you'd probably call a consultant for my company, if you know what I mean."

"And your company?"

"It's called G & M Enterprises, Inc. It's not the car company. I'm sure you've never heard of it."

"Can't say that I have. Is it a large corporation?"

"To a certain extent—very diverse—in many countries. World headquarters in the Big City with branch offices throughout the country."

"What do they make or do?"

"Somewhat of a service company, more or less."

Sensing his reluctance to offer more information and not wanting to be rude I asked, "Are you on vacation now?"

"No. Actually, I'm on assignment. I'll be in this area for a little while."

"Do you live around here?"

"Not really. Just passing through. After completion of my current assignment, I'll be on the road again."

"Well, I hope they give you a better car," I said with a

laugh, remembering his problems of the evening before.

He smiled, and changed the conversation back to my work. "So things aren't going too well with your business?" he asked.

"We've been struggling for a long time, a real long time, Gideon. There are times when we think we see light at the end of the tunnel, but more often than not it's a freight train. It's tough." I was surprised to find myself speaking this way to a stranger. I normally don't share my problems with those who aren't close to me, but somehow this time seemed different.

"Why struggle? A seasoned swimmer does not struggle against the water. He flows with it, using it as a means of reaching his goal. Don't struggle, just follow the flow. Let the river of life carry you."

The restaurant was mostly empty now. In between our conversation we'd managed to finish our brief lunch. Only two tables across from us were occupied. I glanced at my watch. It was time to go. But my strange friend wasn't ready to leave. He gave me the impression that he wanted to tell me something. Again, I had that sense of foreboding—not quite foreboding, but almost like I was getting involved in things for which I wasn't ready nor prepared. I paid the bill and he offered to pay his share, but I refused. He thanked me and got up.

"Do you have a business card?" I asked. He reached into his pocket, pulled out a card and handed it to me. "Thank you. I must say good-bye now and get back to that crazy job I have," I said.

"Be grateful that you have a job to go to," he replied. We walked to the door and went outside. I hoped he wasn't

setting me up for something. I'm somewhat of a pushover when I like someone and I was beginning to take a liking to this stranger.

As we said good-bye I told him I hoped we'd meet again soon. He nodded and said, "Who knows? It really is a small world." He turned, waved and left.

I walked back toward my office. All during lunch I felt an aura of kindness and, strangely enough, power around Gideon. Now back in the sunlight, the apparent mystery seemed to vanish.

The afternoon passed smoothly without as many difficulties as the morning. Several times I glanced through the window into the parking lot where I'd first seen Gideon. Perhaps, we'd meet again.

There was going to be a little dinner party at my house this evening. Just a few friends and neighbors getting together to enjoy each other's company. It was beginning to get dark. Possibly a storm was on the way, I thought. You never can tell with the weather these days. I decided to leave early to reach home before the rain came.

I was about to pull into my driveway when all the driveway lights went out. I thought, perhaps, the impending storm had something to do with it. Then the storm broke. Such fury of wind and rain I've rarely seen. The rain was a sheet of white water alternating with the reflection of brilliant flashes of lightning. The blasts of thunder reminded me of the legends of the gods on Mount Olympus hurling thunderbolts at their enemies. I could hardly see as I drove up the driveway and, since the electricity was out, I couldn't open the garage door either. After parking the car, I rushed into the house, getting drenched in the few seconds it took me to do so.

All was dark inside except for the areas lit by the few candles Mardai had found. Our dinner guests arrived and we made the best of a poor situation. We ate by candlelight and marveled at the many faces of nature.

"It seems really strange to me, John," one of the guests remarked.

"What seems strange?" I asked.

"The fury and nature of this storm. I just telephoned a neighbor down the street and he said that it didn't rain there."

"Didn't rain there? A few blocks away? How can that be?"

"And all their lights are on," he continued.

It was strange to see a storm that occurred in only a few square blocks. For no apparent reason I thought of Gideon. Immediately there was a blinding flash of lightning and all our lights came back on. We discussed the storm for a little while longer. Personally, I seemed to connect it with something having to do with Gideon. Yet, that made no sense.

Chapter Three

Two weeks had passed since I last saw Gideon. Things at the office seemed a little worse and business was not getting any better. Our newly-invented device was not selling as we'd expected. We were fast approaching another financial crisis. In the past few years, it began to seem as though my life had been a journey from crisis to crisis with only brief pauses in between. Then, unexpectedly, I had to make a trip to the Midwest.

A potential account we had been courting for the past six months suddenly exhibited tremendous interest in our product. It would be a short trip, just two days. All travel and hotel arrangements made, it was soon time to leave.

No matter how many times I've flown, there's always a sense of excitement as I approach an airport. The noise of the jets generate thoughts of faraway places that intrigue me, but this was a business trip and all my thoughts had to be concentrated on the matter at hand.

After a pleasant flight, it was but a short cab ride to my hotel. I would be ready in the morning for my meeting with Mr. Seymour, the head of the company. I had never met Mr. Seymour in person but hoped he would receive my proposal in a favorable manner. A good night's rest and I would be raring to go, I thought. As I was filling out the necessary registration form, the desk clerk smiled and said, "We have a message for you, Mr. H." I opened the note. It stated simply that M. Tarkas would meet me later. Perhaps it was Mr. Seymour's idea to send someone to meet me.

I went to my room, unpacked my small overnight bag and took a quick shower. Then I phoned home to let everyone know I'd arrived safely. When it was time for dinner, I went down to the dining room. As I was walking across the lobby, a lady stepped up to me and said, "Hi! I'm Marla Tarkas. You're John!"

"Should I know you?" I asked, momentarily startled.

"Gideon told me you'd be here and asked that I offer my help."

Ah, here we go, I thought. Gideon again. And I hadn't seen him in weeks. Who was this woman, anyway? How had Gideon known about my trip? Perhaps, he had called my office and someone had mentioned it to him. But my secretary never gives out that kind of information. I must admit that I resembled a giant question mark as I stood there looking at Marla.

She smiled at me sweetly. "May I join you for dinner? We'll talk more then." I nodded numbly and we went to the dining room. When we were seated, I looked at Marla with evident discomfort.

She was beautiful but had a distant look, as if deep in

thought. Her eyes were blue and her hair seemed to reflect a golden glow. She appeared to be perhaps 25 or so, but certainly not more than 30.

"How long have you known Gideon?" I asked.

"Oh, for ages," she said, smiling.

"I haven't seen him in weeks. And I really don't know Gideon that well. Had lunch with him once. Are you good friends?"

"He's one of my closest friends. We've been through a lot together."

"I wonder how Gideon knew about my trip," I said, hoping that Marla would shed some light on this. But all she said was, "Gideon knows many things and has his own ways of finding out."

I rolled this around in my mind for a few seconds, but could make no sense of it. Then I asked, "Do you work around here?"

"Not too far away."

"What's the name of your company?"

"You probably never heard of it, but it's called G & M Enterprises, Inc. I'm in the PR Department."

"Isn't that the same company Gideon works for?"

"Yes, but he's in a different department," she replied.

It was now all clear to me. Gideon and Marla knew each other because they worked for the same company. Gideon found out, one way or another, about my trip, called Marla and asked her to help me. He was only trying to repay a favor. It was so simple. Yet, why go to such extremes to repay a small favor? All I did was help him to get his car started, or so I thought.

The rest of dinner was spent telling Marla about my

meeting with Mr. Seymour in the morning and the large contract my company hoped to land. We even talked a bit about the state of the economy. When we were through with dinner, she insisted on paying the bill. I objected, but she wouldn't hear of it. "You're my guest, John," she simply said.

As we left the table, she wished me success with my meeting the next day. I thanked her politely for dinner and for the time she had spent with me. Then she mentioned something about my receiving a phone call later that evening and was gone before I could question her. Since I wasn't expecting any phone calls, I was puzzled. Perhaps I thought, I'd misunderstood and Marla herself would call later.

I returned to my room, relaxed and read for a while. Whenever I travel, I always take along a few good books. This trip was no exception, so I stayed up and read while waiting for the phone call Marla had mentioned.

It was getting late and I needed a good night's rest to be fresh and ready to go in the morning. No phone call yet. I definitely must have misunderstood Marla. Thinking of what the following day would bring, I put away my book, turned off the lights and fell asleep. And as I slept, I dreamed.

In my dream, I went to a nearby city. There was an appointment I had to keep so, after locating the correct building, I went in. Behind a long desk sat a young lady whom I assumed was the receptionist. She looked up at me and before I could tell her the purpose of my visit she said, "Please wait. I must leave for a few minutes," and she was gone. While I waited for her return the phone rang. I hoped it would stop, at least until she returned, but it kept on and on as if determined to have me answer it.

When I could no longer ignore the ringing I finally

picked up the receiver, if only to tell the other party that the receptionist would be back later. "Hello," I said. A friendly voice on the other end spoke, "Hi! Good morning. May I speak with Mr. Seymour, please?"

"I'm sorry, sir. The receptionist just stepped away from her desk for a short while. In fact, I'm awaiting her return," I said.

"Please, could you ask her when she returns to give Mr. Seymour a message for me?" he asked.

"Why certainly," I said, nervously trying to help.

"Please ask her to tell Mr. Seymour that Godfrey called. I've been talking with the Wittersham account and they are extremely interested. Mr. Wittersham himself is on his way over and will sign all necessary papers." I agreed to convey his message for which he thanked me and hung up. When the receptionist returned, I gave her the message. She then asked me to follow her and we went into an office where a distinguished looking gentleman was sitting at his desk. He rose and introduced himself. "I'm Seymour," he said. "Please sit."

Mr. Seymour told me that his company would buy our products if one of his largest accounts, the Wittersham Company, agreed to distribute them. He told me a little about Mr. Wittersham and how the Wittersham Company grew from a small beginning to become one of the largest in its industry. Wittersham, it seemed, was from the old school, conservative, had little patience and was a hard man to deal with. The only topic that he was ever interested in was the sea and he would literally spend hours talking about it.

Mr. Seymour was pleased that I had come. "Make sure you tell Wittersham about your early days by the ocean," he

said, and all of a sudden the dream ended and I was awake in bed. It was a most vivid dream and thinking about it kept me awake for quite some time.

Finally, it was morning and I got up and prepared for my meeting with Mr. Seymour. After breakfast, I took a cab to his office. All the buildings were tall and clustered together in what appeared to be the main commercial area of the city. I paid my fare and walked into the building where Seymour's office was located. Without much waiting, I was ushered in to see him. The expression on my face was one of pure astonishment when I discovered that the real Mr. Seymour and the Mr. Seymour of my dream were exactly alike in physical features. I had never seen this man before and the coincidence seemed remarkable.

We talked for a while about my company's new product. He would be willing to do some business with us he said, but that would depend on one of his largest distributors. There was a knock at the door and an assistant rushed in and whispered to Mr. Seymour. Seymour smiled, looked at me and said, "I'm told that old James Wittersham just arrived and he's insisting on seeing me immediately." He turned to the assistant who stood awaiting his reply and asked her to show Mr. Wittersham in.

At first glance, Wittersham hardly seemed friendly. He gave a quick nod when I was introduced and started talking immediately. "Look now, Seymour. I don't have much time. Tell me about this product you want me to handle."

The whole scene appeared to be a replay of my dream from last night. I finally grew brave enough to look Mr. Wittersham straight in the eye and say, "Sir, perhaps I could be of some help. I'm from the company that manufactures the

machine we're discussing. If you could give me five minutes of your time, I'll explain why our product is so good."

"Good? I don't want good! Damn! I want the best."

"I was just being modest. It's the best on the market."

Wittersham was a study in marble. Deep lines creased his face as he looked from me to Seymour and said, "Let's get on with it then."

I spent the next few minutes explaining all the benefits of our product. Wittersham appeared utterly unimpressed. Finally, in exasperation and in an effort to clutch at straws, I remembered my dream about Wittersham and the sea and concluded, "So you see, Mr. Wittersham, we make an excellent product. Incidentally, I wish you would visit our manufacturing facilities on the East Coast. Some lovely restaurants by the sea." He quickly looked at me and asked, "By the sea? Do you go there often?"

"Oh yes!" I responded, "I love to go down to the sea."

"I wish the ocean was closer to us," he mused. Pursuing the only possibility afforded me I said, "I was born not too far from the ocean. I spent many years of my life a stone's throw from the mighty Atlantic. I'd awake every morning to the sound of breakers. I'd watch the sea change from a silvery white in the morning to a deep dark blue in late afternoon." Seymour was looking at me and I could feel the frustration in his gaze as we discussed the sea. But the change on Wittersham's face was amazing. Gone was the scowl and he was now smiling.

"We must speak more about the sea one of these days," said Wittersham, "I myself am an old salt." Turning to Seymour, Wittersham continued, "Seymour, I like this young man. I'll be happy to have my company distribute your prod-

uct.” Then he abruptly got up, said good-bye and left.

I could hardly contain myself. After so many months we'd finally landed one of the largest accounts in this business. Seymour would now take on our product because his largest distributor wanted it. The dark clouds of depression were lifting and my spirit had already taken wings. I couldn't wait to tell them about it back home.

Seymour and I continued our conversation but it was now in a lighter vein. We talked about boyhood days when I stood on the shores of the Atlantic and gazed as far as the eye could see. How the passing of tramp steamers with smoke stained stacks would carry my thoughts to distant shores. How the tall ships with billowing, white sails would conjure up visions of mystic climes and far-off places. I told him of the many times I stood by a tree on the beach wondering if there were other boys standing on other shores looking out and wondering, just as I was doing.

I told him it was the song of the sea that lured me from my birthplace, led me through tropic isles with balmy breezes and finally set me down in the northeast portion of the United States. He smiled as I mentioned the song of the sea and how the thought of the trade winds still strongly calls to me, somewhat like the singing of the sirens to a tired Ulysses.

Finally it was time to leave. Seymour agreed to have all the necessary documents signed and sent to me within a few days. He promised to work very closely with us to make the project a success. We said good-bye and I took my leave of him and returned to the hotel. It had been an exciting morning.

Marla was waiting for me in the lobby. “I trust you had a productive morning,” she said with a quick smile.

"Very productive," I replied, and as an after-thought mentioned that no one had called me last evening.

"Of course you got the call," she replied with a wink.

"No! Nobody called me last night," I insisted, somewhat puzzled.

"Didn't you receive a call for a Mr. Seymour? And wasn't a Mr. Wittersham discussed? And didn't the call contain important information, which you used during your meeting today? Have you forgotten your dream?"

I almost fell over. I'd told no one about my dream, not that there was anyone to tell, anyway. Yet Marla knew about it. In fact, it seemed she knew exactly what dream I was going to have that night. I stared at her in awe. She seemed in some ways so similar to Gideon, especially in the way she said things. Noticing my discomfort, she calmly said, "Don't be alarmed. You'll understand more soon. Your flight leaves at six, so I'll pick you up at four. This way, we'll have enough time to get you to your plane." Before I could answer, she turned, waved and was gone.

Puzzled and intrigued by the turn of events, I went to my room, packed my things, relaxed for a while to think over the events of the day and promptly fell asleep, thus missing lunch. When I awoke, it was almost four o'clock, so I quickly collected my things and went down to the lobby to check out and await Marla's arrival. I tried to put out of my mind any thoughts about her and Gideon and their strange ways.

Marla was punctual and we made it to the airport in record time. In spite of the rush hour traffic, it almost seemed as if vehicles moved out of the way for us. Before saying good-bye, Marla mentioned she was extremely happy to have been of some help to me, that any friend of Gideon's was a

friend of hers and it wouldn't be too long before all of us met again. I thanked her, wished her well, and boarded my flight.

Much as I tried to push Marla and Gideon out of my mind, thoughts of their strange ways haunted me and raised a thousand questions during the flight. I finally managed to engross myself in one of the in-flight magazines, knowing that in a few hours I'd be home.

Chapter Four

On my way to the office the following morning, I couldn't help but reflect on the events of the past few days. Without a doubt, the trip was an amazing success. I wondered whether Mr. Wittersham would have agreed to distribute our products had it not been for the conversation about the sea. And how would I ever have thought about talking of the ocean had it not been for the meeting I'd dreamt about? In a never-ending circle these thoughts raised more questions about Gideon and Marla. The more I thought of it, the more complex it seemed.

The sound of a car horn woke me from my reverie. It was an old Volkswagen passing me on the left. I briefly wondered why the driver sounded his horn, since I was already in the right lane. As it passed me, however, I noticed the word "GIDEON" on its license plate. My attention diverted, I almost ran into a telephone post. This is crazy, I thought.

Within minutes of my arrival at the office, the telephone rang. It was my private line. The ringing startled me since it was still only seven in the morning and I wasn't ex-

pecting any calls so early. Only three people had the number for my private line: one was Mardai and the other two were extremely close friends. I picked up the hand-set. It was Gideon.

“How did you get this number?” I asked.

“Shouldn’t you first ask how I’m doing?” he answered.

Dutifully I asked, “How are you Gideon?” followed quickly by, “How did you get this number?”

“I’m sure you have a lot of questions and that’s why I called. Listen, John, we’ll meet in the park at lunch time and I’ll explain everything.” He hung up—as abruptly as that.

At first, I thought I'd ignore the incident and stay as far away from these people as possible, but my curiosity got the best of me and I relented.

It was almost noon when I left the office for the short walk to the park. Gideon, hopefully, would be there to provide some explanations for the perplexing things that had occurred. It was a lovely, sunny day. Cradled by the warmth, I felt like sitting under a tree and practicing changing the shapes of clouds. I found it both exciting and relaxing at the same time. You pick a small cloud at first and then try to mold it in your mind into various vapory sculptures. As you become more proficient, you choose larger and larger clouds. You may even want to vaporize them entirely or create new ones where there weren’t any before. It is amazing how easily it works with practice.

Arriving at the park, I picked a spot under a large oak tree, where a bench was located. I sat down and waited for Gideon while observing the birds and squirrels. It was peaceful and, strangely, almost other-worldly beautiful. A blue jay was pecking at a piece of bread someone had dropped, and the

wind ran races through the growing grass. Except for me, there wasn't anyone else in the park. A voice interrupted, "Hope I haven't kept you waiting long." Startled, I turned around and there was Gideon. "Funny, I didn't see you approaching," I said.

This time he was dressed in a sailor's uniform, as if he had been out sailing. He sat down next to me on the bench and began biting into an apple he'd brought along.

"Aren't you hungry?" he asked.

"No, I'm going to skip lunch today."

"Are you sure? I have another apple, if you like."

"No, thank you."

We both sat for a while in silence before I blurted out, "How did you know about my trip? How did you get my telephone number and anyway, who is Marla?"

"Slow down, John. One question at a time. You've been wondering about how I know certain things. Let me tell you. I know many things. You know them, too. However, you just don't remember them. Some of us remember much more than others. Think again of how many things you have known without ever being able to figure out how you knew them."

"Is that all? Are you a psychic or something like that? You see things before they happen? I know a lady who could do that."

"That, I am, too. But much more is involved. It's one way of explaining it."

"You're more than a psychic? Who are you? What are you?"

He looked at me quizzically with a semi-pleased expression on his bearded face. "Of course I'm more than a psychic," he said, "I am Gideon. I am who I am. I am I."

I had come here for answers, not to listen to more riddles. Those were answers any schoolboy could give. I was determined more than ever, to get to the bottom of this. "Who is this Marla Tarkas?" I asked.

"Did you like her? I hoped you would. An extremely fine energy form she is."

"And an extremely fine physical form, too. But who is she? What's this business that you people are involved in? Is this a cult?"

He became much more serious now. "No, John, not a cult as you would think. There are some of us who are involved in certain types of work that are different from the ones you have been accustomed to. We are joined together by bonds that go back into eternity. Marla is one. So am I and, of course, so are you."

I stopped him right there. "It's fine for you and Marla to be... well... whatever you are or want to be, but leave me out of this." I was becoming somewhat annoyed and uncomfortable with his answers, but he continued. "You know me as Gideon. And that I am. But a name doesn't tell much. I am what is called, a 'helper of mankind.' I come from way before your time and go far beyond your guess. I come from anytime and anyplace and could go anywhere and anywhen."

I sat glued to the wooden bench. I had known that he was strange, but not *this* strange. I never really took him too seriously before, but now he was dead serious. On occasion, I did wonder how he knew things about me and my work that I hadn't told him. I'd heard about such people before. I had also not discounted the possibility of meeting one, in fact, I had hoped that I would someday. Yet, when one sits next to you on a park bench, your initial reaction is to run away—and as

fast as possible. But sitting there with him, I actually felt an aura of tremendous power around him and thought I should probably give this encounter a bit more serious consideration.

"You speak as if you're from another world, Gideon. You also seem to have strange abilities and powers. Why are you spending so much time with me? What do you want from me?"

"My abilities are no stranger than yours or anyone else's. They may appear strange to you because you do not understand them. When you understand natural law, nothing is strange, nothing is a miracle. I have been around helping others for ages. Or better yet, throughout time. There is an old earth saying that goes, 'When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.' You're ready, so here I am."

"Who? Me, a student? I wasn't looking for a teacher. I've had my share of teachers and don't want to take any more exams. As it is these days, I am already being tested to the limit. Teachers and students imply tests."

"So you think you've learned everything and have no further need for teachers? If you're so brilliant, how come your financial empire is falling apart? Listen. All of life is an examination, a learning and testing experience, if you will. You examine and test yourself constantly. A little help now and then wouldn't hurt, you know. There are things I still can teach you. No, let me rephrase. There are things I could lead you to learn. Things I could help you to remember."

Part of me really wanted to believe him. The other part was the scientific, analytical part, which was very cautious. That part said that he was crazy. And yet, I've seen few men who appeared to be more sane than he.

"Show me something—a small miracle or so, and I'll

believe what you're saying."

"Believe and I'll show you. You have things reversed, John. I see we have a lot of work to do."

In a quick change of direction, I asked, "Where's your car? Where are you parked?"

"There are many other ways of traveling. I don't really need a car."

Again he was lying, I thought. The first time I met him, he was in a car.

As if reading my thoughts, he said, "When you saw me the first time, I did have a vehicle. I needed something to get your attention. So the car, the engine problem, the lifted hood . . . all props, all effects for your sake. You wouldn't have stopped to talk with me any other way."

All this in such a short time was becoming too much for me to absorb. As I mentioned earlier, it had always been my desire to meet someone like him. In books and dreams I had come across some, but here and now in a park in this small town? This was an entirely different matter. And why did he pick me? He still hadn't answered that to my satisfaction. I was quiet for a few moments.

Gideon continued, "I have known you for eons, for millennia. You are a challenge to me. One part of you accepts these ideas totally and with full understanding. Then there is the other part of you that sees only with eyes and hears only with ears. That part tries to analyze, rationalize and compromise. You are a man of many parts, Mr. H."

Gideon's reference to knowing me for ages was a surprise, but I had read about such things before and chose not to pursue it at this point. Not being in a big hurry to return to the office, I thought that I'd listen to a little more of what he

had to say.

He spoke of seeing with the inner eye and of hearing with the inner ear. That all life forms were connected to one another by invisible ties. That the universe was like a spider's web, where thought or action in one area affected the entire fabric. I listened, fascinated by the new possibilities he brought to my mind. Finally, he said, "It was good seeing you again, John. We will continue our discussion at a later date. Meanwhile, keep an open mind. I bid you a fond adieu."

I looked at him and then at my watch. When I glanced up again, he was gone. It couldn't have been more than a second later yet, he was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps I had fallen asleep on the park bench and dreamed it all. But no! A few yards away was an apple core he had left for the birds. It was time to return to the more mundane aspects of life, so I got up and walked back to the office.

Chapter Five

The days rolled slowly by, summer blending into autumn. Those lovely, lazy, fall days when all you want to do is sit under a tree and dream of far-off horizons and distant shores. I hadn't seen or heard from Gideon in a while and wondered what had become of him.

Although he'd made a strong impression on me, I preferred not to analyze it. I was somewhat familiar with what he'd said, since I had read books about these ideas. I even had some friends who were considered to be psychically gifted, but still Gideon had a different effect on me. He'd spoken of the awesome potential of the human mind and of how we only used a small portion of it. He'd pointed out that most people were content to be left in their misery and that these same people refused to see the very light that would change their misery to joy. I could almost hear his voice again as he spoke to me that day in the park.

A close friend of the family would be visiting soon. June Mareena Ridley was a very special friend. She was a clairvoyant, a person who could see events before they happened. At

parties and get-togethers, she would do "mind stuff" that never ceased to amaze everyone.

I met her many years ago when I was completing a graduate business degree, part-time, at a major university. I had just finished my last class of the evening and was leaving when a poster on the bulletin board caught my attention. It stated that the internationally renowned psychic, June M. Riddley, would be giving a lecture and demonstration in the auditorium at 10:30 AM the following day.

Never having met a real psychic, I thought it would be interesting to see one in action. At that time, I was employed by a small manufacturing company and had responsibilities in the production area. Because I was new at the job, it would be difficult to leave during regular working hours to attend the lecture.

At work the next morning, however, a nagging, uneasy feeling came over me. I had a strong urge to attend the lecture. It was as if I was being pulled to go and listen to June. The more I tried to overcome the feeling, the stronger it became. Finally, I gave in to the compulsion. Giving a feeble excuse to my boss, I then drove as fast as I legally could to the university.

It was shortly after 10:30 AM when I arrived and the lecture had already started. I intensely dislike being late. Generally, I arrive for an appointment early and would rather wait in a parking lot or reception area than be even one minute late. This time, however, I couldn't help it. I rushed into the auditorium. Almost every seat was occupied. In the front row, however, there was a lone, empty seat which I quickly took. It was so quiet in the room you could hear a pin drop.

Standing at the podium was an attractive, middle-aged

woman of medium height. She looked at me, smiled and continued her lecture. I felt the audience's annoyance at my late arrival and I angrily thought to myself, "I want to be late, OK?" But after a few moments the meaning of what the woman was saying caught up with me. She told us about her ability to see things before they occurred and how she was able to give what are called "readings" to people. She explained that she was born with the "gift of seeing," that each and every human being had the ability to develop those same talents. She spoke of God, angels and spirits, of different dimensions and different worlds. I was just beginning to think that I'd wasted the entire morning when she decided to give us a demonstration of her natural abilities."

She asked if anyone in the audience had ever seen or met her before in person. No one had. Beginning with the back of the room, she pointed to people at random and told them a little about themselves and their lives. To one especially nervous woman, she said, "Your friend Elizabeth will be getting married soon and will be moving out of the area. She is so concerned about her sick mother that she needs all the support you can give her. Do you understand what I mean?" The woman was simply astounded. "Yes! Yes! That's so true," she stammered.

After a few more "readings" she turned to a tall, dark man somewhere in the middle rows. "The trucking business which you are about to start will become a tremendous success," she said. "Watch out, however, for one of your partners—the short one with the beard and funny hat. He will try to take control of the company away from you. Do you understand what I am talking about?"

"That's amazing," said the man, "Absolutely amazing.

There's no way you could know about my trucking business and my partners," and he kept shaking his head in astonishment.

By this time, I was becoming very excited about the possibility of my turn. June pointed to a few others and gave each of them some important bits of information, but totally ignored me. Perhaps, she's disregarding me as punishment for my tardiness I thought with paranoia, but I knew that couldn't be the reason.

Finally, because she'd been speaking for such a long time, she asked if someone could bring her a glass of water. Here was my opportunity to be noticed. Up I jumped and rushed to the water fountain in the hallway. Using a paper cup, I hurriedly brought June some water. Surely now she would notice me and tell me something about my future. Again I was wrong. Not one word did she say to me.

As the lecture came to an end, I sat there, progressively more dejected. After she thanked everyone for coming, she looked at me and said, "Young man, I'll see you later. What I have to tell you wouldn't be understood by anyone here, least of all by you." I was surprised, but happy to have the chance to speak with her in private.

The professor who organized the lecture arranged for me to see June a short while later. It was one of the most amazing visits I'd ever had with anyone. Without having seen me before or knowing anything about my past, she told me about my job, my family and where and how I lived. She said that in less than six months I would have a new job, but that I shouldn't be concerned about it. It would be the birth of something wonderful for me, but she said, like all births it would be painful for a short while. She continued for almost an

hour telling me about my past, present and future and touched on things that only I could know. While she was speaking, she seemed to be in another world. Her voice was soft and peaceful. Then as our meeting ended, she gave me her phone number and said, "I would really like to meet you again. You and your wife should come visit soon." And so, we did a few months later.

We soon became very good friends. Many of the things she foretold began to take place. In less than six months I'd lost my job when the company moved to another state. Although I remained unemployed for a while before finding another position, I used the time to start my own small, part-time business. Since then, many things changed for the better. The company grew and diversified. We moved from our apartment into a house and then a few years later into a much larger one.

Throughout the years, June remained a constant friend and advisor. Every six months or so, between her radio shows or television interviews, she would visit us for a week or two. These visits were always very special. By this time, Mardai and I were the parents of two beautiful children and June would spend hours with them.

Little Malika was a favorite of June's and Jonathan would keep her busy for hours. So it was with joy and excitement that we were, once again, awaiting June's arrival. We had not seen her in almost six months so, there would be much to talk about. We were now totally used to her strange abilities and hardly questioned them at all. We had certainly seen enough over the years to know that she had that rare "gift of seeing."

I wondered what Gideon was doing. With June's arrival,

I'd almost completely forgotten about him. At the dinner table, June told us about her most recent television interview. It was always interesting listening to her describe these events. Although she would give readings to anyone, her clientele also included some well-known public figures. Movie stars, politicians and high level business leaders consulted with her on a regular basis.

A short while later, with the children tucked into bed, June, Mardai and I retired to the family room. Our house was built in the shape of an "H" with the sleeping area occupying one side. The living rooms—there were two—were located in the center of the "H" and the kitchen, dining room and family room were on the other side. Because the family room was completely separated from the bedrooms, it was possible for us to talk and laugh to our hearts' content without disturbing the children who were sleeping peacefully.

On one side of the room was a fireplace and across from that stood a piano, a gift from my wife's parents. The piano bench was pulled slightly away from the piano. We'd been talking for just a short while when June turned to me and said, "The man sitting on your piano bench says that he's here to help you understand new things." Having known June for such a long time we should have been used to such comments, especially when only the three of us were there and I was the only man present.

I looked across and saw only an empty bench. "What man are you talking about, June?" I asked.

She said, "The one over there. He's now looking at you and smiling."

"Don't do that to us. You know I can't see anyone sitting there."

“He says you know him, John, that you’ve met before. He has a beard and dark, piercing eyes. He says he wants to help you in your growth and learning and that you’ve been ‘going through’ experiences instead of ‘growing through’ them.”

That’s Gideon—the description fit him perfectly. “What’s his name, June?”

“I can’t get the exact sound but it seems to be Simeon . . . or no . . . it has a ‘G’. It starts with a ‘G’. His name is Gideon. He said that you ought to know the spelling because not too long ago you saw it on a license plate. He laughed as he said that. He said that you ought to keep an open mind. He’s saying good-bye now and that he’ll see you again soon. Now he’s gone.”

So, it was Gideon again. But I couldn’t see him this time. Neither could Mardai. Only June saw him. But then, she always saw things others could not. We discussed this for a while and I recounted how I met Gideon and the events that occurred thereafter. June seemed to understand and, like Gideon, asked that I keep an open mind.

“It’s your strict scientific background that causes you to stumble many times, John.”

Maybe she was right. I was always trying to be logical about everything. In my college days, I was trained as a chemist and mathematician—labs, research and analyzing. Perhaps, more than most, I insisted on seeing before believing. And this, in spite of the fact that I knew and accepted June and her abilities.

Yet, the most successful times in my life were when I guided myself by the “still, small voice.” Some people call it gut feelings, others call it intuition. The times that caused me

the most problems were those when I drowned out the inner voice with logic and analysis. I really needed to learn how to re-program my thinking. I decided then and there to balance logic and intuition, to let them work together instead of against each other and to follow the inner guidance more consistently.

Chapter Six

On Sunday morning June departed for home. We said our good-byes, promising to meet again soon. Her last words to me were, "Remember, the man on the piano bench will be in touch with you, John. Listen to him and keep an open mind."

In an effort to clarify the many confusing thoughts in my mind, I decided to go for a walk in the woods behind my house. Since he likes nothing better than to run free in the forest, I took Rajah with me. About three hundred yards from the house if you go north by northwest, is a small, open area in the middle of the trees and bushes. In that clearing is a giant rock with many smaller rocks surrounding it. Legend was that centuries ago, a mysterious tribe of American Indians lived in this area. Perhaps, I thought, this was the place of their high worship ceremonies. We walked into the clearing.

It was quiet and peaceful by the rock. The morning sun streamed through the leaves and branches of the tall trees falling directly on the little patch where Rajah and I stood. The serenity seemed to reach back into time. It felt like long, long ago in another country and another clime.

In my youth, it was a joy for me to spend hours in the

forests. And forests and streams were plentiful. The little village where I was born couldn't have covered more than a few square miles. To the north was the Atlantic Ocean and to the south were miles of misty, tropical rain forests for a boy to explore, if he dared. And always there was the perpetual, subtle call of the ocean, a sea song luring me away to distant places. The forests also sang, but their songs carried the soothing comfort of the familiarity of home. Home to me was this small fishing and farming village, literally cut out of the jungle by my grandfather and a group of stalwart men.

Year after year the village grew as the inhabitants constantly fought back the jungle and the sea. It seemed that both wanted to reclaim the village as a prize. In time, the village would become extremely prosperous, only to die years later after I left. In my mind though, it was still my village and thoughts of those times raced through my mind.

"It is in remembering the times of your strength and overcomings that you can grow stronger and overcome even more." The voice thundered into my head and interrupted my thoughts which roamed the village streets of long ago. Looking around, I saw him leaning on a boulder next to mine. He was dressed like a story-book character, bright colors, strange hat and cowboy boots.

"Gideon! What are you doing here? Where did you come from?" The astonishment in my voice startled Rajah.

"Just came from a party. Some folks in another time and place."

"I'm beginning to believe you really do the crazy things you talk about, like time travel and nonsense like that."

"You would do well to believe the things I tell you, John. Time travel is far from being nonsense. It's done regu-

larly by those who know how. There are some of us who commute to other times just as simply and easily as you commute to other places."

"Were you in my house the other night?"

"Sitting on your piano bench. You couldn't see me, but your friend, June, did."

"Why couldn't I see you?"

"You were looking only with your physical eyes. Had you looked with your inner eye, you would have seen me too."

"Things like an inner eye and time travel seem so much like science-fiction to me. Do you really think that people can travel through time? I mean... ."

He interrupted me. "You already travel through time. One method should be obvious. You were awake at six-thirty this morning and it's almost ten-thirty now. You have traveled almost four hours since you got up this morning."

"That's silly. Everyone does that."

"Because it's so obvious, no one ever observes the process carefully. It's taken for granted. It's called existing or living. The other method is more fun, or more frightening, depending on the encounters. You travel through time in your dreams. There it happens automatically. The conscious mind is removed from its monitoring functions. The other parts of you which accept the seemingly miraculous as natural function in their own time and space."

"But that happens without any rhyme or reason. Dream times are uncontrollable."

"Not quite, if you really understand how it works. What time does your watch read right now?"

"Ten-thirty on the dot."

"I'll give you a demonstration. Think of a time in your

past that you'd like to see again, if you could. Close your eyes and hold that thought in your mind for a few seconds."

I thought of an incident in college many years ago. A well-known speaker was giving a lecture in the auditorium. Since I had enough time before the lecture started, I decided to get a cup of coffee in the cafeteria. I was enjoying my coffee at a table in the corner when a man walked up to me and asked, "May I join you?"

I replied, "Of course," as he sat down. Our conversation had lasted for about an hour. I wished I could go back to that scene for just a short while.

Gideon said, "Let's go and see your college incident again."

He had hardly spoken the words when I was overcome by an enormous swirling sensation. When it stopped, I looked around. Imagine my surprise to find myself and Gideon standing in the college cafeteria of long ago. Other students were standing around and I began to worry about how I would explain our presence when Gideon said, "Don't worry. They can't see or hear us. You're visiting another time. They'll only be able to see us if we want them to. It's better this way at first."

He led me to a small table across from where we were standing. Two people were drinking coffee. Somehow, they seemed familiar.

"Don't you know who those people are, John?" asked Gideon.

I looked a bit closer and was amazed to realize that the younger man was me—not me as I am today, but the me I was many years ago in college. There I sat as a college student—much younger and thinner, without the gray in my

hair—sipping coffee with another man. “We’re looking back in time, John,” Gideon said. “That’s the event you were thinking of when we left your present-time situation. Do you recognize the other man? Don’t you remember that he came to your table and sat with you for a while before he went on to give his lecture?”

“That was Dr. Martin Luther King! I didn’t know it when he first sat down, but by the end of our conversation, he revealed who he was.”

“Do you recall the effect his conversation had on you?”

“How could I ever forget? The compassion and the vision of that man! I’ll always remember that.”

“You see, we *can* visit events from the past and observe, remember and learn from them.”

Fascinated, I stood there watching and listening in on their conversation. Finally Gideon said, “It’s time for us to leave here and go on to another time and place.”

A thought struck me. “Could we have participated in their conversation, Gideon? I mean, the me of then and the me of now conversing with each other?”

“Yes—but there are certain rules one has to observe. For now, let’s go.”

He had barely spoken when I felt the return of the swirling sensation. The entire scene changed and we found ourselves standing on the bank of a river. A young man dressed in Hindu clothing was approaching us. “You’ll notice, John, that we can participate in this event,” said Gideon.

The man walked up to us, tossed a smile at me and spoke to Gideon. “Hello! They told me you’d be here soon, so I hurried to meet you.” Gideon seemed to know him and introduced him with the words, “My friend Krishna, of Hindu

mythology.”

The two of them continued a lively conversation as we approached the water’s edge. It was barely sunrise as I stood on a large flat rock looking out over the calm waters. It was a beautiful morning as the sun reflected waving patterns of molten gold across the water’s surface.

“What river is this?” I asked Krishna.

“It’s a tributary of the river Ganga—what you would call the Ganges. In time, it will become the holiest of rivers for Hindus, just as the Jordan will become the holiest of rivers for Christians and Jews alike.”

Krishna walked over to the rock where I stood. He placed his foot on it and then moved aside. As I glanced down, I saw a footprint appear on the stone where there was none before.

“Did you do that?” I asked

He smiled mischievously. “They’ll speak about it for generations to come. Yea! For thousands of years, until they learn to direct their footsteps toward the light which beckons to all of us.”

“Don’t the Hindus speak of you as the most important manifestation of their god, Vishnu? I mean, in the twentieth century, they actually worship and sing praises to you. How do you feel about that?”

“We are all manifestations of God. We were created in the image of God. But the sad part is whenever any one person points the way to a better and more fulfilling life, his followers very quickly forget the way and start worshipping the way-shower.”

“That’s an interesting thought,” I replied. “Sort of like worshipping the messenger while ignoring the message.”

"Gideon is a close friend of mine," said Krishna. "We've known each other for eternity. He's agreed to work with you and teach you some of the eternal truths. Pay attention to him and you'll find that you're listening to yourself. Life is a joyous adventure. Start to enjoy it"

As I stood on the banks of this holy river, a sudden peace enveloped me. I felt at one with the world, at one with the universe. Perhaps, this was what was meant by "atone-ment," or, "at-one-ment." Then I heard Gideon saying to me, "We must return now." We said good-bye to Krishna and then that swirling sensation returned again. In the blink of an eye, we were transported back to the woods behind my house.

My watch still read ten-thirty. Apparently totally un-concerned, Rajah remained exactly where we'd left him. Gideon stood next to me. "Sit down," I said, motioning to-wards a large rock, "perhaps, you could explain some of this to me."

I stretched out on the grass under the tall trees and awaited Gideon's reply.

Chapter Seven

Gideon settled on a rock and wriggled somewhat to make himself more comfortable. "Time is like the tides," he said, "or more correctly, like a river. There are currents, white and dark water and backwash. Human beings have been conditioned from birth to believe in sequential time, that is, time as moment after moment. By the ripe old age of five or six, one has generally forgotten the intricacies of the nature of time and space and thus is primed to live in a world where tomorrows come after todays and yesterdays lead to todays."

As much as one part of me wanted to understand what he was saying, another part was firmly anchored in the logical thinking processes. "Stop, Gideon, I don't really think all that is important. In fact, I'm relatively comfortable in this time slot. What with television, advanced computers, other electronic marvels, space probes to distant planets and so forth, who knows? This time and place could still be fun."

"If you don't blow yourself up first, or die of asphyxiation because there is no more breathable air. No clean water to drink because your rivers and streams have been

poisoned by chemicals.”

“Oh it’s not that bad. At least not, yet..., I think. But let’s get back to this ‘time’ thing. We visited different times, didn’t we?”

“Yes, indeed we did.”

“Tell me about the classic case, Gideon. Suppose I had gone back to the time when my great grandfather was a boy. Suppose we met, there was a fight and he was killed. Just suppose, OK? Would I be here, now? Would I be there or anywhere? Explain that. How could I have been born if my great grandfather had died as a boy? Ha! Got you on that one!”

“Pretty clever, but still at the kindergarten level. In that probable lifetime you would not have lived as such, but in another and another and a hundred thousand others you live and are as vibrant and alive as you are here.”

“You mean that there are thousands of me living in thousands of different situations in thousands of worlds? Come on, Gideon.”

“Let’s not get too involved in this matter of ‘time’, John. It’s rather an advanced concept. Suffice it to say that we, you or anyone with some practice could travel to different times and different places. Manage your thoughts and you determine your existence in space and time.”

“That’s fine for space and time but I’m getting hungry. I can’t take you home and introduce you to my family. What would I say? ‘Here, meet my good friend Gideon who dresses strangely, travels through time and knows Krishna?’”

“Your family wouldn’t be able to see me at this time. And as for being hungry, look at your watch. What time is it?”

I glanced at my watch and saw that it was still only

ten-thirty, although we had been talking for what seemed like hours, not counting the “trips” we had made. It felt as if time hadn’t passed. I looked at him and said, “You certainly couldn’t stop time, could you? Not even *you* could do that.”

“No. All we did was center ourselves in an area of non-movement of time and so it appeared that time stood still. Not to worry though. All is well with you and your family and the world, if you will. No side effects.”

I looked across to Rajah. He was sleeping peacefully. Next to him was a picnic basket. “What’s that, Gideon?” I asked, pointing.

“Just lunch. You said you were hungry, didn’t you? I brought it with me this morning. Let’s have some.”

Strange, but I hadn’t noticed the basket before. We helped ourselves to a delicious lunch while Gideon continued his commentary.

“It’s really simple,” he said. “In fact, very simple when you understand it. Each person exists in many dimensions and many systems. Each one inhabits the entire universe, but most times, is focused in only one tiny spot—the here and now. But that’s precisely the most important spot in life, the here and now. From that spot, each one influences his entire future and past.”

“You know, Gideon, our church fathers would string you up for saying such things. What with all this nonsense talk about being born again, or having lived before? Surely, you don’t believe that... .”

He interrupted me again. “You live as many lifetimes as are needed on earth. In each lifetime, you learn and strive to be better than the one ‘before,’ if you accept time as sequential. If you accept time as eternally now, then you exist in

many systems and dimensions simultaneously.”

It was a rather pleasant and ‘learningful’ morning. Brimming with food-for-thought, Gideon's repertoire had offered me some extraordinary perspectives to consider. It was, however, time to return to normal and to experience present-time and people as I knew them.

“Don’t be too hard on yourself, John. You’ve actually done quite well. I am, as you now can see, an other-worldly being. So are all of you on earth. You’re all just visitors here. Some of you know this. Others prefer to remain ignorant of that fact. Whichever way you prefer, you still have access to awesome power. See you soon.” And then he was gone. The lunch basket disappeared too—not even a leftover crumb. Only Rajah and I remained. Simultaneously, we rose and walked back to the house.

Chapter Eight

The remainder of Sunday was enjoyable. I have little trouble with weekends. It's the time between weekends that sometimes gives me problems. All too soon Monday arrived. The ride to the office was taken up with reflections on the past few days. Although we realized we'd be seeing her again soon, June's visit had been most welcome, but much too short.

Gideon still amazed and intrigued me. There was no doubt in my mind that he had access to considerable information and power. I accepted some of his concepts such as time travel as distinct possibilities, especially since I was a party to some of those journeys with him. But again, some of his ideas were difficult to reconcile as I struggled with my "reality thinking."

As usual, I was the first one to arrive at the office. As I walked in turning on the lights, he was waiting for me, sitting on the chair across from my desk. "Gideon! Not you again!" I exclaimed.

"It seems as if you're getting bored with me, John," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"No, of course not," I hastened to assure him. "Not bored, just amazed that you always appear at the strangest times."

"That's good to know. I came because I felt that you're going to need to see a bit more clearly today." He did not smile this time and was more serious than I'd ever known him to be.

"What do you mean, Gideon?"

"You're afraid," he said, "for your employees, your family, your friends and others. You think you've done all you could to make things better and yet, you feel that you can't see the light."

"You seem to be reading my mind again, Gideon. What you say is true—but I'm only human."

"Only human, John? Only human?" He was intense as he continued. "You use that as an excuse. You're much more than just human. You and everyone else are more divine than human. You were all created in the image and likeness of the First Force, the Almighty. Don't you remember the numerous legends of creation?"

"Yes, of course. So what? I'm human or divine or both. It really doesn't matter. I'm still concerned about myself and my people and because of my concern, I sometimes fear and tremble. Is it so terrible to care for others? Is it a sign of weakness to be concerned about your fellow human beings? What's so terrible about that?"

"No, not the caring, John. The worrying is what gets you. You must make a distinction between caring and worrying. You care, so you try to make everything work right. When

nothing seems to work right, you worry and become fearful and because of the fear, you short-circuit yourself.”

“In what way or manner, O Great One?” I asked somewhat sarcastically.

“You see, John, the rules are really quite simple. The Creator made everything and all of us. We, also, are creators. We are endowed with many of the qualities of the Creator, but most times, these qualities are so deeply buried that they’re hardly ever recognized or used.”

“Yes, Lord and Master, please continue. Your humble servant listens.”

He ignored my mocking attitude and continued. “Worry is a form of directed energy, John. Worry removes your focus from everything else and directs it in a concentrated manner on that which you fear. Worry and fear then join to bring into your existence the very thing which you feared.”

“So, how do I stop worrying? Tell me that!”

“You stop worrying when you understand the universal laws that make things work. One of those laws says that whatever you see in your mind—good or bad—if you believe it, it will come to pass. Creation starts in your mind with your thoughts and imagination. Cause-and-effect world, John. Use insight and you’ll see right. What you sow, you shall reap. As you think and believe, so it becomes.”

“Good sayings, Gideon. I know most of those things but how do I use that knowledge in a practical way? How do I use it to improve my present situation?”

“By centering yourself and looking within you. This is an inside job, you see. The answers are all within you. Not outside, not in someone else and not even in the one you call God.”

That puzzled me for a second. "I thought that God could do everything. Why wouldn't He have the answers? More important, why wouldn't He give us some of those answers, especially when we pray to Him so earnestly?"

"Because you don't understand God and the methods He gave us for finding answers. We don't have to beg or plead. We only have to relax and become quiet and to believe in ourselves and the abilities inherent in us. Then we'd begin to receive answers in the form of ideas. We must *believe* and *trust* the process. God doesn't withhold our good from us. However, He does want us to learn by discovering the process. Often we're just unable to see that we already have—or can have—what we want."

This discussion set me to thinking about God. Humanity does seem to have so many gods. The Muslims have one, the Christians another, the Jews yet another and on and on. Some have more than one. Various religions locate their gods in places such as temples, mountains, streams and skies. Legends speak of greater and lesser gods.

Even I have a god with whom I was vaguely acquainted. I had learned in Sunday school that He lived in a place called heaven. He seemed so far removed from everyone and everything that only popes and priests, pastors and preachers, kings, emperors and presidents had access to Him. One would lift beseeching hands and cry in pain to this god, but most times, no answer. I thought I'd throw a curve at Gideon.

"Hey, Gideon, you know so much. Tell me about God. Who and what is He? Why doesn't He hear when people cry to Him? Tell me if you can."

Without blinking an eye, Gideon answered, "Your re-

ligions are like schools in different countries. They teach you basically the same thing but in different languages and in different ways. Some schools may stress art or history, while others may place more emphasis on chemistry or math. But there's a common thread in all of them—they lead to the same place, the Temple of Wisdom and Light. So God by any other name is still God. The cry of the ancient Hebrews, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One,' is as true now as it was then, or ever will be.

"God is not in a place or time. God is here and now. Heaven or hell is here and now. God does not sit on a golden throne surrounded by angels who play harps or fly around all day. If you think that is what heaven is, you'd better start taking music lessons as well as flying lessons. God is in each person, in each life form, in each and every part of creation. God is no more or less present in you than in another life form at the edge of the galaxy.

"And God listens and cares. He's even concerned about the little sparrows and the lilies of the field. Wouldn't He be concerned about you, or for that matter, me?"

I was sorry I brought it up. We could talk about that subject for days. Again I changed the direction of the conversation. "Why don't I see clearly what must be done for my company? Is it necessary that all this, which took a lifetime to build, be torn apart or destroyed?"

Patently Gideon responded, "If it must be that way for your greater good, then accept it. If it doesn't have to be that way, then that's fine too. But you're the one who has to decide. Prepare yourself for that which you're seeking. Know that what you're seeking is also seeking you. You want a successful corporation? Then prepare for it. Know that the forces

of the universe will rush in to bring you what you want, provided of course, you want it badly enough and believe that you can get it. Or, better yet, *deserve* it.

"All problems on earth are of three types: health, money and relationships. Look at any problem and it will fall under one or a combination of these three categories. There are proper and correct methods one must use to solve a problem, just as there are to drive a car or to build a house.

"Now, I must leave you, John. There are many more things to discuss, but we'll meet again soon. Incidentally, I'd like to introduce you to a good friend of mine who may be of some help to you. He has an office in the Big City. When you have a slow day we could visit him. Would you like that?"

"Certainly. If he could help us with this financial thing, I would go to the ends of the earth to meet him." Mischievously I added, "Even if he's half as strange as you, it would be fun."

"I'm sure you'll like him. Let's go soon," he said. He stood up and smiled, "Have a good day, John." Then he was gone. It would be weeks before I'd see him again.

Chapter Nine

It was true that our company had finally managed to acquire a large contract, but things still weren't going the way we'd have liked. Although everyone was working very hard the results weren't comparable to the efforts. Additional financing was urgently needed. Without these funds, the company would be unable to increase production to meet the necessary requirements of the contract. There was even the possibility of having to dissolve the corporation, but I didn't like to think about that.

At our last meeting, Gideon had mentioned that he wanted me to meet with one of his friends in the Big City. If there was a possibility that it could lead me to the proper contacts for a business loan, I was even more interested than before. If nothing came of it, at least I wouldn't have left any stone unturned. It might even turn out that the meeting would be enjoyable and there were so few fun things I did these days. I thought I'd call Gideon and see if I could make ar-

rangements to go with him soon to visit his friend.

As I searched my desk for his business card, the phone rang. Of course, it was Gideon. "I see that you're ready to go to the Big City," he said. "I'll meet you in your parking lot at nine-thirty tomorrow morning." Without waiting for a reply, he hung up.

At nine-thirty the next morning, I was walking toward my car in the parking lot when I spotted him. He was standing at attention near my car, waiting for me. Few things surprised me about this man these days. "Good morning, Gideon. Ready to go?" I asked.

"Sure, let's go. I'm positive you'll have a fine morning, John," he replied.

As we drove out of the parking lot, I jokingly asked, "Why do we have to use a car, Gideon? I mean, you're able to traverse space and time. Let's do it the easy way. Let's arrive in the Big City instantaneously and avoid all the traffic."

Those dark, piercing eyes narrowed as he answered. "I'll tell you a story."

"Once upon a time in the ancient land of Bharat, there lived a Guru and his bramcharyas or, as you would call them, disciples. Each disciple was supposed to pick as his test a very difficult task to perform. He was to work exceedingly hard for several years to perfect himself in the task that he, himself, had set. There was this one disciple, somewhat brighter than the others yet, so very shy and timid.

"And what task have you set for yourself, my son?" asked the kindly Guru.

"Master," answered the disciple, "I want to be able to walk on water. I will practice until I'm able to do it. To walk on water — that is my goal."

"Years passed and under the gentle guidance of the Guru, most of the disciples accomplished what they had set out to do. Finally, the shy disciple approached the Guru. 'Master,' said he, 'I have toiled and practiced without ceasing, lo, these many years. See that city across the river? I can now walk on the water and go over to the city. Master, I have overcome. I can walk on water.'

"Looking at the young disciple the old master sadly asked, 'Why did you not take the boat? You would have saved so much time.' "

"John, when you know you can walk on water, you generally can take the boat."

Somewhat unclear about the main point of the story, I mumbled an inaudible "Oh," but didn't ask for an explanation. I don't always like to listen to riddles or parables and Gideon certainly had a lot of them. I prefer plain talk. I asked about the people we'd be meeting today.

"I made all the necessary arrangements," he said. "You're expected."

"Are they business associates of yours?"

"Business associates and friends, also."

"Do you think I'll be able to get some help for my company?"

"A definite possibility," he replied.

"You know we need a loan to continue our operations. Maybe they'd be willing to help us out in this situation?"

"Perhaps."

He seemed to be in a quiet, pensive mood this morning, but his clipped answers were beginning to annoy me. Not wanting to appear rude, I gave up any further attempts to make conversation. I was thinking only of myself and my

problems, forgetting that he, too, could be occupied with problems of his own. But then again, he shouldn't have any problems, not with the type of information and power he seemed to possess.

He broke into my thoughts saying, "Even God has problems. It's the way one goes about solving them that's interesting."

"God shouldn't have problems, Gideon. I mean, it doesn't make sense. God can do anything."

"True, but even God doesn't like boredom. To exist without challenges would be boredom at its ultimate."

He became quiet again, so I left him to his thoughts for a while. The drive wasn't too unpleasant. Usually, I don't like driving into the Big City. Being there is one thing, but trying to get there is quite another. There are few things more unpleasant than being stuck in traffic for hours.

A flock of gulls had been flying above and to the front of the car since we left the parking lot. To amuse myself, I counted them. There were seven. The freedom of flight, I thought. Gideon broke the silence. "A flock of gulls by day and a pillar of fire by night," he said.

"What?"

"The ancient Israelites, you know, were led in their wanderings in the wilderness by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night."

"Three cheers for the Israelites," I mumbled, again having no idea of what he was talking about.

In a short while, we arrived in the Big City. It was, as always, impersonal. We parked the car and walked through the never-ending crowds to a waiting cab. Gideon handed the driver an address and a few minutes later we stepped out in

front of a tall building on an obscure side street. We walked up to the door, entered the lobby and were soon on our way to the thirty-third floor.

We stepped out into a long hallway. I took a few moments to straighten my tie and comb my hair. At times the winds of the Big City could be exceedingly fierce. At the end of the hallway was a large door bearing a sign that said: "G & M Enterprises, Inc., World Headquarters."

"These are the people you work with, right, Gideon?"

He was a bit more relaxed now. "Yes," he said. "It's about time you got to meet my boss. There'll also be another friend of mine here. You remember Marla?"

"Marla will be here, too? Oh yeah, I forgot that she works for this company, too. It'll be good to see her again."

There was that twinkle in his eye and I knew that he was back to his old self, again. He pushed open the door as we walked into a reception area that was both simple and, at the same time, elegantly decorated. There were paintings of strange symbols on the walls. A receptionist looked up and smiled. "Hello, Gideon, and welcome to our office, John," she said.

"You look well, Mary," replied Gideon.

"Won't you sit down, please. Marla is here already. It will only be a few minutes," said Mary.

In a short while Marla joined us and we renewed old acquaintances. She seemed quite pleased to see me there. The receptionist left for a few moments and when she returned, she announced, "The chief will see you now."

She escorted us through the main area to an office with a sign on the door that read: "President and Chairman of the Board."

"Gee, Gideon, you know the big boss," I teased.

As the door opened he said, "You'll enjoy this meeting, John."

We stepped into an office thickly carpeted in celestial blue. The office was luxuriously decorated and contained several lush plants dramatically placed throughout the well-lit room. On the far side was a large, ornate desk behind which sat a rather imposing figure. We walked over and Gideon proceeded with the introductions.

"John, I'm pleased to introduce you to our chief executive officer. He is president and chairman of the board of G & M Enterprises." I noticed a tremendous respect, but no fear in Gideon's voice as he continued, "I want you to meet God."

For a moment I was stunned. Then I remembered that many people refer to their bosses as "god," and so, I quickly regained my composure. I looked over to the person sitting behind the desk. He seemed to be middle-aged, possessing a powerful presence about him. His hair was jet black and his eyes dark and piercing, somewhat like Gideon's. Yet, as I looked at him a little more carefully, his hair now appeared to be lighter and his eyes blue. Must be some trick of the light, I thought.

He rose from his chair, shook my hand and said, "Glad you could come. My thanks to Marla and Gideon for getting you here. I've been waiting for your visit for a long time."

I mumbled something to the effect that it was also good to be here and that I'd been looking forward to this meeting. The one known as "God" was informally dressed—not even a tie—although his shirt appeared to be expertly tailored and there was an unrecognizable insignia over the right pocket. He motioned for us to sit and asked whether we'd care

for something to drink. None of us wanted anything, so I sat anxiously waiting for someone to start the conversation. My entire being was focused on getting some financial help for my company.

Gideon spoke up. "John, you don't seem to understand. This isn't a joke. You're in the presence of God. I mean, *The God* with a capital 'G'." I started feeling queasy. It was impossible for anyone to be speaking face-to-face with God. That only happened in movies and books, but not in real life. Reason dictated that this was all nonsense. Yet, there was a part of me that said it was all right for me to believe, at least for the time being, that there was more to this than met the eye. My curiosity prevailed and I decided to accept all this for a while to see where it would take me.

God spoke this time. The voice was neither too high nor too low and resounded with a vibrant life force. "John," He said, "Even now, you still don't believe that I am who they say I am, right?"

"Well, some things are very hard to believe," I replied.

"I understand. However, make yourself comfortable because we'll be here for a little while. Excuse me. I'll be back in a few seconds." With that he got up and left the room.

At that moment the words from Alice in Wonderland came to mind — "I'm mad. You're mad. We're all mad here." Perhaps, I was just dreaming.

Chapter Ten

Marla and Gideon just sat there staring at me when the door closed. Finally Marla asked, "Well, what do you think, John?"

"Think? What do I think? This is probably the most inconceivable thing that has ever happened to me and you're asking me what I think? It's impossible for me to think at all."

"Accept this with an open mind," said Gideon, "and you'll find there are different ways to approach life."

There was a tremendous sense of peace and joy when he was near and, yet, I still could not consciously bring myself to believe that he was *The* God. He walked over to his chair and sat down. Looking me straight in the eye, he said, "John, you don't really believe all of this, do you?" It was more a statement than a question.

"Well, I must admit that I'm puzzled."

"I *am* God. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, First Cause, Jehovah, Yahweh, Yeshua, Allah. I am I, Lord God Almighty, The First Force. What did you expect to see? What do you think God should look like? An old bearded

man sitting on a throne? Dozens of angels dancing around him, her or it? God *is* God and *is* all things to all people.”

He gave the appearance of a man totally in control of himself. His voice and tone were not in the least reprimanding, but rather compassionate and kind. I didn’t know what to say so I blurted out the first thing that came to mind. “How come,” I asked, “I’m here with you, when there are many others more deserving of an audience than I?”

“That’s one of the problems,” he said. “Almost everyone thinks that I’m unreachable, that I only speak to special people at special times. Listen carefully: *Everyone* is special to me. I speak to everyone, but not all listen. I appear to everyone in many ways, but not all see me. Do you remember that little child you gave some money to the other day? That was me speaking to your heart and feelings. Do you remember the time you stopped and helped an old man fix a flat tire on the bridge? That was me again.”

“You mean that you care about little things like flat tires?”

“Of course I care. And there are no little things, only people who tend to look at things and call them little. Take a rose, for example.” And as he said that, as if by magic, a beautiful rose appeared in his hand. “Consider its intricacies. Surely, not a little thing. I love roses. They brighten everyone’s life. In fact, I love everything I’ve created.”

“Well, if you are God, why do you have an office in the Big City? How is it that you’re president and chairman of the board of G & M Enterprises, anyway?”

“G & M stands for God and Man. It’s my ‘earth’ company. What better place to have an office than in the Big City? We have branches in almost every city. In every town and

village you can find us. We also have a number of subsidiaries. Marla and Gideon are from the corporate office. Marla is in P.R.—‘people recycling’, in this case and Gideon is a trouble-shooter—special projects. You’re one of his projects.”

“It sounds so business-oriented, as if the entire world were a giant corporation.”

“I compare it to a business for your understanding. You understand the corporate world so, I speak to you in terms of what you understand. You see, I’m in business—the ‘God Business’ or, looking at it another way, the ‘Good Business’.”

If this was God, I thought, then I’ve been granted a rare privilege and should take full advantage of it. Actually, I was beginning to take him seriously.

His voice broke into my thoughts. “You need proof that I am God. Yet, no matter what proof you’re given, you’ll always find there’s an element of doubt. That doubt, as to whether you did the right thing, is a result of your having the power of choice. Let me tell you this. After I had made the earth and all that was in and on it, I too, wondered whether it was the right thing. But then again, whatever I do *is* the right thing.”

“Did Gideon get his powers from you?”

“Yes, and so did you. Now, let me show you something. Think of a place where you’d like to be.”

I thought for a few seconds and then blurted out, “How about the Serengeti plains of East Africa?”

“Good. You will see... .” and before the sentence was finished, I found myself on a grassy plain with knotted shrubbery covering the landscape. There were the acacia trees of tropical Africa. Wildebeests, giraffes and elephants dotted the terrain. The transition was so instantaneous that I caught my

breath. But then again, didn't Gideon take me to other places and times? Surely, the one who called himself God could do the same.

Suddenly, there was a movement in the tall grass to my right. My previous trips to the Serengeti plains had been taken using more conventional fare such as airplanes, enclosed jeeps and native guides. This time I was all alone except for the wildlife around me. Then there was a rustling sound. A chill went down my spine. I turned around to find, facing me, not more than thirty paces away, the largest, black-mane lion I'd ever seen.

It stared at me through fiery eyes that froze the very marrow in my bones. He crouched ready to spring and I knew, without a doubt, that this situation was not conducive to longevity. Paralyzed with fear, I couldn't move. I just stood there rooted to the ground. With an earth-shattering roar, the lion sprang. I felt the hot breath of the carnivore just inches away. My arms raised instinctively—then a blur, and I was back in the office with Marla, Gideon and God.

"Don't be afraid," said God, "you're not in any danger. Enough of this."

Although still visibly shaken from my frightful ordeal, I continued staring at him. Suddenly, it seemed as if I were looking through different eyes than mine, as if new worlds were opening before me. I felt the presence of an extremely powerful and loving force. And then, as if by a miracle, I began to feel that I was looking at the face of God. I fell to my knees overcome with awe and whispered, "Forgive me, Lord. Although I didn't believe at first, now I know that You are truly my Lord and my God."

"Get up," He said, with warmth and love in His voice,

"No need to fall on knees and stuff like that." I raised myself as God continued. "It's easy to set up barriers and retain those barriers for a lifetime. You've all built walls, not only nation against nation, but neighbor against neighbor, friend against friend. You've even built walls between yourselves and me. In your present state, you've forgotten the joy and bliss of being close to me yet, if you search your deepest memories, you may have vague recollections of what it was like when the sons and daughters of God danced with joy on the morning of creation.

"This isn't the only place where life forms exist. Look up into the sky some clear night and see the millions of stars—universes within universes. Look up and you'll know that you are not alone in that vast expanse you call space. There are others, many others and all of them are my children."

While God spoke I sat motionless in absolute silence. I felt such peace and calm that I forgot about my corporation and its financial troubles. Nothing seemed important except to sit there with Him and listen.

God continued, "The universe is dynamic and changing; it continues to grow. Creation never stopped; it will continue forever. Wherever you are *is* the center of the universe and the mid-point of eternity. Nothing is static. All things change. *But I do not change.* The part of you that is Me and the part of Me that is you will forever remain changeless. So, even though seasons change and worlds change, I, God, do not change."

"Lord, I'm overwhelmed," I said.

"You can interrupt me at anytime and ask questions. Don't be afraid to speak. Because I am God, I don't become

offended or feel insulted. I wish my children would interrupt me more often. Now, as I was saying, in this world of change you have chosen to be here... .”

“Chosen to be here, Lord? How could we possibly have chosen to be born?”

“Do you think for one instant that you appeared out of nothingness into the body you currently have? No, you existed before and will continue to exist after your body is gone. And as to the choosing process... .”

I interrupted Him again. “Pardon me, but are you saying that we were living, thinking beings before we were born? And that we chose to be here? I mean, how come we don’t remember?”

“First,” God answered, “If you insist on the framework of time as you understand it—in a before and after continuum—yes, you were conscious energy beings before this earth life.

“Because of the challenges and opportunities for growth and experimentation in an earth life, many chose to come here. You chose the country, the period of history, your parents and even your friends. You made an agreement prior to your birth. The agreement took place at levels that you don’t consciously remember. But the higher self of you, the self which knows me well, understands and remembers.

“If your conscious self would listen to your higher, inner self, you’d have the answers to many of your questions. You’d be guided in times of stress and comforted in times of sorrow. It is I who speak to you with the still small voice. Even in your loneliest moments you’re never alone. Even in the depths of the furnace of affliction I’m there with you.”

“Lord, I have a million questions,” I said. “I don’t know

where to start.”

“Why don’t we continue our conversation in a place you’d really enjoy? Would you like to go on a short trip? I think you’ll enjoy it.”

“Certainly,” I said, “Wherever You go, I want to go.”

God looked at Gideon and Marla and nodded. Immediately I felt a shimmering sensation and our surroundings disappeared.

Chapter Eleven

As the shimmering stopped, I glanced around. We were on the deck of a large ship with no land in sight. As far as the eye could see there was water—blue-green and beautiful. The gentle wind and serenely rolling waves were soothing therapy. God smiled at me and said, “I thought a change of scenery would do you some good, especially since you love the ocean so much.”

The vessel was a tall ship replete with sails and rigging. There didn’t seem to be anyone else aboard and I wondered who was sailing it. “Where is the crew, Lord? Such a large ship must surely need a crew.”

“Not this time, John,” He said, “We’re using a form of energy called ‘celestial power’ for navigation. It’ll be a few more centuries before your scientists discover its existence.”

We pulled up a few deck chairs and sat facing the wind. It was a delightful setting, to say the least. How quickly one becomes accustomed to miracles, I thought.

“There really aren’t any miracles, John,” God said softly. “If you understand universal laws, you’d understand so-

called 'miracles.' Everything works according to universal laws. Know the laws and your knowledge becomes power. Yet, even power requires the use of wisdom."

Next to us on a small table sat a basket brimming with fruit. There was also a pitcher filled with fruit juice. Gideon reached over and poured himself a glass. "Try some, John, it's good," he said. He poured me a glass of the most delicious fruit juice I had ever tasted. Marla took a banana instead. I glanced at God to see what He'd do. Surely, He didn't eat nor have need to. God picked up a plum and bit into it.

He looked at me, winked and said, "I don't have to eat, John. In the cosmic sense, neither do you. But it's enjoyable, at least most times, if done properly and in moderation." I couldn't quite understand what He meant by not having to eat.

He continued, "You see, on earth you have a physical body made of elements that are a part of the very earth itself. Your body is a marvel of engineering. I designed it to be relatively self-sustaining and self-correcting.

"If treated with respect and love, the body generally takes care of itself. It is, so to say, your house here on earth. Each of your cells is a unit of consciousness. They perform in concert to produce a symphony of highly complex vibrations. These vibrations affect every other cell in the entire body. These cells know exactly what's necessary for the body to exist in harmony with its environment. I placed the necessary engineering and electronic data in their memory. If given half a chance, they'd keep you healthy. You think they're simple because you study them under your microscopes, but your most advanced computers are like stoneage artifacts compared to the intricacies of the life force in your cells.

"It's true that you need a certain amount of nutrients

for your physical body, but that amount is usually small. Your mental body is woven into your physical body yet, you feed one and not the other. Your concern for food for the physical far outweighs your concern for food for the mental and the spiritual. Listen, *it's in the realm of mind that you control all in the physical.* It's by working within that you change without. The problems appear on the outside, the solutions are on the inside."

"How then do you explain disease and illness? Shouldn't the body take care of these things as well?" I asked.

"Yes, there are diseases in your world, but they generally result from a condition called 'dis - ease'. Humankind creates new illnesses all the time. All diseases have their roots in your mind and beliefs. And the cure for all of them already resides within you. Most times, a fear of disease deep in your subconscious makes it possible for the disease to become a part of you. Think healthy thoughts and discount the possibility of disease and it will never take up residence in your house.

"There are materials given to you to assist in keeping the body and mind healthy. These are all around you but usually you ignore them and look for other ways. Take light and sound, for example. Your scientists are only now beginning to take a hard look at the intriguing possibilities of these vibrations and frequencies. Vibrations of various kinds affect both the physical and mental bodies. Certain gems, colors and sounds are much more beneficial than others. In periods of deep meditation you can generally tell which ones would be best for you. If you cannot, you may need the help of a teacher or a practitioner in these matters. If your mind is calm and your outlook positive, you would naturally be drawn to the

right people, the right places and the right things. You'd feel that certain colors are good for you. You would feel the effects of certain sounds and light. Tune in to yourself and trust your guidance.

"You'll be healthy not by disliking sickness, but by loving health. Treat your body with respect and love. It's the vehicle for your consciousness while you're on earth. It's also made to provide you with pleasure. Looking at a beautiful sunset, tasting a delicious meal, hearing musical sounds, touching and so forth, these can be very pleasurable sensations for your body. You built it. I only designed it and provided the blueprint."

God relaxed for a moment and took another bite of the plum. "Plums are good," He said. "Fruits and vegetables are good. There are herbs that are beneficial for specific bodily ailments. The ancient civilizations knew a lot about these things. There's much to be learned from what was handed down to you. But in your present century, there's not much respect for ancient wisdom. Scientific data and analysis are fine up to a point, but they provide incomplete answers. Combining ancient wisdom and knowledge with new discoveries will always be more beneficial in the long run.

My mind was racing. This was extremely important and valuable information. It was time I thought, to ask a few questions concerning my current problems. Yet today, these problems seemed so far away and not at all important. Just being in the presence of the Almighty gave me an entirely different perspective. But nevertheless, I found myself asking, "Why is it, Lord, sometimes when we work so hard toward a goal, that it begins to seem ever further away? In fact, there are so many things that I'm working on and they all seem to

be getting worse. Any light You can shed will be a tremendous help not only to me, but also to those I'm trying to help."

"There are various reasons," said God. "The things you are striving for so diligently may not be things you really want or need. Another reason may be that you aren't ready yet or prepared to handle those things. Or it could be timing. You have to learn how to read the signs of the times. A good farmer knows when to sow and when to reap. He doesn't reap when he should be sowing or sow when he should be reaping."

These reasons seemed too ordinary to be "God Answers," so I pursued the question further. "I thought any time was a good or proper time. How do we know this timing? How can we find the right time?"

"It's true," replied God, "that anytime is a good time, but you must know if it is the *right* time. Winter is a good time, but do you plant roses in the snow? A stormy day is a good day, but is it a day for sailing or fishing? There are cycles in the universe, the world and your life. Learn to find the cycles and use them for your benefit. Projects begun at the right time will be much more successful than if started at any other time."

"Sounds something like astrology. Is there really anything to that stuff?"

"I love puzzles—crosswords, jigsaws and many other kinds. You have many puzzles in your life. Things would be dull indeed without challenges. But although the puzzles are challenging, you've been given clues. You have many guidance systems for your earthly life. Since ancient times, sailors have used the stars for navigation on the high seas. You, too, could use the stars for navigation on the seas of life. How do you think those Three Wise Men from the East found our little

baby Jesus? Don't you remember the story? They studied the heavens. They saw a star and they were able to correctly interpret the signs. Call it astrology, celestial navigation or whatever you please."

"Can the ordinary person use these things for his own guidance?" I asked.

"Even today," He said, "there are many who guide their paths according to the signs they read. These signs, astrological or otherwise, weren't given to you as crutches, but as guideposts. They don't determine or predestine what will happen to you. *You* do that. They only point the way. *You* have to do the traveling. Don't confuse the map with the territory."

"Most of my animals are more aware of cycles and signs than humans are. Notice how they seem to be aware of approaching storms or earthquakes. They don't block out the messages they receive. But you, the epitome of My creation on earth, have filled yourselves with so much doubt, worry and fear that you can't hear yourselves think. You can't even hear Me speak to you. You even choose to ignore the signs I've given you.

"Yet, these signs are there for anyone. In your sleep you have signs and guidance through your dreams. In your waking time there are just as many helpful signs for your direction and well-being. Take for example, reading license plates on cars. Every once in a while, take the letters you see and form words. Pick the first words that come into your mind and see how often those words have relevance to your present situation. Once in a while, look at a billboard. Or, perhaps, a song on the radio gives you a hint. Open a book, any book, to any page and see what it tells you. There are 'sermons in stones' if you'd take the time to look, listen and be

open to receive information.”

A slight breeze arose and the sails billowed. The sound of the creaking masts joined with the ocean to create a beautiful windsong. I still had no desire, but just to sit there forever and hear God speak. I was now able to detect a faint, glowing light around Him. I’d seen this light before around Gideon, but for the first time I saw it around Marla, too.

God continued. “Don’t think that you can only speak to me about sacred, holy or spiritual things. As you can see, I enjoy many things, even a cruise. Don’t be afraid to confide in me. I’m closer to you than the air you breathe.”

While I had the opportunity I thought I’d ask one question about my future, since I could sense that our meeting was quickly approaching an end. “Lord,” I asked, “will my path over the next months or years be easier than it has been?”

“The way you have chosen for yourself will be a difficult but glorious one. You’ll need all the strength and faith you can muster for what lies ahead. But you *will* come through it. For me to tell you more would deter you from the path that you’ve set for yourself. As you go through the months ahead remember that you’re never alone. Reach out and hold my hand sometimes. You’ll be amazed at how much it helps. Wherever you are, I’m there with you.”

There was a sweet sadness about this very personal meeting. Gideon looked at me and said, “It’s time to go now, John.”

“Do I really have to go?” I asked.

God answered, “Yes, John, but remember what you have learned here today. You’ll need it.” Turning to Gideon and Marla, He said, “No need for John to worry about traffic today. Please make sure that he’s returned to his office with-

out any problems.” He looked at me again and as He said, “Go in peace,” I felt as if I’d always known Him.

The scene began to disappear. There was a brief silence then I found Gideon and myself, once again, sitting in my parked car. Marla was nowhere to be seen. Gideon whispered, “The Lord moves in mysterious ways,” and then he, too, was gone. Trying to compose myself, I sat there a short while longer. Then as one awakening from a dream, I got out and walked to my office.

Chapter Twelve

The threads of history weave strange patterns in the web of time. Mysterious and complex as the tapestry sometimes appears, the finished product invariably is a work of art. Often, one cannot see the entire picture from the limited perspective of a small portion of a lifetime. It's by expanding the mind and trusting the universal flow that it's possible to make sense of what may be considered nonsense or "none sense."

It was sometime in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Far across the seas in the ancient land of Bharat, which today is known as India, mighty forces were at work. Somewhere in the north central part of that land, in an area inhabited by the descendants of fierce Rajput warriors, the Maharajah Jai Singh the Second had already made tremendous scientific advancements in the pink and lavender city of Jaipur.

A young boy, about the age of ten, served at the court of the powerful Jai Singh. This boy's name, taken from an-

other powerful ruler of earlier days, was Mahn Singh. Well versed was he with the stories told at court. On many an evening he would listen in quiet amazement as visitors from faraway lands exchanged stories and tales with one another. As Mahn Singh grew older, he would dream of those distant lands across the seas and would repeat the stories he learned at court.

Thousands of miles across the oceans, England had a new queen. Elizabeth the First, daughter of Henry the Eighth, was a shrewd and powerful monarch. She was constantly at war with Spain, which was then ruled by Philip the Second. In an all out effort to conquer England, Philip the Second dispatched the Spanish Armada. The defeat of the Armada did not prevent the Spanish from trying to colonize parts of South America and the islands of the Caribbean.

On one of the Spanish expeditions led by Don Pedro da Silva, a young sailor named Juan Martinez was watching an approaching storm. Great was the fury of that storm and when it abated the entire crew, save one, was no more. All but Juan Martinez perished. He barely survived by clinging to a piece of floating wreckage. Days passed under the hot, tropic sun until, finally, delirious and dehydrated, he drifted to land and was rescued by a strange band of warriors. He had drifted into the estuary of that mysterious South American river called the Orinoco.

It is said that Juan Martinez was taken to a city called Manoa, ruled by a legendary figure known as El Dorado—The Golden One. Beautiful, indeed, was the city. The streets were paved with gold and the houses and temples gloriously reflected the rays of the morning sun. Juan Martinez lived for many years among the natives of this land, eventually escap-

ing one day to tell his story.

One who heard the story of El Dorado was Sir Walter Raleigh, friend and confidant of Elizabeth the First of England. Many expeditions were made to the area on the northern coast of South America called Guyana. It was there that Sir Walter Raleigh and others believed the fabled city of gold would be found.

In the search for El Dorado many lives were lost. In the dense jungles of Guyana could be found bushes of Yellow Allamanda and Red Amaryllis. There was also the lovely petalled Cereus that blooms at midnight once in about seven years, then fades away with the morning sun. But a land of wealth and ease or a golden city could not be found. For many centuries the fight for Guyana continued until, in the end, the country became a part of the British Empire.

In the meantime, the little boy Mahn Singh, who had spent much time at the court of the Maharajah Jai Singh the Second, had become an old man. His last days were spent much like his earlier days, telling stories of distant lands, this time to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One great-grandson especially delighted in asking questions of the elderly Mahn Singh. Though still young in age, Jung Bahadur Singh would question Mahn Singh for hours about foreign lands and different peoples. The younger Singh also learned about the heroes of the Ramayana as well as the countries of the West where many adventures awaited the brave and restless ones who would dare to journey beyond the land of their birth.

Jung Bahadur Singh was in his twenties when he heard that some of his people were traveling across the ocean to work on the sugar plantations in a remote land known as Guy-

ana. Jung Bahadur Singh, great grandson of Mahn Singh, took up the call and together with several other stalwart young men, shipped off to the only British colony in South America.

If conditions in India were difficult, conditions in Guyana seemed almost impossible. From early morn to late at night, Jung Bahadur Singh worked in the fields. He raised his family as best he could. Battling the encroaching jungles on one hand and the restless sea on the other in order to save his little farm, he persisted and struggled until the day he died. But the son of Jung Bahadur Singh grew up in the little village by the ocean and remembered the tales of the land from whence his father came.

The village grew and prospered and in time, the son of Jung Bahadur Singh named Harricharan Nian Singh, planted his own crops and tended his own sheep and cattle. The tides of time rolled on and eventually a son was born to him. Nian Singh spent much time with his son, who later in a radical departure from Hindu tradition, would be called John. He taught him the ways of the West and the wisdom of the East, believing that a blend of both would be better than either one alone. Like his forefathers before him, Nian Singh worked the fields and farms so that he could afford to educate his son in the better schools of the time. Much was learned by John and one day, like his grandfather, he left the land of his birth and traveled to a new land—The United States of America.

Strange is the pattern that the Weaver creates as strands of time and space are woven together. Ever since I first came to these shores, I've used a blend of Eastern and Western philosophies that served me well, except for the last few years or, perhaps I should say, in spite of the last few years. When I first met Gideon, my career and financial sta-

bility were being tested. I witnessed things that I had spent a lifetime building, slowly crumble. Even meeting God in the Big City had not prepared me for what was to follow. And what followed was absolutely devastating. Gideon was far from my mind when my car was repossessed. God seemed very distant as creditors hounded me daily.

All I had come to believe seemed to be disintegrating. Anger, frustration, fear and unhappiness filled me to overflowing. Friends disappeared, leaving me to believe they were never friends in the first place. The two or three remaining ones helped as much as they could. Even brothers and sisters raised their voices in anger and disgust because of my inability to repay debts owed them. As time passed, I was quickly turning into an outcast. I remember vividly how, in the middle of one winter, my wife and children huddled over a small electric heater because the oil company had turned off our oil supply. Tears welled up in my eyes as I pleaded, to no avail, with the telephone company not to cut off our service. Where was Gideon in the midst of all this?

The questions weren't new and have been asked by thousands of unfortunate people for centuries. Why must I suffer so much? And if I had to suffer, why did my family and friends have to endure with me? All I had tried to do was to earn a decent living while treating my employees and others fairly. I had tried to live by the old injunction to "do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God." But in spite of my efforts it came crashing down—and fast. After the loss of the company, the comfort and security we had known as a family vanished as mist before the morning sun.

We lost our home and most of our possessions. We sold a few remaining pieces of furniture in order to buy gro-

ceries. One of the most difficult sacrifices I was forced to make was to give away Rajah. It was he who had sat beside me as I conversed with Gideon. Overwhelmed and despondent, I began questioning everything I held sacred. The question was not "Where was Gideon?" but, "Where was God?" Eventually we moved to another state in a desperate effort to start over.

And then, as a final blow, my father, descendant of Mahn Singh of Bharat, passed away. Many were the sorrowful moments I spent alone but, even so, a new understanding was dawning. On quiet evenings as I drove home from work I could still hear his voice in my head.

While commuting one evening, I was thinking how scarce Gideon had become during my troubles. Why couldn't I see him when I needed him most? Suddenly the sound of sirens sent me searching my rear view mirror. Startled, I saw the flashing lights of a state trooper preparing to pull me over. Not now, not now! I can't afford a ticket. I must have been so absorbed in my thoughts that I forgot about the speed limit. I pulled over to the shoulder of the road and nervously fumbled through the papers in the glove compartment as I awaited the trooper. Apprehensively, I turned around to glance up at the smiling face of the bearded man and almost dropped the papers in total surprise. "I've been hijacked... Gideon! You... What... I mean..." I couldn't continue. His grin widened as I just stared, dumbfounded in amazement.

"Well, at least say 'Hello'," he demanded.

"It's good to see you again but, for crying out loud, where have you been?" I stammered.

"Just thought you could use a laugh and, as I recall, you wanted to see me."

“Where did you get this car?”

As if it was normal procedure, he calmly replied, “Created it.” Ignoring his answer, I said, “I’ve got to talk to you, but we can’t stay here.”

“That’s why I came. I’ll see you at ten tomorrow morning. Here’s the address. We’ll have lots of time to talk then.” Handing me a piece of paper, he gave me a slap on the shoulder, waved, turned around and walked back to his car. I glanced at the address then up to the rear view mirror. He was gone—vanished—just like he used to.

I could hardly contain my excitement as I drove the rest of the way home. Tomorrow I’ll see him again. I had lots of questions and, this time, I wanted answers. Tomorrow we shall see, I thought as I pulled into my driveway.

Chapter Thirteen

The morning arrived and I prepared for my meeting with Gideon. I felt calm and composed yet, there was an undercurrent of excitement that even I couldn't deny. Due to my recent relocation, I wasn't familiar with many of the local streets. Finally, out of frustration, I resorted to a local map and, having located the street, got in my car and drove off.

At the designated address, I walked up to the front door and anxiously rang the bell. A gray-haired lady opened the door, smiled at me and said, "Please come in. You must be John. Gideon is expecting you." I thanked her and entered. I spotted Gideon in the living room and walked over to shake his hand. Simultaneously he stretched out his hand, smiled and motioned for me to sit. Impatiently I fidgeted. The silence was overwhelming. Sometimes, a few seconds can seem like an eternity.

"So, how are you Gideon?" I finally asked. Anything to start a conversation, I thought.

"As usual, John, I'm tending to business, doing the things that need to be done," he replied matter-of-factly.

"Well, your business must have been very busy because I haven't heard from you in ages. Where were you during the past few years, Gideon? I really could have used some help. Somehow I felt abandoned, as good as betrayed, by you and even by God. Remember, we met Him in the Big City—or did we? Was it all nonsense... an illusion? My tired mind playing cruel jokes on me?"

"No, not nonsense at all. Far from it. We were with you all the time. You were so blinded by what appeared to be happening to you, so consumed in self-pity that you weren't even aware of our presence."

I wanted to scream in anger, but managed to restrain myself. "Gideon, I've been and still am going through a mine-field of confusion and suffering. Lost my homes, lands, father, company and most of my dignity and self-confidence. My wife was diagnosed with cancer. Her parents are also being treated for cancer. There's no medical insurance—hardly any money. I mean, how much can one person take? You don't know what it's like... you probably don't even care."

He interrupted me, "Yes, I know about all of that. But you gained strength, humility, wisdom and much more. Jim Elliot, a martyr, once said, 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.' The things that are important are still with you, even more so today. Your dignity and self-confidence *are* still with you, but most of all you're regaining your sense of purpose."

"Sense of purpose about what?"

"About what you came here to do."

"What I came here to do? Beats me. I have no idea what I came here to do, except, perhaps, to live and work and struggle until I die."

"Don't you have a sense of something important you must do in this lifetime?" he questioned.

"Oh sure, doesn't everybody? Survive—get through today so I can start over and struggle with tomorrow. Anyway, why didn't you stay around to help me when I needed it? Why didn't you tell me these things were going to happen? You knew, didn't you?"

"Of course, I knew. But if I had told you about them, you probably would have given up and never reached this point."

"This point isn't much better than any of the other points along the way. As you can probably see, I don't earn enough money to even feed my family. It's all I can do to make ends meet. I've been struggling so hard, but there never seems to be any progress. All I do is struggle. Why are bad things happening all the time, Gideon?"

"Bad things happen sometimes and good things can happen most of the time. It's how you look at it, John."

"There you go again, more riddles. Why don't you answer my questions? Haven't bad things ever happened to you?"

"Yes! Unpleasant things happened to me many times. But that was when I wasn't aware of who I was and all the power I had at my command. It was only after I realized that I was both the giver and the gift, the creator and the creation, the teacher and the student, that I learned to change the things that you call circumstances. Life then became much more fun. You think that you have had tough times! Let me tell you about tough times!

"It was another time and another place, thousands of your earth years ago. It was the time of the Israelites and the

Midianites. For some reason, the Midianites had conquered my people and we suffered terribly. For seven long years the Midianites would move across the land and destroy everything in their path. They took our sheep and cattle, our seed grain, all they could find. They killed our men, raped our women and enslaved our children. In spite of all that, we maintained our faith and kept on struggling.

"The Midianites would race over the land on fast-moving camels. They seemed numberless. Like locusts they came, destroying and laying waste until we lost all hope. Now, my father Joash had hidden some grain from the Midianites and one evening, while it was not quite dark, I went near the wine press to thresh the grain so that we could get some food. Near the wine press was a giant oak tree. As I looked over to the oak tree, a man whom I had never seen before stood up, walked over to me and raised his hand in greeting. Always mindful of spies, I was deathly afraid. But the man was smiling and he seemed friendly enough. Perhaps, it was a messenger of God, but then I was too frightened to ask.

"I stood there quivering as he said, 'Hello, you mighty man of valor, the Lord is with you.'

"I was puzzled by this greeting but summoned enough courage to ask a question, similar to the one you asked me earlier. 'If the Lord is with me, how come the Midianites destroy our land, kill our people and enslave us? What would it have been like if the Lord hadn't been with me?'

"The answer he gave did not make sense at the time. 'Go in your strength and save your people from the Midianites,' he said.

"I almost laughed, but seeing that the stranger was serious, I said, 'My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the

least important in my family. How can I do anything?’

“The answer to my question is the same answer I give to yours. The man said, ‘The Lord will be with you and you shall smite the Midianites as one man.’

“You see, John, things were really bad. But that night I started thinking if I really believed in myself and this power that is called God, I could do anything. The rest is history—how, with only three hundred fighting men, we put the armies of Midian to flight. I then had all the wealth, power and happiness I could desire and lived to a ripe old age. When I died they laid me to rest in the tomb of Joash, my father, at Ophra.”

“So, you lived on earth before this time, Gideon?”

“Of course, I did. Many times.”

“Do you remember all those times?”

“Only the ones I want to. But from each time, there was something important to learn. From that experience with the Midianites I learned the importance of believing in myself and my God. I learned that no matter how bad things appeared to be, if you choose to change them and if you have a sense of purpose, you can overcome. You’ve had many lessons of this sort in other times but you’ve forgotten them. It’s in remembering and applying what you’ve already learned that you find the answers to your present problems.”

“How do I go about remembering these things? And how can these things be true?”

“What do you mean by ‘how can these things be true’? Can you tell me how a tree grows, or how a bird flies? Can you explain how the world works? Listen to your heart and soul in your quiet times and you’ll see how much you remember and how much you really know. The door of the soul

opens inward and meditation is the key that unlocks that door. You've taught many people how to meditate and yet, you don't heed your own instructions. 'Physician, heal thyself!'"

In a humbled tone I asked, "Gideon, what's happening to me?"

He looked at me with such compassionate eyes and spoke in such sympathetic tones that I was somewhat embarrassed at the way I'd lashed out at him. "Look," he said, "What's happening to you is nothing that shouldn't be happening. You're discovering yourself again. You're going through a super laundromat—not a pleasant experience while it's happening, but when you come out you're clean. Good gold must first go through the fire. You've been through a lot of suffering. The time for tears is almost over. Don't give up now. You're almost there."

"Do you mean all the sorrowful events of the past few years had a purpose?"

"Everything has a purpose even though you may not always be aware of it. The honeybee thinks that it only takes the nectar from the flower yet, in so doing, it pollinates and helps in the creation of fruits. There's an important reason for your being here. You must now start to use some of the learning you've gained from your experiences so that you can get on with the business of living a joyful, fruitful, peaceful life."

There was a knock at the door and in walked Marla whom I hadn't seen in years. I stood up and took her extended hand. "John," she said, "It's so good to see you again. For a while there, we thought you weren't going to pull through." She smiled as she seated herself next to Gideon.

Gideon looked at Marla and asked, "How's it going with

System 22?"

They both turned to me as Marla replied, "All goes well. Perhaps John might enjoy a short visit there, don't you think?"

Gideon was serious as he replied, "I don't know if he's ready yet, but I'll check with the Chief."

"What's this System 22, Gideon?" I could feel something afoot.

"It's an entirely different system from this one. However, some preparations must be made before you're able to go there. In fact, a trip *has* been scheduled for you. We just have to double check to see if the time is right and if you're prepared. I'll let you know more about it soon."

I could see that further questions about System 22 wouldn't be answered, so I didn't pursue the issue. I felt good seeing Gideon and Marla again. "Will I be seeing you two more often now?" I asked.

"More often than you may want to," Marla replied. "And I've been asked to give you all the help you need and to assist in your growth process."

"That would really be a great help," I blurted out happily.

We said our good-byes and I left my other-worldly friends still a bit baffled, but knowing that I would be seeing them again soon.

Chapter Fourteen

A week had passed since my last meeting with Gideon and Marla. Christmas was only a few days away and we, like many other families, were preparing for the occasion. Barely able to afford a tree, we settled for a sorry-looking specimen and spent most of the remaining weekend hanging ornaments, lights and decorations. Tired but pleased that we were able to make the most of what we had, I fell into bed exhausted.

I must scarcely have fallen asleep when, all of a sudden, I was wide awake again. Being awake this time, however, was somewhat different. I appeared to be floating in the air. Disorienting as this seemed at first, I somehow felt a sense of curiosity and freedom. Gazing down, I saw my body lying peacefully asleep between the sheets yet, I was vibrantly awake, conscious and able to think. I peered around me and found the room as I knew it. I seemed to have a body, but it was much lighter than the one I was accustomed to. Perhaps I had died, I thought, yet I felt more alive than ever. I was beginning to panic when a voice from within my head seemed to speak. "Look behind you, John," it said.

Immediately I turned around and saw Gideon and Marla. "Don't be afraid, my friend," said Gideon, "You're experiencing what's called an out-of-body situation. Your body is in this state we're able to travel farther and faster and, of course, more efficiently than if you're in the physical body."

Still a bit unsure, I asked Gideon, "Are you really sure it's safe to be out of my body like this? I mean, isn't there a danger I might not be able to get back to it?"

"Not at all, John. You're perfectly safe. As a rule, most people do this during their sleep. However, most don't remember it when they wake up in the morning."

"What's the point then? Why am I doing it?"

Marla spoke up. I don't mean that a voice echoed across the room. Instead, I just seemed to hear her in my head. "Let's go to where it's more comfortable and we'll tell you about the arrangements." She reached out and took my hand. Gideon grabbed the other one and, all of a sudden, the three of us were flying, literally, through the roof. Over the house and above the trees we flew until, in a blur, we were standing under a tree in a clearing. Nearby drifted a gentle-flowing stream and the bright moon above us shone on the beautiful, fleecy clouds. Enveloped in a lovely, comfortable warmth, we were immune to temperature and weather. Behind me, stretching it seemed into infinity, was a narrow silver light, somewhat like a shining cord. Gideon, as if reading my mind, said, "We're speaking to you with our thoughts, John. Without the physical body, you have no need for physical voice or ears. You'll hear us, and we you—as soon as thoughts are directed. Incidentally, that shining cord you see, is the silver cord that binds you to your physical body. Your 'Life Force' sustains the body through the silver cord."

Marla interjected, "We use this method of travel when there are special things to be accomplished. This is a trial run for what you'll be doing in a few days. Remember we mentioned System 22 during our last meeting? Well, your visit has been approved. We must tell you a little more about it, however, before we take you there. Somewhat like a mini-orientation."

"Well, I'm listening," I said.

"As you remember, you once visited the World Headquarters of G & M Enterprises," she continued. "There you met the Chief and had the pleasure of conversing with Him personally." I thought of how nice it would be to just rest in an easy chair listening to Marla. The thought had hardly occurred to me when I found myself reclining in a comfortable chair. Marla and Gideon were similarly positioned.

Gideon announced, "When you're out of your body as you are now, John, your thoughts are materialized at the speed of light, or rather, at the speed of thought. The same thing could happen when you're in your body, of course, but then you have to take into account the concept called 'time'. So, managing one's thinking is as essential here as it is there. As a man thinketh..., remember?"

"Wow! What a fantastic place!" I shouted. "Could I think of all kinds of good stuff, fun things or whatever and would they appear?"

"Here, immediately, there, sooner or later. But appear they will, as sure as day follows night. By the same token, however, if you focus on unpleasant things, they too will be created. Just a universal law, John. Think and expect good and you get it. Think and expect bad and you get that, too. It's a double-edged sword, you see. You can't get one without also

being able to get the other, or else, where would your power of choice be? How could you exercise choice if you were only given one possible choice? Therefore, since the power of choice is one of the most important gifts from your Creator, you must have at least two choices and most times, many, many more. That's the simplicity and the complexity of it.

"Gee, Gideon, it's not as simple as I thought after all."

"Simple it is, but easy it's not. Most of your great teachers throughout history have spoken about the wisdom of managing and choosing one's thoughts. Nevertheless, most people still have lots to learn."

Marla took up the conversation again. "When you travel through time and space on earth, you don't necessarily have to leave your physical body. Remember when you traveled to your old college and to the Ganges River? You took your body with you because that was local travel. If you were, however, to travel to a different star system, it's much more efficient to do it this way, without the physical body.

"We were discussing just such a situation a few moments ago. To go to the World Headquarters of G & M Enterprises, you had no need for cosmic travel methods. However, System 22 is outside your star system and is the Universal Headquarters of the Chief. From that location, which isn't really a place in the formal sense of the word, the entire universe is monitored and adjusted according to the thoughts and needs of its various inhabitants and life forms."

"Is it like a super headquarters from which the Almighty manages his universe?" I blurted out still curious, like a child with a new toy.

"It's only headquarters for one universe. There are many universes and each one has its own support system.

Ours and yours is System 22.”

“How many universes are there altogether, Marla?”

“How many grains of sand are there in the desert? How many stars in the heavens?” she quickly replied in answer to my question.

We were all quiet for a while. I could ‘hear’ the sound of the wind as it quietly moved through the leaves above me. “Then there must be other civilizations and people on other planets and star systems?” I asked.

“Yes, John,” Gideon responded. “There are many life forms in many universes. They were designed to live in harmony with one another. Similarly, on earth there are many life forms, each unique and having its own special place in the scheme of things. Just as the ant is able to co-exist with the elephant, mankind should be able to co-exist with one another and also with the various other life forms.”

“Are some of the other civilizations more advanced than ours, Gideon?”

“‘Advanced,’ is not the correct word. It would be more accurate to use ‘aware,’ but for illustrative purposes let’s use ‘advanced.’ Are some life forms on earth more advanced than others, more highly evolved, if you will? Of course there are. Similarly, in the universe there are some civilizations far more advanced than yours. Also, there are others far less evolved. Some are truly energy or light beings, having no need for a body as you know it. They’re so aware of their infinite power that they create whatever they may need out of pure thought.

“Others are not as mature and still indulge in wars and other less evolved behaviors. But they are all children of the First Force and they’re all striving in one way or another to achieve unity of purpose with their Creator. It’s the same

Creator who made you and us—The Chief Himself. We have instant access to Him.”

“Would it be possible to see Him again? I mean, like I saw Him that time in the Big City?” I stammered.

“That’s the purpose of the trip to System 22. In a few more days we’ll make a trip to our Universal Headquarters. There the Chief will speak with you again and you’ll be able to ask all the questions you want. Think and reflect on what you’ve heard tonight. We must take you back now, but when the time comes for the journey we’ll let you know.”

There was a hissing sound and a flash of light. I turned over and was wide awake in bed. Marla and Gideon were gone. Of one thing I was sure, however, it was not a dream.

Chapter Fifteen

It was the day after Christmas. The morning was bitter cold, but the golden rays of the sun bathed the trees in a frosty, sparkling beauty. Somehow, deep within me, I felt this was to be the day for my visit to System 22. Yet nothing had happened to confirm my feelings.

Christmas day had been spent at home with the family. It was exciting to help my children set up their toys. I reflected on the days of my childhood and how, with great excitement, I would wait for Christmas day. With anxious fingers, I would rip the wrappings from my gifts and delight myself with wild imaginations of their contents. Christmas hadn't changed much with time, although, as I grew older, the spirit of Christmas had taken on an entirely commercial vein.

Today, however, Christmas was behind me and it was time to return to the mundane world of commerce. This evening, I thought, should be a peaceful one. It was a quiet day at the office and after a good dinner, some time with the fam-

ily and a few household chores, I turned in for the night and fell asleep.

Without warning, it happened again. I was wide awake looking down at my body sleeping peacefully on the bed. Standing next to me were Marla and Gideon. "It's time for us to go to System 22, John," said Gideon. "Your body will be at rest and perfectly safe while we're gone. You ready?"

"As ready as I'll ever be," I replied, and without further ado, they each grasped one of my hands and we were off again. We experienced the same flying sensation and suddenly there was the feeling of falling. Almost immediately, we were standing in a brightly-lit room of enormous dimensions. The room was full of strangers. They were talking to one another and occasionally glancing at various giant screens on the wall. Two younger men walked over and greeted us. "Your turn will come shortly, Gideon," one of them said. They led us into what appeared to be a waiting room. It was tastefully decorated with expensive furnishings that seemed to be of the same style I saw at G & M Headquarters. We sat down and helped ourselves to some freshly brewed coffee. The thought occurred to me that even out of my body I enjoyed a good cup of coffee.

"Gideon, what is this place?" I asked.

"This is the first step in the 'translation' process from earth to the heavens," he answered.

"What do you mean?" I was frankly puzzled.

"To reach System 22 from earth there are several transfer points. Each person who wants to go or is invited to visit must first go through one of these transfer points. I don't know the exact reason why, but I understand it has something to do with space-time coordinates. Purely technical, I guess.

There are a number of these locations here on earth and a few of them are in this country. Right now, we're in an area you call Arizona. There are also transfer points in California, Virginia Beach and Massachusetts. Two new ones are in the process of being completed in Washington and Atlanta.

"Outside this country, other points are located, for example, in Canada, England, Australia and India. A few more in Africa, China and elsewhere. We chose Arizona for no particular reason, except that we're familiar with it. You see, we've done this many times before. However, we could have gone to any of the other points.

"You'll notice that we all appear to have bodies. These bodies are mental ones, not physical ones and, therefore, are not subject to the same time, space and density constraints as earth bodies. In fact, the earth body is a physical image of your spirit body, somewhat similar to the way a picture shows an actual scene. From this transfer point we'll go directly to System 22 where you'll meet some very interesting people and, finally, the Chief. I think they're almost ready for us. Let's go."

We stood up and walked over to one of the large screens, which was now glowing white. The two young men we'd met earlier waved us on. Gideon, Marla and I joined hands once again and before I could realize what was happening, we walked right through the screen. I mean, through the screen and into a different world.

Immediately there was complete darkness, a sound not unlike music, then absolute silence. I was no longer afraid, just extremely curious. After what seemed like an eternity, but in reality couldn't have been more than a few seconds, we emerged into another brilliantly lit room similar to the one

we'd just left. I turned to Gideon and said, "We don't seem to have gone anywhere."

Smiling, he replied, "We're light years away from where we started."

A delegation awaited us—a group of friendly people who came forward and surrounded us. Searching the faces around us, I was taken by surprise to find my father, looking exactly as I knew him back on earth. He looked straight into my eyes; I thought for sure I was dreaming. I became overwhelmed by emotions as I rushed up and threw my arms around him. I had missed him so much.

"No, you're not dreaming, son," he said to me.

"You're alive, Dad?" I said, more as a statement than a question.

"As alive, as I ever was or will be," he replied. He seemed to be happy and at peace. The crowd parted as we walked across the room toward a large door. As we approached, the door opened automatically and we proceeded into a scene of indescribable beauty. Although we'd left the transfer point at night, it was now full daylight. Perhaps, it's less confusing not to analyze the mysteries of time and space.

Marla said, "We'll be back with you shortly, John," and she and Gideon vanished, leaving me alone with my Dad. I looked at the man who had raised me and taught me so much about life. Was it the light again or did he seem to be surrounded by a faint, silvery aura?

"Sit down, son," he said as he pointed toward a bench beneath a tree, "Tell me how you've been."

"Well, to say the least, I've been having a real rough time, Dad. I don't know how, but I'm sure things will work out eventually. What's this place and what are you doing here?"

Somehow, I felt that he already knew how I was doing.

"This is a reception center for visitors from various parts of the universe. I'll be here for a while. I chose this assignment because of the opportunities for growth and learning, but I have to admit it's also fun."

"Why did you leave us so suddenly, Dad? Don't you know how much all of us miss you, especially Mom? She speaks of you all the time. Recently, she was very ill, but she's doing much better now. I think she misses you more than everyone else put together."

I seemed to catch a glimpse of sadness in his eyes as he said, "It was time for me to go on." He was quiet for a short while as if reflecting on what I'd said. Then he continued, "I'd completed as much of my earth work as I could and there was nothing else for me to do. From here, it's possible to help you and the others much more than I was able to do while I was there. I watch over your mother constantly. It'll be a few more years before she joins me, but you've just started your work. All that came before was just preparation. Your visit here is the next step. It's like a graduation before going on to other, more complex work.

"I'll be with you whenever you need me. Just call me in your thoughts like you called me aloud when you were a little boy. I'll answer and help you as I always did. I never really left you at all; it only seems that way. Whenever you want to talk with me, find a quiet spot, close your eyes and see the house in the old country and the coconut palm growing by the edge of the little stream. I'll meet you under the tamarind tree and we'll discuss whatever it is that's troubling you.

"There are others here who'll be helping you, too. I've known Gideon and Marla from many lifetimes. There is also a

group of three called the Companions. I know you see them often in your dreams. They always bring you valid information that very often you choose to ignore. They are your higher self—your guiding, knowing self. Everyone has several helpers. You're aware of some of yours, but most people never discover the help that is available to them until they cross over to this side."

"Dad, I feel like crying—not tears of sadness, but tears of joy."

"There's no need for tears at all. The Chief is all Love and Joy. You, son and the others on Earth are the ones who believe that life is supposed to be a vale of tears and suffering. The Loving Force only wants for you that which you desire for yourselves. Some of you choose sadness and others happiness."

There was such peace and serenity surrounding us as we sat there. It seemed as though he'd always been alive; that he'd lived forever, this dad of mine whom I miss terribly. I knew then that he'd never really died and I could always meet or see him whenever I wanted.

"Keep working, learning and growing, son," he continued. "Never give up. You've heard it said 'When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.' I believe 'When the teacher is ready, the master will appear.' You'll be meeting with the Chief soon. Then you will know that we're all one. You'll understand you've never been separated from your Creator; that you and He are one.

"We must go now. Gideon and Marla are coming for you and the Lord is waiting."

Gideon and Marla reappeared as suddenly as they had left. My dad hugged me warmly and patted me on the back.

Tears fell from the corners of my eyes as he said good-bye. It was so good just to see him again. Of course, it was obvious now that he was not dead, but transformed. As the butterfly lives within the caterpillar, so, now he was a butterfly of the universe instead of a caterpillar of Earth. "We wanted you to spend some time alone with him, J.H.," Gideon said. "Now we'll go to see God." He paused, winked at me, then continued, "the Chief, First Cause, Creator and All That Is."

Chapter Sixteen

Together we walked along a lovely pathway in a garden of exquisite beauty. Flowers with the most delicate forms blended their exotic scents to perfume the air with an ever so subtle fragrance. Surely, I thought, Eden must have looked like this. Birds with brilliant-colored plumes sang while painted butterflies danced in fluttering pirouettes creating a rainbow of colors.

We crossed a nearby clearing into the midst of a garden party. The tables and chairs were neatly arranged beneath the tangle of outstretched branches, which served as a sheltering canopy. The comforting sounds of talking and laughter rang out all around us. As we approached a table on the far side of the clearing, a stillness fell over the crowd. A closer look indicated that there was but one person sitting at that table. That person was God, appearing just as I had seen Him in the Big City. "Hello, Lord, What are you doing sitting all alone?" I asked.

"Sometimes it gets lonely being God. Please sit," He said gesturing in our direction. We pulled up chairs and joined

Him.

"Where are we? Could this place be heaven, Lord?" I asked.

"No. This isn't heaven. Heaven is neither here nor there. Let me assure you, heaven is closer to you than you think. It's within you. All of this comes from what's within you. Both heaven and hell are within your mind. All you have to do is choose which you'd like to have."

"Bless you, Lord," was all I could say. Realizing how ridiculously stupid I must have appeared, I quickly apologized. "Don't be embarrassed, John. It's generally the intent that's important," said God.

"Thank you, Sir," I replied as Marla and Gideon giggled in amusement at my predicament.

"Why don't you say something, Gideon?" I asked, feeling at a loss for words.

"This is *your* party, John. We're celebrating your visit."

Looking at God, I said, "Lord, I'm so happy to be here. When I return home, I'll spend my life building a temple where we can worship and praise you."

"That's very kind of you," He said, "but whatever gave you the idea that I dwell in temples or that I want to be worshipped and praised? Look, I really get bored with this praise thing. Instead of building me a temple, why don't you feed the hungry, help the poor, heal the sick and teach those who want to learn? Wouldn't that be more useful than a temple?"

God continued, "I've invited a number of others to be our guests and to join in our celebration. Let me introduce some of them." He stood up and pointed to various tables, calling names. "There is Abraham and over there are Moses and Annabelle. Next to them you can see Thomas and

Krishna. And over on the other side Rama, Mohammed, Gautama and Jacob. To our right, under that oak tree are Jesus, Peter, Paul, Elizabeth the First, Joan of Arc, Gandhi and Mary of Magdala. Sitting with them are Martin Luther King, Confucius, Jennifer Thompson, Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Rigby. These are some of my children, my friends and helpers. After tea, you should go around and meet them."

"How can they all be at the same party, Lord?" I asked, "I mean, Krishna and the Buddha conversing with Mohammed and Jesus? And who are Joseph, Jennifer and Annabelle?"

"They're all created in my image. Each is as important as the other. The famous names, you recognize. The other three, though not mentioned in history books, are still quite as dear to me. They were just simple folks, each one trying to fulfill his or her mission. This is a cooperative universe, not a competitive one, John. For someone to be richer, another doesn't have to be poorer. For you to be healthy, no one has to be sick. There's enough and more than enough for everyone. In the game of life, all can win and all can receive prizes."

"This is important; I've got to try to remember it all. Is this a dream or will I forget when I wake up?"

"No, this isn't a dream. And yes, you'll forget some, but not all. The important parts will stay in your memory for the rest of your earth life. Tolerance, harmony and understanding, these are some of the important things. Learn to understand yourself and you'll find it easier to understand everything else.

"Earth life appears to be so difficult at times for those who are there. Yet, there's no need for suffering and pain. Suffering should only teach you that you didn't really have to suffer in the first place. Help is always available if you choose

to ask for it, so ask, seek and knock. You have allies in many dimensions who are more than willing and able to help you when you're caught in a difficult situation. When you need help, ask for it. And, of course, I, too, am always there to assist you."

I interrupted God at this point. "Lord, You say we should ask for help, but I've asked many times and, yet, it seemed that there wasn't any answer. I seemed to have been worse off than before asking. Why is that so?"

"It's very simple indeed. Many times you ask without believing that you'll get an answer. Sometimes you don't think that you deserve an answer. At other times, you're pleading and begging and talking so much that you can't hear the answer.

"Then there are those times when you're like your son who has just broken his toy train. He asks you to fix it for him, but he holds on to it and won't give it to you. In fact, he even tells you how to fix it. You want a problem solved? Then don't hold on to it. Release it to me and go about your work. Let go and let God."

"Do You mean it's that simple? Just let go? That makes sense though. I think I'll try it," I stammered.

"You always have enough to do what has to be done—more than enough, actually, to take care of all your needs and wants. Sometimes you go through trials, but that's only to strengthen parts of you and to give you a deeper understanding. You're never alone. I am with you always. When you're down in the arena and your face is in the dust and the crowds are booing, don't give up. When they laugh at you and ridicule you and say all manner of vile things against you, don't give up. When you feel the boot of your opponent on

your neck, when you feel that life isn't worth living any longer, remember this—it's not over yet. Never let go of hope. Hope keeps mighty big company with faith and love. Get a faith-lift if you must and don't abandon hope."

"You say that You're always with me and Your other children. Yet, I don't always see You as I see You now. In fact, I had to travel through transfer points on earth to get here. Gideon told me that we're somewhere on the third star of the Aldebaran System. Do You know how far I figure we must be from earth, Lord? Very, very far. If You are always with me, why do I have to travel so far to see You. How can You hear when I call?"

"Precisely the point I want to make clear, John. You didn't have to go through transfer points or travel great distances to see me. You believed that was the only way to do it, so we accommodated your beliefs. As you believe, so it is. You're on Aldebaran and you're on earth. You're everywhere and nowhere. Your essence and nature span the universe itself and, like Me, you can be everywhere and everywhen. Even when you seem to be 'nowhere' you are still 'now-here.'

"Beliefs are extremely important. You think that you believe what you see. In reality, you see what you believe. Instead of trying to 'set' things right, try to 'see' them right and they'll automatically be set right. See your problems and challenges through Me instead of seeing Me through them.

"You tend to think of yourselves as a people of beginnings and endings. And yet, there is neither. That which you love will continue forever just as surely as that which you hate. Do away with what you don't want by ceasing to hate it. There is only one power and one force in the universe and I AM THAT. I created you in My image and likeness so YOU ARE

THAT.

"The power to heal and prosper you, to guide and help you isn't in the skies. It is and always has been within you. *I am within you.* All you need to do is to become aware that I am there. There is mountain-moving power in each and every one of My children. You are *a part* of Me and, yet, at times, you think yourselves *apart* from Me. You are made as I am. That which I do, you can do also. You are all co-creators with Me.

"You wonder about prayer at times and think that it must be magical. There's no magic in it. It's a method I gave to you so that you could reach Me anytime you want. It was designed to bring you to the realization that you should be aware of Me all the time. Prayer does not change Me, it changes you. Use it as it was originally taught. Come first to yourself and then you'll find that you have come to Me.

"You are a child of the King, a prince of the realm. All of you are children of the King and thus princes and princesses. To understand the so-called mysteries of life, you just have to be aware of your birthright. Look at the trees, the mountains and the skies. You should know that long before they were, you have been and long after they're gone, you shall continue to be."

God continued, "Perhaps, it would help you to understand better if you walk around a bit and talk to some of My other children. Many of them have gone through a lot worse than you have and, yet, they emerged victorious. Enjoy the party, John. Life is really a celebration."

Listening to God again was an experience never to be forgotten. Marla, Gideon and I walked over to a number of tables and spoke with some of the people. It was delightfully

refreshing to converse with some of the great personalities of all time. I walked over to Jesus who was having a conversation with the Buddha. "Pardon me for interrupting," I said, "I'm somewhat surprised to see the two of you at the same party. Do you have a lot in common?"

"More than most people would like to believe," said the Buddha.

"Lord Christ, could you explain to me why you had to die on a cross?" I asked.

"I didn't have to die, not on a cross nor anyplace else. As you can see, John, I'm far from dead. My followers, if you look over there," as he pointed to Peter and Paul, "Were a group of pretty somber folks and I had to make quite an impression on them. I had to make sure they got the message and were going to teach others about the laws of life. They quickly forgot the 'miracles and parables,' but my so called 'death and resurrection' gave them the incentive they needed to spread the message. Naturally, after all was said and done, somewhere along the way their followers got everything mixed up. They started worshipping me instead of teaching and living what I'd taught them. The same thing happened to my friend here, Prince Gautama, or as he's more commonly known, the Buddha."

The Buddha took up the conversation. "When I first began to understand the laws of the universe, I was sitting under a Bodhi tree. I thought how wonderful it would be to share what I'd found. But those who came after me interpreted and misinterpreted what I tried to say. You can't even recognize some of the things I taught them. Well, there'll be others of us who'll keep trying. To raise ourselves higher, we must endeavor to raise the consciousness of the entire human

race.”

“Will you still help us then?”

“I, Jesus and others, will always be with you to help, if you call upon us. Just believe that we’re with you, and there we are. No need for meaningless sacrifices and rituals. You have direct access to the Chief, direct access to any of us. Only believe and know that this is so.”

Confucius came over and joined in the conversation. “Listen, John,” he said. “We’ve all been trying to say the same thing for ages. The Buddha’s message was love. Jesus exemplified this best. He taught about love. Love your God. Love your neighbor. Love yourself. Remember the Golden Rule? Love is the most powerful force in the universe. The whole thing is very simple. People must learn that they are all shipmates on the common voyage of life and that they cannot sink their shipmates without sinking themselves. Ask Gandhi over there and he’ll tell you. You must love without expecting anything in return. Ask God. He loves us exactly as we are. You should try love sometimes. Work on love, John. Don’t try to teach people how to love. Just show them by example.”

God walked over to us while tea was being served. Beside Him was a tall, remarkable looking fellow. “John,” God said, “I want you to meet Lord Michael. You and your legends know him as the archangel, Michael. Don’t be surprised that he hasn’t any wings. He only uses wings when there’s a need for such appearances.” I bowed with reverence and thought to myself that it wasn’t possible for God, His angels and others to be speaking with me. How could this be? I, a relatively insignificant human being, talking with God?

Immediately God answered my unspoken question. “I speak to all,” He said, “And I speak through all. Do you see

Peter over there? They used to call him Simon. I spoke to him and, through him, I spoke to many others. He was just a common fisherman, you say? But what a fisherman! When he became aware of my presence through the teachings of Jesus, he spoke in thunder tones of truth. How about Paul? At one time they called him Saul of Tarsus. He was formally educated, having studied under Gamaliel at the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Gautama was a prince in India. Even Mary of Magdala heard and understood me.

“Look at Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. See how quietly he sits? A simple lawyer, you say he was? A lawyer, yes, but much more aware of universal laws than petty, man-made laws. Laws were made for people, not people for laws. He spoke of non-violence and love and millions of people listened to him. And Jesus? He was born the son of a carpenter and, yet, hundreds of millions of you believe in him. I wish more of you would believe in what he said. I speak to you and I speak through you. We speak for each other.

“Speak the truth wherever you may find it. Seek the truth wherever it is to be found. Don’t confuse facts with truth. Facts may not even be facts at all. Most times, they’re just opinions. Facts are relative. Truth is absolute. Instead of trying to force your facts on others, help them to find truth for themselves.

“You’re all brothers and sisters on a common journey toward your true potential. You have the power of God with you. You’ve always had it. You’re as free as you ever will be. If your experience seems to be lacking in this freedom, it’s only because you have been fettered in chains of your own forging. Lift up your head and look. See with your true eyes and you’ll never again be in bondage to yourself or to another.

My will for you is really your own will for yourself.

"All power in heaven and earth have been given to you. All, except one. You don't have the power to destroy life, even your own. No one has that power. It is Mine and Mine alone. Life is My greatest gift to you and I permit no one to destroy it. Even when it appears that life has been destroyed, it's only an illusion you see.

"There are those who say that they've found Me and rejoice in their discovery. They've only found themselves for I've never been lost. You, my son, are as valid as I am. When you can honestly say to yourself, '*I and my Father are One,*' then you'll be a master of the universe. You see, I am *you* in spirit as much as *you* are Me in becoming."

God ceased speaking and the party grew quiet. Then all of a sudden, I was alone. But there was an overwhelming sense of power and knowing within me. A voice, still and small, spoke in my head, "We are one—all in one and one in all. The good that you do, you do for yourself. The evil that one does is his alone."

Suddenly, I was startled to find myself in my bedroom, wide awake. It was now very late and I had experienced much and, hopefully, learned a lot. Perhaps, I shall again see Gideon and Marla. But now I know that, forever and ever, they and those I love will always be with me; that God has always been, is, and always will be with me.

It was time to be about my work, to seek the bliss beyond the appearances of the now. This is not an ending. It's not even the beginning of an ending. It's simply a beginning and so be it.

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A letter from the author...

Dear Reader:

If you have arrived at this point, you have traveled far. You've sat in on conversations with Gideon and Marla and you've seen John as he struggled to make sense of what appeared, at times, to be a senseless world. But this is not the end. If you recall, the last paragraph of "When You can Walk on Water, Take the Boat" spoke of "endings" and "beginnings."

Every ending implies a new beginning. Every beginning is the start of a glorious adventure. And the adventure never ends. Like all adventures, there are moments of fear, joy, peace, sorrow, turmoil, anxiety, anticipation and any emotion you could think of. This is life.

If you take a moment or two, every once in a while, to sit still and listen to your heart, you'd find that your world is safe and that there is no problem without a solution. But you've got to learn to trust—trust life, your God, your very being. And as you trust, you'll see that your problems start to disappear as mist before the morning sun.

If you enjoyed "When You Can Walk on Water, Take the Boat," tell your friends. They can download their own personal copies from my website. All they have to do is go to <http://www.waterbook.com/>

Is this the end--the final appearance--for Marla, Gideon and John? No, indeed! The adventures continue in the

sequels, "Morning Has Been All Night Coming" and "Journey in the Fields of Forever." To find out more about these books, please visit <http://www.waterbook.com/sequel> and <http://www.waterbook.com/sequel-2>

My latest book is called "The Power Pause--3 Minutes, 3 Steps to Personal Success and Real Happiness." Like my other books, it's written in story form and explains the amazing, simple formula to achieve your greatest dreams. Find out more about it at <http://www.powerpause.com/>

Thank you. Thank you, dear reader for joining me on this journey. Perhaps we shall meet again. May your journey be filled with all good things.

Always.

John H.

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Photos of John and some friends at:
<http://insight2000.com/pictures>