

# Jaguar Girl—A Love Story With Mother Earth

By Ashley Kent Carrithers

*Being a sweet tale told about Love's many guises and the energies of life on Earth encapsulated in fun characters who learn a little more about the Divine invitation to accede to an ever greater and then impeccable stewardship of The Story.*



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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to my mother, Dossie, with great loving admiration and affection. Those who knew her, and marveled at her phenomenal loving energy, will find her memorialized in Katy.

Second Edition dedication to Dr. June May Ruse, for all the love we are making.

## Foreword

*Jaguar Girl* wants to be the flagship for energies of not only Earth rescue but also of Earth adoration. It intends to unite communities of consciousness worldwide to ignite pro-activity as awareness is shared. The author primarily hopes to engage conscious folk via the stories of love encapsulated in the book such that the personal enjoyment and growth that are available will also lead to applications of care for Mother Earth.

A Love Story With Mother Earth? Of course, for once we realize we are in love with her, how can we continue to pollute her so mightily, so heartlessly. As we put a little dance in our doings, a little glory in our going, how can we not begin to more dearly cherish these lands, waters, and all the creations (creatures) thereon?

Interested readers are invited to explore the [Jaguar Ambassadors Gang \(JAG\)](#) website to consider joining this energy of self-empowerment via amping up personal awareness of the dire challenges upon Mother Earth, and then contributing energies of conscious care toward reversing the ravages we've visited upon Her. Right, there are many challenges operative, and it is past time to change our behavior, but all of this is offered light-heartedly as befits a grace filled revolution.

*Jaguar Girl* will also be a movie – the first environmentally popular movie where the background environment is brought front and center and is of equal import with the plot and characters. .

Movies can be great ambassadors of awareness, and we invite filmmakers to join us in offering the powerful outreach potential of cinema to honor not only the Earth's precious eco-systems but the natural diversity of other beings that depend on Her health for their survival. It is time for us to begin exercising responsible stewardship here, as we deepen our Story of Love with Mother Earth.

## Preface to the First Edition: Well Come

Welcome to this book, the words and wonderments offered herein. *Jaguar Girl* is almost a fairytale, intended for all ages, with challenges and growths and then happy endings for all.

The truth? All is not as it seems on Earth these days, as there are energies at play here that match, in magnitude, the endless immensity and mystery of outer and inner space. The physical world is a bit of a mess, with no small measure of challenge and confusion upon us individually and as a whole, no? Yes, and here's the good news: it's going to be fine—in fact it is, even now, all right. And therein lies the metaphysical presentation of the Jaguar Girl energy.

Careful conditioning has closed so many of us to the fruits of lovely, carefree spirituality. Our schools, organized religions, and other institutions have seen to that. But some of us are opening now and discovering delicious liberations and enjoyments, with a lot more to come.

This is the true invitation of *Jaguar Girl*. Ban it, burn it, or dare choose to join these pathways. It is a world-changer—Your World.

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## Preface to the Second Edition

Welcome to the 2nd Edition. This book was originally written with the express purpose of providing a forum for sharing understandings of life on earth in the hopes that awareness could be enlightened so as to shine some love on our environmental footprints, and thereby lessen the horrendous impact we, all of us, are having on the planet. Hurriedly written, it was riddled with faults as the author, ok—I, was lazy and buoyed by the understanding that it was of such value that readers would embrace the cosmological concepts and join in the heady work/play of Earth Rescue. Well, I completely forgot to market the book and no paths were beaten to its door. Twelve years have wandered by, and now it is offered in ebook form, which can gather only theoretical dust. But it won't, say I, as its time has come. Vamos.

This second edition benefits from the perspective of time passed, but mainly from the attention paid it by Russell Fuller, Chief Editor of WARP Place. Thanks to his criticism this is, hopefully, a better presentation and a more enjoyable read. The intention is exactly the same, to enlist warpers to effect a happy Earth Rescue movement, via embracing a cosmology—a understanding of why we are here on this Earth—which then leads to our own Love Story and a deepening care for our Home.

Comparing the two editions might prove a useful study for students of “literature” in that one might see the evolution of the writing process. To that point, a book report is included at the end from which the edits were effected.

## Review of the Second Edition

*Jaguar Girl* is indeed a love story with Mother Earth. It is obvious that Carrithers is also in love with Nature and the planet that supports all of us. There are actually a number of love stories intertwined in the book; the foremost, best, and most endearing is what Jaguar Girl, Tawny, feels for her Patagonia lands—the lands that hold her and her family, mostly females, in its gentle and sometimes dramatic sway.

Then there is the story of how Tio Perfecto escapes from a successful First World life to fall in love with simplicity and with freedom, and how that leads to a deepening of his wisdom, which leads to more love, health and happiness.

Back in the states we see the endearing, and pure, love story of Walter and Stephanie; friends since childhood and deeply in love, with plans to be together happily ever after. What happens to Walter is a chilling tale of how conditioned responsibility crushes that love. But wait. Tawny goes to the states to “seduce” Walter to come to her beloved lands in the hopes that the land itself would complete the seduction and save themselves from his corporation’s exploitation. In the process of enlightenment he is cured of his disease and falls back in rapturous and heartening love with Steph.

Readers should be aware that this is not just a simple if well-plotted intertwining of energies, loves, dreams, dangers, challenges, and awakenings. Rather it serves as a forum for the author’s personal cosmology, using questions from Tawny and her twin, Alixa, as a means for Tio Perfecto to share his understandings of why we are on the Earth, gleaned from a wide-awake life at the troughs of production and then heightened by his attendance on Nature.

This is the true offering of *Jaguar Girl*, as we are led, piece by piece, through the myriad understandings that constitute, then, not only a peaceful way of life, with love at the helm and negativity eschewed, but also a manner of observing, and hopefully lessening, one’s personal environmental footprint. Through it all we are offered a vision of living more happily via an adoption of whatever parts of the cosmology may be chosen, with eventual ascension to a state of experience with Flow, that seems nothing short of phenomenal.

This little book has the powerful potential to serve as a happy life changer. That choice is up to you. It is at one time complex, as the societal and educational conditionings imposed on most of us are compounded thoroughly and mightily—not easy to escape, and then it is also wonderfully easy—it is simply a choice. But one does need tools and understandings to cleanly shed the impositions, expectations, indoctrinations, and so on, so as to arrive at the beauty and ease of Flow.

So enjoy this book for its stories of love, sure, and also be open to the myriad metaphysical offerings for they are valuable, timely, critical, crucial and—the author’s favorite “F” word – Fun!

And then maybe consider what his hope is—that with more Fun in your life, you will heighten your love and care for Mother Earth.

## Chapter 1

Once upon a time, not so long ago but very far away, there was a beautiful place, lovely with fairness and ripe with nature. So fine and sparkling clean were its waters, so fiercely gentle its great lands, so clear its southern airs—washed with polar winds from the Antarctic and warmed by brilliant suns by day and the twinkling dreams of angels by night—that all the world's magic came there to rest from other zones where it was so often accosted and subdued. And there, deep in the mountains far away from all roads, it reunited with near-forgotten spirits and with the mystery that only Nature knows, as they danced in the outdoor ballroom, rejoicing in the peace, harmony, and love that reigned thereon.

There are tales told by Fairies, by minstrels, and sometimes by energy spirits that bear import for us as we wend our little ways through our times and that pray to share a shedding of light that the way be blessed.

Catch and saddle your imagination, then ride to this place, forgotten by time and far away over all your horizons: a land high in a mountain valley between two countries. From the river valley: sparkling, happy, light-filled waters cradling trout, like swift shadows of rainbows in a flowing dance of liquid diamonds, to high steppe country with songbird, quail, fox, puma, hare, guanaco, rising to the very teeth of the cordillera with its snows, waterfalls, lakes, and condors, and over to the forests on the other side, where Jaguar prowls the silent, sylvan ways under monkey and toucan.

It is the home of Magic that has worked its spells to keep this place a powerful refuge for Nature and the very few people who could find within the memories of their souls an agreement to seek the solace and excitement offered therein.

Here now is the story of how this place called out to its people, bade them come, and then intertwined destinies and loves with them.

Once a long time ago, an earlier century had ceded to the 1900s. This was before telephones jangled people's peace, before television invaded their homes, before automobiles held sway over the land, webbing their ways with hard, hot ribbons of concrete, further dividing Nature into ever smaller plots and fouling the wounded air with dubious fumes, while driving their eager occupants into expensive oblivion.

Back in a time when the grass-eating horse nobly bore his human burden on tracks of dirt or stones patiently cobbled, back when the machine ships had not yet taken over the lean grace of sailing vessels that moved as one with the yet clean airs, there lived in a huge country to the east of Europe, a fine lad of sixteen years whose name was Mikhail. He lived on the family farm with his father, mother, and all manner of livestock; chickens, turkeys, rabbits, goats, sheep, a milk cow, and his favorite, the horses.

Mikhail was a strapping lad, already showing strength in his lean frame, he was always eager to do the chores around the farm. Cheerful, attentive, eager and happy, he moved through his days as in a bright cloud thanks to his love of the land and the learning made possible thereon;

building, maintaining water systems, carving, fencing, providing wood for the ovens and places of fire, riding the herds with the wind teasing his shock of dark hair, the sun reddening his open face, and a combination of presence in the moment, with a faraway look in his brown, earthlike, eyes.

He had already spent seasons in both London and Paris but liked it best on his family's lands. His favorite time of the day was when home schooling classes were finished and he was free to go down to the stone stables to groom and play with the Arabian horses his father had imported from Egypt. He would usually saddle and ride off on his favorite, Magic News, in among the forests or along the great lake near his home, after he had first tended to the herds – riding through them observant for any possible problems; lameness, birthing difficulties etc. The stallion was beyond noble as he pranced his way across the lands, neck proudly arched and tail raised to the sun with which it was on fire. He was slate grey, with long mane and exuberant tail already showing the white, and depthless eyes, into which Mikhail would stare from only an inch away as communication was shared.

One day, his politically connected father, Alexander, informed Mikhail and his English mother, Christina, that he had heard deepening disturbing reports of unrest and armed fighting in certain areas of the country. He began laying concrete plans to move his family to South America.

“But why, father?” asked Mikhail.

“Mikhail, I have never told you this, but ever since my youth I have been visited and even haunted by dreams of a faraway place with very few people, kind winters, and peace. Remember me telling you about my time in the Navy when we visited Argentina? When I was there I heard about Patagonia, about its long chain of mountains and how wild and remote it is. In my life I have been whelmed with worry, strife and conflict. I want only to be with my small family in a safe and gentle place, and all this unrest here is getting to be more than just a bother – it is getting dangerous. And something is calling me—lands that I see repeatedly in my dreams. You must release all of this here and join me in my excitement, for my dreams are filled with longing, and I sense that this old homeland, in fact this entire continent, may not be safe for a long, long time.”

Mikhail was a good boy, already used to the flexibility invited by living in, and with, nature, and, respecting his father, he did not protest. In fact he had also felt a yearning for far-off places—more foreign than the European capitals. But he loved these lands and specially his stallion, which he had raised from a colt, and wondered how he could leave him. His father, sensing the concern and knowing how much he loved the stallion, told him not to worry, that he would ride Magic News to the port, and that he had already arranged transport on the ship to Argentina to include the horse. Mikhail was overwhelmed with appreciation and gave his father a big hug, as they thumped each other on the back, smiling broadly.

During the next few weeks the unrest continued, and assumed dangerous proportions, as the beginnings of chaos began to take over the ways of the law. Mikhail's father sent him and Christina, with voyage trunks, to the port city while he stayed behind to settle his business affairs and dispose of his possessions, the things of his father's father. His plan was to complete the sale of his estate for gold to take to the dreamland, a land he had castled and planted with animals and orchards in his mind for many years. He had received a down payment and was waiting the final



installment from his neighbor, though he had doubts that it would ever happen due to the turmoil upon the land. He gathered what gold he had, plus the jewels in his saddlebags while hoping to wait another few days.

But now it was late, and men without dreams, without understandings, came to simply take his lands and possessions, for lawlessness was the new law. Driven by fear and need, they came at night and surrounded the manor and lit fires as they looted his outbuildings and gathered corn from his fields. The night before he had had a new dream, one of urgency, "Come now, come now." And in the dream he almost woke and asked, "What of these things?" And was answered: "They don't matter now. Ride the Magic News stallion away and bring your family, your spirit, to us. Life is short and ever shorter. Come now!"

So he went with just his saddlebags with some gold and the jewels his mother had once worn at court. He mounted the stallion, whose eyes were flaring at the excitement, and circled his manor to find a break in the attackers, and then he rode. He spurred through them, exhilarated to be free and on his way. "I am coming!" he exhorted within. "Wait for ..." but he was struck in his back by a bullet. He slumped onto the neck of his surging charger, and as he clung he felt the great heart of the animal as it powered onward. "Hang on, hang on."

And he did, his blood staining the horse's pelt and glistening in the last moonlight. He felt himself almost flying. Maybe they did fly, aloft in a dream of peace, cuddled in a cloud, at one time floating through the dawn airs, at the next hurtling surely down dale and forest way to the mother ocean and her vast, salty bed of forever.

He arrived at the port city on the lathered horse, gasping for air. He was badly wounded, barely conscious. He had been shot in the lung and was dying. He spoke of the heroism of the horse in their escape, of how it waited once when he toppled off unconscious, and then resumed the long journey when consciousness returned.

As he lay on his deathbed, he told Mikhail to go and find those lands that were calling out for them. "They are deep in the Andes mountains—a vast hidden valley filled with clean, healthy waters. I see meadows and waterfalls. I see this place of peace surrounded by high barren mountains on one side and then by desert that will protect you to the East. I see peace, for there are very few people, and they are under the spell of the place. I see vast skies blown by strong winds always under the eye of the sun. I see there a great house made of stone where your grandchildren will raise their grandchildren. I see sufficiency and security. I see love. Do you see it, Mikhail?"

"Oh yes, Papa. I do, I really do."

"Go and take care of your mother, for she is great with kindness but knows little of the ways of men. And be good to your stallion – I know you will. This animal has magic in his heart, and he will lead you to this new home. I can give you only these few jewels, as the gold was used for the ocean passage, so you will need to find your own way."

And then he presented Mikhail with this poem he had written on his deathbed:

There is a River of Whispered Whys  
Which courses within me.

Rock-strewn and nymph-laced,  
It lathes my little being  
with wonderments.

Time puddles in my soul as I seek  
The answers that so guile from my cells' vast interiors.  
And maybe, just as these river waters,  
Which endlessly seek and cycle,  
From the Mother ocean to the Father storms, return and return,  
So shall my trails toward endings  
Begin at my beginnings,  
The unknowable One where we all began.

There is a river through my heart.

And soon thereafter, with one last labored breath he died, but not before telling his little family how he was at peace and that they should not be sorry for him as he knew he had done what he had to do to send them off to the dream land. He was buried and he was blessed, with some heartfelt tears watering the few flowers waving goodbye from the fresh turned earth.

Mikhail, his mother, and the stallion boarded the sailing vessel for South America. The trip was difficult and the area below decks was very congested. Many people were sick and some died. Mikhail and Christina were deeply saddened by the death of Alexander, but they took on his dreams and were excited with their adventure. They also sensed that he was with them—in the wind through the sails and in the water that conversed constantly with the great wooden hull of the ship.

Mikhail spent much of his time with the stallion, ensuring his minimal comfort in the cramped, swaying hold. The horse also seemed to sense their destiny and took the trip surprisingly well. At night Mikhail would go to the bow and clutch the bowsprit as it plunged through the roiling water, black with night, the surface dancing with starlight, and glowing with phosphorescence below, ignited by the ship's searing passage. It left a trail of light behind that Mikhail would only retrace in memory.

In the day would sometimes come the dolphins, sleek messengers of fun and Godspeed, jumping effortlessly in the bow wave, saluting the boy who sent heartloads of love their way. They seemed to be leading the ship as she beat her way West and South through the seemingly endless seas.

But end they did one day as the ship arrived in Buenos Aires, capital and port of the vast and varied and untried country of Argentina. There is a great tale to someday tell of their journey overland by oxcart to the Andes Mountains, which guarded the western boundary of the country, some thousand miles distant.

Always they went with the dream of the land pulling them, as adventure followed adventure. For many seasons they traveled—the boy on the stallion and Christina in a cart drawn by oxen. They

lived by selling the few jewels that were left them and by the work of Mikhail, who was growing into manhood, strong and resourceful.

Magic News also contributed as a breeding stud, leaving sons and daughters throughout the plains and deserts. Often they would glimpse their dreamland in a flock of geese or a fleeting taste as the warmed mustard grass wafted through their senses. And all in all, they were glad to be moving, for there was much to see and to learn, and the lands were clean, untrammled, exciting.

And so it went for many years of wandering around the great pampas and then the mountains of Patagonia, where the teeth of the cordillera were fully exposed to the cleansing winds that coursed over these most beautiful and largely unpopulated lands.

At the same time, the turmoil of a great war raged in Europe, engulfing it in a flood of madness. Word would reach them in frontier settlements confirming what his father had foreseen and heightening their happiness to have escaped to such an exciting land.

Mikhail ever moved on, driven by dreams, falling in and out of love with land and lovers. His dreams would always implore him to “keep looking, keep searching,” and he would move on, enjoying his life of adventuring and being outdoors attending his horses, for he had built a small herd. He cared for his mother, making sure that she was comfortable and chatting with her about the vision lands of her husband.

And then one season, from the powerful nation to the far north, came a wealthy banker. He came to fish and to adventure with his daughter, who had just finished school. They had inquired if there were any guides with horses who could take them on a fishing-and-hunting expedition. As such they came to the camp of Mikhail and Christina, and a deal was made.

The daughter, Katherine, was beautiful with a beguiling shyness, behind which she glanced ever so often with knowing and further questioning eyes. She was topped with a mane of auburn hair and had sky eyes of pale blue with halos that deepened her beguilement. Her young body was strong and proud with years of horse riding, tennis, and hiking. Her smile was a radiant magnet which seemed to pull on Mikhail’s mind, then his heart, and finally on his own mouth as he found himself yearning to consume that smile with his own.

Mikhail was enchanted – could not take his eyes off this new and disturbing and exciting vision. He awoke always at last dark and now spent those luscious moments thinking of her and reviewing scenes from the day before. She was in the same swoon and soon became fully in awestruck love with this nature man on his white stallion, working with his shirt off – tanned and muscled by his life out of doors. She saw in his eyes a dream once familiar to her as she re-awakened to an essential energy within, one perhaps from other lifetimes - long buried in this one by schools and society.

There is another tale to be told of their love, how they shared their dream of the River of Whispered Whys, which is what they named their vision, at the evening campfires, or during the sunny afternoons, riverside, while her father fished. Their fire sharings were punctuated by an endless night sky exploding with shooting stars, as if to shout a great celestial “Yes.” Tales of how they knew they were to stay together and then how the father, who had loftier marriage

plans for his daughter, delivered a stern, conclusive, patriarchal “No” and took Katy away, back home to the United States, where dreams were already dying.

Before she was hauled away, she got a message to Mikhail: “Wait for me, for I will return. I have loved you for longer than these few days. All my life, lonely with enforced aloofness, I have searched and finally found in my heart the dream of you and our river. Wait for me; watch your stars and I’ll watch mine. Through the stars we shall speak, for surely, they are the same.”

And then she included this poem:

I remember nights like untamed ponies,  
days like vibrant wine,  
Soft mornings and candlelight love,  
oh, I remember love.

The image of your body wreathed with our love,  
this wispy cloud wafts into my mind  
like a little waterfall;  
it purls in my soul and perches upon my heart.

I remember when the whole world  
became our touchings;  
faces, fingers, and middle places  
of untold yearnings,  
the ponies tugging at our heartstrings.

The love, fierce, hard, wet,  
the love strong and drenched.

In the quiet sure surging apex of our passion,  
at the top of our rainbow, we are One,  
joined in a dance to the music of heaven.  
And there we sighed and laughed.

And there we drove the world,  
and our loving filled all the empty places  
and was like Christmas to the nations of peoples,  
as God and all the Angels held hands,  
Our Love stopped the Universe.

He did wait. He was well used to waiting, and now he understood that Katy was the key to finding the valley of dreams. He waited a year, and she then came to him with endless hugs and touches and great stories of import. Her aunt had seen the love in her eyes and helped her to get her inheritance from her grandfather. So she came with gold, and they could now purchase the land once they found it.

## Chapter 2

Now the land's beckoning was tuned twofold, and together they homed in on the energy. Leaving Christina safely behind in a little pueblo, they mounted Magic News and a sweet, strong filly. They turned north along the cordillera, away from the wilder winds, and left the deep woods and cold plains behind. They continued further north than Mikhail had ever been, and he wondered what the lands over the next horizon would reveal, and if trout could live in the rivers here that were now warmed by greater and greater suns.

One night, as they camped on a wide-open plain surrounded by mountains, after making kisses and making laughters and making holdings, explorations, sharings, and then making slow, almost worshipful love, and then that love, along with the day's miles, making them sleep, they both awoke later at the same time. Their dreams had told them to "wake and watch"; then, from the sky, fell star after star over the western ridge, as if God were hurling balls of fire towards some destination, as if news of import for them was being revealed. They held each other anew in speechless, awed delight. They knew that the stars were surely falling on their dreamland.

In the affairs of men and women who hold the dream, there is magic. Doubt you the mystery of these skies without end? Accept you this tiny speck of life-bearing ground as it hurtles at vast speed toward a never-ending nothingness. Its freight is a resounding "yes" of foreverness and of mystery. Surely this is more than magic, and when the winds and ways of these people waltz, magic comes alive and shoots stars wherever she may.

Eagerly they waited for last dark to cede her hold to sun's first hint of light. They kindled a little fire and brewed a maté, excitedly sharing their thoughts, while they passed and sipped the tea. With just enough light, they saddled the horses and rode straight west following the trail of the falling stars, which were still burning in their hearts.

At mid-day they came to a large cordillera at the end of a long, wide plain, which was watered by subterranean springs and lay before them rippling in the breezes and suns that quickened their way. More climbing, and still more, through the teeth of the majestic range, the horizon tugging them ever onward.

The final rise was precipitous, so they dismounted and walked beside the horses. As they neared the crest, they heard, and then felt, a great wind, like a distant drum roll. As they finally topped the pass, they beheld a splendor so vast that all they could do was stand, transfixed, holding their hats while the wind and the view buffeted and bathed them in sunshone wonder.

On the distant horizon marched a series of spires, mantled with bright snows—fearless, majestic, awe inspiring. Their eyes rode the flanks down jagged sub-valleys, lesser peaks and verdant flanks, down into the bowl below where the river's ribbon underlined the canyon's grace and mystery, with light-sparkled waters into which the stars of the night before had surely fallen.

The couple was swept with an unspeakable knowingness and moved together to embrace wordlessly. The River of Whispered Whys was theirs, as they were now hers.

Thus is the tale told of the marriage of this place with Mikhail and Katy, for lands and people do wed. There is a heart embedded in great lands, places untrammelled by industry and over large

numbers, whose noise and busyness silences the beat of that heart. Un written pacts are made as people and earths sleep and dream together – as hearts then beat as One.

After descending the many miles to the valley floor, and exploring the river valley, and marveling at the perfect micro-climate that graced this fine place with its lush meadows, waterfall springs, and wildlife galore, they chose a camping place, which was to become the house site, on a spring watered verdant shelf that gazed down from a cliff at the river. They returned for Christina, arranged for the purchase, and began the lifelong game of making these gracious lands their home. They named the lands *Estancia Cielo*, for the vast sky that presided there and which had shown them the final way with its trail of stars.

Much could be told of their joyous toil as they planted trees, gardens and flowers, wheat and alfalfa fields; as they parented Valeria, who was conceived that joyous night at the shelf campsite; and as they built their house high on the cliff, on the same place they had made fruitful, frenzied, and celebrative love.

Much could be told, but the tale of Jaguar Girl awaits, so we will merely summarize at this time.

Mikhail and Katy started out by living in adobe houses thatched with the long grasses that graced the waterways. The adobe bricks were made from the ground, dug out for the foundation, mixed with horse manure for fibers to hold the sun dried blocks together, and then built one by one using the same mixture for mortar.

Mikhail began the great stone house only after the fields, gardens, and orchards were in production, after he had purchased the flocks of sheep and the cattle herd, the new oxcart, made especially for the rock-laden creep into the valley, and his tools.

Valeria was born as the house was underway. An Indian girl assisted in the birth and stayed to help Katy with the chores. As Valeria grew, so did the land's capacity to sustain: honey bees, milk cows, chickens, a press for sunflower and corn oil, grapes for wine, and trees planted for beams, posts, firewood, a sawmill.

Life was easy there, busy with honest and productive toil, ripe with health, sharing, and love.

As a second roiling war engulfed the world, sending waves of horror, fear, and hate to surf upon the consciousness of man, Mikhail, Christina and Katy gave great thanks to the vision of Alexander and reveled anew in the bounty of the simplicity that surrounded and nourished them. Mikhail was never tempted to acquire an automobile, nor a generator for electricity, preferring his reliable horse and beeswax candles.

Because Mikhail had seen that the world was going crazy with its wars and with people moving from their farms to the big cities, he had decided to make his lands as self-sufficient as possible. Being a simple man, he did not agree with the complicated process involved with crowded clusters of people and their desire for fancy things, nor did he want to rely on them.

To him, it felt unhealthy, and he knew there was danger in that life. There was danger not just in the streets but also in all the doings, entertainments, consumptions, and pollutions that attend the busy industries of man. He, of course, had never heard of the "Great Correction" that was to occur in the year 2020, still far in the future. He sensed, however, that when man abandoned,

disregarded, and attacked Mother Nature with fouling poisons, there would one day be a heavy price to pay.

Mikhail, being a clever, hard worker, had therefore gone on to develop all his own food resources: pressing olives for oil, growing a mountain variety of grapes for wine, and smoking the fish. He dug a cellar where he could store potatoes and apples all winter long. He built a solar dryer to dry and preserve his fruit.

He also didn't want to trust motorized machines, knowing that to maintain them meant trips to town for parts. He knew that to run them consumed fuel and polluted the air. So he happily cut his wheat and oats with a scythe and used an ox cart to carry it to the barn. The exercise made him stay strong and healthy. Working with animals and simple tools gave him a peace that enabled him to catch the spirits that shone down through a blue, blue sky and were reflected in the golden sheaves of wheat that danced gracefully as he worked. The peace also showed on his kind face and was shared with his family.

Christina died a peaceful death, as her granddaughter, Valeria, was becoming a woman. She was buried beside the river, next to the graves of some Indian children. Katy asked Valeria if she wanted to go see the world, but Valeria stayed because she was in love with her life. She stayed because she too understood the dream of her grandfather, a dream that claimed her. It caressed her, cuddled her, and came writhing around her on sun-kissed winds, half-crazy with love and the excitement of being. Sometimes it entered her by her eyes and would hold her with hour-long stares at the hills in the distance. Sometimes the fire spirits would speak to her soul, dancing there in the happy lilting waltz of life. Hints of peace would pour into her from the Oneness, and she knew that she was blessed many times over. She knew she was Home. The beauty of the place was reflected in her face, body and being. She was weathered, tan, stout and strong – always in motion. When not working on the lands she would tan hides, weave ponchos, or knit sweaters.

The Dream had her, and she needed no congress with the multitudes in their cities. Nor did she need the commerce of their doings. Her ownings were of the earth—leathers and feathers. She was not confused by the empty allure of things without souls. Nor did she need a fancy husband, for she was married to her lands, and her children were the animals and the flowers, the new trees that would spread out from the canopy of the great arboreal father.

When Valeria was becoming almost a middle-aged woman, Mikhail died as he leapt into a flooding winter river, attempting to save his old dog. He had only a moment to make his decision when he heard the cries of distress and saw his faithful dog in the floodwaters. Of course he knew it would not be easy as he ran and dived into the turbulence, but he counted on his competence and, perhaps, heard yet another call. In any event, he couldn't have lived with himself had he not jumped. It did not work that way in the deep country.

And he did reach the stricken dog, as they were pulled under together. He tried to shed his heavy jacket and boots, but as they were swept down the rapids, his head smashed into a submerged rock and, unconsciously drowning, was carried away by his beloved river which now became his funeral procession. The dog survived and lived another year. She would take herself daily to the river to sit and peer into the waters, but Mikhail would never be seen again – only in memory. His dream now lay elsewhere.

This was a tragedy for Katy and Valeria, but they were life-hardened to death and were consoled that Mikhail had died courageously in his dream river. He was older than Katy, and had lived a long life filled with the things he held dear; travel, adventure, horses, animals, building, family, and above all, the finding and holding and cherishing of the Dream. His deep love for Nature, for Family, for Mother Earth was the torch he passed to them. They reached for it with pride.

Katy found this poem he had written and read it, – a little tearfully, to Valeria:

As corporal life begins its steady wanement  
 down time's river to the mighty Mother sea,  
 from the simple bounty of a  
 widening tranquility,  
 I remember the great waxing tumult  
 of springtime seasons of yore.  
 Howling in rapids, broken on rocks,  
 making love on beaches beneath star music,  
 and staring endlessly at the whispered whys  
 of creation written on the faces of flowers and  
 in the great sway of verdant steep hillsides,  
 simmering in the summer sun.

There is a River through my heart  
 that ebbs and flows with my chosen fortunes,  
 and carries me Home.

Valeria, perhaps sensing the need for continuity, perhaps simply acquiescing to the ways of the Universe when a gaucho passed through of a night, became pregnant with the twins, Tawny and Alixandra, and thus were born Jaguar Girl and her sister.

The twins... one a golden girl with a halo of love surrounding her being, Tawny, was a proud baby, sure of herself from the start, always happier with the sky as her roof. People near her stared with numb delight as she played. And a fine sister, Alixandra, strong and independent from the beginning. People sensed a sureness in her and became quiet when they gazed at her.

They were born in the house their grandfather had built over two decades, the great stone building rising above the river cliffs; balconies and towers commanding the view of the whole valley. Meant to be an enduring edifice, it was fashioned mostly from the rocks and earth of the surrounding countryside.

The grandmother, Katy, lived in the great house and loved the addition of the two babies whose lively calls and chortles were the welcome songs of love after the departure of her beloved husband.

Valeria and the twins lived outdoors most of the time, preferring to be closer to night sounds and nature, making their beds beside streams on piles of sheep wool. There they would stare into their campfire and hear in their hearts all the endless tales told by lingering spirits.



Valeria, who was born and raised in these climes, knew that the best dreams were dreamt when sleeping close upon the breast of mother earth. Often she would cling to a great rock for wisdom, hug a tree for some electric spiraling love, or nap upon the bare earth to recharge her energy, and she shared all this with the twins. All this and the night skies, rainbows, waterfalls, the secrets of seasons, and the hushed sounds of animal birth comprised the life and lessons of the people in the valley, cradled in the endless perfection of nature. There were hardships aplenty as the twins grew, and those trials often proved to be the most powerful teachers. As such, the sometimes daunting challenges were turned into invitations for undaunted learnings, adding pride and confidence to the family's curriculum.

Katy was thrilled with the twins and delighted to be with them as they grew. She always had room for them in the big house and would speak to them in English so they grew up totally bilingual. She had a dinner party every Saturday night in the old fashion, with baked goods and fresh produce from the land along with a great glistening asado – the meat of a tender goat or lamb slowly roasted over an open fire of the native Chacai wood which sumptuously and surely imparted its smoky fragrance to the gathering. The gardens would provide berries and vegetables. The orchards gave apples, cherries, peaches, and pears. The beehives flowed honey. Wheat and oats from the fields were threshed to be ground for flour. From the rivers and lakes came sleek trout. From the pastures came milk from the cows and meat from the goats, sheep, rabbits, ostrich and guanaco. Life at Estancia Cielo was a symphony of sound and of sight – a fine interweaving of the energies enjoined by all creatures who live in agreement with the whims and wonders of Nature, and the girls reveled in the challenges, the funs, and the blessings which abounded all around them as they grew and gained ground.

One of the twins' favorite times came at the autumn harvest as the great draft horses would bring in a wagon loaded with wheat which had been scythed that morning. The men, who gathered from the neighboring homesteads, would make a big pile and then ride their horses around and around in ever shortening circles, the hooves breaking up the seed pods. The girls jumped around in circles also, holding outstretched arms and beaming up at the men who could never resist for long their implorations and swooped them up for a prance around the threshing ground. The next part was almost as good as they would then toss the crushed wheat up into the wind which bore away the chaff and golden rains were left to fall on the cleared landing ground – the cleaned kernels which were to be later ground into flour.

The grandmother adored the twins and would have spoiled them with toys and things purchased from the outside world, but Valeria discouraged her, especially when it was seen that the stuffed animals were abandoned in favor of a homeless bunny, a tree house, or a camping trip to one of the land's faraway valleys.

She read to them, separately or together, from the great house's library. She had only to say, "Who needs a little trip on words?" to have twin cuddles on each lap half, and there they would journey together into the never-ending reaches of imagination. She taught them kindness, selflessness, and an uncomplaining acceptance of the "bad" plus an unbounded enthusiasm for the "good," with an optimistic love and hope for everything in between. Every new day was a cause for celebration for her, and all her music had within it a dance.

Granny Katy's life had been privileged and blessed by living in this place. She always said, "Don't count your curses." She knew that only by selfless sharing would the bounty increase. As such, slowly and surely, she herself became complete and filled with a stunning grace, seldom bestowed. There were many echoes of the fine beauty she had been as a youth when she first met Mikhail, though her dark luscious hair had long ago turned a shimmering white and her laugh lines had swarmed all over her kindly face in swirls of the sun dances she had done for decades, now memories enshrined on her visage. And her body, once lithe with muscles toned by happy work, had thickened to a matronly abundance – great for cuddling. Her smile, a beaming beacon, was the same as it was so long ago – a steady signature shedding light on all around her.

One day as the girls were gazing down at the river from the cliff, they saw a lone figure descend the trail. He had on a leather pack and walked surely, steadily picking his way down to the river. Any new person was always fun, somewhat rare, and usually interesting, and, even from the cliff, they could tell that this fellow was intriguing. Where was his horse? His dog?

They scrambled down the steep hill and climbed into the aerial cable car, which was used to cross the river when it was too high for horses, or for the odd hiker, a sight seldom seen in these mountains. The car was made of old wood, banded by strap iron and it took a lot of strength to work the hand crank that pulled them along the cable.

As they neared the far bank and took a break, they gazed at the man who was waiting. He smiled a great, beaming grin and raised a hand in greeting. Now, who was this person? He was older than their mother but radiated a fresh strength and had an indefinable aura about him.

As they landed, he greeted them in Spanish, but they could tell that it was not his native language—no, this man was from far away, but what a light energy he possessed, and they were immediately quite drawn to him. They asked if he spoke English.

"Why yes, I am an American."

Wow, this was great, for they were studying history and had much interest in the United States, especially since their Granny was an expatriate Yankee, and had told them many intriguing things about that country.

"So, what are you doing here, sir?" asked Alixa.

"*Che, hermana invitarle a un maté primero,*" interrupted Tawny. "Please, come with us for a maté at the house, and then we'll ask you questions."

"Perfecto," said he, and they all rode the car back, taking turns at the crank.

### Chapter 3

When they arrived at the house, Valeria and Katy greeted them. They too were eager to learn about this new arrival. They gave him spring water while the fire was heating the *maté* pot. He told them that he was exploring, looking for wonderful places to camp and enjoy nature.

"Well, you've come to the B.P.I.T.W.," said Tawny.

“B.P.I.T.W.? Beware, perfume in the way? Or, better pitch in the work?”

“Nope. Best Place In The World!”

“I can see that,” said the man whose name was simply Uncle. “I have traveled to many places but this land has a very special feel to it. And what beauty. When I crossed the pass two hours ago, I got this feeling and it grew all the way to the river, and now here, at this amazing house with you nice people, and even speaking English. How did this house, and you, get here, if you don’t mind my asking?”

So they told him the stories of the family and then invited him to stay. He replied that he wanted to live outdoors and asked if he might make a camp somewhere on the higher ground. By now, everyone was intrigued with this gently humorous person and were delighted to have him stay on the land.

Uncle had lived a very full life in the United States. As a student he was often caught staring out the window, seemingly lost in meditation and paying more attention to the movement of the tree leaves than to the monotonous drone of the teacher. He was quite brilliant and could keep up easily with the class without seeming to study, and then won a scholarship to the University of Hawaii where he studied mathematics – a subject that came naturally to him. He was a mid-sized ectomorph and had slightly large lips which supported a knowing smile though his schoolmates often understood that it was more of a smirk than a smile, and that he seemed to be grinning more to himself than to others. His humor was an otherworldly wry. Not exactly a misanthrope, but they could tell he was but barely abiding them and their antics. He did not readily join in with their locker room jokes, though he loved playing bridge. He was not the best bidder, but his brilliant play made up for it. Highly energized at night, he would sleep late in the mornings, often rising only when a bridge game was offered.

After college, Uncle began inventing things. He developed “quickies”—those one-third-length herbal cigarettes for smokers who were either trying to cut down or wanted only the first few puffs. He invented energy-saving devices, including corporate gyms that supplied electricity for the grid, plus a host of other fun and practical products that also made him rich. He then stumbled and invested in a start up which never really started, draining him of most of his cash reserves. At the same time he suffered a divorce from a desperate wife who wanted to cash in before all his money went away. He admitted that the entire process really threw him “off his feed” – as he put it, and he went into a time of depression which included some experimentation with drugs. He shared that that experience, coupled with the support of his best friend, began to open his doors of perception such that he learned some pretty interesting things about life on Earth. For years he scrambled financially until he finally found the formula to recoup his wealth, building up a high tech company in Silicone Valley which went on to have a successful IPO, making him wealthy once again.

He then used his fortune to develop his School of Personal Integrity, wherein he taught people to see and practice truth, to understand why they were on the earth. Out of that came his world-famous books: *How To Be a Human and Why*, *Perfection Is Perfect—How It Works for You*, and *Choice—to Horse, My Hearties*. These were translated into many languages and encouraged people to understand life and the light that shines into all experience: that there are no “good” or

“bad” happenings, only perfect ones, and that often the “hardest” hits pave the way to the greatest knowings.

He went on to make movies and pioneered the Interactive Viewing Event (IVE), which got people out of movie lines and into intimate seating arrangements at special theaters that felt more like clubs. People were able to meet each other boldly and naturally, and there was dancing at intermission. He produced his own movies, always telling a great story studded with jeweled insights, such that the audience was invited to be, yes, entertained, but also to be elevated by hints and nudges of higher thoughts and tantalizing possibilities for all levels of participant viewers. His movies ran for years at the clubs, like Broadway shows, and revolutionized “Hollywood” since they were cheap to produce, and fun and stimulating to experience.

He accumulated a vast fortune but then, at age fifty, gave away every penny and everything he owned to various foundations and beneficiaries and went off to lose himself in beloved nature for which his heart had always been yearning.

In “losing” himself, paradoxically and beautifully—he became found. Thus he arrived at the mountains of Northern Patagonia, attracted by the power there and the clean fresh winds that he knew would best bring him closer to the sighs and whys of God. And he stayed.

He grew a great beard and slept outside, making camps in whatever areas of the high mountains he liked at the time. He reinvented primitive tools and practices and delighted himself by slipping into the lives of the twins to play and to stimulate them with understandings of reality and of the spirit. He was a little like a forest gnome, an aging waif and sometimes it seemed as if he was half mountain goat. He accepted their invitations to sleep over at the guest house on the estancia where he reveled in the hot showers which compared favorably to his cold bath in the mountain waters which he said he had once a week, “whether he needed them or not.” On those visits he tried to help in the garden but seemed to have a black thumb as most everything he touched tended to grow poorly. So he was fired on that front and put to chopping wood, which he enjoyed for the exercise, though if truth be told, he was pretty much of a lazy old fart. Still they all enjoyed the evening fireside chats, though Valerie sometimes excused herself as she pretty much understood, organically, much of what he was sharing.

When he walked he often pranced. He could often be seen stopping to applaud a view – he would come to a silent stop, staring at distance mountain, the grain in a mottled boulder, the little beauteous shouts of a streamside flower, and then, eyes gleaming, slowly begin to simply clap his hands. Sometimes this was attended with little prayer-like sayings; “Creator, Creator”, or “Earth”. The girls loved him wholeheartedly and always looked forward to his visits when he would come to collect some food stuffs, and to share stories of his cordillera times, filled with adventure, simplicity, challenge, contentment and fun.

They affectionately called him alternately Tio Perfecto, or Uncle Perfect because he seemed to be always happy and content with everything that happened to him and with everything that he had, which consisted of some clothes of wool and leather, a harmonica, a few pocketsful of trinkets and amulets, plus his little survival tools: fish hooks made from rabbit bones, a grass snare, and his bow. He had a double poncho woven by Indians from the estancia wools – blacks and whites and greys – into which he would stuff dried grass as insulation if the nights were

cold. For his head he would take off the down vest he had made, having borrowed the front feathers of geese gaggles.

They asked him, one day when Alixandra suffered a lightly sprained wrist, having been tossed off a new filly who freaked when her polo leg bandage unwrapped in the wind, if he considered something like that a blessing. Uncle Perfect replied, "All of life is a blessing, beloved children, and while I am not happy that Alixandra is in a little pain, I am sure this event will teach her something as she grows, for we are here only to learn and nary a thing, nor a happening, may present itself but to teach. And it is all, not good or bad, but Perfect."

He continued, "There is a reason, a design, behind everything, and we do ourselves a disservice dare we not pay appreciative attention. We are here in this glorious classroom to learn. And, yes, were we but here in the tiny scope of one lifetime, the lessons presented would oft appear hard and could destroy our fragile energy. But we are spirit and that energy is endless, and we are learning our lessons over hundreds and thousands of trips around the sun, and various incarnations.

"Look to your history to understand that this current wave of 'humanity' is barely in the kindergarten of their education. So while it may not be easy to appreciate the pains, confusions, and loneliness that wrench at our young hearts, therein lies great news for our onstriding souls. Remember to observe yourselves. Remember that the power of Creation, which includes us all as co-creators, is total and does not make a mistake concerning broken bones, missed planes, nor books that appear in one's hands.

"As the universe is contained in your beautiful hearts, so too are you invited to expand forever to encompass the magic, the mystery, and the perfection that circle the core of all existence. And love, my dears, always love. Come now, Alixandra, and we'll have a meditation after I prepare a little poultice for you. I wonder why you had that fall, don't you? Bet you will wrap the next bandage a little better."

Uncle often talked to them of areas of thought and of understanding which he called "metaphysical, above the physical, and in a special realm of existence". He explained that it had taken him his adult life to understand that there was way more to life than the merely physical. He asked them, early on in their experience of each other, if they liked to hear of such energies to which they responded that they did, for listening to this man, with such a twinkle in his eye, was fun. It also opened the doors of their perception such that they could apply his little sayings and ditties to what they were being exposed to in Nature, which also had her teachings and sharings.

Alixandra and Tawny had their own horses, which they trained themselves, and would be with them everywhere and at almost all times. At night they often preferred to sleep outdoors, tethered to the sky by gossamer memories of light from the shooting stars that would gather energy from the very vastness of the black firmament, and then hurtle themselves toward earth. They would play polo most every day during their free time between learnings and work.

Learnings about the four elements (earth, air, fire and water) and how they combined to constitute the dance of existence. Learnings about growing foods and about how careful husbandry of animals could provide the people with food, clothes, fur, and friends. In the course of all their questions and quests, they absorbed the understanding of words and numbers, which

came to them naturally, without parental or societal force, and thus became their friends for life. The twins also learned music and created their own compositions, combining bird and river song with the drum beat of their ponies' hooves as they dashed through the sunlit avenues of creation.

Always there was the wind. At times it would nap, a great silent volume of vibrant passivity waiting for the sun to wake it. Then it would leap up to kiss the rays as they beamed down, and older airs would sweep into the void tugging at leaves along the way sighing, "Come on, come on," while writing happy little poems of well-being on the waters and in the tall grasses. Always the winds taught the twins and ran with them, as they gathered energy, on their ponies.

And always there was love. The older people knew to listen to the children as they expressed themselves and did not force anything on them, just as they, loving their freedom, would not want to be prevented from following their own hearts. For it is so that children are little people, unadulterated yet by experience and its freight of chaos and caution, and not without their own wisdom, still fresh from God.

Children are seldom listened to simply because most adults have never grown up and lack even the fundamental education of attending their tiny messengers from heaven, from whom they could learn much about Creation enjoyment, if they were not so busy imposing their conditionings on them. The children understood and appreciated love and trust but also accepted the responsibility to learn the basics and contribute to the home and the land. There was great love in the family. There was love in other ways because the angels readily shed their blessings and affections on people who love natural creations—the falls of waters, rainbows, and songbirds that so garland the creation.

Angels can much more easily find people who are out of doors. People who are under roofs; people whose attention is robbed by televisions, computers, and vapid conversation; people who dull their seeing with many drinks of alcohol, with drugs; people in automobiles: all these are seemingly hiding from the love of their angels and terribly miss the benedictions that freely flow in a natural state.

Tawny loved her life with a heart full of appreciation. She loved her granny with a great abiding affection, loved her constant availability for storying, consulting, sharing, and laughing. Granny had taught the girls early on that everything happens for a perfect reason, just as old Tio said, and that complaining didn't do any good. No matter what they would bring to her in the way of news, she immediately found the greatest positive and dwelled therein, a rosy beaming smile gracing the beauteous riot of wrinkles that encapsulated her never-ending beauty.

Valeria was a wonderful mother, ensconced in grace and always ready to sleep outdoors or take the girls on a midnight, moonlit ride or an ice-skating adventure on the blue-black ice of July as it skimmed the surface of the river. She taught the twins how to allow a horse to follow the dictates of its blood so it could perform the graceful service to which it was born. They learned to touch with love, to ask the foal to follow the indication, and then to be attentive for the first sign of response, to then ask again—building on that response delicately, and never with brute force. As such the foal, and then the filly, and then the mare learned with love, not fear, and amazing things happened.

Tawny loved her animals—her Border Collies, which would scamper attentively across hillsides to gather the sheep and goats, and her horses, especially her horses. Those proud, prancing steeds that carried her across beloved lands to and through constant adventure, and then the wild critters—the condors, eagles, owls, and hawks as they plied the living skies, fierce eyes piercing the ground, gazing for prey; the crawling and creeping critters, as they hugged the earth in animate embrace; the coveys of quail as they exploded in delighted profusion, rousing hare, rabbit and armadillo; and the fox, puma and jaguar that prowled—patrolling their territories in prideful might. The jaguar – mightiest and most majestic of big cats – how she longed to see one, and even to touch one as she had once touched a hungry fox in lean springtime as it crept cautiously to take an out-held morsel of meat.

The twins matured quickly, learning from the lands and their freedoms thereon. Valerie gave them a lot of latitude, honoring her own up upbringing, so they were exposed to self-responsibility early on. As such they matured so that by the time they were ten they could go out by themselves on their horses, but they also retained the natural joys of youth so there was not a hardening as they aged, but a ceaseless joy and celebration dominant in their going.

Alix was more the homebody, preferring to shear, spin and then weave the wool into colorful ponchos and sturdy maletas for carrying provisions on her horse, or to work in the garden with Valerie. Tawny, on the other hand, felt that she had to get off the Headquarters shelf at least once a day, and often twice. In the morning she would hike with her dog, often out to a little lake where she would delight in the riparian community while mesmerizing the wavelets, wind driven, that kept trying to wet her, there on the grassy shore. Then in the evenings she always went out horseback to commune with the further lands, sometimes spending the night if she chose to go far. She always kept an eye out for Tio Perfecto's smoke signal, a thin wisp of smoke stroking the sky and pointing to his peripatetic whereabouts.

And she also began to sharpen her senses, especially when in the high cordillera, hoping to glimpse a jaguar, mightiest of mountain beasts. Whenever she found tracks her heart would beat faster as she dismounted to study the traces of majesty written on the Earth ways. One night as she was camped she heard a howl, not so far away. Instead of instilling fear in her, it turned her on to the basic bestiality of Nature. Commanding her dog to stay she went out into the night forest towards the howl which echoed mightily in her mind. As she went forth, every careful step, she could feel the energy rising. She knew that the howler was totally aware that the howlee was approaching and could feel the energy between them. As she got closer, she responded to some inner sense and lowered to all fours to then crawl onwards towards the unseen but totally felt presence ahead. But it was not to be more, that time, as she began to lose the feeling, as if watching a spectacular sunset and seeing the colors fade to grey and then dark, but still sparkled with celestial magics. She could feel the animal as it faded back into the night and the vast wilderness where it roamed and which it called home. Still, it left whiffs and goosebumpy sensations of that wildness as if gifting the sharing with this woman child it had seen before from its sylvan solitude. As such the soul of the jaguar intermingled with her animal soul and something inexpressible was won.

As she reveled in that wondrous space she heard, far off, and fading away, a last howl and took it to mean “good bye”, as she then returned to her camp and the jealous but faithful dog. Sleep did not return, though her night was sparked with dreams. Her going, her entire being, was indeed lightened as she then made her way down to the home ground.

Tawny especially loved the lands. This growing love had her heart, perhaps her very soul, in its gentle and pervasive grasp. She could hardly wait to relinquish her night dreams to make the morning fire, to gaze out through its silent smoke upon the river below, to then ride its light-filled waters as they tagged the cliffs, vales, and boulder beaches with their caress of timelessness, to greet her animals, her plants, her loved ones, to beget the day’s offspring and offerings, to dream her waking dream of day.

And she loved the mighty mysteries whose thrall whelmed her way with an eager light and tickled her being with endless wonderments and whys. The wind. The “Patagonian Wind,” sailing up from the great Southern ice cap to bathe her and the lands in a cleanse that freed her soul and had it soar. She loved the suns as they poured forth bounty.

How could this star, so far away, heat us all—and for four billion more years? What stories will be told! And the stars, her night teachers, winking from across soundless scapes of time as if in collusion—as if sharing a gigantic riddle.

She was one happy and even delighted child, eager to enjoy the Creation’s sharings in whatever form they were manifest.

## Chapter 4

The girls delighted in riding up into the higher mountains to visit Uncle Perfect and sleep near him beneath the stars. After their evening fire and the last dance of the day, they would spread their sheepskin saddle blankets out and snuggle with their dogs under their ponchos. They did not always find him as he moved much as the winds which could neither be found to be held, nor could they be lost, as air is in constant attendance. Still, the looking was part of the adventure and when they did come upon him, usually guided by his smoky signal, it was always as if he expected them. Always fun to be with him to share his fireside dances and chats. He particularly enjoyed telling them what he had learned in life, after first asking them if they even wanted to listen to his “preaching”. They convinced him that his words were appreciated and urged him to tell them more. After all, it is not easy to find a cosmology teacher, even in cities – especially in cities, and Uncle’s classrooms were the best; mountain sides, lakeshores, springs and streamlets.

"Okay, girls, see the stars?"

"Claro."

“Which is the closest to earth?”

“That big bright one?”

“No, silly. The sun is the closest, and it’s working in Japan right now, waking up millions of people to go to work,” said Alixandra.



“Oh, right, of course.”

“What I don’t quite get, Tio, is if space never ends, like you said last time, then what is beyond the light of the furthest star? And some of those little beauties are thousands and millions of light years away? My mind feels like there’s a great wind within when I open to that thought.”

“That’s right, my dear. Look at this: our sun is some 150 million kilometers away and the light gets here in something like four minutes. Can you imagine how far away a star is for the light to take a whole year to get here? Now try a thousand years. See?”

“Yikes!”

“Che, Tio, how did it begin—all this?”

“Yeah, how?”

“Oh, we are way too young to know, my beauties, but it is thought that creates, the energy of thought. Let’s use the “G”-word and say that God had Thought and as such was it created. Do you want to hear my God/Earth Theory?”

“Yes, why not?”

“Tell it like it is.”

“Okay, but remember that this is only a guess. Yes, I’ve assembled it over time, studying lots of thinkers, philosophers, and so on, but it’s just a fun theory that amuses me—nothing anyone has to go to war about. Also, promise me that you will always do your own thinking. You are welcome to any of this that feels good, but this is just my best guess, as of today. As such it creates my world and becomes The Truth ... for me. You are both different; your truths will be different, and will add new versions to our library.

“And you readers; hello, hope you are enjoying this book so far. Ashley wants to share this story with you – the love story with Mother Earth, and he is using me as a spokesperson for the cosmology that engenders that love. I guess he feels that if people could somehow shed their conditioned thinkings and adopt pieces of this understanding that life is so, so much more than what our classrooms provide (and install), more than what is witnessed in societal circles of show and tell hydrated with boozy behavior, than the world would be a better place with fewer wars and such, and greater care, appreciation, celebration and, ta dum, love. But many either don’t want to engage with pontifications such as what is to follow – maybe they just want to read about sex and thrilling adventure or a who done it detective novel, or maybe they have their own cosmology and don’t care to field any other – fine, just skip over these sharings and enjoy the stories laced through this little book. I think that he feels that adopting an understanding, a guess, about life on Earth, which can then be used to navigate one’s little fragile and oh so temporary ship of state through the wily waters of existence, can then lend meaning to that life as well as imparting a sense of positivity over negativity which is so important for health and happiness. He might even feel that if more people could access the grace in their going, then the world would be a better place – violins please – and pollutions would lessen and even war might become, one good day, archaic. Now where was I? Oh yeah – preaching, bleating like an old goat, and all.

“Here goes. Well, first, it is all a grand magic—a mystery far beyond our best imagining and we are not, yet, to know it all. Like you say Tawny, how in the world, how in the Universe, could it possibly be that there is no end to space – that it simply goes on and on and on. OK, so I accept and honor that, marvel at it, and do not question it. So I start with Magic and Mystery and now I add Love and then Fun. The Love, via the energy of thought, creates worlds, like this here Earth, and their heaters, the suns. Now let’s play just with this planet. So, there are lots of Gods, maybe endless Gods—just as thoughts are without end. And Gods, just like all beings, have their cycles, their evolutions. In God School, our God was given this solar system, for his graduate thesis, the mission to tell a story.

“Now, the sun has a life of 8 billion years, give or take, and that could equate, let’s say, to a year of God Time. Well, He or She or It, began creating beautiful playthings—glaciers, the moon, oceans, mountains, water cycles, mastodons and spiders—lots of fun. But he needed Story Tellers, so he invented Human Beings, dividing them off from Himself, thus creating separation, and letting them start with only partial access to their Big Brains. His idea was that, like all things, they would evolve—would grow into a knowingness of Love such that all would arrive, at the end of earth-life (what I call “Sunclack”), when the sun finally burns out, expires, into this place of heaven on earth. This they would do during a multitude of incarnations, sort of like classes at school.

“To further entertain Himself, He gave these beings Free Choice, so that He wouldn’t be directly in charge of their going and would be amused/amazed at their shenanigans as they stumbled through their learnings. Right now it’s like we are still in Kindergarten. Look at the way we treat ourselves, our animals, our children, our Mother Earth. If we didn’t understand that we are simply still in the sandbox, that we are only halfway through the story, we might all commit suicide out of shame and frustration. But, you see, it is all Perfect in this Story of Love.”

“But, Unk, you say it’s all perfect, but how could dying be perfect?”

“First of all, we have placed Death as a ‘bad’ thing, when really, Death is the greatest gift to life. Death is a graduation from incarnation (*el carne de tu cuerpo*) and a return to the Light, the ethereal Love where thought operates. There can be no new growth without death. Everything dies: insects, lakes, mountains, civilizations, suns ... maybe even Gods. Everything dies but energy, which cannot die. Energy goes on and on.

“So, whereas life was the chosen mission here, it is Death that takes us back into the knowingness of God in the ethers, where the energy of growth, of the Story, is stored. It is there that our soul counsels with the energy of creativity to choose the next incarnation. It’s like choosing your next school curriculum. If you’ve failed something, you take it again until you get it right; otherwise, you move on to something new.

“And there’s no hurry. There are zillions of experiences to enjoy, and there is no judgment in heaven, which means you can’t be ‘wrong.’ It’s like you were given the part of Hitler to play in the school drama. The ‘bad’ guys are experiencing sacrificial lives to provide drama for the Story, and also contrast for us all, as we wander through the sandbox on our way to eventual, inevitable, unavoidable glory.

“Here’s another piece: do you understand that our energy, our soul, cannot be destroyed and is the instrument for that part of the Story we reach out to tell with our lives, and that we can be seen either as little parts of God or as God spread out to gather in the Big Story, the Earth Story?”

“Well, the way it works in the Ether is that we commune, counsel, and then choose our next circumstance, then incarnate and agree to forget all that happened. Why? Well it makes the story so much better, you see. It adds drama—a lot of it, and surprise. And contrast. Every good story has its portion of ‘bad’ so that the ‘good’ may triumph. And old God really wanted to ace his thesis, so He invented all these myriad, if complicated, concepts.

“Forgetting is a great piece, as it engenders loneliness and Fear, the opposite of Love, and is a great learning and experiencing device. It also explains why we so often feel lost—separated from the Creative Thought. It squares the Story. Why, you guys already know how much you have enjoyed, and profited from, your days when something goes ‘wrong’—now you’ve not only learned how to survive physically, but also mentally. That’s why you choose to ride in the mountains and not just the tame valley trails.”

“Ye Gods, Tio, but hardly anybody is going to buy these theories, you know.”

“Well, kids, maybe so, but there’s a lot of new energy on this Earth now and anyone can see in the state of Mother Earth, in the angst and unhappiness of the people, that Big Change is coming and will be welcomed. All our education has brought us to here—way overpopulated, polluting like crazy for consumptions that don’t make us happy, and operating, generally, without a clue as to why we are here. You see, the people want to know; they just lack the right education.”

“Maybe you should go teach them.”

“Are you crazy? Ha ha. Anyway, maybe through just my happiness here, I am sharing and teaching happy energy. Since it is all Perfect, I can relax and do my job, which is to enjoy through growth. Why is it all Perfect? Because it is God’s Story, so we can trust that it is all for the highest eventual good, and because it is a Love Story, a long heroic Story of Love shining light on hate, death, and fear. Yes, we are in Kindergarten still, throwing sand in each other’s face, screaming, crying, giggling, grasping for shiny baubles we are told will make us feel good, and messing up our pants. But we are growing and there is no way at all that we won’t succeed to the Light, to all of the Light as we tell our funny or strange stories, one by one, us little pieces of God.

“Speaking of perfection, I can add a great little life hint here. There is a law that operates on Earth, the Law of Attraction. It works like this: as you move through your time, processing energy, your original blueprint (your choice of general life situation) is tweaked by Free Choice. Free Choice is that sort of wild-card energy bestowed upon us all to heighten drama and deepen Freedom. By the way, whole books can and have been written about all these concepts—these are just the Cliff Notes.”

“What are Cliff Notes?” asked Alixandra.

“Cliff Notes were a series of book condensations that were popular in school a long time ago. Today I guess they say, ‘Cut to the chase.’ Where was I? Oh, the Law of Attraction. Well, one

thing is that you can't get it wrong. Since Growth and Fun are the ultimate goals here—and not fame, power, money, and things—we can all relax and choose to further the joy of creation.”

“But what about poor, starving people?”

“That’s another story—has to do with contrast, overpopulation, evolution, and compassion—in that we are invited to experience the ‘bad’ so that we will not only understand it but also heighten the ‘good.’ And don’t forget how wonderful Death is. It’s like a Get Out of Jail Free card, and the suffering on earth has its own wonderful as well as terrible lessons. All this builds soul, and character, and greatly amplifies the Story.

“As Free Choice is always operative and changes personal ‘destiny,’ the Law of Attraction works to bring you exactly what you need for growth. Remember my saying, ‘the trick is not getting what you want, but wanting what you get!’ Perfection reigns in all things and is neither ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ it is simply the like energy of Love operating to bring us the energy we have attracted for our life chapters, as the Story is being told by the billions. As you put out energy, that attracts like energy into your life. Now, this is all wondrously complex, just as are those endless depths of stars and space. And we are only talking about the tip of the iceberg. So a forgetting soul often doesn’t understand why something happens to it.

“Here come Trust and Faith to save the day. Trust that what comes in is for the greater good, and Faith that it is divinely ordained, perfect, and story-full. We are invited to work with our perceptions to choose whatever response we want. This is called Attitude. It is how we re-act to the energies that show up. Most of us, because we are un-evolved, remember girls I told you that we seem to be using a minor percentage of our brain power - only ten percent access—choose to re-act with remorse, blame, guilt, and anger to the ‘bad’ things. As such we are choosing an energy of dis-ease.

“When Trust and Faith are operative, we may choose appreciation, gratitude, and wonder, which are Love, not Fear, responses. Anyway, the Law of Attraction guarantees that the energy we need for greatest growth will show up. As such we can add an understanding of responsibility to the equation and know that we, and no one else, are in charge of our life’s energy. This is very liberating. In fact the whole thing is a lot of fun. My ‘worst’ happenings—getting drafted into war, divorce, going broke—were my greatest impulses for growth and movement into Freedom and Happiness.”

"Oh, Tio, tell us about getting drafted. Was it awful?"

“I just told you it was wonderful, and now I’m going to sleep, my lovelies. My dreams are waiting, big time, good, good night.”

The next morning when the girls awoke to the happy smell of wood smoke, there was Tio Perfecto doing his Morning Dance around the fire. The dogs watched and occasionally joined in. The girls giggled, as always, at the sight of this dear, wonderful man cavorting around like a teenager. He laughed at their giggles and made funny faces for them as the dogs came over to lick their happy smiles.

Around the maté fire, they asked him how he escaped to such a fun life. “Well, chicas, that’s both a long and a short story. The short story is that I chose it. The long one needs to wait for another night.”

On another visit, Alixandra complained to Tio Perfecto, whose nickname was now Macanudo, which is an Argentine slang word meaning *groovy*, that she had lost a favorite vest.

He laughed and said, “Things are only matter, and they absolutely do not matter. We are not on this earth to accumulate things. We are here for two principal reasons. Which are they, girls?”

“To grow in evolution and to enjoy—have fun.”

“Precisely, and which is more important?”

“You never told us, Tio.”

“Well, what do you think?”

“Probably to evolve, but I think that I prefer to have fun,” said Tawny.

“In that case, having fun is more important. Look, I have told you that this is all a love story, no? And that it is a long, long, long story? As we grow, we are growing toward what eventual end, as we experience all our reincarnations and evolutions?”

“Well, since it’s all a Love Story, I guess it is Love.”

“Exactamente, chica ... amor. And love is nothing if it’s not fun, eh?”

“Right, Unk, so we might as well have fun now.”

“Okay, let’s talk about ‘things’—*cosas*. Since we’re not here to accumulate things but rather to learn and have fun—you know, where I came from there was a saying, ‘you can’t take it with you,’ and another, ‘they don’t make hearses with luggage racks.’ And it’s true, but you do take your learnings with you because, as in processing your thoughts and understandings, you create energy through the electrochemical process of your brain. Energy is indestructible and goes on and on. Where? Well, I call it the ‘Ethereal Library,’ where it is available forever. Fun? Enjoyment? Same sort of thing, only now it is heart energy—it is love. Every smile, every hug, every giggle and glance of wonder adds to the universal store of Love. And even you, well ... your soul, will benefit because as you re-incarnate, you can access those contributions of Love. So ‘things’ don’t matter, you see.”

“But, Tio, I miss my vest.”

“We’ll make a new one, chica. The joy in matter is in the creation, not in the worrying or guarding, but in the giving of your energy to create. When something goes its own way, it opens space for more creativity.”

“Unk, how do you know that we re-incarnate? I was talking to Claudia in the pueblo, and she says that is crazy. I mean, I like the concept, but how does one know?”

“Everything advances in cycles, my love. Have you seen the old tree surrounded by offspring, winter cede to spring, river water that flows into clouds that rain on the peaks, and night to day? Even civilizations have cycles, and so do planets, so I know we do as well, and then I play the old ‘God Game.’”

“Oh yeah, we remember—we play it by ourselves also.”

“That’s right, if I am God, a piece of the creative energy, and I am, we all are, then I have Earth for to tell a story. Since it is a Love Story, *si o si*, it begins and ends in Love. And since growth is the news for any story, we are invited to play our parts by evolving, slowly, so as to tell our story. So, when I play God and build in all the learning opportunities, and since energy can't be destroyed, the soul journeys on as a vehicle for growth and Fun. Any other story is not a Love Story.”

“Why are so many people so silly, Tio,” asked Tawny, “wanting to live in noisy, polluted, dangerous cities? And wanting to surround themselves with things that contribute so much to Earth dying? And they are often complaining. Val taught us not to complain. Who wants to be around a complainer, and the bad energy they are attracting? So silly, really.”

“It’s not that they are silly, but they are un-educated, even mis-educated. And they don’t question the conditioning that befell them when they were very young and that continues on throughout life. You girls have been profoundly blessed to have grown up in these outrageous climes with Val and Katy as your teachers. It is not easy out there in the real world, and those people know, on an unconscious, cellular level, that what they are being force fed, as a conditioning tool, is not graceful, thus the lack of ease, the complaining and so on.

“By the way, you mustn’t think poorly of them, or indeed of anyone, even Hitler and Terrorists. We are all One in this Story, and since it is such a grand Story, we have the ‘bad’ guys to teach us and to create contrast. Your soul will choose some ‘bad’ lives also, to experience, to grow, and to better enjoy the ‘good’ ones. And you are also invited to employ more compassion toward others, more understanding and allowing ... less judgment.”

“But what is this ‘we are all one?’”

“We are all one because we are divisible parts of God, but *basta, princesa*, later I will tell you more. We are talking about Alixa’s vest. Now let’s go catch that black-and-white goat for a haircut so we can start spinning some wool.”

Wait. (Ashley speaking here...again)

Just let’s wait a moment here. Because one of my best friends, a fundamental, formative, and beloved friend from University where we participated in “sit-ins” against the Viet Nam war and that psychotic idiot, Tricky Dick, called these repetitive rants and raves about perfection, suntrips, brain access, evolution, re-incarnation and flow – he called them “bleatings”. Actually, I sort of like that terminology as it aptly expresses his dis-interest and possible disdain of his old friend taking up column inches and privileged space with HIS personal cosmology. I mean, everyone has his/her concept as to what life is (or not). My father, who was pretty much of the opinion that you are conceived, however that happens, birthed, live and then die with nothing much else going on, once said, I remember it well, he addressed me, with a bit of a painful

expression on his mien, and said; “Son, you don’t really believe in that shit do you?” (Referring to re-incarnation and spirit and whatnot). I gazed a moment at him, endeavoring to find some way across the cultural gap that yawned between us – could think of nothing better to say than the truth; “Yes.”

So, this dear friend is also my partner in this Warp and JAG business and is the guy responsible for this second edition – he wrote the Jaguar Girl Report in the appendix. Wait, because though the easiest, least investigational do item is to reduce cosmological sharings to mere, if even annoying, “bleatings” – what happens if there is some value encapsulated therein?

Here is the thing; Life is way more than it appears, or at least the way it appears that most people hold it. My goodness... my God, it is a phenomenal experience, rife with intrigue, mystery, challenge and invitations to growth. If I say that it is “magic”, what does that do to you? Do you turn the page (or burn it), in a mini rage of wanting to get back to the adventure or the sex piece? Maybe. Fine. So chosen. But what if – just what if, life is more than that? More than Charlie (my dead dad) held this experience of incarnation? Just pretend, for a moment, that there is a meaning to your life. What does that feel like? Agreed, there are myriad incarnated souls who seemingly are “placeholders” – taking up space to participate in the seemingly meaningless overpopulation we are experiencing and which is so thoroughly stressing the Earth’s eco-systems. Do you want to be a bit player here – a walk on? Not a bad choice as it certainly saves you from learning some lines, from advancing the Storyline in any effective way, from having a rude spotlight shone down upon you. Go for it. Have a drink, senior.

Hold – sounds as if there is some disdainment operative here. As my intention, (Ashley still speaking – bleating) is to sell some books I should be careful of insulting any portion of the population. But, as it turns out, my true intention is to engage with folk who are open to evolution on all fronts; emotional, intellectual, metaphysical and even survival of the fittest, so I can leave behind the insult piece and concentrate, or emphasize, the invitational energy – the go ahead news, and hope to engage hearts and minds whose limits are expandable and elastic. Why? Maybe if more could adopt a life of simplicity – a celebration of the free things that are abundantly available in Nature – then there would be less attacks against same.

How do I imagine that I have any authority here? Well, that is an intensely personal query and one littered with minefields and slippery slopes of ego and higher ground assumptions. Fine. Still, I might gird my loving loins and assay an answer, which has something to do with having chosen to live in deep nature, aligned with an inquisitive (and happy) mind that has successfully striven to escape societal conditioning and to accede to higher energies – more fun ones (there’s that “f” word again!). Do with it as you will. I am going to say it again; life is way more than it seems and there awaits sublime experience for any and all who choose to dare, or dare to choose. That I am so amateurish, blatherish, and bleaterish is a good exit choice if you need it. Fine. All perfect. Do as you will, sorry to bother you – back to your desk, sir. God knows there are millions of books out there that tell stories better than I do, that serve as better passé tiempos, and that are replete with blood, who done it mysteries (who cares?), and grey shades of soft porn. Or,

and actually this is way easier than turning a page, watch television or text your friend your latest thought.

BTW – I should, and do, hasten to say that the referenced buddy is a far better writer than I am, and probably has his own cosmology, which could also be far better than mine, though I am unsure as to who, oh who, is going to judge the “better” piece. My sharings? I have said it before and will say it again; it has worked rather phenomenally for me in this life, bringing me all manner of experience along with the ability to handle the “goods” along with the “bads”, such that this “Flow” thing has caught me up and delivers me, in a happy cocoon-ish yacht, down the stream of consciousness, better known as “life”, in a way that rather invites, if not demands, attempts – however puerile or challengeable – to express and to share.

## Chapter 5

Let’s take a look at an autumn day at Estancia Cielo, just for the fun of it. The girls would wake on the lawn and snuggle together a little longer with their Border Collies, burrowing deeper down into the pile of ornately woven ponchos that covered them and their bed of fluffy sheepskins, waiting for the sun to crest the ridge to the East.

They sometimes played guessing games as to where, exactly, it would rise, the same game they would play with the moon. From the gaucho worker quarters came noises: sticks breaking, kindling, the thunk of an ax, someone already whistling, a muted rapture of laughter and, of course, the rooster and—in the distance, the last calls of an owl bidding Godspeed to the night.

They took turns with Valeria making the morning maté fire, and since this was their day ... up they surged to gather last night’s clothes: billowing *bombachas* – the gaucho favored riding pants, cotton shirts, a leather vest, and sweaters knitted with wool they had carded, corded, and spun—black and grey with white accents. Sturdy leather boots and a floppy felt hat topped off the show, and they scampered to the fire pit overlooking the mighty river, gathering sticks for kindling as they went.

Dry leaves in a pile, some stick shavings and the fire-making contest began, as each girl bore down on the spindle while concentrating force on the bow, an arched rib bone, until wisps of smoke began to escape from the target wood as a coal began to form. Often they would each be putting their coal on the shavings at the same time, as now it was a matter of blowing steadily and calmly to coax the flame into being. The girls knew that a maté fire, whatever fire, was always best when ignited naturally, and that the tea would taste even better.

Valeria would appear soon thereafter—drawn by the dawn’s drill of sweet, beguiling, wood smoke—to hug and hug her darlings and hear of their dreams and plans, as they passed around the maté for the day’s first hour. She would then go to send the men off for their work while the girls took in Katy’s tea.



After a bedside chat with their granny, they would trot off for chores: gathering eggs (they loved to slip their hands under a fluffy warm mother hen and explore for eggs while she chuckled and bobbed her head, pretending to peck), milking the cow, and lighting the outdoor adobe oven for the day's bread (the winner from the maté fire race got to have the honor). And then they got their books and trooped to the schoolroom for two hours of book learning, with the teacher of the day. As there were often visitors, including youngsters from Europe, Australia, the United States, whoever was handy would share with the girls and be available for discussion. Of course Valeria provided the consistency as she followed their studies.

After school they would race out to play in the stream, to work with their horses, to romp with the dogs, or maybe go check on the gauchos as they worked the sheep and cattle herds or trained the new horses. Lunch was prepared by Valeria, Katy, and the wife of a gaucho, Rosa—always happy, fat and happy. It was served outside, at the big round table in the shade of the *alamo blanco*, where the river could be watched, including the steep cliffside trail, for news.

When lunch was finished, and while the others napped, the girls would go down to the river for fishing, swimming, and sunning on the hot sands, which welcomed their little bodies gladly. They surrendered themselves totally to the riversong, sensing the timelessness of the waters as they roiled and curled and gurgled and frolicked their way. Were these light-filled waters going to their death on ocean's coffer, or to their birth as vapor to sprinkle the jagged yearning mountains above? A trip to the river was always magical.

Walking back to the *casco*, cleansed and blessed, they gazed at the spires of alamo trees that graced the avenue to home: stately monarchs gently fired by autumn's brilliant hand, marching in place to the silent beat of breeze, and shedding golden glad hands that would drift down in gay droves to season the way with tidings of life and love. The girls would often stop, especially in autumn, at the cross-trails, where two avenues intersected, to twirl, heads thrown back, in a tumult of dizzy ecstasy as the sky's blue, straight up, was the only anchor to reality.

Then, happy work in the garden or canning, or extracting summer's golden honey, or threshing wheat, digging potatoes, drying fruit in the solar dryer—any of a hundred meaningful chores that added zest and future to the moment.

After work—To Horse!—the best time of the day, as away they would lope, bareback, on their favorite steeds through the scapes of valley, mountainside, dale, and ridge that surrounded them and constituted their playground.

Where to go? The Confluencia, where their two rivers joined in a slow ecstasy of reunion? Temple Rock, the cliff high above the North River? The Stream of the Condors? Across the Llano Blanco and down into its woosy embrace? The High Guindo, where the wilderness began? The Cascada, where a volcano in Chile could be viewed above the chilling mists of falling waters? The Indian Mound, to search for arrowheads? The Pine Forest, to revel in sundrenched scents and to search for mushrooms? Lion Mountain, to check out ground news for puma prints? Nipple Peak? T.A. Valley? The Mill Stream? The Warm Spring? The glade at Row Boat Pond? Or any of the dozen old *puestos* whose gnarled apple and pear trees and gentle square heaps of earth bore witness to the “natives” who first settled in these mountains? And would they encounter Tio Perfecto or not?

He was a moving target, making camp from place to place so he could “enjoy the vibes,” and only coming into “town,” the Casco, rarely, for a little yerba, flour, or to bring in a brace of tasty wild duck that he had, yes, trapped—a couple of times a month to dine, nights when everyone would dance as Valeria played the piano.

In the end, it didn’t matter where they went, maybe just the twenty minutes up to the polo field at the Llano Blanco to lope around the meadow, *tocking* the white ball and scattering the flock of sheep that maintained the grass at a perfect level while also fertilizing the field. Oh, life was grand and for the living.

Then back for the ‘Granny Hour,’ sharing a maté with the sweet old woman and either journeying on the pages of an adventure book or on her words of happy nostalgia as she shared stories of life with Mikhail and the development of the estancia when Valeria was a child.

Down to the garden to harvest lettuce, chives, tomatoes, arugula for a salad and some late raspberries for dessert with the cream that Valeria had made. Dinner was a fun family affair, candles shedding a soft glow on the Baccarat crystal and Wedgwood china that Katy’s aunt had sent down for her wedding decades ago, everyone sitting at the long table in the great room with a fire dancing in the cavernous fireplace at the far end. All great. Did the girls have a sip of fine, clean wine from the microclimate at the North River Vineyard? Yup, a little.

Good night. Great, even.

Here is an excerpt from Valeria’s journal, in which the influence of Tio Perfecto can easily be surmised:

*A day at the estancia, as day’s dawn crested the great bow wave of light that endlessly circles the globe, begins with the precise, insensate crowing of the cocks heralding sun’s hello and haloing the casco (headquarters) with an unseen crown of sound. Girls, entwined in filaments of fantasy, as last dreams devolve into lovely reality, snuggle closer to canine companions under heavy ponchos as angels hover and the dark lightens and quickens its foreplay with light. Light seeping in to caress treetops and to shoo away the million-million stars whose nightlong sway silently cedes to sun’s strength.*

*Now begins the dream of day whose doings dance individual duets with chosen deities and are recorded in ethereal epics, unread but inscribed in eager cell’s memory—another tiny chapter in the mystic message writ large face upon time’s offering to the universe. Why? And what presents from these climes, what presentations and, again ... why? In an utter oblivion of not knowing, none may answer such celestial query, none, but any may opine. The energy from here, as sun’s fiery love lightens dark’s gauntlet, offers this: being, in love, and being, in sensuous simplicity, and being, in a state of relative grace with god’s king- and queendoms on Earthride while all else disharmonizes in a disequilibrium of doing, is an assuagement of such a Love that its energy can cast a cloak of gentle yearning over all the ways of the world and reflect outward to an absolute infinity of vibrational awarenesses.*

*As fires, animals, and flowers are tended, gardens and orchards grow their gifts gently, and time flows in its bed, wafting all in a dream-dance of magnificence where absolutely nothing is ever in other than a state of abundance, except to provide healthy contrast—perfection’s offering of grace and growth.*

*Here in the deep country, where technology's temptations are kept in afar abeyance, here the dream deepens daily, and doings are offered as celebrations of not only yore's ways, but of tomorrow's tidings of harmony when harm is no more. Fulfilling needs, bestowed with a prayerful gratitude, become deeds of grace and enhance life's dance. And, as evening gathers her respite and night-dreams rehearse their presentations, balance dwells in energetic interface with perfection as the angels hold hands and sigh.*

## Chapter 6

The girls received many varied lessons through the kind wisdom of Valeria. No truths were kept from them, and early on they came to understand the intricacies of human interaction, and then the complexities of the energies encapsulated in sexual and financial intercourse. For why, oh why, should these precious beings ever be lied to, mis-led, or denied learning? What convention contrived to darken the doors of growth surrounding these essential understandings, even shrouding them in doubt, in foulness ... in fear?

Only minds that themselves had been conditioned by uneducated Fear would darken these doors of growth. Katy, and then Val, shared all their stories of the world openly, and the various wanderers who visited were invited to tell tales such that the girls gained an understanding of the world and felt that they were missing nothing much of value, not when compared to the bounty, the fun, the love and learning that they enjoyed at home.

They learned to count their blessings, the gift to themselves that sharing provides, that there is a reason for everything that happens, however inscrutable at the time, and that one attracts the energy needed for her growth, that things don't matter as they are made up of energy—nothing is solid, and then they learned how to create happiness. How does one do that? It is at once the simplest and the most complex question of man.

Granny came to it instinctually, so even though she was brought up in a time and place of imprisoning conditioning—being taught many things to fit into a societal norm, which weren't healthy or fun, she escaped. Her favorite saying was, "Oh, I feel another of those glorious waves of well-being coming on." And Valeria picked it up from Katy, as the contagion of love is the best exemplar.

Tio Perfecto came to it through intelligence, experience, and what he termed "damn good luck." Though he sucked in societal endeavors, and was a bit of a bumpkin, he had developed observational skills so that he was able to seek deeply within the "hallowed" confines of his peers. He found very little of real value therein and began to question his motives for endeavoring so mightily to be like them, when the rewards seemed so shallow. Wealthy people lived in fear for their "things"—for their lives and their children's lives. Famous people lost their freedom and all public places were anathema to them as they were either touched or trampled. He found out that rich people mostly just wanted to get richer, and that there was always somebody wealthier, and that their wealth entailed endless hassle and great dangers.

Then he discovered that since they, his "poor" peers, were basically uneducated to the real rewards of life: health, freedom, integrity, joy, sharing, nature, and being, that they insisted on

earth-murdering productions and consumptions in misguided and desperate quests for happiness and self-knowledge. He wrote a piece called “Let me be your millionaire,” which offered an example of the emptiness, futility, danger, and misguidedness of wealth acquisition. No, he was looking for something real, something essential that made him feel alive, self-sufficient, and involved in the basic Story of Creation—he was looking for self and he was looking for fun. He knew that the avenues for these realizations had to come from Truth and from Freedom. Mother Earth and Grandmother Nature did the rest.

And the animals had it naturally. They never lost it and alternately reveled in, and endured, their great aliveness. Animals taught the girls the joys of simplicity, of self-sufficiency, of fitness and survival, of being in harmony, and of surrendering with a calm grace to the inevitability, the kindness, the transcendence of Death. Alixa once came upon a mountain lion attacking a six month old foal. It was across a canyon on a grassy hillside and she was at first struck with a combination of a vast compassion fired by her desire to, somehow, help. She saw the mare charge the lion to no avail, saw the foal in a death grip as the puma’s fangs sank deep into her throat and she accepted that it was almost over and that there was nothing she could do but watch and absorb the deep and sometimes dire truths of life in Nature. As she related her experience to the family, Val nodded her head, especially at the part where the mare went, seemingly calmly and acceptingly, to her grazing as the lion fed.

From their town trips they learned of the confusions visited on their neighbors by the conditionings of a society, not yet ready to change—clinging to insistencies of consumption that were bringing Mother Earth to her knees, as pollutions surged over every inch of the globe. When will old Mom tire of her children’s’ selfish, unhappy, and unconscious violations—acts of constant terrorism—against her being?

Thus were arranged the girls’ teachers. Ah, but we want to learn how to create happiness, of course we do. It is what we live for, no?

So. One day the girls were intrigued to spy a group of horsemen coming down the trail. There were no dogs, thus they knew that these were not gauchos. As they neared, negotiating the steep cliff trail, the girls could see “gringo” hats and as they closed, that they did not meld well with the horses as they jounced, rather than flowed, down the trail. They were also going slower than any gaucho would ever go. Must be the fishermen who had arranged to visit for a few days. Goody, something to learn, always something to learn with these rare visits. Usually visitors were high-spirited and joyful, as they reacted to the energy of the valley, and the three-hour ride just to arrive.

The father seemed happy and eager, but his son was uncomfortable—didn’t like horses, weathers or places without televisions or computers—and the girls couldn’t get him to respond to their offers for adventure. He certainly didn’t want to go on an all-day ride to sleep outdoors and visit some old fool hidden in the “middle of nowhere.” This perplexed the girls and spurred them up to visit Macanudo.

“Tio Perfecto, this fellow isn’t happy and he doesn’t even want to try—seems he just wants to escape reality by sitting in front of a TV.”

“Well, my dears, happiness is one of the most difficult acquisitions for man, but once the way is understood, it becomes so very simple. Now that fellow down there missing his television is unfortunately a product of an ‘emperor’s clothes’ society—we’ve talked about that before haven’t we?”

“Oh, that’s where everyone agrees that it is all finery and great glittering wealth when really it is bare emptiness.”

“Okay, let’s be kind here, they really believe in that myth. Heck, I believed in it for a half a god-darned century. I really believed that if I had enough stuff I would finally be full-filled and happy. Materialism is a bit of a disease. Just look what it is doing to Mother Earth! I mean it is as if there is a de facto conspiracy up there; go to schools, get a student loan, go to college, get A’s, marry well, get to work to pay down that loan, buy things to “keep up” – to look good, drink in the evenings, watch television so you can chat and chat, take two, maybe three weeks a year off to go join the hoards at the vacation venues... lordy, I am getting exhausted here. But, really, it is a mess and there are myriad diseases abounding. Anyway, you have heard this from me before. It just sort of blows my mind that everyone is so sheepishly conditioned to think that they are “doing the right thing”. But then again, I fell prey to it for many years. Let’s move on.

“Have we talked about how to create happiness? I know we’ve talked about a bunch of the elements – the ingredients in the happiness pie. What are they?”

“Uh, everything is perfect, of course,” said Tawny, “and you can’t learn to sail on calm seas, and Death be not proud, don’t count your curses ‘cuz they’re probably blessings in disguise, don’t worry about getting what you want, but want what you get, what else?”

Alix piped up, “Matter is not matter, so it doesn’t matter, and then there’s always Freedom will lead you to Truth—all your cute little ditties.”

“Good, and we need to add perception, free choice, release.”

“Don’t forget Trust and Faith, old Tio.”

“I was just getting there, chica, and then The Flow.”

“So that’s how we create happiness? Don’t we need to add an estancia?”

“Good point. Anyway I got happy first and then found this place, but I suppose that happy folk are going to want to find some country interaction with real Nature.”

“So let’s hear the recipe and cook up this puppy, Unk,” said Alixa.

“You’ve already heard about most of the ingredients, and here comes the simple part: you choose to be happy.”

“Right on, Uncle!”

“You insist on being happy,” asserted Tio Perfecto.

“Give me happiness or give me Death,” exclaimed Tawny

“Exactly. Remember we’re here to learn and to Enjoy the Creation, so happiness is of the essence. By the way, now, I don’t really know about all of this. We’ve talked about other beings from other places? Well, there have been channelings to the effect that some confederations of so and so from such and such a constellation look to this Earth, ‘garden spot of the Universe,’ as a source of happiness energy. So we may be duty-bound to be happy, but true happiness based on real enjoyment of animate life, not on drugs like alcohol, well, like schools and TVs and jobs and doodads.”

Somewhat curious, Tawny queried, “Jobs and schools, likened to drugs? Unk, there goes a whole bunch of your audience—right out the door. Not us, of course, who would ever want a job? Work, sure—and schools—if we’re here to learn and to grow in harmony—what better classroom than Nature?”

“Okay,” interjected Alixa, “but I was not happy when my foal died, and I was not happy when Claudia made fun of me because I couldn’t even turn on her computer, and I still get unhappy when I think about those things.”

“Of course,” Tio answered. “Those are examples of the ‘rough seas’ where we learn to sail, nothing like the storms and even hurricanes that may be attracted in if needed, but yes. Here’s what you are invited to do: get to neutral in your emotions and thinking as soon as possible. Remember that our thoughts attract, so, just like I taught you never to run from an attacking animal, and you have to train your mind for that, you have to train yourself not to have negative thoughts. Thoughts create and attract and, unless you want more negatives, better not bring ‘em in.

“So, go to neutral. That doesn’t mean we don’t grieve or enjoy some sadness. Emotions have value as transporters, mood-riders, and teachers.

“Remember not to grieve for the filly; she is in horse heaven, romping in sweet clover. The computer deal? Here’s another ‘ditty’ for you ‘What other people think of me is none of my business!’ That one took me decades to figure out. We are so conditioned by those rotten, herd-ish, schools to compete and exceed, and we’re always worrying about what others think of us. Bah, not of us, but our acquisitions and ability to ape a bunch of social sayings. Ah, don’t get me started, and, by the way, learning is great. Heck, it’s half the reason we’re alive. But you know that, where were we?”

“You were going to tell us how to create happiness,” Alixandra reminded.

“Right. Go to neutral, then go to positive. Remember, everything happens for a reason, and we need the energies that show up. We asked for them. Go to grace, go to observation for the offerings involved—go to thanks. Anyway, that’s more of a way to stay in happiness. To create happiness, just choose it ... that’s our birthright. We are free. Free Choice, thank you God, to choose anything we want.

“We can choose ‘Normal,’ for example, and I apologize beforehand if this sounds a little judgmental. Choose ‘Normal’? Well, that’s where you go to school and agree to the conditioning and, after ‘sowing your wild oats’ for a minute or two, get right into the production/consumption/pollution slot lined up for you. Without true education, and because you will attract energies, ‘bad’ things will always show up, no matter how many degrees or cars or

houses you have. So, by default, you will be choosing anger, blame, guilt, remorse, jealousy, resentment, even hate ... all fear-based choices that will self-fulfill and bring you lack of ease, usually manifested as heart, nerve, or further mental deficiencies and unhappiness. You cannot imagine all of the new diseases romping through the first world's ways and times. Fie.

"You may not even know it as you continue in the system, sharing your problems with others, and slavishly, semi-deliriously, waiting for your next acquisition to create happiness for you, and guaranteed, g.u.a.r.a.n.t.e.e.d, it does not. So. The recipe? Do you want to start in soul's ethereal heaven or the incarnate's earth garden?"

"Take it from the top, Macanudo," Tawny gleefully requested.

"Right you are, though we're getting a little long-winded here, and didn't you say something about the audience leaving?"

"That was Alixa. She wants to go study how to turn on computers. Just kidding, sis."

"Okay. In the Ethereal Consultorium, the energy of our soul, reviewing all that's been experienced and all that hasn't, chooses a realm of approximate experiences for its next incarnation, then chooses its earth parents: stands on the brink, looks down, looks back, counts to ten, looks back again, is waved on ahead with fond laughter, and leaps out and into the chosen womb. This is all figuratively, of course. The real process – well, you have seen it in the barnyard, is another story altogether.

"Once there, it instantly forgets everything it knew in the ether and gives itself up to the entertaining and growthful vagaries of Free Choice and the various Laws of the Universe. Now, if this soul has evolved to a state of Creation Enjoyment, that is, understanding how to choose and insist on happiness—well, then its ethereal choices reflect this and so, even though it might consciously choose some big old stormy seas to experience, it will do so in joy.

"Once incarnated, the recipe might go like this: get close to nature, release matter, be in impeccable integrity, honor Death, release negativity, self-observe without judgment so the self may speak, appreciate all incoming energy, know Oneness—feel it, ladies, and allow others their ways, allow yourself also, marvel at mysteries, practice minimal harm on Mother Earth and all species, celebrate your body, seek Truth through Freedom, trust in the absolute Perfection—having Faith in you and God (which are One and the same)—and go with the Flow, get ready for the ride of your life."

"Whoa man, that is one heck of a mouthful! Enjoy the creation—it all adds up to enjoying the creation, which seems to be our job—goody, goody," exclaimed Tawny.

"And why should it be any other way?" replied Macanudo. "Che, I want to revisit something I just said about being impeccable and being in integrity, but first, there's at least one more component to happiness that I forgot, though it's part of the 'release' understanding. That's releasing the need to be right, and, kids, that was, and still sometimes is, a doozy for me. They used to say: 'judge not, lest ye be judged,' but I was born into such a mechanism of conditioning. Heck, I was trained to judge others, and to judge myself. I was intelligent and was 'right' a lot, so I determined to always be right—didn't like the judgments forthcoming when I erred. But we all err: it's human business to err, to stir up some stormy seas." Macanudo paused thoughtfully,

then continued, “It took me the longest time to release that need. I think wars are fought over it, and I damn well know that countless divorces are produced by this behavior. And, as I said, I’m still prey sometimes.

“So, impeccability and integrity and creating happiness. You see, true happiness isn't shallow and certainly isn't a factor of material acquisition, substance use, heavy petting, hearty applause, lottery winning, or gold forehead stars. True, life-affirming, healing, happiness is depthless, and I've only just begun to wade into its near-shore waters—the nether shore, I think, is out there, but no one can see it yet.

“No, girls, this Story is immense and the guesses and life hints I am sharing are but the bare essentials of all we are invited to experience as we co-create the Earth Story. For example, there is all the multidimensional being energy, the time dilemma and the time travel, vibrational frequencies, the other five chakras outside the body, species communication—heck, communicating with a woman ... just kidding, but not totally.

“And this impeccability question is there all the time. We are invited to achieve impeccability, and, in my case, I am sure that will take many more lifetimes. Impeccability literally means ‘without sin.’ As we continue our slow, steady, sure creep onward toward Love, we will learn of the Fun and the Enjoyment of No Harm and thus will Harmony at last be gained.

“How to bless one’s life, now, with relative sinlessness? We’re not there yet—it’s like asking your baby to wash out his diapers, but we’re getting there and, in the ‘mean’ time, we may begin to seek integrity in our thoughts and actions. Oh, this Story is so vast. There are concepts, powers, understandings we cannot name, nor can God—not yet, not yet. But happiness, relative happiness, is easy—easy, that is, once the fundamentals are understood and agreed to. You simply choose it, releasing anything that is other and insisting on it for you. Plus it’s fun, great fun, and then the Flow really shows up.”

“Is that why you’re dancing now?” asks Tawny.

“Precisely.”

“Well, it sounds good, old Tio, but I still get sad and angry from time to time,” said Alixa.

“Hey, we all do—and, by the by, there are always guides who will help if asked. Just ask for help – they will show up, and, also, enjoy your emotions; they manifest for a reason. There is a great difference between having emotions and them having you. Emotions are fine. They can be quite transformational as evolutionary tools, but get into them positively, ride ‘em like you would a spring colt—just get away, and stay away, from negativity. Now, who’s going to dance with an old fart?”

## Chapter 7

*Some scenes from Estancia Cielo:*



Horses. Horses everywhere. This is a working cattle ranch; healthy, grass-grazed, mountain-blooded cows roaming over the lands. Horses are the vehicles, taxis and pickup trucks, and there were always a few horses at the adobe, stone-sided saddle house, licking the salt blocks in the shade of the great Alamos or hobbled on the green sweep of lawn in front of the stone manse.

Sometimes one would come into the plaza to get a drink from the fountain. Granny Katy's bedroom pasture became the foal pasture, and every year she enjoyed watching the pranced frolics of the descendants of Magic News, who had bred with the sturdy mountain Criollas, lending a delicate refinement and wondrous endurance to an already outstanding breed.

The gauchos would catch their mount for the day just before last dark, and saddle them even before lighting their first fires. Great leather works of rawhide, hearts decorating the breastplate and halter, a scattering of dogs now arrayed in dutiful expectation around the horses. Horses were the animate lifeblood of the estancia. There is nothing nobler for land-cruising, indeed for any movement, and the Estancia Cielo horses were well honored.

Once, camped alone at the Confluencia, Tawny was awakened at night by a great clattering and looked up to find her gelding, Guindo, helplessly entangled in his hobble tie, sliding into the river. What a sight as the moon illuminated the silvery waters closing over his body. She leapt up, grabbed her knife, cut the rope, but still the horse slid further into the deep water. Tawny got around behind his back, where the thrashing hooves couldn't get her and ducked into the frigid waters to work her way along his neck to cut away the rope that was wrapped around his foot and his neck, and he was then able to surge to his feet and clamber out of the river, Tawny on his back, and spewing great torrents of river water from his mouth and nostrils. Tawny would never forget the feel of the waters, nor the view underwater of Guindo's eyes bulging in the blue-black luminescence of the bubble-laden flow.

Alix and Tawny would play tag on their horses, would trade mounts at a lope, nap with the new foals, and bring their favorites into the great room once a year for Christmas. Horses.

Granny Katy graduated to the buggy, and there she would reign, under her parasol, in a special blue chair that Hugo had rigged for her as she cruised the lands.

Sheep shearing—the gauchos bent to their work, whistling all the while as the fleece was peeled back in creamy waves of wealth. The girls would tend the maté fire and keep the shears sharp and sometimes, with great giggling glee, hop on top of a newly naked woolly for a wild scamper around the pen.

Cattle gathering, especially in the high valleys, where weeklong expeditions were handled as well-strategized campaigns. What fine joy to set off in the sparkling crispness of an early morning with a gaucho, to ride the long flank of an autumn mountain, searching side valleys for signs: movement, dust clouds, or specks. Then to come in at mid-day with the dogs, driving the gather to the stream meadow, to unsaddle, wash, and tether your horse and then savor a maté with the men while the goat slowly roasted. And then the siesta, sprawled out in the shade of the Lenga trees on your saddle blankets. The occasional early winter storm only heightened the memories as snow kissed the bright blaze of reds and oranges, then glistened in the sun that always returned.

Once a year, mid summer, there was the yerra at the high headquarters on the edge of the big meadow. Gauchos and guests would come from the surrounding villages on Friday to gather in the herds of mother cows and their 4 or 5 month old calves. Fire brewed stew would be served at dark while guitars were tuned and strummed – the dancers unsaddling their mounts before coming back to the fire for day’s communion. On the morrow they would wake early to catch their ponies and grease their lassos around the maté fire, which dispelled morn’s clear chill. Then to the corrals, which had been watered down from a little canal to lessen the dust of doing to follow. Lots of running and lasso waving as the mothers were separated from the calves – sometimes the mothers would clot and be hustled into the one corral, and sometimes then the calves would gather and be herded to their separate corral. Once it was done and the numbers tallied it was show time.

Some would marshal five calves into the roping corral, and most would be twirling their rawhide lassoes while grinning and egging each other on as calves scattered along the rails and were hooped and hollered until someone scored a good throw and the two rear legs were captured with a throw along their way and then yanked up in a gather of dust and legs – usually dust, sometime a leg, but that was not enough so it was slaked off until both legs were got and the upward yank brought calf to the ground. Ah, but that was just the beginning as it was young, free, scared, and would not wait for more than a heartbeat on the ground. So the lassoer would back fiercely to maintain capture on the rope which his companeros would scamper to dive on the struggling calf, which often got away – maybe half the time. Which was fine and accompanied by all sorts of banter, until it was better dived upon – one gaucho grabbing a hind leg which was pulled back into his chest while his leg pushed the other calf leg ahead and at the same time his buddy was kneeling on the neck of the now concerned calf. Done.

From the hot dung fire was run a red-hot brand which was presented to the brander – usually the owner of the herd. Aim, twist, adjust for writhe and press home – one, two, three seconds with smoke streaming up from the burned flesh, leg man having to hold on extra tight ... some bawls. Then, if it is a macho, here comes the gaucho knife. Say goodbye to them balls, senior. A slice, then, across the sack and out pops a pink testicle to be whittled along the cord and then swiftly cut – another bawl. And then the other testicle is urged out of its useless hiding to be cut, and both go into the bucket for later snacking, mountain oysters, while iodine is splashed on the now impotent scrotum. A couple of shots, and then the ear marking; a quick cut into each ear with the distinctive mark of the estancia and then all look at each other; “listo?”, and the little beast is freed to scurry off and consider what had just befallen him.

A long and happy day of dust, work, blood, and fun. And then the huge asado; an entire ribcage slowly roasting, attended by a Viejo – too old to enter the fray. Potatoes roasting in the hot ashes and a little happy army of ladies baking tortas fritas, preparing salads and laying out the goat skin wine bags. In troop the corral men, counting the balls and dividing by half to get a good count of the machos, washing up at the spring pouring forth from the hillside, and then knives are re-sharpened for to cut away at the sizzling ribs, using pieces of bread as plates and passing the salads around with a shared fork.

Dancing. What can be said of the yerra dancing that would convey the utter delight shared by one and all after a day in the dirt, pouncing and laughing with friends which actually accomplishing something? It goes on all night, and why not.

Maybe in your home community she says; “Honey, remember to get a loaf of bread, organic whole wheat, at the 7-11 after your drive to the gym.” At Estancia Cielo, it goes like this: under the chilly cloud-swept skies of spring, the Percheron draft horses would prepare the wheat field, plowing and disking, while the girls followed behind, sowing the saved seed from sacks draped around their necks. Fans of golden life ceaselessly catching the air to cascade onto their earthen womb. Careful irrigation from the canals all summer, as windows are opened for the gurgling water to wend its life bearing way across the thirsty field, and then the scything party: teams of men and women cutting and gathering the golden produce. “Scythe” – what a nice word to describe the gentle yet sure arc of the sharpened blade as it is swung to “sigh” down the mature stems. Oxen yoked to lumbering wagons loaded as pitchforks poke, glean, and heap. To the threshing pen, the horses circling to playfully prepare the grain, so the gather of gold, tossed repeatedly into the fresh winds that blow away the chaff, leaving the heavier seed to fall to the ground to be swept up and stored in feed sacks.

A Percheron freight wagon trip to T.A.’s valley where Mikhail had chiseled a water flow through a tall rock so that it could fall into the blades of his grinding mill—two huge stones that ground the seed to flour.

Back to the casco, make the dough, fire the adobe beehive oven, rake the coals around, put in the dough, wait forty minutes, and out comes the most natural, delicious of all organic bread in the world and probably a lot more fun, not to mention healthier, than driving the SUV to the corner Super. Just add time—happy time, please.

Starting at the age of 9, Tawny would go to the highland valleys, a day’s ride away, to spend solo time. The first few years either Hugo or Diogenes, the local gauchos, would pack her up, using the mule, and then return for her later. When she was 12, she packed herself in, and when she turned 14 she simply rode in with what she could carry in her saddlebags.

The highlands were extremely rugged, rising into the skies and scattered with valleys ripe with the ways of the wild. Tawny loved it up there—loved the silence and the very powerful peace that reigned throughout the fastness and that held the spirits of the lands in a sure sway. Her dreams of dancing, of flying, were born in those hallowed climes. She was drawn there as surely as the salmon to their natal stream, the geese to their winter climes, and the red deer to their rutting zones in season.

She would go there to be. Semi-fasting and walking meditation and being—staring up at the tree limbs by day, the stars at night—star-ring into her soul and finding therein an agreement with Being. She communed with the spirits that resided there, receiving tidings of long ago, tracks of yesteryear’s energy. Was it from the Indians or was it from the Conquistadors, or perhaps it was from a race of beings even older—predating history. She communed with the Creator and found herself in pleased and peaceful agreement.

One night she again heard a Jaguar growl, a primal guttural rending of the dark that seared into her heart and, after first clutching it in a fearful grasp, caressed it with soothing afterthoughts much like the little breezes that follow great gusts, the wavelets that tickle and stroke the leaves and sands after the strike of the storm, the ocean wave that recedes.

Again she crept out into the night's silent embrace away from her fire's coals. This time she crept right into the Jaguar's presence. She felt no fear, but rather a basal communication – an essential agreement that they were sharing space and time and being, and meant no harm. Tawny began to speak in low crooning tones, hoping that the jaguar would purr or something – she did not know, but it felt good. So she continued. After a time she crawled a little closer, into the very scent of total wildness until she could actually see the form of the supine cat whose head was raised in extreme awareness. After a time she saw the animal raise, arch its neck, turn and slowly stride off. After a time, it turned its head, and after another time it turned and disappeared, melding with the night. Each time was but a moment but seemed an eternity, an entire eon of communication.

In the morning she wrote this poem:

Now my heart prowls nightways,  
Unwinding from day's long drink.  
Now, as claws caress trail's dark flank,  
I gather my being in flawless felinity  
To grace the ghost's last haunts  
And sing the song that silences all others.

She became infatuated with the Jaguar and yearned to see it again, to be granted another glimpse of this beast as it prowled ever deeper in the depths where man dares not frequent. Tawny studied the Jaguar, in the estancia library, and discovered that it was a very endangered species and so shy of man's foul mechanizations that it was seldom seen anymore. It needed thousands of *hectarias*, not just for food source, but also for Being—for the prideful fulfillment of the roaming blood that coursed within.

Tawny identified mightily with this great cat and saw it as a symbol, as its extinction loomed ever more imminent, of a world gone awry—all to satisfy the seemingly endless and totally selfish demands of one species, the one that harmed all others. Tio's ditty; "There is only one species that harms any other species, AND that species harms all other species", came to mind. She remembered Alixa's statement that the wolf surely harms the deer, and the answer that, indeed, the wolf helps the deer population by weeding out the slow, the un wary, the infirm and making the surviving members stronger, smarter and healthier. And did that one species really harm every other species? Yes, via its pollutions which affected every inch of Earth. Wow!

Every year she would return to the same valley and there avail herself to her sylvan sister, singing songs she would write during the day. And they, or she—for Jaguars are so rare they hardly ever see each other—would sing back in dreams and precious imaginings, leaving tracks on her heart.

Occasionally she would come across prints in the damp earth and once, after a night of deep dreaming, she followed tracks that completely circled her clearing, effectively enclosing her in wildness. That day she wrote this poem in Spanish as her Jaguar was of the Argentine.

*Oh ... Oh ... Jaguar*

*En la inmensidad puedo sentir al  
a salvaje Jaguar que fluye de mi ser,  
y en comunión con el quiero estar  
al anochecer; antes que mi instinto,  
antes que mi sangre corra por todo mi cuerpo;  
quiero conectar mi corazón  
y espíritu con el Jaguar, casi como un  
alma gemela puedo sentirlo  
oh ... oh ... Jaguar tan sensual y salvaje  
como puedo expresarte si no es con  
mi mente, si no es con mi corazón,  
si no es con el alma.*

*En tu mirada profunda Jaguar,  
encuentro mi río con su torrente de  
aguas que parecen rugir y en la luz,  
como una estrella que aparece  
en la noche; te veo ahí entre aguas,  
rocas, montañas y cielo; oh Jaguar  
cuanto te entiendo; tan tímido  
y fuerte salvaje; tan sensible  
a la presencia humana que  
nadie puede verte.*

*En lo profundo de la noche  
nuestros ojos brillan juntos y a través  
de orgullosos y majestuosos árboles;  
te estoy adorando.... Oh, Jaguar  
Tu soberana presencia me inspira  
fuerzas poderosas salen de mí.  
Soy Jaguar de esencia.  
Pureza de vida salvaje e ingenuo caminar.*

*Me siento viva y fuego arde en  
mi sangre. Ya viene, ahí viene  
el salvaje Jaguar; con su ritmo particular,  
todo sensual; pisadas sigilosas,  
cuidando la situación.  
Riesgo y peligro lo atraen  
Conoce el límite; tiene garras.  
Su sangre como mi sangre,  
corren... nuestros cuerpos vibran juntos  
Arento el Jaguar a su instinto  
responde al mensaje;  
puedo saberlo; puedo sentirlo;  
mi alma sabe...*

Oh ... Oh ... Jaguar

In the immensity I can feel the  
wild Jaguar who flows from my being,  
and, in communion with him, I want to be  
in the deep night, before my instinct,  
before my blood flows  
through all my body.

I want to connect my heart  
and spirit with the Jaguar, almost like  
a twin soul. I can feel him.

Oh ... oh ... Jaguar so sensuous, so wild,  
how can I express myself to you if not with  
my mind, if not with my heart,  
if not with my soul?

In your deep looking, Jaguar,  
I find my river with its torrents of  
waters that seem to roar and in the light  
like a star that appears  
in the night, I see you there between waters,  
rocks, mountains and sky. Oh, Jaguar,  
how much I understand you, so feral,  
so fiercely wild, so sensitive  
to the presence of man that  
nobody can see you.

Deep in the night  
our eyes shine together and behind  
the proud and majestic trees  
I am adoring you ... oh Jaguar.  
Your royal presence inspires me;  
powerful strengths come from me.  
I am Jaguar in essence.  
Purity of the wild life and ingenuous walk.

I feel alive with high fires in  
my blood. Already he comes, there he comes,  
the wild Jaguar, with his own rhythm,  
all sensuous, stealthy steps  
guarding the scene.  
Risk and danger bring him.  
He knows the limit; he has claws.  
His blood and my blood  
flow—our bodies vibrate together.

The Jaguar is attentive to his  
instinct to respond to the message.  
I can know it, I can feel it;  
my soul knows

Oh ... Oh ... Jaguar

But never another sighting, never, that is, until one day when she was 13, just at dark she saw a spotted shadow slip through the dusky underbrush to disappear, not unlike a dream at dawn's waking. Was it an imagining born of yearning? Was it the same great cat from the year before?

That night she sang her Jaguar song and as the last words wafted through the woods, she was answered, as the very fabric of the night was rent with a piercing scream from so nearby Tawny was not sure it had not come from her soul, such was it rendered within her very being. Once again she felt so alive, so thrilled. She felt as if she had been called by the Wild, and, before morning, she had vowed to answer that call.

All night she had felt a presence, not at all menacing, at the same time feral, soothing, and very, very exciting. As she descended to the grassy steppe where she had hobbled Griff, she was filled with a thrill that vibrated through her being. It felt as if light were flowing through her veins, as if she were haloed with the divinity of the wild and garlanded in grace. Never before had she moved with such sureness, such fine felinity, her mane of gold gathering in the glints and glances of sunrise through the trees. And when she neared to Griff, he backed, wild-eyed, as he sensed the scent and energy of the great cat on his mistress, needing words and moments of reassurance before he could be saddled.

Ever after, she would take herself to that valley of dreams, where she would commune with her Jaguar. And if the Jaguar appeared, as it did, not always, but occasionally, they would stride together or sing songs at night. Tawny felt more than blessed and loved the news from the wilderness. This was her secret, as she told no one of the relationship, holding it deep within her very heart and soul where it cuddled, roiled and roared with her essence. Jaguar Girl.

## Chapter 8

"Mom, we're going up to Perfection Vale. Probably be gone for two nights; made some cinder bread," exclaimed Alixa to Val.

"Okay, darlings, enjoy—but where's Perfection Vale?"

"That's where Macanudo is making camp now. He found a cave and everything. It's that high valley off the flank of Cerro de la Cordillera, just past Arroyo Arco Iris—must be pretty close to Chile," added Tawny.

"Hey, give him *abrazos y besos* for me. Why not take him some of that raspberry jam he loves so much—love you."

"Correcto, already got some, Mum, love you."

“Love yous, darlings.”

And they were off—each sweeping up a poncho from the leather wing-chairs that faced the huge fireplace in the great room, before scampering off to horse and to adventure.

To horse! Saddlebags of woven Indian craft, filled with yerba, a blackened and dented pot, bread, writing and reading books, fire-making kits and extra socks, a couple of flies they had tied. Come on, you dogs, and away, out the gate and into the avenue of poplars and alamo blancos until they reached the edge of the casco. One last gate and they burst into sun-laughed freedom, the horses moving forward into the "gaucho walk," which they could sustain for hours, even over tough terrain.

Up the hill, a leap over the irrigation canal, up through the pine forest, resplendent in spring-kissed scent, up the next hill, and into the little valley that led them up to the “Llano Blanco.” They paused to check out the flock of sheep in the polo field enclosure and to gaze at the Cordillera del Viento, which reared high above the lower river’s towering cliffs; brilliant snows seeming to shimmer and dance along the horizon more than fifty miles away, and above, the glory of blue.

Up again, gaining the long ridge, past Nipple Rock to the first ‘Cascada’—snowmelt pouring over a shelf of rock, droplets tickling verdant ferns, catching and reflecting sun’s outpouring like a never-ending entrainment of diamonds donated to the earth. And now the high plains, trotting while the dogs raised hares and the winds picked up—first volcano shows, there, on the Northwestern horizon.

Skirting snow pools and barrens, mixing with tracks of fox and puma to the 7-kilometer-long valley (*valle de las yeguas salvajes*), and sure enough, even this early in the season, could be seen far below, sprinklings of wild horses amid the streams and lakelets. Down and across, more up, then cresting the ridge for the view of all the cordillera, presented in front—a black-and-white jumble seeming to leap from within the earth.

We need a bigger and better word here than *awesome* to describe the view which pummeled them with waves of wild wonder. Tawny always thought of them like a band of killer whales frozen in time, guarding the West in a great front of leaping mottled might—such did they seem to be alive, such was the brilliant interplay of snow and rock. What was that word meaning a dance of black and white, of dark and light? Chiaroscuro! That’s it.

They stopped in the lee of some boulders, where a spring gurgled forth, to kindle a little fire and have a maté. Still the wind from the West found them, wafting tendrils of smoke into their hair, perfuming them with *eau du wildness*, as they relaxed in happy communion with the four elements.

The horses stood with their tails to the wind, the dogs curled up, the sun shone down and the high mountains waited—an eternity of contented patience.

At the last sharing sip, a sigh of well-being, a prayer of thanks as yerba and ashes are scattered. The way turns rugged here, no more trotting—this is the deep fastness, a fortress of nature gone bush, gone wild. Jumbles of boulders, interstrewn with glistening snow spills, seeping new waters, beginning journeys of down, ever down. Tangles of little trees and wild watercourses, no



songbirds here, just raptors and splayed feather condors, and marches of up and down and of disappearing around cliff-sided corners of into ... into where?

They don't always know. Perhaps it is deeper into the Dream they suppose. Guided by a thin, swept-away, semi-miragic memory of smoke, they finally spy Macanudo's camp in the vale, and ride in for hugs and more maté, settling in comfortably around the fire with their backs up against the accommodating trees.

"Macanudo, let's check out your ditty, 'The days of doing are done/let the age of being begin,'" said Alixa.

"Right you are, my beauty. But first, ladies, I want to check in with you, again, and make sure you really want to sit through more of this old goat's bleatings. I mean I am happy to share with you tadpoles, but this cosmology is a bit personal and may not resonate with everyone. You guys might prefer to develop your own cosmology and not listen to an old fart."

"Well, give us a break here old Tio – we ride all the way up here because we are interested and we want to know more. Look, if all this cosmology, whatever that really is, ends up making you feel young and making you dance around your campfire – seems like it is worth attending."

"Watch out, sis, if I know this old fart, he might give us a break – he might break wind!"

"All right, girls, I hear you and I am glad that you are enjoying the cosmology lessons ... uh, bleatings, so I will go on. But please just stop me if you want to talk about boys or something else. These are pretty personal thoughts and might get boring. So "cosmology" means a study of the Universe – it might have more to do with the foundation of all of this, but I expand it to include matters of spirit and of mystery and even the magic which is involved with life on earth. It therefore encompasses my thinking which I use as personal guidelines for ... well, for enjoying the creation. And by the way, you two, how about showing a little respect here. You blow me away sometimes. Aw, just kidding, I love how you joke with me."

"Good Macanudo – and since there are boys in the creation, plenty of them, we can include them in our, ah, studies?"

"Perfectly, little ladies. OK. Let's see, we are after all human ... beings. This doing thing is a bit ridiculous, especially in the light of Earth destruction that accompanies our production/consumption/pollution cycles. We are so overpopulated. That's an insane mess all by itself and must be corrected. Every other species self-regulates to maintain harmonic numbers. Of course we are the Storytellers—that's why this gross, unseemly, overpopulation is 'perfect,' but it sure adds up to a big old *lio*, an un-holy mess, for the Earth.

"Remember that ditty about harm? That we are the only species that harms any other, and we harm all the others? Well that mayn't go on forever—ain't gonna happen. They say that a whole bunch of souls have incarnated now, these last couple of centuries, to catch the cosmic show, this 'Change' we've talked about.

“They also say that about 5,000 years ago male energy superseded the female and began a reign that has been dominant until just now-ish. You know us males: do, do and do—a mess of doodoo. Authority, power, avariciousness with not enough heart. Wars and all sorts of messes, and we’ve harmed the heck out of Mother Earth in our un-caring-ness. Now, it seems, the female energy is ascendant.”

“About time, jeez.”

Macanudo continued, “If you take an Earth-first view (I mean, it is our Mom, and it is our home), you would welcome anything that curtailed the terrorism that the consuming/polluting bipeds wage on an hourly basis. I used to say that if it really made us either happy or growthful, it might be condoned—Storytellers that we are, but it seems that the time is up. It doesn’t make us happy, generally speaking. You know, if you’re committing a crime against your Mom, even if you didn’t recognize your behavior as criminal, how could you be happy? Plus, just owning great piles of stuff bothers us energetically. Balance and harmony are called for, and they are coming in.”

The girls were in interesting contemplation as Tio Perfecto described, “One way or the other, the days of vast doing are done. Oh, we will always do and do—I mean that’s the story we are telling, human doing, but the Longview story, no matter what, will include total harmony. And why not? Why shouldn’t we join all the other species as they enjoy life with all its hardships and soft-ships? People fret that they will suffer, that they won’t have enough.

“A couple of things: first, there will be far fewer of us, and we will be distributed over the earth in climates that suit us. Second, we will dwell in harmonic commune with others of our species, with other species, and with the Mother Being, Earth. Third, we will have access to more of our brain. What does that mean? It means that we will mentally cure, or prevent, disease and pain. We’ll entertain ourselves, make our own movies and music internally—even be able to effortlessly transport our consciousness, and without these archaic, Earth-murdering vehicles. People keep turning to technology for answers—doing and doing, while the real answer lies within our DNA. We just need the time, the tools, and the key to get there. But what fun.”

“It’s lots of fun living in community,” added Alixa. “I love when the summer visitors come and we can share the garden and other work, plus play polo and volleyball, then make music and tell stories around the fire.”

“Yes, but we’ve got a long, long way to go, individually and as civilizations. Our learning, our expanded abilities, will probably kick in over the totality of Sunclock—some 4 billion years.”

“Good Lord!” said Tawny.

“You can say that again, and why not? This is a Big Story, guaranteed, a Big Story of Love—an epic of supra-Universal telling. You girls have tons of doing to mix in with your state of being, and so do I, thank Goddess.”

“So what about this female deal?” asked Alixa.

“Well, again, we hear that in our time and yours and your children’s, the female energy will rise to reclaim its rightful reign, bringing back the energy of Love, Earth care, mothering,

cooperation, connection, nurturing, enjoyment and so on. They also say that this huge Change is in the works and nothing will be the same again.”

“Wow, you mean wars or what?” Alixa is now concerned.

"I think he means Earth change," said Tawny. "Like earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, and droughts, right, Tio?"

“Yes, and then probably human ones as well, like wars and terrorism, heck, maybe even disease attacks. And with the female energy ascendant, people may begin to opt to raise their competence, lessen their consumptions, get more involved with Nature, maybe move to the country and be with their loved ones. You know about Darwin’s survival of the fittest? Well, for Homo sapiens, that one species – look out! that’s come to mean the greediest, most clever, and often with the least integrity. A lot of those dudes who own the block aren’t fit enough to run around it. Can you imagine what might happen when people start to see that most human production is nonessential? Maybe we’ll see lawyers and bankers in the soup-kitchen line.”

“Do you really think it will go that far, Tio?” queried Alixa.

“Who knows? There’s always Free Choice. We just don’t—can’t—know how people will adapt and react. But the energies are definitely out there and are attracting in some huge balances and it all seems to be converging on these times. Could be quite the show.”

“So, the days of doing are done?” Tawny seemed excited.

“Nah—that’s a fun ditty I play around with, but we humans have tons more doing to wade through before we really get to enjoy life. I did and did and did, up there, and sure had some fun in the process, sort of, but I always wondered where was the real contentment, the real sense of pride, the meaningful benefit of my success. Always wondered where the real ‘I’ was. Self-knowledge, self-love, is the name of the game, you know, and I only came to it, well ... I’m not there yet, but in this state of being in these mountains, I am beginning to, finally, love myself and ...”

“That’s why you’re dancing, you old fart?” Tawny smiled.

Tawny and Alixa occasionally went to town, riding to the neighboring estancias and a few times to the little pueblos in the area, and once, on a road trip, to the Provincial Capital where the yearly fair was held. The pueblos were rustic, dirt-road affairs, where the feeling of yesteryear was only occasionally disturbed by the odd pickup truck that would shout its way past dogs and horsemen, raising angry clouds of dust, which roiled up in the vehicle’s wake and drifted ominously to cover the townsfolk in a light curse of powdered earth.

Tawny enjoyed her outings and was always the first awake to gather the horses and the pack mule that were to make the journey. She kept her favorite horse in the home orchard pasture, where it was always available, and would ride him to the lake pasture. There she and her dog would scout the grazing areas until she found the herd. Then she could build her strategy for circling and driving them home to the corral, where the gauchos and Alixandra were waiting to saddle and pack them. A town trip was usually an occasion for fun and extra high spirits, as they were rare.

After the riding horses were prepared with Indian woven blankets, pads, the saddle of leather and then the soft pelt of wool, the mule was caught and saddled.

First, the gaucho, usually Diogenes, would cover the mule's head with a jacket, tied under its chin, to calm the animal so that he'd stand while the packs were loaded and the various rawhide straps were tugged and tightened. He made quite a strange sight, standing there while the men danced around, sometimes putting a foot on his side to get leverage to tighten the straps. The pack itself was rawhide and goatskins.

And then the departure: Valeria, Tawny, and Alixandra all mounted and dressed in their finery: billowing *bombachas*, that Argentine loose riding breeches, tall leather boots, silk shirts and knitted wool sweaters, a scarf at their necks and a woven poncho over their laps. Sometimes a vest of tanned leather.

The gauchos also were dressed in their best. A town trip, even though it took six hours of riding, was always an occasion to dress up and feel fancy. At the halfway high-pass puesto, they would dismount to rest the horses, but really to gather brush for a maté fire while they gazed at the huge plain, *Buta Mallin*, named by the Mapuche Indians and meaning "Big Meadow", and its ponds, which hosted geese and, occasionally, pink flamingoes. "Buddha Mallin," as Tawny called it, had the largest skies of all.

They stayed a number of days with their neighbors, sharing stories and perhaps doing some horse-trading. Matés were passed and great *asados* prepared, with plenty of homegrown food, wine and pastries. The girls were always especially welcomed as they came from Estancia Cielo, so far away, and so remote, and so special, as their visits were few and done in the old way: no automobiles, only horses, and sleeping in the barns on beds of hay.

The girls always arrived bearing a sensation of times past, when life was tuned to the rhythms of the weathers. Tawny generally refused to get in the trucks of town, preferring the clean friendliness of her chosen mount and the gifts of feeling the outdoors and the passage of time, though Alixa often enjoyed the novelty of riding in trucks.

Tawny was turning into quite the teenage beauty with still golden hairs and a smile that outshined the sun – flashing eyes of deep blue. She had a lithe body that was being sculptured by her work and her movements to produce a dream woman. She easily beat most of the town boys at arm wrestling and was getting used to their eyes as they, more and more, roved over the curves and tantalizations of her body. "Bawdy", as Alixa called it, a bit jealously as she, though a bit taller, never filled out the same – never acquired that air of a walking dream which sometimes stopped townspeople in their tracks as they watched Tawny pass by.

When they were younger they always went with Hugo to town. He was the head gaucho and also a skilled craftsman builder. He loved the family and was the girls' self-appointed guard until they insisted that they could go alone, establishing their maturing self-reliance.

Hugo had left home when he was eleven to work construction and to experience the world of his country. He had come to the estancia as the master mason, steadily crafting the great keystones, which weighed 70 pounds each and crowned all of the arched windows and doorways. He was an immense man and all the land's love crowded into his frame, though he was only as tall as Tawny. Always in motion, he rose before first light for his maté while he worked his leathers. He

would then send the men off for their daily work: cleaning canals, scything wheat, gathering cattle, building rock walls. He always trotted, even on foot, and would only rest once at mid-day, drinking his maté while roasting a leg of lamb.

Hugo was very studious as well, not so much with books, though he had taught himself to read and write enough to get by. He turned to the woods, waters and weathers, and ways of the critters. The whole world of nature was his classroom—he delighted in showing Tawny a tree seedling, explaining what it was, how it got there, and what its life would be like. He gathered herbs for medicinal purposes, rearranged eggs for the best hen-sitters, bred and tamed horses, prepared wonderful garlic sauces, and built drunken furniture out of twisted trunks and tree limbs.

He always wore a bright scarf, a long knife, a delicately woven *faja* (belt), and a grand smile that creased his ruddy complexion. If a job required extra attention, he would give it. If there were bags of cement to carry (even just one at 110 pounds was a challenge), he would heft one on one shoulder and have the men load a second one onto his other shoulder, which only deepened his delight. If there were calves to rope and throw, his were the biggest, or a rock to carry up to a scaffold, the heaviest. Even gathering firewood, he was not to be seen behind his stacks.

Tawny and Hugo were great friends, and she learned much of her proud competence watching him as he marched through his days.

From her journal, an interesting entry about one memorable town trip:

*I had planned to get to the little community on the river in time to catch and saddle the horse for the two and a half hour ride home before dark. Heading toward the pueblo I became increasingly concerned, as the streams I crossed were solidly swollen and running dirty. The sky was a lovely filth as well, with a brooding, black band covering the horizon as I moved North and West out of the desert toward the cordillera. And then the fierce wind. And then the rain—the world turned to a new element, neither air nor water nor dirt but a confused combination that tried to extinguish the fire I had kindled in my breast for being at home, cuddled in the embrace of my lands.*

*I am well equipped with chaps, down vest, hat, and poncho and would have gladly set off, but now with this news of the rushing and roiling waters, I understood that there would be no usual river crossing this day, nor this week. This means that I must go the long way around to arrive at the HQ cliff and there hope to be heard yelling for someone to come down to fetch me in the cable car. That entails not only more time but also a treacherous trek along a cliff whose sheerness is daunting even in good weather. The little used trail, which I've been on only twice in 12 years, has one feature called La Gargantua del Diablo or The Devil's Throat. It is a pass chiseled into the rock face, hundreds of feet above the river and negotiable only on sidestepping feet, your horse tugged along behind. The tigger hopes that the tuggie doesn't slip-slide into her, especially when she is alone. It all takes time and care and is fraught with some challenge and danger, as well as the awesome beauty of adventure.*

*So. I'm holed up in the little hosteria and will leave on the morrow. It rains and winds all night long, seeming to rouse and then orchestrate the parrots, which cling to leafless trees, like a drunken orchestra of some noisy tropical fruit directed by a maniacal idiot devoid of sense.*

*The next morning, I choose the filly, as I appreciate her careful mincing steps when negotiating nasty areas and, since there will be no river crossing, I don't need the taller gelding.*

*The weather is still complicated: some of the menace has waned, though it's never far away. We set off slithering in the mud, but are homeward bound and Get-Home-Itis has us now. As we top a small pass and gain our first view of the river, we are stopped by the sight. It is at once awesome and awful, a great snarling, writhing, roaring snake of brown turbulence that fills the canyon and thunders down out of sight, a zillion lemmings all in a roiled puree sucked seaward by some heretofore unimagined hellish vacuum. OK, it wasn't THAT bad (just trying out a little writer's license), but it was astounding.*

*And there, upriver at canyon end, was a shining half-rainbow right over Home, a little gateway of God, beckoning ... beckoning.*

*I put the mare forward, and down we went to join the canyon trail that was sometimes submerged. The filly shied at the waves that rolled toward her, prancing up onto steep boulder strewn ground to avoid this unfamiliar and aggressive brown-ness. A couple of times we lost the way and I would leave her, ground tethered, to clamber up steep cliff sides, hoping to find an upper trail over the sheerness that had collided with the waters, effectively halting us. But no, I was cliffed out, so ... back to the filly and into the river fray to pick our way through until we gained some semblance of the trail again.*

*At one point I realized that I was too tense, wanting to be fireside and safe at home already. I took a couple of breaths and said to myself: "Hey girl, this is what you are alive for, this is what you like."*

*I returned to the moment, patted the horse, and looked around. The cliffs and spires, the winter trees pawing the wind ruffles, the river itself—such mighty intent, the skies, clouds, and ... there's a pair of condors! It truly is too magic, a wonderland of immensity and of the basic truth of nature, with its gracious invitation to accede to a fitness to survive. I am filled with a calm sense of being, as peace and beauty surge into my soul. "Look, we're on a pony ride in the park. Put in another quarter".*

*And now we climb. I dismount and lead the filly up and up on the capricious trail that sometimes loses itself in the brush ... up. Along a bit of a cliff face and there we are, the Devil's throat. Take it from the top. I gaze at this strange passage that funnels down and through the cliffs. I wonder briefly if some engineer did this with dynamite, but know that no sane engineer would sign off on this puppy—it's like a 70-degree slant ... drop.*

*I look back at the filly, way above me. I look for little escape ledges in case of a runaway, but there really aren't any—that's why it's not called "The Throat of an Angel," I suppose.*

*Off we go. The idea is to pull her, yes, but ever so gently, so that she can pick her pace and not steamroll me. And all the while I have to pay exact attention to my way. It's raining now and the shale is slippery—how could it be any other way? We pause halfway on a 60-degree slope and then go on and are then done with it. In celebration I hug and then mount her... back in the saddle again. But within 30 seconds I am off again, peering down a mini-shoot ... must be the Devil's Adam's apple, which is a piece of cake for this team and we go on ... making our way.*

*We arrive at the HQ with a couple of hours of light left and howl up over the river roar for someone to come down to fetch me in the cable car. I howl again and think I hear Bear, my old Labrador buddy, barking. Then appears Hugo, who clammers down the cliff to the ancient cable car, and winds himself over, and we are home. The filly is left undressed and freed on the far shore, but she stands there anyway, wondering what to do, as she watches the cable car skim the high waters. “If the creek don’t rise ...”*

## Chapter 9

At about this same time, thousands of miles to the north above the equator, there lived a stalwart young man whose name was Walter Cabot DuPuenta IV. He was attending Harvard University, the college of his great-grandfather, his grandfather, and his uncle. His father had died before he completed his degree there, but at least he gave it the old college try.

Walter’s great-grandfather had started the company that was the lifeblood of the family. The company had grown and expanded and was now a multinational conglomerate with tens of thousands of employees. It was still largely owned and totally controlled by the family, relentlessly aggressive and successfully dedicated to the bottom line. The company had sprawling interests in mining, insurance, chemicals, timber, and banking. It made many millions of dollars a year for the family members and was of such singular importance that it became the very heart and *raison d’être* of the DuPuenta dynasty.

Walter had been made aware of his duty as heir apparent ever since he could read and write. His life was largely planned out: finish Harvard at the top of his class of course, then Harvard Business School with the same expectations, some time off to sow a year’s worth of wild oats and to know the world, and then into the waiting arms of the conglomerate with an appropriate marriage along the way.

Walter had grown up without ever knowing his father and was always somewhat conscious of his loss. He was a good and sensitive boy, very willing to handle the family business, but he often looked out of the school and office windows a little wistfully, wondering where the sunshine and breezes of childhood were playing, as he had spent many a happy summer in Nature.

The family owned a “cottage” on Georgian Bay in Canada, where Walter would spend his early summers exulting in the waters of the lakes—aquaplaning, water skiing, and fishing for bass and the torpedo-like pike. He would climb a great rock face, lie in the sun, and smell the pines deep in summer. Then he’d dive into the lake and zoom down twenty feet, where he would just stop movement, as the air in his lungs gently lifted him to the surface. There in the great wet womb of nature, he expanded and was able to feel momentarily complete.

At boarding school, where he was sent at age eleven, he forced himself to turn his mind to all the matters of books. Often, though, his gaze would stray out the high window to contemplate the leaves turning golden and murmuring on the autumn winds, ‘Come on out and play; come on out.’ But he stayed, somewhat reluctantly, with his books.

When he turned sixteen, he began doing summer work at the corporation—first in the mailroom, then in the accounting department. As his life developed, there was less and less time for lying on summer rock ledges. He dreamed once that he was back in that graceful, easy, un-stressful, loving womb of the light-filled, warm summer lake, and as he drifted and floated effortlessly, Walter saw, a little below him, what he understood was his soul. But just before he was about to join it, his mother woke him and sent him off to school. He was tall with DuPueute bloodlines peering out from blue eyes, and dark, wispy hair. He was strong and slender, kindly and considerate, though on the squash court or soccer field, his inner fierceness romped through, much as it had conquered his great grandfather's business world.

And now, at Harvard, Walter studied for hours and hours every day, even on the weekends. He was in the top ten in his class, which he knew pleased his grandfather greatly. From his earliest days, Walter had understood the great importance of the company. As he had no father, Walter also knew that he would assume the helm of the company at the retirement of his uncle, who was soon to succeed his grandfather. Thus the entire family was counting on Walter, rising star and heir apparent, to further develop the company and manage its ever-increasing fortunes.

Walter was deeply in love with his childhood playmate, Stephanie, who had joined him during lovely summers at the lake in Canada. They felt they were soul mates and planned to spend their lives together. They were both tall, Anglo Saxon types. Walter with thin hair and a prominent nose, his body strong from soccer and tennis. Steph was saved from homeliness by a brilliant wide smile, perched on a pleasant oval face, good features and a nice mane of auburn hair. Good body which she maintained with workouts at the gym, long legs, small, but authoritative breasts.

On a sailing excursion a couple of years before college, they'd set the sloop's sail just right to catch the slight but steady wind and were cuddled in the tiny cabin loving each other and making plans for the future. Walter agreed with Stephanie's dream of two children—a boy and a girl—but reminded that he'd have to wait until after Harvard, then after Harvard Business School, to get married. She understood and brightly proposed a year off after business school, before he was to start at the conglomerate, when they would journey to an island group off the coast of Indonesia to live peacefully in beloved nature, to sail in warm tropical waters, and to dive for lobster and grouper dinners.

In the gently rocking boat, their loving synchronizing with the hull beneath the pure billow of sail, sung to by the halyards, and the tympani of the wavelets, the two made a pact to go to that island no matter what and to love one another forever. In the ecstasy of that moment, they felt their souls join and intertwine, as their song softly exploded. In the middle of the day, caressed by all the sparkles and spangles of the sun's waltz with the water, they both saw stars and were therefore gently "star"-tled.

They had begun to make love after being friends for many summers. Stephanie had taken the lead as Walter was a bit hesitant to be too forward, or maybe he was simply content with holding hands and kissing endlessly in the dock's gazebo. One night as they had just finished preparatory school and were spending a curtailed vacation at the lake, since Walter had to go to work at the corporation, she finally broke off the long, languid kissing and gently took his hand from her face. She gazed into his eyes and said that now that they were going to college it was time, high time, to graduate to other physical matters. Slowly, never breaking her gaze, she lowered his hand to hold her breast which she then held there as his eyes widened and life changed forever.



Walter's heart was smothered with a combination of deep love and now a lust which arose in his being as this beloved womanhood was embraced – a soft enticing essence as old and pure as anything ever experienced. A nascent yearning infused him with a need almost as basic as breathing, though his breath was then taken away as her other hand then traced its soon to be familiar path down to his center where waited a repository of such pleasure and rightness that life was forever enhanced. From then on there was no going back and the love that was thus born, though it was to experience change and challenge, could never be extinguished. Making love was there dance, their joy, their main *raison d'être*, and they went there often.

As they lay there on the summer boat, entangled, resembling a ball of tan twine, reality intruded when their sailboat bumped into something metallic and totally unresisting. They scrambled to the companionway and looked forward to see, high above them, the towering stern hull of the DuPuente Exploiter, which they had, in oblivious innocence, rammed—driven by the nefarious breezes of fate. Though their boat was unharmed, and they reacted with great giggles, the omen sent a slight shudder into their serenity.

Now, a few years later, Stephanie reminded Walter about that pact as they walked across Harvard Yard. He again assured her that the year off was firmly in the plan. Then he wondered aloud if they couldn't consider having three children, instead of two, as they might require extra bodies to carry around the heavy, sweet freight of their love. As they talked, Walter was overcome for a moment by a dizzy spell and tugged Stephanie to a bench, then sat and rested his head on her shoulder.

During that moment, they shared a shudder as an icicle of fear pierced the veil of their happiness. Stephanie took a deep breath and imagined a life without Walter and saw a thin sorry song of sadness and loneliness. In the aftermath of his dizziness, a sobered Walter had a vision of classrooms and boardrooms—all the windows barred and barren—imprisoning his soul. But that darkness passed quickly. They brightened again and continued their walk.

Stephanie studied environmental science at Radcliffe. She and Walter both were concerned with environmental protection. His great love for the lakes and forests of his childhood demanded his attention to Mother Earth. He well remembered the magical communication with wood and water nature spirits, whose whispers are best understood by young ears unadulterated by society's sirenic seductions so often leading to confusion, chaos, and endless concrete.

But Walter, whose very blood and upbringing fiercely defended the family legacy, reminded Stephanie that the corporation was providing many jobs in mining the earth for products to satisfy consumer demands. They argued briefly but could not long sustain their differences. Their great love brought their hearts and minds and, finally, their mouths together in a lingering kiss with eyes locked and looking into the endless stories of their united love.

Meanwhile, way down south of the equator, the twins Tawny and Alixa continued to grow and to learn nature's lessons. Their teachers were grandmother Katy, mother Valeria, Tio Perfecto, and the natives. But they were also taught by the animals, the seasons, and, of course, the stars, for they would still sleep outside almost every night. Before they fell asleep, they would stare, as if in holy prayer, at the untellable distance between the shining sands of heaven, knowing that never, even within an understanding of infinite foreverness, could they reach the light past the furthest star, for it was never-ending.

They also knew they were staring into the past, that heaven's news is always years old by the time it reaches earth, even though it travels at speeds thousands of time faster than their favorite horse. As such were they, nightly, cuddled by the immensity of the All, and the relative meaninglessness of what some might consider problems faded to their proper place of inconsequence.

As they grew together, and as they were treated to heady contemplations of almost mystical import and depthless surmise, they also got to play children games. And they were good at it – good at playing. Horseback was their best game board; playing tag, switching mounts at the run, hiding and seeking around hillocks and groves, polo and what not. They had moments, sometimes daily, when they would say something, or remember something and dissolve down into happy piles of girl giggles. They loved to laugh and they loved the communication between them that opened doors to belly laughs, which sometimes became body laughs which would double them over, and have them lying on their backs, rolling back and forth and into each other for happy hugs. At these times the initial source of the laughter was then waylaid as the ensuing giggles were eruptions and waves of love – love that they could so enjoy the fun of being together, the devolving down into helpless gigglements, and the understanding that life, at the end of the day – mysterious or not – was a pretty funny affair, especially when shared with beloveds.

Tawny, Jaguar Girl, continued her study of nature, nurturing the plants and animals of her domain. She rode or hiked often to the National Preserve in the high mountains, where she could more openly hear the song of the wilderness and dance the sun dance taught her by Uncle Perfect, and be with the spirit of the Jaguar. And sometimes, those rare magic moments which can arise to grace life, the jaguar would appear to salute her, seemingly drawn in by her energies.

She loved those moments as they imparted to her a feeling of her felinity and imbued her life anew with a sense of magic, though she also understood that the jaguar seemed so alone. Would a great cat be lonely, especially living in such majesty?

From her journal;

A horse black as moonless midnight had carried me to the little lake where I kindled a fire which kept my dog and me company as the horse grazed on the green grass, lakeside. We could hear his nibbling and then the tearing rrrrip, as he swung his great head to cut his bite and begin a munching with his back teeth even as his lips nuzzled the next grass stand, preparing it for extraction. Through that dusky vision and through the mastication noises occasionally drifted duck sounds; a scurry of foot paddles as an intruder was pushed off chosen territory, a flurry of wings as duck flapped and seemingly clapped at the gather of night, and of course the chortled quackings which said waterfowl things to one another.

I cut a green branch and threaded it through the goat rib I had brought, salted it and leaned it close to the fire's flames, already savoring its smoky strong offering. Jappa raising her head from time to time to lick her lips. Time and the winds quieted, insects as well. The trees stopped their breathy banter as leaves left off their chattering to reflect on the day's sun which was setting, and winking goodbye.

Delicious dinner – dog gets the bone and I go to sleep on my saddle sheepskin, poncho covered and dreams aswirl all around. Nice to wake to hear the silent night – to feel it in almost surreal surround. The horse taking small steps – still here? Good.

At last dark I awake to wonder; marveling at my dreams, imbibing the embrace of cold, first tentative bird call – wonder where is the horse. Oh well, snuggle back down, girl, and review that last dream of plunging through spring river ice, horseback – naked, and being taken by river roar down deepening chasms, rock strewn, the horse going first, me clinging aside him now, and somehow his passage assuring our safety, and more somehow, the warmth from his great equine heart countered the searing freeze of frenzied waters.

I don't hear the horse hooves, nor the steady munch – nothing. I peer lakewards as dark still engulfs all in its grip. Wait, what is that darker dark under the tree? Every moment light is happening to my stare and little by little a horse is created, or revealed – I know not exactly which – standing stock still, savoring noble equine dreams, standing facing the eastern glow which grows and promises another day on Earth of life.

As such were her times replete with adventure, seeking, dreams, and delights. No wonder she took herself so often out and away.

She did not always find Tio, and indeed was not always looking for him so their comings together were part of the flow which had her in its generous grasp.

She was attracted to the fastness of those mountain depths as if by a momentous magnet bearing import for her being, a message from the wild.

One night the jaguar came to her and in its roar she heard an invitation. Through the sylvan silence they crept closer and closer to each other. First she could hear him, then she could see him, then she could smell him and finally, foot by foot, they touched, as she reached a hand out to let him smell her love, her innocence and her feral feeling. She then stroked his head slowly, slowly as waves of wonder coursed over her, and probably, over him as well. Their bonding was to continue from time to time – always at night and always surrounded by a grey veil of mystery, which enclosed them in an untellable communication.

As such Tawny was imbued with a supreme sense of natural wildness – she seemed to glow with it, setting her apart from all others, as her enjoyment of the creation included this magnificent creature and their love, their secret, as she never told anyone more than that she had heard his howl.

Uncle Perfect told her that the creator wanted some people to practice living in heaven on earth, as they all would billions of years in the future, what he termed “Longview.” All his life in the busy North, he had produced and accomplished and invented, burning up huge gobs of energy and creating untold *sarks* of pollution in the process.

"What's a sark, Unk?"

“It's a unit of measure, not yet in use, to describe the pollution that attends human consumption and results in a cubic inch of air or water ruined. They will someday begin to tax these unpaid sarks.”

“Wowser, dowser.”

He then repeated his favorite phrase, which was inscribed as an epitaph on the gravestone of who he once was, “The days of doing are done, let the age of being begin.” If anyone were to ask what he was doing in the mountains as he danced to the sun or wandered on game trails, hands clasped behind his back, muttering little greetings to the weeds and insects along the way, Tio Perfecto would reply, “Ee Tee Cee.” Further pressed, he would explain that ETC stood for “Enjoy The Creation.”

Tawny paid a lot of attention to this kind and wise man, realizing he had collected much wisdom when he traded in his paper wealth and things, stuff, for a life of simplicity and love of nature. He explained to the twins about the lures of the social centers, the cities, adding that very few people could resist the promised attraction of wealth.

“Why do people need so much money?” asked Tawny.

“They don’t,” advised Tio, “but they’re insecure. There are seven billion humans on this planet, and we are animals, subject to animal senses, instincts, and reactions. When any finite area is overpopulated, then behavior is altered to include fighting, hoarding, stealing, murder, and, of course, rampant insecurity. All animals have basic needs: food, shelter, an understanding of purpose, and space.”

He continued, “As space, which equates with food production in all but human terms, is restricted, animals manifest new behavior. Humans think that corporate agriculture’s chemically altered food will provide more than enough for the new crop of consumers, but they are dead wrong. Sure there may be enough ‘food’ for everyone to eat, but they have exceeded the space requirements by a factor of a thousand. Because we are all subject to the resulting stresses, insecurity is widespread and pursues people throughout all the levels of ‘paper wealth.’ Overpopulation also explains our need to ‘show off’ our success: many fancy vehicles, second and third homes, jewels. If we don’t have monetary success, we nevertheless may try to declare our uniqueness in the crowd, in a harmless fashion with purple-hair and body-piercings, and sometimes in a deadly fashion, using easily accessible guns to eliminate other humans, in a desperate and mis-guided effort to stand out – to be known.”

“Why are there so many humans?” Tawny asked, truly interested.

“Well, one, we’re deeply enthralled with technology and, two, we are afraid of death and keep ourselves alive in whatever way possible, and, three, every soul wants to witness the Change, this huge cosmic event coming down on Earth.”

One summer day, Tawny awoke to a special sensation. Something was different; there was a new energy in the air. She asked Alixandra if she noticed anything.

“Maybe Tio Perfecto is coming down from the high cordillera?”

“No, this is something else.”

That afternoon, Tawny was drawn to the Valle de las Damas, the haunting valley located two hours’ ride up river. With an almost full moon that night, she told Valeria not to worry, that she

would fish for dinner and be back before moonset in the morning. She bade goodbye to Alixa and set off on Griffin with her poncho and her dog. They climbed out of the valley and trotted all along the high trail that bordered the cliffs and then descended to the Confluencia and crossed the Rio Aguila, as always delighting in its tumble into the more staid Rio Condor—the River of Whispered Whys.

As she left the last puesto behind and began threading her way through the vertical rocks, which looked like a procession of cloaked women, Tawny again sensed something and reined in her horse for a moment, tilting her head from side to side before putting the pony forward again. A fine, stealthy breeze from upriver pawed through the tree leaves and tossed the silk scarf around her face with a wispy caress almost like smoke. And there, on the back of the breeze, was that not smoke? Yes, it surely was ... there it was again, just a trace. Now, who would be up river this far? Uncle Perfect? Not his style. This time of year, he was up in the high mountains, near the hot springs. Who then?

She dismounted a little later and hobbled Griff so he could graze, and motioned, open handed, to the dog to stay to guard the saddle, as she slipped onward, moving like Tio had taught her, as one, with the way.

## Chapter 10

Now the smell of smoke was distinct on the hand of the air as it filtered through the thorny *chacai* trees and, there, on the sandy beach beside the river, smaller now without its tributary fingerlings further downstream, was a little “Indian fire” offering the last of its spirit to the air, to the sky. Beside the ring of stones lay a person, but “Hello,” this fellow had a mane of golden hair much like her own tresses. He was asleep on his back, was deeply tanned, nicely muscled, and clad only in cutoff shorts. He appeared to be only a few years older, maybe in his early twenties, and there emanated from him a kindness, and an innocence, such that she was drawn to play a little trick on this young stranger.

Marcos sensed her presence, knowing at once that something was near and that it was not hostile. He cracked one eye slowly and beheld the most beautiful thing he had ever seen in his life, as she crept past him and toward the river, taking off her hat to dip it in the water. This was no dream ... or was it? If it is, ‘Please, don’t let it end.’

Tawny turned with the water-filled hat and began to creep back toward the sleeping boy, but then she stopped, and regarding him anew, she savored the calm energy of his presence. But the game awaited, time to welcome this stranger to the Valle de Las Damas! What a heart-stop when he sprang to his feet and in one motion swept her backward towards the river’s pool, laughing and howling all the while as she wrestled him, almost succeeding in throwing him in, but then they both tumbled into the delicious water!

Thus did Tawny and Marcos meet. He explained that he had come to the Rio Condor from Buenos Aires for a vision quest. When she asked him to explain, he launched into a long monologue about seeking self-knowledge in the solace of nature.

She interrupted and, laughingly, said, “Cut to the chase, boy. What are you doing here?”

“Well, I’m looking for something.”

“Claro, that’s the ‘quest’ part, what’s the vision?”

Oh, he mumbled something about seeking to understand the “purpose of life,” but his heart whispered another answer inside his head. ‘You, lovely girl-child, are.’

“You’d better meet Tio Perfecto,” Tawny insisted.

From the Diary of Marcos;

The best thing that has ever happened to me? Winning the Argentine Open at the age of 21? No. Selling my mare to the Sheik of Arabe for \$200,000? Starting to get there, but no, the best thing that ever happened to me was when Tawny snuck up on me with a hat full of water. I leapt up and we wrestled, what strength that woman/girl/child/tiger! She, somehow, threw us both in the river.

I was astounded, amazed, awed, shaking with the cold and the unknown all at the same time, while, as we surfaced she was choking on her laughter – pointed her finger at me and said; “Gotcha boy”.

Can you imagine what I felt, dear diary, as recognition surfaced with us and I beheld this glorious waif bejeweled with riversun sparkle; blue eyes echoing the sky and golden hairs outshining the sun. I must have looked quite the sight as I went from consternation to confirmation that this was the most beautiful creature I had ever beheld and there she was on a wilderness beach chortling helplessly at me – at us. I don’t even know what I said – probably I was speechless, but her laughter like a waterfall of butterflies cascading over me, warmed the entire river as I joined in. There we were, I was already half in love, circling each other with just our heads above water. After a couple of circles with nothing said but the bonding language of laughter, I thought, and even said; “You got me.”

I guess we introduced ourselves, like any good Latin would do at, say, a cocktail party, and then she turned and said she had to check on her horse. As she climbed up the sandy shelf her body was slowly revealed. Strong shoulders sloping down to muscular arms, her shirt plastered to her two buttock cheeks which swayed enticingly as if enjoined in rivalry in a beauty contest; look at me – no look at me! I suppose she felt my stare upon her as she turned to present a profile and a smile. Proud breast sloping down from a haughty neck, towering over a flat rippling stomach. Nipple even prouder, poking at her thin covering – it seemed to say; “Now boy, I really got you.” But you know, this was not in the least staged and the seduction operative was more one of a shared secret between the two of us. Her smile spoke of millennium of women winning men – the dance between the two and the fun of games therein.

I could not follow her out of that river for a long moment as my own poking was highly evident, and I had to wait as she strode to the trees to hug her horse, to then wade ashore.

What a wilderness morning.

She invited him to the *casco*, where he was appropriately blown away, as was anyone who witnessed the stone manse in the midst of so far away, where no roads scarred the earth. And the statuary, art work, and carved antiques. There was even a pair of stone lions guarding the trail up from the river. He was given a cottage with a fireplace and a view, and he stayed and stayed: working in the garden, playing polo with the girls, chatting with Granny and staring, when he thought no one was looking, at his “vision.”

Alixandra loved to talk with Marcos about Buenos Aires and became quite enchanted with the idea of going to experience all the excitement of the huge, much-fabled city, which she had heard about and imagined all her life. Tawny hardly cared about it, as she had experienced the Provincial capital and needed no further congress with tumultuous humanity compressed into canyons of brown-aired concrete. But she was quite intrigued with this lad who had turned up so enticingly on the river beach.

She loved to watch him play polo as he loped across the meadow, stroking the ball with seeming effortlessness, through the goal posts, displaying both grace and authority. He rode as well as she did, seemingly one with the horse. They practiced and played every day, and Alixa, who was the better of the two girls, learned a lot from him and her improvement could be seen daily. What great fun it was, running after the bounding ball, concentrating on it with the mallet cocked – just waiting the perfect moment to send it soaring above the long green field, towards the goal posts which were woven willow branches around a post. They got Hugo to play with them so it could be two on two; Marcos and Hugo against the twins. Hugo was a natural rider, but a totally wild and untutored player. He would often cross the line and lunge into his opponents as he surged towards the ball unconcerned for safety or rules. What he lacked in experience he made up for with enthusiasm; whooping and grinning madly as he darted to and fro.

Apparently Marcos was becoming quite the celebrity on the polo field, already playing with a 7-goal handicap. His father was supporting him while he finished law school, and the only way he could play polo, which he adored, was to study law, which he abhorred. And this dilemma was the reason for his vision quest. What to do? He also was a boy of nature, having mostly grown up on his family lands in the mountains nearby, which had since been sold, and he detested city life, with its noises, foul airs, and busy-ness.

He stayed and he stayed, and when he finally left, Alixa went with him to study art. She had been promised a year in Buenos Aires, and this was the perfect opportunity, as Marcos’ family had plenty of room in their fashionable Old Palermo house. Tawny stayed on to care for the *viejas*, even though they both welcomed her to go. Before they left Tawny asked her sister what she thought of Marcos. Alixa told her not to worry – that she could see the attraction in both of their eyes for each other, and that she was going just as a friend.

Tawny felt a piece of her heart leave as Alixandra departed, but she understood and was excited for her. The twins had developed their telepathic ability to communicate with one another, and they often exchanged ‘mental’ messages. She also understood that as Alixa went forth into the world of men, she, Tawny, could vicariously participate in the adventures and learnings, while staying in the valley with all her beloved wildlife.

The night of Alixa’s departure, Tawny slept alone in the high forest. Ah, but she was not alone, for she had her faithful dog beside her and from the forest came her Jaguar. A great owl winged in through the darkening dusk to perch on a branch outlined against the various constellations that lingered almost until the sun rose in the morning. She dreamed about Alixa—that she came to her like the wild ponies that lived in the high steppe above the river. She came with affection, messages of love, and then thundered off to join the herd when her time came.

The next night Tawny sought out Tio Perfecto, as she was somewhat distraught about losing her sister, confused about not going, and also about this disturbing Marcos character.

“Sweetness, in this astounding world it is almost impossible to make sense of all that happens, and into every life will appear great turbulence from time to time. We are here to enjoy, yes, and you are an outstanding enjoyer—but we are also here to grow and...”

“Yeah, yeah, I know. ‘You can’t learn to sail on calm seas,’” interjected Tawny.

“That’s right, chica. But here’s the really good news: you can’t make any mistakes. When you make a decision, know that it’s the right thing for you at the time. Doesn’t mean you can’t change it anytime you want ... remember, Free Choice. Worry is the thing to worry about. What did I just say? But, seriously it is fine to think about our actions and decisions and also about our thoughts, for thoughts create. This is how we process—how we grow. But take ‘worry’ out of the equation, my dear. You absolutely will not, may not, and cannot make a mistake, so don’t worry. Don’t ever worry about anything. Change, take action ... whatever, but don’t ever worry.

“Remember Trust and remember Faith. As you are a Daughter of God, you are creating your Chapter of the Story. So whatever comes your way, however you re-act, whatever you decide or do is perfect for that moment, and you can relax, can dis-attach from any other energy, knowing—trusting that it is for everyone’s highest good.

“Now this could be an entire book and may be about as graspable, using words, as a trout is in a fast-flowing stream. But it can be felt in your being, on a cellular level. Why? Because it is the truth in this Story of Love we are all co-authoring.

“You decided to stay. Trust that decision for the nonce. Honor it with your heart and know that if, tomorrow, your heart wants to go, then you shall be free to process that new energy. Worry is actually a state of un-grace and invites in the agents of dis-ease. The Law of Attraction operates here as, indeed, it operates in all things. When one worries, ungracefully doubting the perfection that always reigns, a like energy is attracted, often full-fill-ing the worrier’s prophecy, but also usually visiting upon him or her a physical manifestation of the un-ease.”

“Why, Macanudo? Why is it so?”



“We are here to learn, to grow, and to enjoy. The creative offering here is to learn to Trust, to Trust that this is, indeed, a Love Story, and also that we are not always to understand the perfection of our disturbances. Instead, we just Trust.

“Once we have unmasked Death and then enthroned Death fearlessly, all the other ‘nasty’ aspects of Perfection can be blessed more easily. If we emit unease, we will attract disease; as such, we learn ... over time. I repeat, we are here to grow and to enjoy. Worrying is neither growth nor joy. It is like the opposite of prayer, the opposite of appreciation, and it will attract a like lack of ease to teach us to love.”

“But, Macanudo, it still hurt when my foal died in my arms. I know that Death is a transition into grace, but, even so I grieved ... well, you told me, just experience the grief for a while but not for the foal, for me ... right?”

“That’s right, Tawny. The foal is fine and you are left in a slightly rude incarnate state, processing your loss; just do it with grace, as you already do so well.

“Here’s another Life Hint: The Flow. Oh, The Flow, chica, it is so lovely ... so very lovely. But how to capture this energy? It took me decades to discover, and I am still learning more ways to join the Flow. You already do it when you go on a horse trip. As you pack, you plan—let’s say; go to Llano Blanco, Eagle Stream, climb the high pass, cross the Plain of No Water, descend the steep ridge and down into the Lake of the Cordillera, up to Moonscape Ridge, follow the divide, down to Heart Lake, Heart Stream to the Hotspring, then Passo Condor into the Jaguar Woods, maybe duck into Chile, go around the Domuyo Volcano and all the way down the Mountain’s Blood Stream, across the Guanaco Hills to the Confluencia, and then on home. Nice trip, maybe ten days, right? Almost always something happens to change the plan: weather, meeting someone, some smoke on the horizon, or simply a happy new thought.

“When I planned a business trip, I had it scheduled to the minute, all typed out and presented by my assistant. When something went ‘wrong,’ everyone got stressed out. You can’t imagine, truly, what life is like back there for most people: schedules, hurrying, driving fast and neurotically everywhere, and usually with cell phones pressed to their precious faces while staring at a computer. Basta!

“When I began to discover The Flow, I let it all go. I relaxed. They say ‘let go and let God,’ meaning to not get attached to outcomes, meaning to Trust that what comes is perfect. And it is so very lovely. I began to move through life without worry. I became fascinated with what showed up and attentive to the reasons. If I missed a connection and didn’t doubt or worry, I soon appreciated why, and life became positively enjoyable. It’s so much more fun that way.

“Once The Flow is joined, a deliciousness assumes command on a craft of well-being. Let’s see. It’s so simple, really. It’s like, say you are headed to a destination many kilometers away, you’re out in the desert, and it’s summer. Hot, hot, hot. And you’re hiking up and down cliffs above a river flow. Oh you are having a hard, hard time: spires and side canyons and cactus, and you’ve got blisters, scratches, a powerful thirst, and there’s a rattlesnake, *tipo abogado* (lawyer).

“Anyway, you go on and on. You might glance at the river, and you might even notice how lovely and clean and cool it is—outstanding blues and deep greens shimmering with enchanting

pebbles, rocks, and boulders. But you can't make the connection that it's going where you want to go.

"Your attention is focused on the hard ways. You were told all about this trail; it is the trail trod by your parents and all their peers, yet nobody even mentioned the river. It's like an invisible thing. And, besides, you really want to test yourself on the trail, to see if you can't load yourself down with the gold that glitters along the way. Yeah, now we've got it—the gold.

"So you start picking up gold and heaping it on your shoulders, stuffing it deep in your pockets. So now there goes the good night's sleep, because you worry about losing that gold. Maybe you hire a less gilded guy to carry some of the load; so now you have to worry about him. Yikes!

"Already, even the idea of leaping into the river flow is impossible, you are too heavy, weighed down by useless sh... uh, stuff. Plus your brain has ceased to function rationally. Anyway I could go on and on with this metaphor, the point is that all the time, there just beside us is The Flow. It invites us to let go and join it in its joyous abundance."

"Abundance, Macanudo?"

"Sure, abundance galore—even gold if we want it. The gosh-darned river is lined with boats, yachts even, which we don't even notice, blindered as we are by social norms, dictates, and expectations. But the most fun seems to be to just strip off everything and dive in with the body. Che, the abundance therein is measured in terms of love and fun and of peace and of appreciation. It's truly a wondrous phenomenon, but when The Flow is joined, I don't know—still studying it, but whatever is needed just shows up. Maybe it's that whatever shows up is perceived as perfect. Here, we go back to that Law of Attraction also, and appreciate that what does show up is just for us, brought in by our energies, our thoughts."

"Che, Unk, I've been thinking on that Free Choice piece and melding that with the choices we make in the Ethereal Consultorium."

"And, how's it working out? It gets pretty complex, no?"

"Let's say that I'm putting out nothing but joy vibes and the next day I break my leg," Tawny answered. "Did that come from my Life Choice, the soul's need, the highest good for all, or what?"

"Yeah, I'm still working on that too. I go to Trust and Faith pretty quickly, since I don't really know. I do know if I trust that it happened for a reason, stay in The Flow, that I feel good about it ... well, there's pain of course, but pain goes away. What I think is that the soul knows, *mas o menos*, what it needs and will pull in those energies. If you're just putting out happiness vibrations and something 'bad' happens, well, just stay with the happiness energies."

"Well, it certainly is how the other animals live, that's for sure. Che, Tio, I've been studying some other religions like Buddhism, and they talk a lot about suffering and never even mention the word 'Fun.' Never. What gives?"

"Oh, toots, judging the dictates or disciples of religions is one of the silliest, and most frustrating, occupations on Earth. You can get into a lot of trouble and fast. But ... well, first off I go to the

Law of Allowing: allow everyone his path. And, by the way, that goes for your very own self. Allow yourself your path. Take a look at it, of course, but don't judge it. Buddhism became popular in the States a while ago after the Vietnam War, when people began looking for some answers other than materialism. But then the 'dot-com' thing happened: great excitement over computers and vast new wealth, plus this Change, capital "C," started to manifest."

"Change? You've mentioned The Change before."

"Yes, big Change. It's only just started. Anyway, the suffering thing never really took hold outside of areas of its conception. These are areas of vast overpopulation and areas of old energies of Fear. Now, with the new Energy that is upon the Earth, this Big Change energy, we are invited to check out happier responses. Remember the God Game?"

Tawny nodded.

"Good. So if I am the Creator, and I am a Creator, as are we all, I want the beings in my creation to enjoy it. Look to your grandfather. He built that magical house with its balconies and towers, the sauna at the river, the swimming pool with its waterfall, so that we all could enjoy his creations. So, 'God' wants us to enjoy His creation as we grow, hence my understanding of Love equals Fun, and not suffering. Suffering is a choice based on a perception of fear; Fun is a choice based on a perception of Love."

"What about overpopulation and all of the world's problems, then?" asked Tawny. "Why is there so much fear on Earth?"

"Remember when we studied that fellow Konrad Lorenz and even did the experiment with the mice? We've talked about this before, no?"

"Yeah, at first they were content and then as more and more babies were born, they began to fight and to hoard, just like humans, and then they even ate the new babies, yuk."

"Right. For whatever perfect reason, humans have populated far past normal and ease. When overpopulation occurs, fear is constant. Sure, we have 'plenty' to eat, but we don't have space, so we are afraid. That's why I came here ... for the space, for the freedom, and to not live either in fear or around fearful beings. But it doesn't matter how much personal space one has, because it is an absolute – so many people per all the square meters on earth. I mean we feel the congestions and fears of China and New York – make any sense?"

"Now, the problems are perfect and are needed for our growth. I just woke up to what really made sense and felt good for me, so I chose to enjoy. Remember Free Choice—remember my little saying, 'the days of doing are done; let the age of being begin.'

"Oh, I could go on and on about all the manifestations of Fear on the planet. We humans have been afraid for a long, long time and have behaved bizarrely as well. In the United States there are any number of millionaires, and most of them think only about how to get more money. Fear has reigned on Earth all through memory, and Love is its opposite. Truly the Story told on this planet is a great one indeed."

"Unk, have you ever been in love?"

“Darling, I am, now, always in Love—but to answer your question, yes. I used to think that I had to find a woman with whom I could fall in love and make her my wife. So I went a little crazy looking for my perfect love. I married early on and then, when the infatuation went away, for both of us, we fought and finally divorced. I was astounded to see that huge love turn almost into hate.

“You see, since we have all agreed to separate from God, and also to forget that separation, we have a fairly constant yearning to reunite with Him. Our cells have a memory of how nice it is in the Ether, in the Light and Love of Creation, and our little brains believe that the answer is to ‘fall in love’ with the closest thing available—another Human.

“Plus, we are conditioned to understand that mating for life and raising a family, responsibly, to follow our conditioning is the ‘right’ thing. So we go there and, if it doesn’t work—which it often doesn’t, since we are loading Godlike expectations on our mate, we are really upset at what we consider to be a betrayal.

“But let me also say that it is well worth the try, being in love is the best, and playing the game is great fun ...way good, yummy good ... and it is also an excellent vehicle for self-knowledge. Just keep in mind that since we are talking about a couple of kindergartners, with only minimal access to their brains, it can get dicey, fast.”

“Macanudo, you say you’re in love all the time now?”

“Yup. Finally discovered that being in love with myself is the answer. Loving your very own self, first, is the best ... not easy, but definitely the answer. Well, it’s part of the answer; there are many other ingredients. And, hey, I get lonely sometimes, even depressed. Thank god I have you guys to not only keep me company but also to have in my mind to bring me out of any lows that visit me – uh, that I permit to visit me. By the way, I like that Marcos guy. Hope he comes back soon.”

“Me too.”

“Goodnight, sweetie, and welcome to the game.”

Throughout the next several days Tawny found herself in a bit of a daze as she processed the wisdoms of Macanudo and put them up against the very real disturbance and excitement she faced over this Marcos fellow. The days seemed tinged with new brightness. She found herself regarding her image in the mirror, in the river’s reflection, more and more, running her hands along her flanks as if checking the musculature on a fine filly. She was thinking about him all the time, Marcos, writing his name over and over in the sand, as if an answer would magically appear. She even wondered why she had not agreed to go, but then remembered all that she loved on her lands and the growing relationship she was developing with the jaguar.

And Tawny was content on her beloved lands, delighted in tending her garden, grateful for her lessons from the people on the place, the animals, and weathers. She knew that never in the course of a single lifetime could she learn all that nature had to teach. She planned to seriously attend the various spirits she was meeting. Her days were full with alternating movement and meditation. She would whistle up her dog and trot away from the stone house and into the dwelling of nature, running with lighthearted energy to visit a fox den, a waterfall, a canyon, the

high condor cliffs, or perhaps an aged apple tree at some abandoned hillside *puesto*, where she would sit in the shade under the canopy and think about the spirits of those who walked these mountains before her. And thus she moved through her time.

As her body strengthened, so too did her mind. From her sunrise dance of thanks for another day, through her runs, the poems she would write, service to her family, weaving, work in the orchard, the fields of wheat wheeling to the sway of sun-tugged wind already smelling of fresh-baked bread, through her climbing and swimming in the river pools of liquid light where trout would trade tickles with her, to the high forests where she would hug the trees and sing songs with the raptors, through the dusk that gathered the waning energy of day into its cradle, and she would find her bed for the night and do her sunset dance, welcoming in the energy of jaguar, who sometimes came.

Tawny was filled with the sense of great aliveness. At night she would stare at the stars, trying to hypnotize them before they would transport her into the fathomless depths of mystery that asks daily of the myriad denizens within their domain, “Why are you here?” and “What is beyond the light of the furthest star?” and also, “When, oh, when did it all begin?”

She loved these questions because in their mystery lay the solution to the meaning of her problems, which faded into nothingness with the advent of day. The stars always hypnotized her first, as Mother Earth cuddled her into sweet sleep.

She dreamed of many things: sometimes of queens in far off lands, sometimes of Indian scouts, once a bullfighter. And one night Tawny dreamed of a stumbling, blind, destitute crone who nevertheless received great comfort from helping hands: gifts of bread, the sun on her extinguished eyes at the end of the day. And Tawny understood that these were incarnations of her energy in other times, other places.

Valeria explained that every spirit is to know everything before heaven and earth may be joined, mentioning the Bodhisattva concept – an enlightened being finally climbs to see Nirvana, considers entering as it was the life quest, but turns back to help others to find it. She talked of the ether, where energies were stored as in a celestial library, available to wandering souls between times of experiencing the bodies that would carry them through another series of lessons “in the meat.”

Tawny gave thanks in her daily prayers for all she was learning, for all the beauty that surrounded her in nature, and for the spirit within as it coursed through her. Her mother, Valeria, had taught her to always give thanks as she would harvest the vegetables in the garden, the pears in the orchard, and the wheat that fell with a hushed “you’re welcome” to her scythe. Fish also were thanked as they gave up their trout spirit to nourish her and her family. Thus was there much gratitude in her life.

Missing, with an aching emptiness, her unknown father as well as her twin sister was occasion for Tawny to send loving thoughts to them, wherever they were, as well as to be thankful for the chance to become self-reliant. As the days and seasons passed, she grew in strength and grace and understanding. The angels were pleased and shared with her their unique ability to understand time. She carried with her an aura of magic and a freshness not unlike the morning dew as it reflected each day’s new sun.

Tawny was becoming, in her strong grace, a hauntingly beautiful young woman, not without her feral side that manifested in her eyes and mesmerized with hints of mystery.

## Chapter 11

Walter was finishing Harvard School in the top ten of his class and was exhausted from the hard work involved. He rested often but still studied much of the day and had little time for playing squash. His hair was continuing its lonely tendency to thin, and his once straight shoulders had dropped an inch. He was even more in love with Stephanie and was looking very much forward to their year off sailing in Indonesia.

His grandfather and uncle were running the family conglomerate and were pleased that he had so well earned his year off. They sternly reminded Walter that he was needed at the company immediately upon his return, so his grandfather and uncle could train him in the ways of progress and prepare him to take over on his uncle's retirement, which was only a few years off. Once accomplished, the grandfather would then retire comfortably and be available for consultation., first with the uncle and then with Walter. Walter knew how much he needed the vacation, as he continued to have occasional dizzy spells and double vision. He and Stephanie would see each other on the weekends and continued their plans of being together, and of having children.

“Two only,” said she. “The world is greatly overpopulated.”

“Three, my stupendous Steph,” said he. “The DuPiente line ends with me, and I'm already losing my hair.”

They also had a few friendly skirmishes regarding the family conglomerate and the environment. Stephanie, who now had a master's degree in environmental studies, was impassioned concerning attacks on the earth by rapacious companies intent on producing things for constantly unsatisfied consumers, whose vanity and foolishness could be seen ending up in overflowing landfills. Walter listened, then defended the corporation, ever trying to maintain the rosy image passed down to him through the family.

One day, as Stephanie was busily preparing for the year's trip one month away, Walter finally visited the family doctor, as he was so often fatigued, even though the stress of school was over. Many tests were done, which revealed that Walter, though a young and outwardly healthy man, had begun showing signs of something akin to Parkinson's disease, a degenerative nerve disorder for which there is no cure. Walter also showed symptoms of chronic stress, which ran throughout his family.

“So what does it mean? Will it affect my work at the company?”

“These things are impossible to predict, Walter. Parkinson's, if that is indeed what you have, will progress at its own speed, and we can explore treatment options that may or may not help. As far as your stress-related problems, well, half the industrial world seems to have one syndrome or another. Most workplaces these days are not healthy environments. Then you step outside into traffic, pollution, social problems, crime, and on and on. Let's face it, Walter. We're

all stressed out in one way or another, but combined with Parkinson's, well, you're in for a difficult journey."

"Doc, what about my ability to eventually take over the company? Will this stupid condition mean that I can't even do what I was raised for, what I studied so hard for?"

"Well, not at first. Most people with this disease lead productive lives in the early stages. But you have some big decisions to make. If you decided to run that conglomerate, you won't have energy for anything else. I'm talking about marriage, children, and the like, Walter. It's really one or the other, because you'll need so much rest."

"But I'm still young," appealed Walter. "I was the squash captain for God's sake."

"I know. I'm sorry. These things seem to have no respect for age. I've been your family's doctor for a long time, Walter. I have a pretty clear idea of how much stress you're under and will be if you take over the company."

"But don't people get well? Isn't there some cure?"

"There is no real cure, but lifestyle changes can make a big difference. Minimize stress, eat healthy food, don't drink much alcohol, think positively, and rest, rest, rest. Maybe there's a way for you to move to the country, where the air and water are cleaner and clearer."

"I cannot deal with this, Doc. You're saying I could marry Stephanie, have children, and let down the DuPonte family name, or I could fulfill my family obligations, responsibilities, and promises and continue the family legacy, but I can't do both. How am I to make such a choice?"

"Well, this has become the journey you are on. I'm so sorry, Walter. I know it must seem impossible now. You have to also consider what an imposition your condition would be on Stephanie, plus the genetic situation with any kids you might have."

Walter left the office, his head hanging low, with its near insupportable burden of sadness, doubt, fear, and the crushing freight of responsibility. One foot after the other, hands in pockets, shoulders slumped, he wandered the streets mechanically, unseeing. Inside was waged a war whose outcome, though certain, was shrouded in horrid doubt.

So outrageous the violation to be done to the victim, Love, as it struggled against the fierce, indoctrinated, eventual victor, Responsibility. For Walter knew that his whole life was to serve the company, that his entire family depended on him, that the dictates of his very blood would have it no other way. "But Steph, my life's love, my soul's comfort, I could never leave you. The kids to be. Not your two, not my three, but zero," he mumbled to himself, as inside a slow shriek was sounding.

The doctor's words echoed in his head: "It's a terrible thing for the mate to watch her spouse decline, and the dependency is debilitating to any relationship." He knew that he couldn't do that to her dreams that once, yesterday, were their dreams together. He shuffled into a dusky bar and, for the first time drank a whiskey in the middle of the day, then another. He stared straight ahead into nothing- the vast and echoing emptiness his future had suddenly become, his head supported by his hands over his ears.

Walter stumbled out into the evening, into the street, and was almost hit by a car, its driver honking on the horn and yelling at him. Another bar. And still the brain's decision, so unbearably untenable, mocked the despairing heart. He had never been unsure of the way ahead, but now the broad, tree-lined avenue of yestermoment looked frightening and dissolved into a knife-edge with hellish, abysmal chasms on either side.

He wandered on into the night, where the bright sparkle of myriad lights and flashing colors did not light his way but instead mocked his sorry passage. Despair deepened, ragged steps slowed, until he collapsed at last in the lonely refuge of the bed in some room in some hotel. There he thrashed and sobbed his way through a night long with impossible longing. "Oh Steph, my darling, I'm so very sorry. I'm so ... so sorry. Just Goddamn the world."

And the next day, with resignation already mantling his shoulders, stooped with near-unbearable burden, Walter could not yet pick up the black veil of his new life and again wandered aimlessly from bar to bar, from park bench to another upstairs hotel, squeezed between a porn theater and a pawn shop. And the next day, with his entire soul screaming an endless, depthless "NO!" his unshaven jowls mirroring the new shadow that had pursued and engulfed him, Walter finally found within him, from the very cells of his blood, the strength to accept his responsibility and his resignation to it. Still he could tolerate neither the loss of his love for Stephanie nor what it would do to her, and he had no idea how to tell her. He returned home to find a series of urgent messages from his grandfather.

"Get right down here, your uncle is finished!" Walter shaved, showered, put on his business suit, and hurried to corporate headquarters in DuPue Plaza.

"Your uncle's liver is shot. He's at the hospital. He was rushed to Emergency yesterday, and he's alive but, without a transplant, he probably won't last out the year. And he's not much of a candidate for a transplant. All that stress and all that drinking, especially the stress I'd say, and, well, there's only so much a body can take. Walter, that trip with your lady friend will have to wait, and maybe wait a long time. You'll have to begin immediately."

Walter sat, or rather collapsed, down into a big leather chair and looked at his feet, then up at a wall of portentous portraits that in a way told the entire history of the family business. For a moment, he couldn't bear to look at his grandfather. The DuPue family health problems were coming home to roost, too fast. How had his grandfather escaped? What was the meaning of this?

He then told his grandfather of the visit to the doctor two days ago, and of his condition and the dreadful change which was upon his life. The grandfather seemed both concerned and also somewhat relieved in that he had not been happy with Walter's affiliation with such a dramatic, and already effective, environmentalist. He commiserated with his grandson, while also cautioning that the truth of his disease must not be told to anyone – stock price and all of that.

"Listen, Walter, I can advise you as you take over, but that might be all I'm good for at this point. You can bring your cousin Bobby in from Cleveland and have him be your right-hand man. That's not a bad idea, but you decide. You're in charge now of all the day-to-day. But let Stephanie go right away, you can blame me if you like, but don't tell her about your condition."



Walter welcomed this opening for breaking off with Stephanie, he was glad to have it, now that he had made his decision; or rather the decision was made for him. The grandfather had long cautioned Walter about the consequences of marrying a radical environmentalist, and now urged him to use Stephanie's incompatibility with his corporate and family responsibilities as an excuse to call it off. Nobody was to ever know of Walter's own disorder, as it could adversely affect corporate profits and the almighty stock price. The doctor was sworn, blackmailed really, to secrecy.

Walter called and invited her to their favorite watering hole. When she arrived he was already on his second whiskey, his head in his hands, as she breezed in and kissed him on his little bald spot.

"Dupe, I'm so excited. Just talked with the travel agent again," shaking out her lustrous hair and settling herself into her chair. "They've arranged for us to lease a sailboat for the entire ... [noticing Walter's dire dejection for the first time] ... year. Walter, oh Dupe. What's the matter?"

He couldn't speak at first. He just stared and stared at the woman-child he loved with all his heart and being. A tear appeared in one eye, as he slowly pulled himself together to share the devastation that had so awfully visited his life.

"Steph, I have no idea how to express this, or make it easy, or make it right, so I'll just say it. The trip is off and so are we. I ... I am ... I am so sorry." Through his sobs, he went on to explain about his uncle's near death and that he was expected to take over immediately and that his Grandfather insisted that he could not be seen associating, much less marrying, such an adamant conservationist, but he couldn't even hear his own words. He couldn't even see her clearly. He was watching his dreamed-of future wife and family become no more than a mirage.

Stephanie, of course, could hardly believe or accept what was happening. She understood about his uncle's sickness, but the excuse to break up because it would never do for the next DuPonte Corporation chairman to be married to a "radical" environmentalist just didn't sound like Walter. She couldn't accept what she was hearing. Her heart couldn't bear it. And it just wasn't right. But through tears she read the sad tidelines on Walter's face, the streaks of despair and sorrow amid a painful determination, as she began to process this almost unbearable news. Slowly and determinably, with her eyes staring into the emptiness in Walter's, she tore up the brochures into tear sized pieces, and let them fall to the floor.

There were some communications between them in the ensuing weeks, but Walter held fast to his horrible little lie; that he had to choose one or the other as responsibility trumped, or rather, smothered, love. Stephanie, had harbored some hope in her breast, but finally gave in to the understanding that her most beloved had changed – life had lessened. She wrote a poem which she called

*Just a Woman Who Loves.*

*In the wake of your departure I ponder the deep silence you have left*

*In every corner of this place.*

*Silence that is filled with the soft, smoky, gentle, caring,  
Patiently waiting aura of your still fresh presence.*

*Wondering what will I have for lunch...a celebration no more...  
It doesn't matter that much now... the sadness wells up my shore  
Whetting my skin and muscles, rendering them lifeless...*

*It has happened; this struggling to catch the fleeting  
Just gone butterfly of love, now beginning to hover up  
Fluttering, into the morning air,  
...but to disappear yet again into other heavens...  
and tended, now yearningly, now doubtfully, nostalgic heaving.  
Of another time, always out of time...*

*I cry, with hot big tears that roll down my empty heart;  
I cry for myself and for you and for us.  
I want to stop Time from pushing on;  
Bulldozing my senses into a great big pile  
That nobody sees or cares for unless, unless next we ever meet  
So that life could return.*

*Life that will prod the dead thing into warmth and breath again,  
Caressing, hugging, cuddling and talking to it,  
Making it flower hopefully into a smile,  
Giggles, laughter, rhythm in motion,*

*And just as our time is almost over,  
Is ready for love.*

*I am born and die thus, face into the wind, sea-anchored.  
I am soft sand that is covered and uncovered by wave;  
Sculptured by its ravaging, turgid, rolling visits,  
And then the lapping, softly receding goodbye.  
Ever-changing, and ever-waiting;*

*Just a woman who loves.*

During the following years, Stephanie married her work and immersed herself in efforts to protect Mother Earth from the unconscionable ravishes relentlessly imposed on her by rapacious man. She longed for her old love with Walter, but she had accepted the loss in tandem with a vision of them somehow together in the future, and this sustained her somewhat. With or without Walter, Steph felt empowered enough as a woman that she became a vibrant force in the growing environmental movement. They had tried to keep in touch at the beginning of their ending, but there was so little to say, though both their hearts were longing for the nightlong sharings of before, as the communications became less and less.

Walter settled into a routine and became devoted to running the corporation from its corporate offices in San Francisco, which was determined to be the healthiest climate for him. He napped often in his office and was able to attend well to all the business. However, he didn't travel and had no real outside interests. His hair continued to thin, his eyes came to need bifocals, and his once strong shoulders continued their bow earthward. Under his capable leadership, the corporation moved strongly ahead. His grandfather, now in his eighties and mostly retired but still aggressive, would on occasion give Walter a little friendly kick in the corporate butt.

## Chapter 12

Alixandra, already a natural polo player from her practicing at Estancia Cielo became a bit famous in Buenos Aires – she was rated at three goals, but played even better and therefore was chosen often to play in tournaments. She visited the Valley once but was very busy with her horses and tournaments as well as her new life in the city. She and Tawny loved each other deeply and were still able to communicate through the magic of their telepathy when the need or energy was strong.

During that visit Tawny easily noticed that Alixa carried with her a new energy. She seemed older and Tawny put it down to living the city life which they had talked about the first night home; the discos, the bars and fashionable cafeterias. But then a growing suspicion nudged by almost a knowing prompted her to lift a bottle of good Malbec from the cellar and invite her twin to go down to the river for a chat.

“So, out with it Sis, you have been up to something and I think I know what it is.”

“Hey Tawny, I was just about to tell you...”

“Sure you were!”

“No, I mean it. Let me guess what you guess. That I lost my virginity?”

“Well, did you? I figured it had to be that, you old puta. Tell me all about it. Does that mean you are in love, cuz you remember our pact – that we would not make love until we were in love?”

“Don’t get your tit in a wringer, Tawny. I will tell you all about it, and it was wonderful, and maybe I did cheat a bit on the pact, because I don’t know this fellow all that well, but I at least like him a lot. A lot!”

“I bet he is a polo player – one of those dashing dudes you see on the Champagne advertisements?”

“Yup. His name is Chano, he is tall, dark haired with a gorgeous smile, and he is not too macho – he lets me drive his Porsche sometimes...well, if he is drunk that is. You should see what it is like, zooming all over Buenos Aires – not as exciting as high goal polo, but it sure gets the adrenaline going.”

“Whoa, toots. Is he a drunkard and only a bit macho? How many goals is his handicap?”

“Seven, and no – he is not really a drunkard, but all those guys like to drink after a match. It lets the steam off.”

“Seven, huh. Does Marcos know him? Does he approve?”

“Actually Marcos warned me off about him – said he was always on the make.”

“Right, sounds like Marcos, anyway tell me all about the... you know – losing your virginity...vamos. Was it good? What’s it like? Is he like a stallion? How long did it take? Did you do it again? What is his thing like? Did it feel good? I bet it did, cuz you are smiling like crazy.”

So the twins shared Alixa’s story, often devolving down into happy giggles which echoed the funs they always had together as kids.

Alixa; “So, how about you, you old prude? Now that I have, sort of, broken the pact you are free to do it whenever it comes up. Whenever it arises, see. And what about Marcos? All he wants to do is talk about you when we are together. I think that HE is in love!”

Tawny murmured some reply and then later, when she was alone, pretended that her hands were the hands of Marcos, that the caresses she bestowed on her oh so sensitive and womanly places were his touches – his kisses – his little happy invasions sending troops in sensuous waves of pleasure upon her increasingly receptive shores.

Before Alixa departed Tawny counseled with Alixa to be careful, to, sure, enjoy it all, but to keep her head on her shoulders and not get too taken and lost with the life of the city.

Tawny continued growing as a remarkably beautiful young woman. Her hair was like a sunflash, and her eyes were like blue portals to another world. She moved with a feline grace and had about her an aura of the wild, of another time. Her laugh was like a waterfall, like a trill of bright butterflies. When she entered your space, it was as if you had suddenly remembered how to breathe, even as she took away your actual breath. Her natural exuberance was reflected in the lithe muscles that graced her firm body.

She seemed to never be in one exact place, but almost shimmered even in repose. Not quite a mirage but quicksilverish, with an after aroma of sweet smoke. She lived mostly in the forest with her animals, often visiting her mother and grandmother in the great stone house, and occasionally encountering Uncle Perfect in the mountains where they would dance together and share in the delights of the natural world. She would often check in with him and insisted that she wanted to hear more of his “ditties” and investigate the manifestations of his cosmologies even though he told her many times that he was just an old fool blathering along about suntrips and laws of attraction. They shared a light hearted and intimate relationship even when pondering the heavy considerations of an astoundingly mysterious Universe. Still, their talks were leavened with light and with fun as they agreed that the whole show was, indeed, a Love Story, and a pretty funny one at that.

Sometimes Tawny wondered why her life was both so exciting and so pleasantly comfortable. She knew from her teachers, which included the creatures and weathers that abounded in nature, that she was on the earth to learn. Sometimes she found herself seeking some big and ominous obstacle so that she could test her skills and the powers that seemed to loom inside. Usually, though, she was content to preside over the family lands and the vast forest preserve in the high mountains, where she would visit with her Jaguar, either in the flesh or in spirit. At night sometimes she would dream of flying with her friend the condor over the unpeopled valleys, ranges, rivers, lakes, forests, and jagged crags of her domain.

Uncle Perfect told her not to be concerned about the other lessons, that she was only 21, and that the creation was actively searching for volunteers to ETC.

“ETC? What’s that mean again?”, she pretended not to know.

“Enjoy the Creation, knucklehead.”

“All right, Unk! That’s already what I’m best at.”

“I know, chica. It’s tough work, but someone’s got to do it, right?”

“Right.”

Marcos came twice to visit and to share stories of Alixandra. He really came to pursue his quest, though he was careful, perhaps too careful, not to push young Tawny in the ways of the city, where sexual liaison was common among teenagers. There seemed to be no hurry as they so enjoyed just being together which often entailed good old giggling, which, for them constituted some sort of foreplay. Both held the knowing, the feeling, that they were to be together and were content to continue knowing each other, though there was a yearning which grew ever more interesting as time passed. Did they touch? Uh huh. Did they share kisses? Yup – long, slow sharings as lips parted to taste each other. It was their eyes that made absolute love, circling each other in a dance as old as time; enfoldments and wonderments waltzed with knowing as visual penetrations were perpetuated, enveloped in a slow sure sharing of passion and of love. Giggles were held at bay then until the happiness broke through the trance, and laughter was then the next best thing to experience. When he left there was a sweet linger of love which haloed her going and promised a next togetherness which sustained them both.

One day, as she rode across her beloved lands, Tawny felt a dark energy course through her heart, and she knew that something serious had happened to Alixa.

The next day it was Marcos on the radio who explained that Alixa had died in a high-speed car accident, something involving a Porsche and whiskey. Valeria, very distraught, arranged for Marcos to bring the body to the estancia. She found Tio Perfecto at the river, where he was smoking fish, and shared the news with him through her tears. He said that he would tell Tawny, then left to find her.

Macanudo found Tawny at Temple Rock, where she was tending a small twig fire whose ghostly finger of smoke signaled her presence and also her state of mind. She already knew—not the details, but yes, that her sister was no longer in corporeal form. They talked for hours on that pinnacle of rock, as day ceded sway to night—talked about what it all meant and processed this sudden sad and demanding energy visited upon them. More than once Tawny surrendered to the hot tears on her cheeks as she crawled into Macanudo's arms to be held and rocked.

Tawny's life training served her well: experiences of animal death—the filly that died in her arms after a long night in front of the great fireplace, having been found shivering in a mud hole, just two days old—and her long talks with Val and with Macanudo. The waves of grief that washed over her were soothed by understandings and in time by acceptance. And even, in some mysterious way, she could feel closer to Alixa—could feel her in her heart and soul, though they never again would touch. As such was the devastation which was visited upon her handled so that acceptance was a slight solace, though not before sadness had its say.

Marcos drove all day and night to bring Alixa's body out to the estancia. They all met him at Roadend and loaded the body into a casket that Hugo had crafted and then into the carriage drawn by Lanin, the white Arabian horse decked out with ribbons and flowers in her mane. Tawny was dressed in her finest; special bombachas, gathered into shiny black boots and sashed at the waist with a hand woven wide belt which was wrapped three times around and then the tassels tucked along the sides. A deep blue silk shirt which had come from her grandmother those many miles from the old country, topped by a satin scarf of many colors. On her head a sombrero, wide brimmed to shade from the sun. The men were also arrayed in their best clothes, each with a long knife slanted crosswise along the back.

The trip was then three hours, up and over the pass, and down the steep trail all the way to the river, where Alixa was buried in the little plot with some Indians, Mikhail, and Christina.

That evening they held a ceremony, then broke out the best wines—there were many memories to relive, many good times, and much love.

Tawny was feeling a funny combination of being at once abandoned and united. As the days went by, she also realized that there was also a new space, somehow, in her life, which countered the deep hole left by the corporal departure of Alixa. It had to do with Marcos. There was an energy between them from that excellent river dunking long ago, and they had maintained contact through Alixa and the radio calls, and by the visits - the holdings and kisses. But now it seemed heightened, and she was very pleased that he would be staying a number of weeks.

Marcos had finished Law School and even tried his hand at lawyering but was so disgusted with the mechanizations, the lack of integrity, and the rampant injustices involved that he had defied his father, left the profession, and taken up professional polo. He was now one of the best players in Argentina and beyond. He had regrown his long blonde hair, which would stream out behind him as he rode, a sort of flag, whether of welcome or of warning, Tawny was not sure.

She was sure that she liked to be with him: fly fishing in the brilliant waters, playing polo, sharing a maté fire, and welcoming in the energy of laughter as it sidled back into their lives, little by little, not unlike a naughty puppy sneak-crawling back into bed. And then the kisses, the caresses, the eye passions and the knowing that their complete joining was coming.

It was during this time that they heard the world had changed with the astounding success of a small terrorist band riding jet-bombs into the twin New York Towers and the Pentagon. It was, of course, unsettling to the estancia folk, but they had long ago understood not only that the “civilized” world was a place of solid confusion, terrible pollution, barely controlled chaos, and unhappy ungraciousness, but also that energies were gathering to bring in balances.

A few days later, Tawny decided to visit Uncle Perfect, who had returned to his beloved high cordillera. She rode Griff out of the valley and up the ridge that cut into the very heavens—a long serrated trail upward that she wished would never end, as her mind sang this new strange song that so serenaded her way and filled her with funny new feelings.

“Che, Tio, que pasa?”

“Hola, Chica.”

She dismounted, loosened the cinch, let down the bridle, gave old Griff a quick head massage and left him to graze as she told Tio about the monstrous attack in New York and Washington D.C. They discussed it at length, marveling at the message contained in such a successful campaign and agreed that the First World better pay some attention to their consumptions and pollutions – to their own war mongerings, saber rattlings, and interference worldwide.

That handled, Tawny turned to Tio;

“Tio, there are some other things I just don’t understand, and you’re so goddamned smart.”

“Hold on there, woman-baby. I’m not all that smart and especially not about your life. I’ve got these nice little theories I’ve been developing and fine-tuning for half a century, and they work for me, but if some old geezer had told me fifty years ago to not go chasing after the first beautiful girl that turned my eye—I’d have told him to go sit on himself.”

“Right, Macanudo, and I’ve been thinking about that damn boy and about your b.s. to be in love with yourself, but I wanted to ask about the whole world.”

“Okay, and you’re pretty much right about the b.s. part. We all have to go through our learnings, which can be a lot of fun, and, sometimes, there’s no way to the other side anyway. Now what about the world?”

“Well, what about it? What about this Change deal? Why are Humans so different from the other species and so messed up? That saying of yours, ‘There’s only one species that harms any other species’ and so on, I mean, I go to the pueblo and all they are talking about is buying more stuff—who’s got the newest car or computer—not that they have room in the house anyway. Where is the damned ‘Perfection’ in that? I mean the whole Earth is dying, and I don’t even think those things make them happy. I know they don’t connect their consumptions with Earth pollution.”

“Seems that you’re pretty pissed off, chica. First, it is all Perfect. We couldn’t ‘kill’ the Earth if we set off every bomb and turned on every motor. Sure, we could eliminate life on earth, and, by the way, that’s been done before—civilizations ‘extincting’ life on earth, and I’m not just talking Atlantis, Mu, and Lemuria, the ones we reference easily. The energy goes on, you see. Perfect? Well, we need the contrast, the fear, to see, feel, and appreciate the Love. And then there is the Story, plus there’s time and plenty of it. There are four billion more earth trips around the Sun before Sunend, and we’re using so little of our potential consciousness, so of course we’re creating pollutions and so on.

“I understand that as we evolve a little more, we will grow into more enjoyment and, one day—perhaps near Sunend—reach Harmony. In a state of Harmony with the rest of the world, we shall do no harm. It’s beyond our grandest imagining at this time, and it has to do with Love, with magic, with the Story, and nothing to do with technology.”

“That’s a tough one for people to give up,” Tawny replied.

“Right, and they don’t have to choose to, not for a long time. There’s still lots of infatuation to be worked through before simplicity is honored, and lots and lots of time. We humans are different because we are the Storytellers and our trail is long before we witness the joy of being, which is already experienced by our co-passengers on this Earthship ride – well, except of course for the effect we, that one species, has on them and their habitats.

“The Change thing is very exciting. Even now, there are understandings, books, groups, all around the world that speak of Earth as a garden spot of the Universe, and there are other entities helping us to achieve Harmony during these times. I don’t know much past what I understand here, but it is intriguing. Seems like the Pleiadians—that precious group you call *Las Siete Hermanas*—are sending down a lot of news, some of it channeled in some interesting books.”

“I think I have seen a spaceship,” said Tawny, “those really weird lights I told you about? They gave me a strange and wonderful feeling, but what about this Change? Hold on, you say, they’re



helping with Harmony here. What about the terrorists? Towers being knocked down by hijacked airplanes doesn't sound real harmonious to me, Unk."

"Well, the world needed a jolt, I guess, and surely got it. There's no telling what form Change will take. I, for one, felt more Love, along with astonishment, after that attack, felt it even before Marcos radioed to give us the news. Again, here's an example of something we can't put into words, at least not words that the average person could consider. Especially if he's reacting with shock and with anger, waving flags of noble bombast. Have to go to Faith—an understanding that even this is for the highest good.

"Heck, strife, wars, and militant religions are so totally archaic, they seem like a joke. But look at this, sweetheart: the consuming nations are waging a huge act of terrorism daily on the world's eco-systems, not just savaging oxygen-producing forests but also fouling the elements vital to survival. I left that world long ago, when I saw not only what acquisition, corruption, and pollution were doing to the Earth but also to the perpetrators—their lack of ease, of health, of happiness.

"Nobody knows how this Change will come down, just as there is no individual fixed destiny thanks to the moving target that is Free Choice. How will we react to the Change, the changes? Do we rebuild tall target towers, attack more countries, and continue our mindless consumptive pollutions while World War III brews? Or do we wake up to consider where our real values lie? What I know, from deep in my cells, is that this is a Love Story, a spectacular, multifaceted saga replete with 'good' guys and 'bad' guys, and that they are all perfect—perfect in their current state of growth.

"Big Change is upon us, in what form we do not know, but we are here to witness it and speed it on its way. Earthquakes, seeps, tides, melts, winds, rains, and droughts will attend, but whatever other manifestations, including mighty towers falling to mightier fanatics, need to be processed and honored as well.

"Of course this doesn't mean we condone the horrors. That terror, that cowardly attack on nonmilitants, as a manifestation of the Change, is a huge 'wakeup call' to consider the depths of the problem, the situation, that has attracted change-correction energy. We must move past selfish fear to even begin to understand these divine energies. The really spectacular thing is the invitation to us all to become more conscious of what our consumptions are doing energetically to the Earth. Though I have to say that criminally idiotic president Bush, urging his people to show the world that the United States is not afraid by running out and buying thing after thing, is quite the absolute fool – looking in exactly the wrong direction. Oh well.

"Then the repercussions back to us as this invitation, which is now pretty much a mandate, comes with the revelation that there is real joy in simplicity. Thus the horror of that amazing attack is both a result of natural law plus a divine invitation to better tend our nest. The forces at work here defy conformative rationalization and will probably continue to be misunderstood for some time."

"It's gonna be difficult for people to see the horror as divine, Tio."

"Everything is divine under God's little sun."

“Claro. Che I gotta get back, just wanted to share your take on this phenomenon.”

“You’re not spending the night? Got something better to do down at the casco?”

“Yup, you old fart – you got it.”

“He’s a good one.”

“Could be.”

## Chapter 13

Meanwhile, at DuPueute Headquarters in San Francisco in the United States, Walter received Mike Eye in his office. Eye was a large man with a beer belly that poked, peeked, and bulged through his ill-fitting shirt. His tie was orange and, for some reason, quite small, such that it rested on the upper slope of his stomach, sort-of like a tired tongue. He hadn’t shaved for a day, and his spiky hair resembled a drunken cactus. He wore army boots and had the fat stub of a cigar on one side of his mouth. When he talked it bobbed up and down as if to accent his language, which was a combination of southern drawl and Midwestern truck driver. His neck was not unlike a turkey’s, reddish and somewhat wattled.

Walter winced, as usual, when Eye entered his room. His brutish presence was extenuated by sprinkles of dead ash from his foul stogie. However, Walter recognized him as a very effective operative, a company man, a bottom-line type, and his slight distaste didn’t show; in fact, he often found Eye quite funny. He had an engineering background and was usually the front man – setting up various operations around the world. Eye was excited about his new pet project, which involved the exploitation of 200,000 acres in Patagonia.

“Hiya, Mister DuPueute. How ya doin?”

“Very well, Mike, and you?”

“Fine, fine. Listen, I’ve got good news on the Patagonian Preserve. Just talked with the foreign minister’s office, and them boys are gonna bite on the carrot I dangled. The lousy spics. I knew they’re all dirty rotten, but that’s good for us – makes it easier to get the job done.”

“I don’t think there are spics down there, Mike.”

“Spics, wops, tangos, wahoos, whatever. Anyway, it’ll cost us just two hunnerd grand, dirty, another night of pricey cheesecake, and we get the lease.”

“Cheesecake, Mike. Is that what I think it is?”

“Well, uh, it’s probably a lot better than what you think it is – no offense. I gave her a little test run before setting up the minister. Made it part of the deal, ya know.” Mike emphasized his happy memory by taking repeated and deep sucks on his stogie, and then even winked at his boss.

“There’s no above-board way to wrap this up?”

“It’d take two freakin’ years, boss, and by then they’d change ministers. We gotta move now. And, hey, this is how it’s done down there, Mister DuPiente. Trust me on that.”

“Okay, thank you, Mike. I’ll meet with the board on this on Friday. I’m sure they’ll go along.”

Walter and his board approved initiation of the Patagonia Preserve Project. Money was appropriated and an advance team comprised of Mike Eye, a geologist, and a timber cruiser was dispatched with instructions to make preliminary studies for the exploitation of the vast resources of timber, oil, and natural gas.

In Patagonia Jaguar Girl attended her lands and wildlife. Often, when moving through the forests, she would sense a presence, and then see her Jaguar. And when she climbed the ranges that circled and seemed to guard the land below, sometimes she would see a shadow cross at her feet. There, just above, was her special condor with wings spread into the steady flow of air from the faraway ocean. Tawny would perch on some great rock outcrop and watch the heady flight. The great bird would invite more by swinging his head from side to side and splaying the feathery fingers of his wingtips ever more out, and up. Then Tawny would send her very thoughts and dreams skyward, where they could mingle with the condor’s and soar toward heaven.

When she hunted in the soft evenings with the bow given her by Uncle Perfect, Tawny would offer part of her prey to this condor, always with a prayer to the liberated spirit of the animal, as taught by Valeria. Jaguar Girl realized that real communication had begun to develop between her and this condor. They were becoming friends, and Tawny began each visit by sending waves of love upward.

Tawny learned to release her thoughts so they would rise like a whirlwind of bright butterflies to soar with the condor. As he rode invisible currents of air, always using his farthest feathers to read, braille-like, the air maps, so too rose her meditations, drawn ever upward by the stars waiting for darkness to beam out their timeless silent song.

In the quiet ranges of her heart, bathed by the suns and airs of Patagonia, she knew and reflected a love unconditioned by want or by fear. She was happy and, in many ways, complete.

One day she was kneeling in a forest glade near the Preserve, attempting to touch a small shy deer, when the deer suddenly bolted and fled as Tawny sensed and then began to hear a distant disturbance. Something ominous was approaching, something that was first a thudding like distant thunder, which then grew in volume, sending our waves which seemed to shred the very air.

She had seen airplanes from afar that were interestingly graceful with a slight drone, a white glint in the forever blue of the massive sky. But what thundered toward her now was something graceless, the noise and awful dissonance swelling quickly and sounding like unceasing shouts from bitter, angry, vastly dangerous, and heretofore unknown Gods. Tawny could feel herself shrink in response. She felt some darkness reaching inside to clasp her racing heart.

Mike Eye, chomping on a cigar stub in the helicopter and directing the pilot, spotted a huge bird. “Git me over to that big crow, and I’ll blow him out of the sky. He’s in my airspace, and I haven’t killed anything for a while.”

“That’s not a crow, Mister Eye; it’s a Patagonian condor.”

“So it’s a Jurassic crow. Line me up level with the sum bitch.” He prepared his M16 automatic army rifle and then fired a long burst that finally found its target in an explosive scatter of feathers, from which fell the dead condor, as the helicopter flew on with Eye coughing, laughing, and clapping his hands.

On the ground, as the helicopter roared into sight above her, Jaguar Girl recoiled in fright at the great predator and turned toward the safety of the trees. But then she recognized what this noxious machine was from pictures Marcos had shown her. She calmed slightly but then heard a screaming series of shots as the helicopter passed overhead and receded toward the upper basin. In its wake came plummeting toward her the corpse of her condor, trailing lifeless feathers made useless now against unrelenting gravity.

Horrified, Tawny ran to where the great bird crashed into the earth: broken, bloody, and ravaged. To her it seemed the earth itself shuddered with the impact, so great was the sudden shock to her world.

How could anyone kill her great friend, and for what twisted reason? It made no sense. A tear rolled from her eye and christened the newly liberated soul of the once majestic bird. She prayed to the condor spirit as she buried the bird, then hurried to her pony, tethered in the tall grass. She vaulted onto his back to race off in the direction of the whirling air beast, stopping along the way at her shelter to gather up her bow and the quiver of arrows she and Marcos had made.

As she bounded up the trail to the upper basin, Jaguar Girl encountered scared animals going the other way, including a pair of toucans flitting through the canopy. She arrived just as the rotors were winding down and saw Mike Eye and the pilot consulting a map behind the chopper’s curving eyelike plastic dome.

Dismounting stealthily, she melded into the brush, drew her great bow, and sent an arrow straight and true, through the windshield. The arrow stopped an inch from Mike Eye’s nose. The men turned abruptly to each other as the tail feathers of the arrow still vibrated, not unlike a rattlesnake. The pilot yelped, jumped out, and ran off toward some rocks. Mike Eye dived for the ground.

Even within the confines of her fury, Tawny couldn’t help giggling to see the fat man trying to hide in the grass, especially after burning his hand on his cigar stub and letting out a string of strange curses. He heard her laughter and tried to regain his departed dignity. He was used to dominating native people, not crawling in the grass like a tick. Still, he was scared. He couldn’t see anybody and didn’t know how many there were or if they meant to harm him. “*Amigos, cerveza!*” he yelled, exhausting his entire Spanish vocabulary.

Jaguar Girl emerged from the bush with bow at full draw. “I speak your language, bird-killer. Stand up!”

Eye got shakily to his feet, brushing off twigs and grasses. When he saw just one person—and a young, beautiful girl at that—he regained his composure, slapped his hat back on his head, and said, “Why heck’s bells, honey. Put down that plaything and come on over here, and we can get acquainted. Real friendly. I don’t mean you no harm.”

*Whoosh.* Tawny sent an arrow through the crown of his hat, then drew and notched another before the skewered expedition hat hit the ground. She advanced on Eye. “Shut your mouth, you horrid man, and get off this Preserve before I lower my aim and bloody up a perfectly good arrow. No machines allowed on this land.”

“Well, cutie, this here Preserve is now a Serve. We got twenty years’ of rights to the minerals and trees here, all perfectly legal. Now put away that thing an’ lez be frens, seein’ as how we’ll be in the same area. I wanna show you something.” Eye found his briefcase, opened it, and brought out some papers that supposedly granted a 20-year lease to the DuPuente Corporation of San Francisco, California, U.S.A.

Tawny left, but not before warning Mike Eye that if she ever saw him shoot another animal on these lands, she would make sure he ate it where it fell. As she rode away, she could feel her blood simmer down from its boil, and she was charged with the fresh energy of resolve. She returned home in time for the radio call to Marcos. She told him about the lease and the U.S. corporation behind it, and declared she would do anything to stop it.

Marcos understood immediately and, indeed, knew something of the DuPuente Corporation. He told her that he was going to San Francisco the following week to play in a celebrity polo tournament. He urged her to come to Buenos Aires to strategize together and told her she should go to California with him. She agreed, abandoning her reluctance to be in cities and on airplanes among teeming crowds of humans, as her passion to protect the lands impelled her to action.

She then mounted up to find Uncle Perfect, to camp with him one more night under the stars, to dance one more time his morning dance prior to leaving for her big adventure, which already was energizing her and lending her surging feelings of interaction with what Marcos and Alixa had called *the real whirled*.

Uncle Perfect beamed when he saw her and understood her intent. “Go, just go, for the wind whispers your name. There is a sudden, terrible energy in your life, which is not without its wonder, as voices unfold. Hear the summons and go.

“Fortify your fine heart with the love you have learned here. Every leaf, bud, and great tree and all the animals lend their love. Go with the blessing of a million tiny hearts; just go. And keep your eyes open, for the ways of man are myriad. Even as they seem mindless, the sun still rises and sets on all they have prisoned in concrete. Try every day to bring a light into their lives, for in truth they know not what they are doing, and they need forgiveness. So say the angels who watch over all of God’s children, however wayward. Sorry for sort of preaching here, honey, but there is more – don’t forget I used to live up there and know something of the operative energies.

“A wondrous story is there being writ—too much, far too much, to see it all. It’s like hordes of inexperienced riders have jumped on the backs of runaway horses, holding on and yelling as the trees fly by in blending blur, jumping rocks flat out, galloping full speed ahead through fields of fragile ferns that wilt with their passing, trampled. And still they spur their steeds onward and

whip their flanks, now lathered with sweat and blood, now swelling their numbers in vast array as they race toward a chasm that they do not see, through trees thinned by their passage: canyons of chaos funneling toward a chasm of correction; no to the insanity, yes to the goodness at the core of every human heart.”

Tio Perfecto then added, “OK, basta of bleating like an old goat, it just riles me up sometimes when I think about all they are doing up there. Go, chica. Blessings on your trip. Corporations are heartless, and their owners and managers visit much devastation on the earth in their quest for material to be fashioned into ‘goods’ and then the goods to money. But there is coming a great correction. Oh yes, the earth spirit will not long continue to abide our mindless degradations. But never mind. That’s not for today. Just go. Go and find the person behind this DuPuente Corporation and bring him here. Here he will listen to messages that will open his heart and mind, for indeed there are other ways for us to be on earth—but we are young yet ... ETC.” He chuckled, shook his head, and improvised a little dance he called “Go, chica, go.”

Equipped with passage money from her savings from the sale of the weavings and leathers she had made, Tawny was prepared for her great adventure in the real world. On the day of her departure for Buenos Aires, after saying goodbye to Katy, who slipped her an old hundred dollar bill with a wink, Valeria, who also gave her some “glad” money – telling her to invite Marcos to a special dinner and think of them at home, and then the animals, Tawny sprang up on Griffen and trotted down the lane of giant poplars to catch up to Hugo, who was leading the pack mule. Together they descended the trail to the river, where the dogs immediately launched themselves into the water. Hugo and Tawny stopped at the shore to let the horses drink and to exult in the breeze that coursed down with the sparkling waters from the high mountains.

Nowhere in the world are there winds like the ones that roam over these lands, at once soft as a sigh and then fierce and bracing like a shout from heaven, “Get ready, get ready!”

“Ready for what?” pondered Tawny. “But, yes, I am getting ready for anything—for *cualquiera cosa*.” Crossing the river, hiking her knees up like a jockey as Griffen danced across the silken tresses of the River of Whispered Whys, Tawny knew the journey had truly begun. She turned back for the traditional waves to the casco: Katy and Valeria on the balcony, the old dog barking down at them. A happy howl.

The ride to town, as usual, was a grand adventure. White eagles serenaded from the flowing airs, hare and quail scattered riotously from the way, tracks of a puma were crossed, and there, in a dale, a fox slinking along his way.

In town, Tawny and Hugo embraced as the old bus pulled up to the hosteria.

“*Que le vaya bien, princesa,*” said Hugo. He spoke no English, only his native Castellano Spanish.

“*Gracias amigo—que cuides bien a mis animales, a la Granny y la Mama.*”

“*Ciao.*”

The bus trip, the plane trip, the taxi through the teeming town—ever vaster noises and commotions—until finally she arrived in the arms of Marcos for a welcoming hug. Tawny

shared the story of Mike Eye with him, and they had both a cry and a laugh together. They made plans to meet, to attract, and to somehow convince Mr. Walter DuPueute IV to come down to see and feel the preciousness of the lands so as not to exploit them. Together they boarded a huge jet plane and blasted their way through the air for nine hours to Miami and then, with a few hours layover, another six to San Francisco. Tawny, of course, experienced a combination of intrigue and horror as she was crammed into a tiny seat in a plane filled with humans, roaring through the sky. Quite the adventure, but who would ever want to do this sort of thing very often, and what were those mumbling, roaring, and screaming engines doing to the air?

Marcos had explained to her how to attract men's interest and assured her that, with her aura, her natural energy, and her glorious body, she would attract every man's attention and every woman's jealousy. On arriving in San Francisco and checking in at their hotel, he then delivered her to a dress shop, where the owner clucked over her and her new wardrobe like a mother hen over her brood. This was all new and fun for Jaguar Girl, and she got into it with some excitement, even mischievously taunting the fellows, who were gay, as she pirouetted before the mirror. One clapped his hands and said, "Oh, lordy, now I remember my teen years." The other gave a glance to him and said, "Yeah, and I sort of remember girls too!"

The polo match was organized by the American Sustainability Movement (ASM), dedicated to leadership in a return to a sustainably correct balance between man and Mother Earth. The founder of ASM was none other than Stephanie, who had selflessly devoted years of her life to creating an internationally recognized alliance. The polo match featured four movie stars and four of the world's top players, and the proceeds were to go to ASM to further its work.

Marcos had arranged for Tawny to sit in Stephanie's box. They quickly became friends, as they watched the game, and what a game it was! The day was glorious—bright and fine. The sun seemed reflected in the bounding white ball, off the helmets of the players, and in the slashing glitter of their mallets as they stroked the ball. Sleek horses galloped across 10 acres of level green, turning, and running at full speed and then back the other way as the play changed: neck shots, back shots, and offside forehands that sailed 150 yards. They played a variation of true polo in that only the four "stars" could score. The pros would attempt to place the ball in front of the goals, and then urge on the stars, "Go Sylvester, go, go, go. Vamos, hombre!"

Thus went the afternoon, fun for all and a great success. Everyone came up winners, especially ASM, which raised lots of money for its cause. There followed a champagne reception: players in their saddle-dirtied white britches, hair still tousled by the winds they made as they charged, mixed with beautiful people, and important people who wore their success like sly grins, like bulging waistlines, and like one or two chins too many.

Jaguar Girl and Stephanie wandered off after a while. Tawny turned to her host, looking for a long time in her eyes, and said, "Excuse me, but I see something in you that reminds me of my Jaguar."

"You have a Jaguar?"

"Oh, I've known him since he was orphaned a while ago by a hunter. He's sleek and beautiful and seems fine, but I always know that something is missing. He moves through the forest as if constantly looking for lost love, but with little hope in his going. I have never told anyone, but he

sometimes comes to me as I am camping and we have, like, this communication. I think he is glad for our companionship, because I feel that he really is lonely.”

“Wow, that is amazing. My goodness, and that reminds you of me?” asked Stephanie, returning the gaze. For a moment, all around them the noise and light compressed, their auras mixed to encompass both in a timeless cocoon of communication, and reality shifted.

“Yes, it does.” And as time stopped for seven breaths, they heard the heartbeat of the earth.

Then Stephanie shuddered a long sigh, and broke the gaze. She sighed again, then slightly moaned as a great tear peeked out from the corner of her eye. There passed between the two women a great understanding, a sudden sisterhood, as full and deep as what Tawny had always felt for Alixa. Stephanie told her the story of her lost but abiding love for Walter, and Tawny, realizing that this was the same Walter DuPuente she had come to meet, was shocked into silence for a moment.

‘This is all somehow meant to be,’ Tawny thought to herself, and in her mind’s eye she saw Tio Perfecto laughing and dancing, and rambling on about the phenomenon of ‘Flow’ – how the Universe brings people, events and happenings together when the energies are aligned. She told Stephanie all about the Preserve, the terrible helicopter, the worse Mike Eye, and her plan to seduce Walter into coming to Patagonia and see for himself what his corporation was doing to the earth.

There, on the grass, the two women felt enfolded in golden light, knowing that magic was blessing them with its attention. Flow also was blessed, for how else should they have come together? Stephanie felt that some light had finally entered the deep shadow of her waiting on love these many long years. And Tawny understood that a man once able to love so well could do so again. In truth, it was they who were blessing magic with their attention, for magic is always present and waits only our invitation.

Steph shared some secrets on how to attract and captivate Walter. Tawny promised that the messages of the mountain forests would surely contain good news for Steph, once they were revealed to Walter. The two then shared a profound embrace.

The next morning, Jaguar Girl dressed in her sexy new outfit and sauntered down the block, timing herself to pass Walter just as he habitually headed for the DuPuente Center. As she approached him, many heads turned to stare, not just because she was gorgeous but also because she carried in her stride the essence of the wild from whence she drew her energy, her knowing.

Walter, though just middle aged, was mostly bald and walked with a cane, which he carried for stability should he suffer one of his dizzy spells. He walked stoop-shouldered, his slightly sad gaze fixed on the sidewalk in front of him. Thus he did not see Jaguar Girl as she passed, though he did sense something, whether it was a memory from his past, when he would visit the woods, or a vision of the future. Briefly, an interested look, a speculative perplexity crossed the otherwise bland field of his face, but it passed in a moment. He slightly shook his head and resumed his visage of noble resignation, as he trod on.



A frustrated Tawny ran all the way to the hotel to talk with Marcos. “Just bump into the guy, chica. Here, carry these papers and drop them when you bump. He will help you pick them up.” Marcos spoke with confidence.

“Stephanie told me that he goes to lunch at 12:30. I’ll be waiting. He won’t get by me again!”

And she was right, except she underestimated her strength and hit poor Walter a body block that knocked him backward and onto his rear end. His glasses fell off and the world went blurry. The last time he’d bumped so hard into anything was twelve years earlier, when his sailboat rammed the stern hull of the DuPiente Exploiter. He fumbled for his glasses and got them on, bringing into sweet and shocking focus Jaguar Girl, who was bending over to help him up, with a little more of her outside her clothes than in.

“My goodness,” he said. “Are you all right?” He then answered his own question: “Why you’re way more than all right!” Walter was more than moved—more than just bumped.

“Yes sir, I’m fine,” Tawny answered, “but let me help you up.”

“Here, let me help you with these papers. Gracious,” Walter fumbled. “What a collision. Please excuse me. I . . . I never saw you. Must have been sleepwalking.”

“No, no. It’s me. I’m not used to all these people,” she said in all honesty. “I must have been dreaming or something.”

“Wherever did you come from?” Walter asked, as he helped her gather the papers.

“Why just up the block.”

“No, I mean, in the world. Your accent. You’re not from here, are you?”

“Oh, hardly. I live in Patagonia, down in the Andes Mountains.”

As they chatted, Walter felt an interest stirring for the first time in as long as he could remember. He straightened his shoulders a little, hid the cane behind his back, took a deep breath, and invited her to join him for lunch. She paused a moment, then accepted, when he insisted. He called his office, “Hold all my calls.”

At lunch, Walter became further enchanted with this girl and felt a strange attraction to her that transcended the obvious physical beauty. She was so fresh, so natural, so uncontrived, and she was delightful.

Her laughter trilled like a small waterfall, which started as spangles in her blue eyes, and then chuckled and gained a new heartiness as it came pouring forth. It was impossible for Walter not to laugh with her. He did so, couldn’t help himself, and then he laughed some more. Jaguar Girl laughed back at him, eyes locked into his and sharing a delicious secret, even though neither knew exactly what it was. Then they were laughing at the laughs and, finally, at the memory of the laughter.

It was the joy of birds, of silvery fish, of freedom, and in Walter it opened gates to memories long ago adulterated or even obliterated. It was as if he suddenly remembered how to breathe

after eons of half-breaths. He fell tumultuously in love with love and with the humor that is liberated as love and happiness melt the walls, the inhibitions, built and maintained by seriousness. She told him right away to “lighten up,” and her words became a mantra for him from then on, as he embarked on a strange new trail toward enlightenment with this wonderful waif as his guide, even though he had no idea at the time.

He asked if they could have lunch again tomorrow. She said, “Yes, but we have to eat out of doors, and I need to see the ocean. How about a picnic on the beach?”

“A picnic?”

“Yeah, I think that’s when you make sandwiches, put them in a basket, and then eat on a blanket with the bugs...”

“I know what a picnic is. It’s just that it’s been a very long time.”

“Silly man. Whatever have you been doing with yourself? I’m going to call you Dupe from now on.”

“Dupe? Someone else used to call me that. Someone very special. Call me anything you like, just not late to lunch. How about you call me Ter, or Wally?”

“Nope, it’s gonna have to be Dupe. Sorry. So now, Dupe, you bring the sandwiches and I’ll bring the maté.”

“Maté?”

“Ah, yes. Well maté and I go together. Can’t get to know one without getting to know the other. You in?”

“I’m in.”

“And how come you’re not having any ice cream? This pistachio is divine.” She sniffed it and then threw back her head in ecstasy, her smile near-orgasmic. “I don’t even have to eat this. I could just smell ... here, Dupe, smell mine, then see if you can resist getting one for yourself.” As she held it out, the olfactory delicacy, Walter leaned in to sniff as instructed, and Tawny popped it up on to his nose and then sat back whooping with delight. “Oh my god, Walter, I mean Dupe, you are too easy!” Walter found his handkerchief and was wiping the ice cream off his nose and caught a glimpse of this beautiful woman giggling so hard that tears had begun to come pouring down her cheeks. And then he was startled to hear himself join in, laughing like he hadn’t in what seemed a very long time.

“I’ll remember that,” he said.

“Oh, me too, Dupe. Me too.” And she started in again, almost crying in her abandonment to humor and to fun.

Walter also began to cry a little, but not from laughing so hard he couldn’t help himself. Walter was remembering the joy, the healing, and the lightness of laughter, of how much he missed it, how desperately he missed not just laughter but so many things, like real love for one, that had of

almost unconscious necessity fallen by the wayside in the wake of his devotion to the DuPiente Corporation and by extension the DuPiente family— specifically, the men—the father he never knew, the uncles, his grandfather and great-grandfather and reaching further back, all the way back to the beginnings of when the DuPiente name first became admired, envied, then even feared. With all the decades of success had also come, Walter knew now better than before, incalculable personal loss. That’s why he was crying, though it was seasoned with the almost forgotten laughter, which was now upon him.

Walter looked in the mirror of Tawny’s eyes and knew he would have to change his life. Beginning today. And so his tears became tears of relief, of the first flush of a burden lain down, however gradually he could not know now. Each day to come would be a new day indeed, rather than one more slog of repetition toward an early grave. And finally he smiled, a big broad smile, and noticed that he was having lunch with a beautiful young woman he’s only just met and that he felt very much alive. His chest didn’t feel collapsed the way it had for so long, and, taking a deep and a real breath, Walter filled his lungs almost to bursting and for this moment, at least, he was ... happy!

“Thank you, Tawny. Thank you.”

“You’re very welcome, Dupe, though I’m not quite sure what you’re thanking me for.”

“For everything. Thank you for everything. I’ll order some chocolate ice cream, and let you take a sniff.”

The next day he picked her up in a limousine, and they drove to the beach. Tawny insisted they get out and walk the last part so that she could savor her first encounter with the Pacific Ocean under her own power. When she saw it, she clapped her hands and started to run, kicking off her shoes and discarding her sweater along the way. “Come on, Dupe. Get moving.”

He smiled to see her delight and picked up his step some, even jogged a little, as he used to when he was in training for squash and for soccer. It felt delicious to trot into the teeth of the bracing breezes from the sea, waving his cane like a scepter. He imagined he could feel little wisps of worry trailing behind him, attached by gossamer strands of imagination, and then he saw them breaking off and disappearing, and they did. He soon tired, but only his legs and his lungs—not his smile, nor his heart.

She came sprinting back and cavorted in circles around him as he strolled through the sands. She skipped, cantered, and shook her mane of sunlight rays, then laughed some more and sang little dance songs learned from Uncle Perfect. She then ran ahead and gathered driftwood, and by the time Walter arrived, she had a little fire going and was heating water in a blackened pot she had carried with her in a leather bag decorated with flowers and beads.

“Now what?”

“Sit down, Dupe. First, we’ll have a little maté; then we’ll eat. I haven’t had an open-fire maté since I left home.”

“Whoa. Tell me about maté. Is it legal?”

“Yes, for God’s sake and yours, one hundred percent legal,” she said as she scooped the tea from a leather compartment into a gourd bordered by silver. She then pulled out a silver straw and snuggled it sieve-like into the tea. “This is called a *bombilla*. Beautiful, isn’t it?”

“Yes, beautiful, but what’s this tea or whatever going to do to me?”

“Maté is just the greatest, Dupe. We drink it every day. It is stimulating but doesn’t make you nervous like caffeine, and it must have some magic in it, because you always see a little clearer afterwards. Things stand out better, and problems are either solved or redefined. And there’s energy—it makes me run like a filly or, well, it also is great for contemplation. It’s really quite mellow. It’s got vitamins and aids in digestion, especially meat. Plus it’s fun, much better than a dopey teacup. There’s a whole ritual to drinking it, practiced by millions over South America.”

“Let’s do it.”

“Here, it’s ready. Now I’m the *servidora*, so I prepare it just perfectly, never allowing the water to boil or to cool down. I take the first hit to make sure it’s correct and to settle the tea. Then I refill the maté and serve it to you, always with the *bombilla* facing toward you. Here you go. Don’t say ‘thank you,’ as that is the signal to the *servidora* that you have had enough and are out of the circuit. It seems a little bitter and strange at first, but you will soon grow to love it, especially when you’re around an open fire and, of course, out of doors.”

“Hmm.”

“Go ahead and finish the maté, Dupe. Then hand it back to me, showing respect by turning it with the *bombilla* pointed toward me.”

“I sort of like it.”

“See! I don’t know all about it, but there are medicinal benefits as well. Maybe it cures baldness.”

“I’ll have some more then. Make it a double!”

That night, as suggested by Stephanie to Tawny, she said she was going to see a Three Stooges movie.

“Why, they were my favorite in school, I used to do Curly with his faces and laugh for hours. Why don’t we go together—it’s been twenty years?” She readily agreed.

They met at the theater and watched the Stooges go through their ridiculous antics. Tawny could not stop laughing and Walter, infected with her hilarity, joined right in. As he doubled over and took off his glasses to wipe away tears of laughter, Walter felt the joy of humor beginning to massage his heart. He felt young again and felt energy as it was infused into his blood – he even imagined that it was working to give him strength and to combat somewhat the disease which was upon him.

When they left the theater and went to a cafe, Tawny practiced making faces, clicking her fingers, and popping her throat, which had Walter in happy hysterics. Then he did a series of faces. First, Curly faces of outrage, consternation, and crying fear, then funny faces that changed

with the beat of the music—angry, hateful, sad, timid, turned on, and so on. Jaguar Girl started laughing so hard she blew a little beer on to his face that made him pick up the beat faster until they were both lost, consumed by the happy fire of their fun.

Walter could hardly believe how he was feeling: young again, alive, joyful, hopeful. His heart lurched in his chest and began beating more fully and more powerfully against the cavity that had so long confined it totally. He wanted the feeling to never end.

The next day, after a hike with Tawny at dawn on Mount Tam, Walter presided at a full meeting of the board. The bankers and industrialists who constituted the board were greatly and somewhat pleasantly surprised to see new life energy in Walter. But they were more amazed, and a bit baffled, when Walter seemed to fall into a little trance and then, eyes closed, ran through a few face routines. Moments later, the silence in the room brought him back to the business of the day, though he maintained his silly grin.

He could hardly wait to see Tawny again that night, as she said she had some fancy clothes to show off. She wanted a first-class evening, with a sunset limo ride to the beach for a fire, followed by dinner at a super deluxe place with champagne and then her “surprise.” They had their maté as the sun approached, kissed, and then slowly penetrated the great Pacific on its way to waking up the other side of the world. They then took the limo to the “Blue Fox.”

Jaguar Girl looked spectacular in a leather dress she had made herself, accompanied by a necklace of animal and eagle claws that Tio Perfecto had gathered for her. As dinner proceeded, Tawny told Walter that when she went away, he must promise to keep on laughing.

“Okay. But why?”

“Because Uncle Perfect says that all life is based on love, humor, and truths and that laughter opens our hearts to the healing energies.”

“Fine, but why are you going away?”

“Oh, well, it’s time. I feel my lands calling my name in night dreams. Also, while I’ve enjoyed these city times a lot, I’m not breathing well, nor is it possible to find real food. Mostly, though, it’s the noise. I haven’t heard the wind’s whispers for days.”

“Who is Uncle Perfect?”

“Oh, he’s this great old fellow who runs around the mountains dancing and blessing. He says a lot of crazy stuff but most of it seems to be true. You should meet him, Dupe.”

“Well, I’m thinking I haven’t been out of the country in over a decade, and we’ve got a project just underway that must be down near your lands. I haven’t even flown in the new G-5. Why don’t we fly down together?”

“What’s a G-5, Dupe?”

“It’s one of the company jets, a Gulfstream. You’ll love it. Please say yes.”

“Si.”

“Well then, it’s settled. Can you stand one more day? I’m acting precipitously as it is and could use a day to prepare.”

“Okay, but finish your dessert, because it’s time for the *surprise*.” Her surprise was to take Walter to a dance club that played the great music of the ‘60s and ‘70s, once again as suggested by Steph, who knew how much Walter loved to dance. Tawny tugged him in, chided, and begged him to dance, then clapped as he got into it, put down his cane, and let loose.

The following day Jaguar Girl spent with Marcos and Stephanie, discussing (and getting excited about) the strategies for saving the land and curing Walter of his industrialism. Stephanie was concerned that he was falling in love with her, but Tawny told her that Walter was falling in love with life, that the laughter and light she had brought into his life had given him energy and that the walks on the beach and in the forest of Mount Tam had reawakened his innate love of nature.

Yes he loved her, and she even loved him, because in his heart he was a good person, as truly are all of God’s children. But she could see that his being still yearned for his true love, Stephanie. She was hoping that once they got to the high forest and experienced Uncle Perfect, and the pure peace and bounty of untouched nature, Walter would remember what he had left behind, as well as understand how precious it all was.

## Chapter 14

Tawny was filled with happiness as they boarded the gleaming company jet, which had a lounge with TV, DVD player, and champagne bar, plus a small bedroom, all in white leather and teak. As they roared away south, east and south, south, south, Walter handed her a wrapped present. She opened it with the delight of a child, and then laughed and gave him a big hug when she saw that it was a Three Stooges movie. After laughing through two hours of the Stooges, many sips of Dom Perignon, and a dance or two on the side, they looked up to see a rather startled steward announcing dinner. And would you be surprised to hear that it was goat, as Tawny had often described to Walter the tasty chivito asados in Patagonia.

After dinner Walter insisted that she use the bedroom while he curled up on the couch. When they awoke, they just had time for breakfast before landing in the provincial capital. The steward had prepared a tea and coffee service and was shocked when Walter pulled out the maté and bombilla that Jaguar Girl had given him and proceeded to prepare and drink maté.

They then boarded a little tail-dragger plane that flew them across the desert and into the valley, landing at the estancia. The beauty of the river captured Walter’s wonder, and he immediately wanted to know how big the trout were. The grand lodge perched on the cliff simply took his breath away.

They had discussed their plan, which was to relax at the estancia for a number of days, then go by horseback to visit first the base camp of the DuPuente Patagonia Project. Walter needed to get an initial progress report to bring back to the board in California. They then intended to ride over the cordillera into the high forests to explore the higher part of the Preserve, and to meet Tio Perfecto.

Jaguar Girl, of course, had not told Walter about her confrontation with Mike Eye and wondered how she would handle the next meeting. She was also a little uneasy because she was used to living the truth in all ways, and being devious was not her style.

Marcos had consoled her, saying, “The truth, chica, is that you are attempting to save a large preserve that has importance for all the world, and you’ll probably change and improve the life of this DuPiente fellow in the process.”

Stephanie had heartily agreed.

When Tawny and Walter arrived at the great stone house, Granny Katy greeted them with a huge welcome full of hugs and happiness. Walter was mesmerized by the place and spent an enchanted week working in the gardens and orchards, fishing, reading from the library, drinking maté with the gauchos, and wandering by himself along the trails and through the meadows. He even tried a little polo and discovered a pleasant addiction to stroking the ball across the green, sun-kissed grass, while atop his galloping steed.

Every day he awoke to the Sun streaming onto his face as he lay on the balcony, high above the river, which had murmured to him her deep, bright dreams all the night through. Every day he felt a little better. Less and less was he experiencing fatigue or dizzy spells. More and more he was opening to the energy that abounded around him. He heard it in the winds, in the rivers, in the animal and insect calls. He felt it in the air, in his heart, and he saw it in his dreams and in the sunlight-stroked dust motes that coursed in happy congress all around.

He wondered, as he strolled beside a happy brook, if he was in love and guessed that he was. He contemplated what was happening with his disease. He felt at ease, finally, after decades of doing. He thought about calling his office and found he was repulsed by the idea of using the satellite telephone.

As the days wended their way through his life, wound in cocoons of well-being, Walter began to notice the poetry of flowers, the lovely knowing grace that skated across the eyes of animals, and the thin musical net woven by unseen birds through all the quarters of the day as they trilled, chatted, and chanted. His heart awakened to sense the first benedictory harbingers of a nurturing knowing and was not unlike a once dry desert—dry with ages of withered waiting—but steadily still, seeded with the spirit of undeniable life. For within the closed chambers of his heart, great with goodness, the simple sure love of Being—the birthright of all animals, waiting only its season—had begun its happy process of re-awakening.

On a day deep in summer, hidden in the vast keep of the Andean Cordillera walked a man, a son of God. As angels blew him kisses on the breezes, and the kingdom of nature displayed its diversity, royal with perfection, he felt a oneness that, fleet with mercurial teasing, touched his soul and then flew away, leaving in his breast a sweet longing. He stopped and looked up.

From eyes closed with glimpsed glory, tears streamed and glistened as they fell on the fertile fields of his heart, and there was finally watered the long dormant seeds of being. From a soul, once shackled and near shattered by dirges of doing was wrenched and then released a huge shuddering sound. Fingers outstretched toward the sun and forever beyond, his body shaking with the light-filled vibrations and an untellable knowing, this man sighed a small “Yesss” and then again long and loud with longing, “Oh, yesss.” At that moment he sensed a memory almost

from his unconscious – a fleeting feeling of lost love, though he dared not put a name to it ...Stephanie. Not yet.

Marcos came in from Buenos Aires that day and in the evening, at their maté fire, Jaguar Girl regarded Walter and announced that it was time to leave tomorrow for the high country. He agreed and reminded that he must first stop at the base camp to check in with Mike Eye.

In the morning, they saddled up their fleet mountain horses and loaded the saddlebags with the very few things they would need. In addition to the sleeping bags, they packed the maté pot, yerba, flour, salt, rice, plus a few potatoes, garlic, and onions. Tawny gave Walter a gaucho knife for the waistband of his jeans.

“Excuse me, my dear, but you don’t really expect us to survive on this meager fare?”

“Survive? Why, we’re going to live like the kings and queens we are!”

“Hmm, when I went on pack trips in Montana, we had a pack animal for every two dudes. Uh, what will we sleep on? What about a tent?”

“Our saddle blankets serve as sleeping mats underneath the bags. They’re quite comfortable and still allow an excellent communication with Mother Earth. As for a tent, well, it’s time for star lessons, and if it does rain, there are caves and huge trees. Also, I know how to make perfectly good shelters. And Walter, really, it’s only water. We’ll be fine. Trust me.”

“Okay, but what about fires?”

“What about them?”

“You have no matches, chica.”

“Walter, centuries ago the conquistadors and missionaries—who buried the native peoples with slaughter and salvation—had no matches, but they had fire. You are in the company of a fire-maker.”

“Okay, but we have no rods or hooks. How will we catch fish to bring to your fire? And what about meat?”

Jaguar Girl was becoming a little playful with the lack of trust shown by her visitor. “Well, Dupes, can you wade up a stream?” Walter nodded that he could. “Okay. I’ll make a basket trap of reeds and sticks, and we’ll just herd supper in. Meat? Would you believe a grass snare?” Again Walter nodded and suddenly felt a little hungry. “Che, Dupe, this is supposed to be a basic trip for reasons of closeness to nature, remember? And a visit with Tio Perfecto?”

“Well, I said I’d try, since you seemed to think it is so important.”

“What’s that bulge in your shirt pocket, Dupes?”

“That, my dear, is toilet paper. Hey. Get your naughty hands out of there.”

“Sorry. Not in the rules.”



“Rules? Come on, you’re scaring me here. I just ... how?”

“Silly man, haven’t you ever blown your nose with a leaf?”

“I wasn’t thinking of my nose. I was, well, you know ... uh.”

“Che, Dupe, we don’t need a roll of processed, chemically drenched dead trees. Can’t get much closer to nature than sitting in a stream.”

“Oh God, that’s way back to nature.”

“You bet your sweet behind it is.”

“Bottom line, J-girl.”

“Fun and fundamental, Mister Bridge.”

“I just hope you don’t make an ass of yourself.”

“Hurry up, Dupid. You’ll be left wiping up the rear.”

Away they rode through the early morning sunshine, yet unstirred by the winds, as a vast peace settled around them like the dust just raised by the passing patter of their horses that then drifted momentarily in their wake, and, finding no further action, lay back down. It was fresh. The memory of last-night’s moon melded with the sun’s fierce, brilliant love on their backs as they climbed. All around and below them now were hills and valleys shimmering under the timeless sway of the great shining sun, brightening the very air of this queendom.

Here a fleeting flash of wing against river cliff still shadowed, there a fall of water like a million jeweled tiaras loosed through nodding crowds of tiny flowers and glistening ferns. Then particles and waves of sunlight warming night-stilled wings. Then began little fanciful flights and scratchings, long muted shrieks, and the chattering of a million gossiping insects. Butterflies appeared, flirting in joyful mad congress around the grasses, making of themselves whirlwinds of wonder. The breezes gently stirred great volumes of air, little tendrils of breath presaging the energy to come. The freshened wind bathed riders and horses in a cleansing steady stream, which eddied behind them and tugged playfully at their scarves.

Throughout the morning, Tawny and Walter and Marcos climbed through a heavenly peace made complete by their silence. They were engulfed in this quiet liquid mirage, drunkenly drowning in light as the day moved along. Time was marked not by minutes but by pony steps and waterfall clocks. Condors circled, lizards scurried off, and quail exploded into flight, then vanished over the hill, like hand grenades filmed backward.

No clouds, mountains with white hats, the trail gently ascending and revealing river views that seemed to reflect a million suns. Trees painting the blue, blue sky a momentary green as the leaves danced their wind waltz. Listening to the cry of a hawk and smelling the mustard grasses and flowers was a little hint of heaven, as they traveled up and up toward the cordillera.

They reached the high mountains, then the divide, and beyond, the forest preserve. Walter felt a deep appreciation for each step taken by his mount, so confident as he moved from rock to rock,

with ears forward, attending perfectly to these surroundings. They lurched over streamlets that were cleared with effortless power and a slight headshake that produced the beautiful music of leather and silver. Such was the day spent in happy movement, not un-dreamlike, as they meandered steadily across the vast scape, shelving always up and always away from the lowlands, where dreams are also dreamt but never so wide awake, nor so untroubled.

That evening they had planned to camp at the DuPue project headquarters so that Walter could check in with Mike Eye and get an up-to-date progress report for his next board meeting. As they topped a ridge, they saw a dust cloud in the valley below and heard a disconcerting distant roar and screech whose noise and disturbance gained in fury as they descended into the valley.

Peace and happiness abandoned the trip at this point, replaced with worried glances and disquieting feelings of nervousness, of worry, of stress. The dust cloud drifted overhead, filtering the sun and coating their eyes with the film of industry, the dust of doing, as Mother Earth was gouged and dozed and ripped and trampled. In Tawny's eyes, tears were raised to wash away the news. Much had happened, and was happening, to these beloved lands and so quickly, so devastatingly.

She insisted on riding ahead, wanting to warn Mike Eye not to reveal their earlier meeting, leaving Marcos and Walter to follow. She also wanted to be onsite to observe Walter's reaction as he arrived. She urged her horse into a gallop toward the mechanical beasts. But when she arrived, her heart began to cry for the devastation she saw—earth dug, plowed, and mounded; a sad midget army of tree stumps, shredded with sap still welling up from butchered limbs. She dismounted and walked the last bit, then tied her horse to a fallen tree. She crept quickly up to Eye's trailer, where he was guzzling beer while talking into the radio.

"Hey, fatso, remember me?" she said as she hooked an arm around his neck from behind and pressed the point of her knife into his lowest chin.

"Oh, nuts, not the Amazon Robin Hood again. Ouch!"

"Listen, you overweight armadillo, your owner is coming, and if you let on that we've met, I'll carve you another grin. Got it?"

"Okay, okay. I understand, damnit. Now let me go. Please!"

"Not until you promise. Here I'll make it easier for you. If you tell him anything, I'll cut off your tongue and feed it to the 'crows,' as you call them."

"Awright, awright, yes. I get it awreddy." And she let him go just as Walter rode in.

"Hello Mike, I see you've met Tawny."

"I ... No, nossir, never seen her before, I mean, not 'til jez now. Anyway, hello, Mister DuPue. Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Mike. Mmm. What's this? Cut yourself shaving, no shaving cream?"

“Uh, no,” Eye stammered. “I mean, yes, I have shaving cream but still cut it. Can’t concentrate over the roar of the machines and chainsaws, plus I’m covered in dust.”

“Why are all these trees cut down? Was that in our plan?”

“We’re clearing out a place for the sawmill,” said Eye. “It also gets rid of some insects.”

“Mike, tell them stop all those motors. Now. This is *not* what I expected. I can’t stand it.”

“But, Mister DuPuate, we’re smack in the middle of a big op...”

“Shut ‘em down now Mike!”

Mike complied; a bit bewildered by the new authority he witnessed in his boss, and then returned to talk with Walter. A sort of silence settled over the battleground as bulldozers ground to a halt and chainsaws quit their whining rage, with just a faint ticking as the engines cooled and the scrape of a work boot as drivers climbed down from their rigs.

Walter was appalled at what was being done in the name of the company—in his name. For the first time in his life, he began to redefine “responsibility.” Already, from the perspective his new energy and health had lent him, he began to understand some things—suspicions of truth long hidden by expectations, traditions, and slogans. He needed time to sort it all out.

“Sir,” said Eye, “we’re running at \$6,500 an hour out here. Any idea how long it will be?”

“It’ll be indefinitely, Mike, at least until after I return from my trip to the high country.”

“Whoa, that’s over fifty grand a day, Mister DuPuate. Plus, these locals won’t wanna sit around for...”

“Set them to cleaning up this mess by hand, Mike. No more machines.”

“By hand?” That will take weeks.”

“Fine, and make sure no one does any hunting. Is that clear?”

“Sir, I think I’d better go with you to the high country. I need to see the border of our lease, and I can put Nellis in charge down here.” Mike Eye feared that his leader was under some sort of spell and hoped that by going with him, he could persuade Mr. Du Puate to get back into production and stop all this nonsense.

Walter said he could come, after setting Nellis and the men straight. He figured that he needed to see eye to eye with Eye and pronto. And it would be better to talk away from the scene of all that destruction. He instructed Eye to meet them the next day with a horse—up the creek, where he was going to make camp with Marcos and Jag.

As the dust began to drift back down to earth, through the gaze of the machine operators, the threesome rode to find a campsite undisturbed by the DuPuate machine. Gone was the sublime peace of the day, replaced by a bitter taste of dusty ashes, as Walter realized that he was responsible for this all-out attack and slaughter of nature. Doubt perched behind and rode with him to the campsite.

After they were settled and had a fire going with a little maté, Walter turned to the others and noted, “Well, it certainly is quite a contrast—your estancia and my war zone.”

“Night and day, Dupe. And it happened so fast. When I left there were none of these beastly machines around.”

Walter was lost in thought for a minute, then bit his lower lip a little, then spoke softly to Jaguar Girl: “I have an old friend, an amazing longtime friend; in fact, we were engaged once, and I am remembering talks we used to have about every man’s responsibility to the earth. Today is the first day I am able to really understand her viewpoint. You people must be outraged at what is happening here, even though it’s a day’s ride from your place.”

“A day, a month, it all hurts, Walter. Living as close to the earth as we do out here, it’s natural that we would feel the pain of our Mother, just as we would any human relative.”

Reflexively, Walter began to formulate his standard defense of his corporation. He tried to rationalize that it provided jobs and products for the world’s consumers, but he was distracted by the little campfire, the smoke, the flame, the unending, never-the-same babble of the brook. The slanting rays of the setting sun caressed the smoke and called it home.

Walter was pleasantly exhausted—the nice feeling afforded a body after a day’s exertion, and the yerba maté was working its wily ways on his brain and being, lending him an infusion of wonder and expectation. Into this, doubt dismantled and sidled over to snuggle down somewhere between contentment and corporate responsibility.

Magic, which had mantled every scape of the day, seemed to have fled at the “war zone,” then slowly seeped back in as evening ceded to night and stars began their silent symphonic passage.

“Whenever I consider that I have a problem in my life, I regard the stars,” said Marcos. “Here we are on a tiny globe spinning, tilting, orbiting, and the whole system is hurtling through endless space with very little chance of ever getting anywhere. It never, ever, ends.”

“That star is four light years away,” added Tawny. “It could explode today and we wouldn’t know about it, visually, for four years. “Your jet could fly for four years nonstop. Let’s see, Marcos, how much is 600 miles per hour times 24, times 365 times 4?”

“Gotta be around two million. No, wait a minute, Twenty million miles *más o menos*.”

“And how long would it take light to go that far?”

“Well at 186,000 miles a second, uh, around hundred, say, a hundred and five minutes.”

“I’ll have to get a faster jet, I guess.”

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*It’s a long trail we have chosen to tread, between life in the ethers and the living dead.*

*Our little hearts, shattered by the original separation, are broken anew, as we stumble over the shambles of guesses gone awry, of dreams askew, still, we go on.*

*Oh, yes, long as it may be, we wander on, fueled by a slow and steady fire, the light within, without which eternal dark wins.*

*It's the light of the spirit of the Oneness that has us all, and it beckons down time's trail with promises presaged by rainbows and flowers and breezes of great well-being that, when we remember, garland our way like bright whirlwinds of summer breezes, like puppy kisses.*

*The haze of WHY is pierced by intention, by the sun of purpose. The great winds of "I go on ... I go on," which, once stilled in the late night, when its denoted season holds sway, wake with each new dawn to offer us a divine impetus, Love.*

*The way is then again obscured, is lost in a fog brewed by separation and fear, as the awful freight of our fate weighs down on our tiny shoulders and we shudder, our souls shredded by doubt and forgetfulness.*

*But, hark, there are signposts in the dark mist lest we lose our way.*

*One is surely Love and the other is Humor.*

*We are complete within, though the journey inside is as limitless as the trail onward. And our baggage is heavy, fraught with concerns of our own fabrication. But see the humor in the creatures that share our domain and see the love, which surely speak the stars.*

*As we fall down, let laughter lift us up. If we descend down the depthless spiral of self-despair, let love light the stair, that we may steadily climb and that will lead us back to the brightness of our way.*

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The next day, as they were gathered at the fire and sharing a maté, they saw Mike Eye coming up the trail toward them on the horse they had left for him. And what a sight! He really was a funny fellow and was putting on quite the show as he attempted to dismount.

"Better try the other side, Mister Eye, your left side. That's what these horses are used to," offered Marcos, as he rose to help out.

"Is that why this beast was dancing around, then?" queried Mike, his eyes bulging.

"That, and I think you burnt him a little with your cigar when you fell forward."

"Oh. Sorry, horsey."

## Chapter 15

The group rode all that day, up and up, deeper into the fastness of the hills. Little needed to be said until they reached their camping spot and unsaddled.

Walter, Tawny, Marcos, and Mike Eye settled around the fire, a peaceful silence soothing their trail-weary bodies. Then into the penumbra of flicker light, like a second thought on waking, slid Tio Perfecto. Tawny jumped up and flung herself into his arms.

“I knew you would come, Unk. I really, really missed you.”

“Yes my girl, I missed you also. Hola, Marcos, que tal el polo?”

“Fine, Tio. Nice to see you again,” Marcos greeted as they hugged in joy.

Turning an eye on Mike, Tio said, “Ah, now, I have been observing this fine fellow from my ridge. Pretty busy, aren’t we?”

Mike stood up and the two contemplated one another, turning their faces to get a better view, until Tio smiled and opened his arms to welcome Eye in an embrace that left Mike sheepishly startled. Tio then turned to Walter, whom Tawny introduced.

“Tio Perfecto—Uncle Perfect—this is my new friend Walter. He’s the boss of this other guy.”

“Welcome, Walter. I like you already,” said Tio, as he opened up for another embrace.

“Hello, Tio. Yes Tawny told me that you are both funny and wise, but not necessarily in that order.”

Tio laughed. “Well, Walter, if I had to choose one I’d favor funny over wise, but then again you have to be wise to be truly funny, no?”

“Yes.” Walter was looking at Uncle Perfect, staring, as if he had a memory of Tio that he couldn’t quite locate. “Help me, please,” he asked. “Are you that fellow who made the movies and wrote those integrity books, then disappeared off the face of the earth—well, as far as anybody knew?”

“Ah, ‘tis me, dear sir, but I am no longer that man. I am now what you see before you, a simple guy living a happy life in nature, a bit dirty.”

“But you seem too young,” said Walter. That guy disappeared years ago and was already getting old.”

“Ah, it’s true, but down here life slows and can go any which way, even backward.”

Mike Eye was looking quite askance at this carefree fellow, this happy woodsman with the devilish twinkle in his eye. Perhaps he was in cahoots with this disturbed young woman who seemed to have Walter in her thrall. When Macanudo sat next to him, Eye disdainfully lifted a cheek and puffed a little fart in Tio’s direction.

Tio raised an eyebrow, wrinkled his nose, and smirked. Moments later, he stepped in front of Mr. Eye to get the maté pot, bent over, and blew a toxic blast right in the Eye of the beholder. Tawny began to laugh, then tried to stop, though little giggles leaked from the corners of her mouth. Marcos, amazed, didn’t know what to do, but when Mike Eye, who had initially recoiled and then removed his cigar to regard it, turning it this way and that, in feigned perplexity, Walter outright guffawed and soon a superb belly laugh was rolling around the entire circle.

That first night they talked of many energies and phenomena, sharing views and discussing Tio Perfecto's theories, as a full-ish, still waxing moon rode the space ways to her western bed. When they woke in the morning, Macanudo was not to be found, but that evening, after a day of easy rest and some happy exploration, he appeared at the fire almost as if many tendrils of smoke had coalesced and become him, sitting there on the log.

Walter was happy to see the old man and welcomed him warmly. He wanted to continue last night's discussion of reincarnation and of participating as a piece of the Story. "How do you know about reincarnation, that it's not just all a meaningless mess of happenstance or that's it's not all predestined?"

"I play what I call the 'God Game,' Walter, assuming that I am God and then building something fun out of my responsible creativity. And I know that it's a Love Story because I see the other species in harmony, very much in real life, knowing and in love with themselves. If that isn't enough, I look at this Earth, at the moon, and I see Love wherever my gaze rises or falls.

"You've heard of near-death experiences? Well, they all report a vision of glory and feelings of such magnitude that they simply cannot describe the wonder of it. This is a glimpse of, well ... *heaven* if you like. I call it the Ethereal Consultorium, where our evolving souls seek guidance for the next Earth experience and respite from the trials of incarnation. That's why I offered that Death is the greatest gift to life. Then there's Free Choice, and that combines with those Universal Laws to provide quite the schooling grounds. We evolve ... in love. Predestination just isn't a bit of loving fun. Who would choose that?"

"Good Point," said Walter.

"Great point," barked Mike Eye. "But to me it's a bunch of malarkey. You're born, you live for however long, a lotta shit happens along the way, and then you die. Period. End of story. End of Love Story. Nighty night."

"Perfectly valid point of view, Mister Eye. I espoused it myself for my formative decades, but as I became more conscious, it just didn't hold up anymore. For me. But, hey, *mi amigo*, that's the beauty of the Story we tell—lots of different tellers penning a multitude of chapters that will somehow fit together in the end. When I was young, I thoroughly explored the usual routes to happiness. That worked for a while, as I was very successful and the rewards were great. For me, the happiness was real enough, but the measuring sticks were all wrong. The higher I got, the more hollow – the more meaningless - the happiness seemed.

"So there came a point in my life where I had a decision to make. A fork appeared in my path, and my life was about to go one of these two ways, for surely there was no going back. I knew well where one path led because it was an extension of the one I'd been on for so long. It was heavily trafficked and looked worn out. Most of my friends were on it.

"I would miss many of those friends, but it was time for me to go another way, my own way. That path looked at once inviting and forbidding. It was fresh, colorful, bright. But in some places there was such a tangle of confusion that I had to cut my own way through. And so I did. I left one world behind in favor of another. I came here, and I have no plans to leave – never been happier or healthier.

“The good news for me is that I can’t lose. If I’m wrong and all this really is malarkey—no soul reincarnations, no Love Story, no evolution to a greater consciousness for all, that will be all right. You see? Like you, I will have been born, served my time, had the happening shit, and then passed away like just another breeze in these hills. BUT, I will have made myself happy, daily, by embracing simplicity, by not contributing more to poisoning this earthen garden, by sharing my little point of view for what it’s worth, and by loving; loving people, plants, animals, starry skies, the whole bit. That’s my Free Choice and I’m exercising it.”

“I like my free choice too,” snarled Eye, “as long as I’m free to make a different choice than you. Now, what about this Flow? I don’t get it and figure it’s just more malarkey.”

Tio nodded and smiled. “We talked about so many things yesterday, I’d quite forgotten. Well, the Flow is the greatest! There are some important components, chief among them Trust, Faith, and Release. I guess you have to believe in some Universal Laws as well.”

“Oh, cripes,” said Eye.

“This stuff isn’t easy to explain, but it works. And it’s fun. And sometimes magical. Hmm, here goes: Since this is a Love Story, we are invited to release the confining and conforming dictates of our conditioning, release as well our expectations, and enjoy what we attract into our lives via our energies.”

“Awright, I like where this is going. This means girls, right?” said Eye. Marcos and Jaguar Girl looked at one another and cracked up. Walter was just trying to follow Tio’s thinking.

Tio went on, “Since it’s a Love Story, it is, we then go on to Trust that what shows up is for our higher good, and we process it as such. Doesn’t mean it won’t be a ‘bad’ thing. I tell the kids we must conquer some stormy seas before we can say we’ve really learned to sail. Dealing with and overcoming obstacles helps us learn and grow in skills and confidence. And we maintain Faith that we’ll eventually understand the ‘good’ that Flow provides for our life. In fact, everything that happens, to everyone, everywhere in the world is Perfect.”

“Oh, for Chrissake. These kids believe the mush you’re servin’ up here, Mister Perfect?”

“Shh, Mike,” said Walter, eyeing his employee.

“And it’s *Uncle* Perfect,” added Tawny.” Tio means Uncle, not Mister.”

“Believe it or not,” Tio continued, “everything really is perfect. When you trust in that understanding, when you faithfully hold it in your heart, you can release resentment, blame, anger, remorse, even fear. And you can experience more appreciation, joy, wonder, celebration, growth, fun and Love. That’s when you are in the Flow, and it is amazing how totally smooth it can be.

“No matter what happens, you are in a state of grace, you’ve pre-tuned and hard-wired yourself to happy acceptance and, if not immediate appreciation, at least you will process it into appreciation. Of course, Death must be recognized and saluted for the honorary graduator and bearer to the Light that it is. Don’t ask me how the Flow works exactly. I just know it has to do with some Universal Laws and what I would, in my ignorance, call magic.”



“But, Tio, it’s all magic, isn’t it?” chimed in Tawny.

“I’d call it magic,” sparked Marcos

“I’d call it hogwash,” grunted Mike Eye.

Tawny and Marcos giggled together as they regarded Mike Eye, perhaps remembering his difficulty with the horse, his consternation at having to sleep on the ground, away from the comforts of his trailer. They supposed he was trying, and he really was quite funny. Imagine wearing a bow tie in the wilderness!

“So what, Mac? Look, I call you Mac, you call me Mike. We gotta deal?”

“Of course, Mike,” smiled Macanudo.

“So you think we should dump our stuff, like you did, run away, and go around in deerskins huggin’ trees? What about contributing to society? DuPuente Corporation creates thousands of jobs and puts hundreds of millions into ...”

“Whoa, Mike.” Tio stopped him right there. “I certainly don’t want everyone to do that. In the first place, my wants are for me except for wanting others to also use Free Choice with integrity. Actually, if I could share some life hints—make all this easier and more fun—I’d want that also. And, sure, I’d be happy to see people slow their consumptions, mainly because of the pollution, the poison, involved in production, transportation, and so on, but also because it doesn’t make them, ultimately, happy. Biped true happiness on the Earth, along with consideration for the other denizens on the ride, that’s what I’m for. And tree hugging? Ha. Try it, my friend. Just go out there, pick any old tree, gaze up at its majesty and wrap your loving arms around it. While you’re there, maybe thank it for the oxygen it supplies to our planet.

“As for contributing to society, before I left the states I started foundations, wrote books, and so on, but I didn’t feel like I really helped anybody all that much. So I came down here and started living alone in these mountains, and now I sing my little ditties and do my little dances, meditate on beauty, grace, wholeness, connectedness, oneness, and you know, maybe that helps the world and even the universe more than all my doing up North.”

“How’s that work?” queried Walter

“As thoughts are energy, the electrochemical process of the brain, they create. My thoughts before were socially conditioned and fear-based: aggression, greed, ego, competition, conforming, hoarding. Now I think about peace, appreciation, harmony, and love. And the energy of those thoughts goes wherever it goes – second law of thermodynamics ... it cannot be destroyed, so it is available, somehow.”

“Well that’s ridiculous,” interrupted Mike. “You look like a homeless person who parachuted into the Andes – a dumpster diver with no dumpsters around. I can see why you live alone.” Tio began laughing happily and everyone joined in, and, finally, so did Mike Eye.

Uncle Perfecto went on, “You’ve heard of the 100th Monkey Theory? That’s where the first monkey discovers that dropping a coconut on rocks is a good way to access the meat, then monkey two figures it out somewhere, and after a while the third monkey discovers it on some

other island. After the 100th monkey discovers the secret, suddenly and magically, every monkey everywhere acquires the understanding. Could work the same way with happy people. There's no reason we shouldn't be happy; no law against it. If social conditioning prevents you from being happy, get rid of it."

"Yeah," said Mike Eye, riled up now. "So what if they dropped a million homeless people down here in your wonderland, then dropped a million of them monkeys with their coconuts. How happy would you be then, Mister Perfecto, when the magic is wall-to-wall monkeys and homeless people, none of them willing to work like a regular person. And then they could airlift in a million CEOs, who also don't work. Now that would make me happy. I'd like a ringside seat to watch three million CEOs, monkeys, and homeless people going to war on one another over a bunch o' coconuts. Don't think it couldn't happen here."

Marcos and Tawny couldn't take it anymore. They had already burst out laughing but now they were on their backs with their legs pulled up toward their chin and arms clasped around their lower legs, laughing so hard they burst into tears, then rapturously rolling down the hill a ways.

Walter smiled and dropped his head in his hands. He wanted to change his life. He wanted to learn, laugh, and live in a bright new way. He wanted to leave conformity, expectations, and claustrophobia behind, but at the moment he simply didn't know what to make of any of these concepts. On the one hand they went against all his societal training, all the norms that he had schooled for and tended to believe in. And on the other hand he was beginning to re encounter childhood dreams of being – the deep sense of Oneness with the world, and he did not want to let go what he was experiencing ever since meeting Tawny and especially glimpsing the life she and her family lived in nature.

For his part, Mike Eye was pretty pleased with himself. He let his shoulders and neck relax, then closed his eyes. Then he thought about his workers and all the company money being pissed away while they all lollygagged around the campfire. "What about work and a work ethic where a man can take pride in ..."

"Well, what about it, Eye?" Tio Perfecto cut him off. That's part of too-long-lived patriarchal societies, of the now-toxic testosterone we see in pointless wars, in the absurd competition to get ahead, in the everyday aggression of some people. What's it gotten us, Mike, don't you see? We've plundered and poisoned not just the land and its wildlife but the oceans and rivers and streams to the point where repair is becoming impossible. The rain is acidic and can no longer be called a heavenly gift. We've brought our Mother to her knees, Mike, and for what? For what? For more machines, more gadgets, ... more profits. Always more profits. Sorry to have interrupted but that old saw about the work ethic, riles me up because, for one thing, it is murdering Mother Earth, and for another it is not making people happy or healthy, the way they so desperately lunge at chances to acquire things.

"Attics, garages, basements, closets, storage units and landfills burst with abundance, are we happy? Satisfied? Peaceful? Have we learned how to raise and truly be with our children, or have we left them to choke on the so-called fruits of instant gratification? How is the health of our minds and bodies, our souls, now that we have everything from video games to instant home delivery? Sorry, Mike, but the work ethic has become so twisted that it is now murderous. Oops,

forgot my own b.s. there and got into the negativity of judgment and worry, sorry – won't happen again. Perfectly imperfect old fart, me.”

For once, Mike Eye was speechless. Marcos and Jaguar Girl were beaming, relaxed and refreshed in the aura of Uncle Perfect. Walter looked both miserable and turned on, torn between two worlds.

The next morning, the party set off for an easy ride through the upper valleys to a little hot spring near the toothed cordillera with Chile. As they crested a ridge, they were greeted with a lovely vista down below in the soft sweep of a gentle meadow as tiny white dots punctuated the shimmer of green. A timorous thread of smoke tethered the deep blue sky to a copse of trees on the edge of the vale, a horse grazing, her foal running nearby. The meadow nestled up against a lake that stretched away toward a towering mountain, its slopes festooned with waterfalls gaily tumbling to the lake waters.

The group decided to go down to see if they could buy some meat for an *asado*, and put their horses forward down the rock-strewn slope. Tio leading the way with a smile on his face, and a glint in his eye.

On nearing the trees, they saw a small skin tent tied to various branches and a black-haired woman, garbed in a happy riot of colors, who was coming forward to greet them. She especially greeted Tio such that Marcos sensed that the old goat had been here before, and possibly did some bleating and rutting with her as well. And why not, conjectured Marcos, a little afternoon delight in the high mountains – good for the Viejo!

This exotic and strangely exciting woman proved to be a gypsy, who provided for herself by selling knittings from the wool of her “sheeps” and paintings of her natural surroundings. Walter was quite taken with both her simplicity and the strong essence she exuded. She immediately invited them to dismount and come to the fire, and then insisted they stay to eat. Following a modest but lovingly prepared and warmly received dinner, the gypsy read to the group this long excerpt mostly in the rustic English she had learned somewhere – could it have been from Macunudo?,- from her journal, as they had inquired into her life:

*“In the campfire, under the moon”*

*Then, at night, colorful lights as inflamed flashes over the faces calling to pray in a deep silence: under the stratum stars and as a cutting and silver sword, crowing in front of everybody, there was the great moon as a vigilant that, with a lot of care and vigor, would control each letter and each word that would come out from a human mouth.*

*During my life I had been always in harmony with Nature, following its laws, I let myself to guide. I don't know when I became a savage woman, so natural and spontaneous as Nature, with its own laws and freedoms. I'm free and responsible to my life. I am in a complete union and harmony with Mother Earth.*

*I lived in nomad way according my needings and my sheeps needings, depending on the climate and just as the food for them.*

*I made some of art too, and then I carry these paintings toward villages so as to sell them and gain enough money to my necessities, and that's all, a lot of grace and blessings.*

*A lake lost in the cordillera. No men roads that reach here. All is silence and natural music. A great scene with mountains, lakes and streams where my life go on. As natural music there is the wind, the waves, the rain, the birds, some fox, all the savage animals, my mares (she and her daughter), my sheeps ... my dear sheeps.*

*I can see the great extension of land that open for me as windows with long entrance of light.*

*One day I can't stop to see and look at the Nature: She was mine and I was for herself. Her strong was powerful and Her peace attracted me. It was my spirit calling me or perhaps Her spirit was in mine, making us only one. A perfect interchange as a fusion. I could fusion with trees, with the river, with the sheeps, with the rain and the sun. She and I were only one, each time nearest God, perhaps we are God. People say I became crazy, but I began to get in love, I turned into a witch, a mysterious woman, a lady who fall in passionately in love with the savage and natural life, in a mental brightness I had never had before. It's a different life, a special true life, alone with my soul.*

*My soul know what she wants; she can guide me. I'm here, in the silence, looking at the wildness, I make a job and I know how to live. A sacred life all in prayer.*

*In this place you feel protected, sure, at safe, not by your physical being but by your spirit. He feel protected, so the soul can make its way and mission. Lots of people, even in their entire lives, can't realized it, nor hear their souls hitting the door of their spirit that wish to flow and vibrate in God.*

*Here each day is perfect: your mind work at fullest precision in harmony with your complete being.*

*I have all that I need to live in a happy way. I love to spin the wool I shear from my sheeps and I love my art disconnected from every civilization.*

*I made myself responsible and exalted it with my paintings in a spiritual way. I unite perfectly my life in a clear-sightedness, so I can know that here I am because I choose to live as such, not as a lunatic will, but as a crazy woman getting in love by the life that I choose.*

*I could find, in the silence, another world for me, with highest and deepest wisdom. I had only to see the landscape in peace and here there were miles of thinkings rolling around me. I discovered the endless side of the life. I saw a way that we can't see or touch because it's spiritual and it's the way that each of our souls travel in. It is incredible it is marvelous and impossible to describe exactly with details.*

*Those who live in cities can't know and hear themselves deeply, they are very noisy and the vibrations interfere this communication with their spirits. They have their minds full with confuse or sick world thinkings. They want to buy, to consume and fill their selfishness each day, and they move away more and more from their essence because they move away from their souls.*

*Each human being is selfish. They think that if they nurture their selfish they'll be happiest, but then, they find themselves empties and they don't know why.*

*The soul isn't selfish. She doesn't want the things that the world offers. She wishes to stay in the world but not to be of the world. And we are souls in the life's road. This is the life's truth. This is to realize that you are a divine, spiritual and light being.*

*When you can access the knowledge that all is One and One is all, then you can identify the conscience that there are in your complete being (mind, body, soul and spirit).*

*It is the same with the animals, plants, and whatever being alive that lives on the planet—until a rock has conscience. Do you see that she works with the cold and the hot?*

*There are more riches in the spirit dimension that turn on the common life in magic life. It is a mysterious, almost sensual and very funny life, full of sensations and emotions that manifest themselves as happiness.*

*You have to be conscious and responsible of those emotions. I choose a life in which I feel myself as unique and special being, like an elect and sacred being. I can go to worldliness when I want. I have natural freedom.*

*When all your animal instinct and your natural rational being are joined and worked harmonious, there is an increase of your perceptions and you will be able to communicate with another animal kingdom because of your great sensibility.*

*Nature is full of feelings, she is waiting to be price and value, though she needn't human beings. She is so sensitive and kindness that she show her nobility with beautifulness and arrogance. She waits you see her, she is consciousness and spiritual, she is great.*

*People by the surroundings call me the gypsy woman, they see me as a witch, they don't understand me, and they don't understand a gypsy in love....*

*Somebody think that I'm arrogant, but that is the illusion that reflected my deprive, my indifference by the world things, your spirit raise more and more and that's true! I'm arrogant in spirit.*

*Someone think that I'm insane because of my loneliness, that's the illusion that reflected my unity in harmony with Nature. I'm alone and I'm not afraid. People in the cities are all together but they're full of fear and wars. Do they choose it?*

*I choose my life. Who can choose your life? Are there anybody in arrogant spirit this night?*

*Many times I asked myself how I reached to such election. It was a powerful ideal growing inside. It was conviction that slowly and in silence guided me endlessly. My basic ideals: the beauty, the peace and the sensibility for a real life. Then I learned to overcome the danger and fear that come from time to time when we are not so in love and happy with life. It is possible that sometimes we would be sad. Who knows? There are so many things to learn and so deeply its mysteries.*

*I'm a settler and inhabitant in this place by own election. I was born in a little village where my ideals and thinkings were ripening and its guide me till here.*

*I felt an enormous pleasure when I was a little child but I didn't know why I was losing its freshness as long as I was growing in society. This fact affected my emotions and sensibilities. I began to wonder myself why? What are happening here? Are we happy? And God?*

*After several years of searching the highest and the truth, I realized, under my paintbrush, that I could paint my life as my desires. Each place here, each land or puesto I paint is for me a little part of my heart that I put in the sky and then I describe in the picture the most internal I can offer. It is always the beginning. There is no limit or an end. It's only to live in a happy way in a full spirit.*

*Since I was very young I felt the human existence as a mystery and that everybody were a searching of that mystery and that the swiftness we would be able to process it, the easily we would understand it. Therefore you are true in your principles you are near God and your freedom. I named it, Spiritual Freedom.*

## Chapter 16

That night, camped on the upper beach of the lake, horses hobbled in the meadow, they delayed the lighting of the camp fire to attend the rise of the now full moon. As last light still lathed the West with reflections of the Great Pacific Ocean, sending silent sirens of fiery magentas to kindle the high clouds, as dark began her dominion and stars commenced their speaking, a soft glow—there, to the East was witnessed.

And in the great gather of dark, with nighthawks raiding the airs, the glow grew and grew, punctuating the new night with a word of wonder, until, yes, it peeked forth and finding all to its liking, summoned the rest, a huge round unblinking orb, doing its very job of offering mute reminders of mystery and magic to every onlooker—moonstruck now.

As they gazed, each one withdrew into his or her own quiet place where the incessant mechanizations of the mind are somewhat stilled.

Walter had been experiencing steadily improving energy ever since meeting Tawny, and especially during his week at her estancia. He had always been amused as she related Tio's theories and her own as well, but now that he'd experienced Tio's wisdom firsthand, he found that his very aliveness responded and wanted more.

Not that the old fellow was right for everyone, or about everything, but there was much of value to be gleaned from Tio that applied to this life. And Walter knew then that he wanted to live for himself, not for the others in the corporation, and certainly not for the corporation itself. But even these thoughts were stilled as the moon wrought her magic on his mind and he joined, fully, the beauty of being in the present moment. When finally the spell transmuted, they turned to light the fire, and there was Tio Perfecto.

“Hey, Mac, how’s it hangin’?” asked Mike Eye, who, despite himself, was feeling affection for this weirdo.

“Hangin’ just fine, Mike. Nice little show, eh?” The moon was shining forth now, picking out all of the valley waters as dance partners.

Walter was joyed to see Tio and exchanged hugs happily. He asked Tio to explain more fully how the purpose of life could be so simple: to grow and to enjoy.

“In the first place, Walter, that’s not a bit simple. At least getting there is not easy, especially when we go up against our conditioning. After all, it is our beloved parents and their peers who have taught us how to live. Don’t forget how young we all were and how eager we were to please, to be “good” – it was almost impossible to even begin to think of going against them and what they were all saying. Their teaching is about all the things we must do to be successful in various ways, and about how through our doing we learn and grow. And of course that is at least partly true. We do not stop doing.

“I’m busy all day long providing food and shelter and fun for myself. The difference is in the harm our doing engenders. I was involved in plenty of consumption, which is pollution, and am happy to balance that now with as much of a ‘no-harm’ life as possible. It’s a fine challenge for me and I don’t lack or miss anything. Growth is both easy and difficult. You see, we are growing back into simplicity, but we do so by having exploring complexity. Getting to, appreciating, accommodating, and loving simplicity, as do all the other kingdoms on Earth, is no picnic.

“Takes a lot of long lesson learning,” Tio continued, “and please don’t forget that as we evolve to ever greater consciousness, we will ever more be learning how to enjoy. Folks quail at the idea of living like animals, fearing a life of bored suffering. But no, quite the opposite. We are in God’s image and will be accessing great and glorious entertainments and an absence of suffering.

“It is essential to hold the understanding that this is a Love Story, conceived in love and maintained by love. As such we will choose to lessen, and then cease, the harm we currently choose to produce, and as such will we one by one, and then all, take our true place in this Earth kingdom, at which time our story will be told.”

“I don’t know if I agree with anything you say,” muttered Mike Eye. “I mean, not suffering? But I got to hand it to you, you got a good line.”

“Glad you like the line, Mike, because it’s you I’m fishing for,” said Tio, who then began to laugh and started a little dance that included pretending to cast a long line out toward the river. “What I understand and am offering in regards to that biggie, Death, and the choice of suffering involved, is that ... well, in the first place, some motive grief—some emotional charge—is perfectly fine. What I understand is that we are grieving not for the dead but for ourselves. On two levels: one, we feel abandoned, feel a missing of the graduated, heavened person. Well, that’s life and we’ll grow out of it, get over it, and move on. But often the main source of our grief is that we did not love the person well enough – did not tell the person that we loved them enough. You see, we haven’t learned how to love very well yet. That comes later down evolution’s trail, so we feel grief over opportunities to love we let slip away.

“Now, if we can witness and understand that, we can incorporate truer and better loving in our lives right now. Nice, real nice ... new energy exploration. Lovely, and, by the way, my theories are only guesswork, compiled through thought, readings, revelations, and both a meditative and an adventuresome life. Everyone will create his or her own special reality. Mine works well for me. I adapt my perceptions of incoming energy such that I am in a general state of appreciation. Does wonders for health and happiness. Getting a little preachy here.”

“I’m concerned about the ‘No Harm’ part, Tio,” said Walter. “I mean, Jesus, I just came from a hellish scene that I am responsible for, and there was pretty much nothing but harm. But I’ve always got the family and the shareholders to consider—quite the responsibility.”

Tawny stood and walked over to Walter, squatted down in front of him, looked into his face and said, “Maybe it’s time you are responsible for yourself, my sweet Dupe. Look how healthy you’ve gotten in just a couple of weeks. And think about what fun we’ve had. You’re a whole different person than when we met, and maybe this new person is the real you.”

“Oh, Tawny, now that I’ve seen this, felt this, been here with you all, been myself, really, out from under all the layers of my own conditioning, I don’t see how I could go back to my ‘old’ life.”

“Oh, cripes,” mumbled Eye.

“Walter,” chimed in Marcos, “you don’t have to give up your corporation. I’ve been studying something called Natural Capitalism. It’s a way for businesses to work responsibly with natural resources on a sustainable basis. They say it will be of even greater value as resource depletion continues, *and* it could even enhance the old bottom line.”

“Well, I could take a look at it right now, Marcos. Between the wonder I’ve felt here, the sheer happiness, and the promises I’ve made back home, like working another ten years as the corporation’s head, I’m a man in need of a clear alternative.”

“Well,” said Tio, “I can offer you a little meditation that often achieves clarity, from those guides we have inside us. Want to give it a go?”

“Vamos.”

**Ashley here; those of you who would like to delve into the experience of this suggestive meditation are invited to do so by asking a beloved to conduct the process by reading, slowly, and over time, the piece shared below. There is much made available here and doing the exercise yourself, and including others, could be a very powerful tool for movement and growth. Enjoy!**

“Okay, everyone get comfortable. Ready? Now close your eyes and relax. Focus on your breathing: inhale deeply through the nose and slowly release through the mouth. As you inhale, let energy and peace and love come in through the top of your head, what is called your ‘crown chakra.’ Feel that energy move down your spine, down, down, all the way to the bottoms of your feet. Relax. Okay, now breathe into the toes, ... now the feet—feel your breath fill these areas



with energies of love, hold it all there and then relax as you exhale out any pain or confusion of an ease you might feel – just let it go. Keep breathing ... now breathe into your lower legs, those mighty means for carrying you around – breathe in thankfulness. Next the knees, breathe in energy slowly, slowly, slowly, ... now the thighs, ... now breathe slowly and deeply into your genitals – hold the loving air there and feel it invigorating your essence ... breathe out any confusions or fear ... now deep breaths into your stomach ... feel the cleanse of fresh loving air and breathe out any poisons ... now bring air into your lower back, giving thanks for its every movement and strength ... your chest, fill your heart with fond love ..., ok, now your neck – let the incoming air grant it power and grace ..., now your head, breathe in new thoughts and relaxations and peace, breathe out worry – just let it go. Relax your body, your face and keep breathing deeply and slowly. Remember to breathe in all the children of love; peace, ease, contentment, happiness, health, well-being, appreciation, celebration – more love all the time. Breathe out the bad; worry, stress, doubt, hate, blame, guilt – less fear all the time, just let it go, let it go, let it ... go.

“Feel yourself sinking into the ground, your Mother. Feel her supporting you. Feel God’s loving energy from above as it fills every cell in your body. Feel the loving acceptance and support of Mother Earth. These are your parents and they love you as you are. Keep breathing slowly and consciously. This is your life force coming in. Feel your Self as loved, as valuable, as lovable. Feel yourself as a vessel for God and Earth to know themselves, even in all your imperfections. Remember to breathe out the negatives – just let them slowly go from all your insides; worry, confusion, guilt, blame etc...let ‘em go away, and replace them with those pieces of the love.

“Now, think of your human mother, get a picture of her in your heart and breathe into it. Forgive her any trespass she may have occasioned for you. She was doing her best and truly loved you as well as she could from her place in life. Feel that love and feel your love for her—just be with that love for a moment.

“Now let her recline and imagine that she has treasures in her body, under her skin. Think of your scratching away at her body to get those shiny things and to hoard them in your dark vaults or wear them to show off to others. She is bleeding some now, but still she smiles at you in her pain; yet you ignore her and continue your digging, your maiming. You light a noxious fire and the fumes engulf her. You spill acid on her as you get over excited to get more of the glittering things.

“Imagine her, now in real pain, still loving you though wishing, longing for you to slow down. She still allows you your aggression even though she is crying, so saddened that you hurt her and pay her no attention, no care, at all: her face, her heart, her soul. Feel her hurt, her sadness, and feel the pain of her wisdom, as she knows that even though you degrade her mightily, you are not happy. She so wants your happiness.

“Now ask yourself: do you want to so harm your Mother? Whatever answers, that’s your guide—could be a voice, could be an emotion. Just open and listen.

“Now, we’re going to leave our mother. She understands. She’ll be all right. Whisper to her that you love her. Say it. Say, ‘I love you, Mother.’”

Tio continued, “Let’s go to heaven, check out Big Dad, or whatever you want to use as a name: there he is, scratching his head. He is both enjoying himself and he’s concerned. Let’s see him on a cloud peering over at Chicago, say. Freeways bulging with traffic, headed both ways. He laughs at them as they rush about, storming the malls, stores, and offices, nervously roaring around with social smiles painted on their faces: the kids either left behind to stare at televisions or strapped in the back seats, sucking on poison. He is a bit amazed that the free choice he granted them is manifesting so strangely, almost ridiculously. He is amused, as was his purpose, but he also wonders where it is all going.

“As he peers down at the Middle East, he shakes his head and says to Himself, ‘Still at it, my, my.’ If we interview him, we find out that he is relaxed, knowing these are stages we must go through. But he is concerned to witness the all-out attack being waged on Mother Earth. He says, ‘I, of course, am not ultimately concerned for the state of either Mother Earth or my people, but they are just now between a hard place and a harder place. I don’t know how they will react to the energy they have attracted. We’ll have to see how this plays out. I gave the little devils Free Choice, see, and they’re mixing it up pretty good. It doesn’t seem like many of them have prepared for the balancing that’s coming.’

“Understand that God has a fine sense of humor. Understand we are all One image of God, as thought, going forth, and as we gain self-knowledge, His Love can be known. Know that He knows we will be fine and that enjoying the Creation (our creation, as we are co-creating via our thoughts and our enjoyment) is the key to this epic Earth Story.

“Now, let’s keep breathing, breathing into our cells, into our soul, and let’s open to communication with a loved one who has graduated into the heavenly ether. Forgive them any trespass and forgive yourself as well. Remember, we are all One on this journey from separation to Wholeness. Listen for the message. It will probably be one of humor, one of happy enlightened peace.

“These souls know that liberation waits, and in the finishing of life’s lessons, they know to not take ourselves seriously and may offer indications to relax. Let’s listen. They surely want to have us know that Death is anything but ‘bad’ as they share the Light with us.

“And now let’s relax into a knowing of the creative Love—call it It / Him / Her—anything you like: God, Prime Creator, Goddess, Buddha, Bill or just happenstance, call it malarkey if you like. There it is, snuggled up in your cells with peace, joy, and knowing. Breathe into that center of Love. Feel that you are a part of that Love, that with all your heart you want to share the Love. Feel the Oneness of the Creation—all part of the Love, all working together to co-create this Earth Story of Love. You are never, ever alone. Relax into the simplicity of that Love—so very simple, so very perfect.

“All right let’s look into the complexity, because it comes up. Our little minds bring it up for us, and there it is: a million questions and problems and concerns, and perhaps we are afraid of some things ... all right, all right.

“We can be with these challenges for a time. Let’s be with them and see them for what they are. There they are, claiming our attention, the ones that command negativity: jealousy, neediness, blame, remorse, pettiness, hate. We forgive ourselves their trespass on our desire to love and to

be loved. We are young and not yet educated to process these energies that arise as we grow. Know that we will be learning about Oneness.

“We already know the Golden Rule: ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’ And we know about Trust, Faith and The Flow. Know that as we learn about these energies, we will incorporate the feelings of Perfection, Freedom, and Fun into our lives, and our worries and fears will evaporate in the light of Love.

“Now see the energies that confuse: sufficiency, right use of occupation, ego, being right, the energies of fame and of power, and see them as birthed by the unnatural pressure of population. Of course we are invited to choose reactions from our mental bodies to balance this fearful pressure. Now forgive yourself and others—we know not what we do. Know that as we grow, we will learn not only that this temporary over populating is perfect, but also how to process the energies with ease, not dis-ease. Know also that as we join The Flow, the confusion will slip away. Relax into that state of ease as we know that Love and Perfection reign, even through our manifest challenges and opportunities for growth.

“And now the energy of self-knowledge ... relax, breathe deeply. Who are we, we ask ourselves? Really and truly, who are we? Are we destined to dream of problems, negativities? Is this life? Is it living? Do we choose these problems by default? Do we really so want all these bothersome and temporary possessions?

“Now relax into ease—no negativities. Relax. Let the self-knowledge energy remain, for this is the primal creative thought energy seeking to know Itself through you, through your piece of the Story of Love. Stay with it. Relax. Breathe. Be who you are, who you choose to be. Just be in ease. No worries. Only fun invitations to growth, to more fun, and to love.

“And now, there is the creative Love, eternal and patient, all loving and humorous. Everyone smile. Feel the happiness of your smile. Don’t be shy to show your smile, your love—we are learning to show our love, the Love, the heart’s yearning—ours to choose, ours to choose.

“Now let’s go deeper. Let’s go within ourselves, within our cells, into the energy. Remember to breathe. Slowly. Deeply. Breathe into your minds and let all thoughts escape with your out breath. Now breathe into your heart, into the great beating heat of your loving heart.

“Just like this campfire reaches out with its tiny flames to the light and the Love of the sun, so do our hearts beat with the rhythm of the stars, the beat of Love. Feel your blood as it courses with the freshened spark of life to all parts of your body. Feel the timelessness of the river within as it nourishes you with love. And now look into the vast interiors of your cells. Feel the energy there in the huge matter-less spaces between the electrons and protons that are dizzily dancing and that constitute you. Look for yourself there, deep in the space, riding the neutrons. There you are, a spark of Love. Look closer, go deeper, and you disappear as the electron dissolves into greater spaces, vibrations, the humming frequency of Love. You see that you are made up of happily contained light. There is no matter anywhere. You are the spark, the light. You are the Love.

“Be with that now in the crisp and utter silence of fathomlessness. You are Love. You are a child of Love playing a game with your Mother Earth and Father God. You are unique. There’s never before been anything like you and there never will be again.

“You are invited to dance out Your Song. Go ahead and dance. Dance deep in your cells with the untouchable Light. You are cherished and beloved no matter what you choose to do. You are part of a grand, epic Love Story.

“Now find yourself in these depths—there you are. See yourself as a baby, as a toddler, as a child falling, crying, giggling in delight at your father’s tosses and tickles, nestling in total security at your mother’s breast. Be with the child that is you. Know that you are loved and that self-knowledge is a gift of that love.

“Be with yourself—ask you any questions. Cherish you, forgive you, and consult with the lovingness of you as to the choices you will make. Just be in love.”

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And thus high in the Andes, in a deep valley beside a lake and under the gaze of a full moon, was a little magic wrought as five human beings shared some moments out of time, journeying within to embrace therein the majestic Oneness, the Divine Source of Being.

These are special occasions as yet un-experienced by the many as they hurl themselves headlong at life’s trials, tribulations, and at the glittering baubles arrayed along the way in semi-satanic splendor, much as the Sirens who summon storm-weary sailors onto the dire rocks of doing. As such are they not accustomed to the celebration of life’s majesty, nor do they relate to the supreme Oneness that is the Source of life. Consequently, in their innocence and ignorance, they are apt to choose an oft-repeated chapter of the story, plagiarized from parents or peers.

But other avenues are available, as we are invited to choose to release our grip on things and conventions, as we find within the happy secret of simplicity and salute therein the self.

Into the night’s precious fabric, the Jaguar called, her roar rending the darkness with an aural light that caressed each soul in a blessing of wildness.

The meditation over, the voyagers came back, one by one, from their journeys within. They stretched and sat and stared into the little fire, the one Tio had maintained without and the one he had nurtured within, marveling at what they had experienced.

People.

There are songs we sing to ourselves; songs sung as night gathers day,

Morning songs as we do what we do, songs to ourselves.

Listen to the music playing inside your head.

What do you hear, what do you feel?

Could life be a singing then as we dance our little dances?

And could those songs be lightened by love

And less freighted with fear?

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Macanudo was nowhere to be seen—he'd slipped away like a dream upon waking. For a while no one spoke, as they continued to process their journey and its message, and began planning for lives that would be substantially, or subtly, altered.

Walter wandered off, head and heart aswirl, gazing at the Majesty of nature around him. His feet led him to a happy waterfall, where he found Tio Perfecto heating water on a little squaw fire in a battered old blackened pot for his maté.

“Mind if I join you?”

“*Por favor,*” said Tio, “it will be my pleasure. Are you enjoying your time here, sleeping well?”

“Astoundingly. I remember sleeping outside when I was younger, and how restful it was to feel the earth beneath me and see the stars above. But what I wanted to talk about, and now, thanks to that amazing trip you just sent me on...even more so – well, I am now sobered like never before as I see up close what companies like mine, including mine, have done to earth's ecosystems. I am the head of my family corporation, which includes many companies. I was taught that my responsibility was to always increase profits and, you know, the devil take the hindmost. I have a new vision now, though, one that you have led me to. Degradation and destruction in the service of increased production and consumption will not be the DuPiente legacy. I will see to that.

“But how was all this shown to you, Tio? Was there some Uncle Perfect who pointed *you* in the right direction? I know you were a great success in the States. Did you just up and leave it all behind one day?”

“Well, Walter, there was no Uncle Perfect for me, but, yes, it did happen interestingly. I saw what was happening up there and my role in it—playing all the traditional games, consuming to wild excess because I could afford it, I thought it made me feel good, and I knew it attracted *friends*, well, at least a lot of people who wanted something from me. But I did wake up one day and saw in the mirror what stress had done to me, what I had done to myself really. And when I looked outside myself at what we had done to each other, and what we had done to the earth and the waters, soils and airs that sustain us, and what we had set up for ourselves as rewards; not peace and love, but trophies and even trophy wives and the like, I saw that I was part of a crumbling, pollutive and even criminal empire, one of many, and I chose to leave. I chose to live the rest of my life in peace and simplicity. Darn glad I escaped, too!”

“Great. Ever feel any ... well, not guilt, but regret that you didn't stay and fight for change? I'm the head of the corporation, so I can't just up and leave. I have a lot of people to take care of in addition to a lot of responsibilities. I know I want to go back and effect all kinds of change, but I'm not sure how or where to start.”

“Well, I did keep my hand in, in one way. Before I took off I invented something called P.O.W.E.R., which stands for Presiders’ One World Earth Rescue. I put my remaining funds, after having rather precipitously given a lot away, into a little team of folk scattered about the globe who are studying the concept and will be coming out soon with the first book.”

“Earth rescue? Presiders? Care to expand?” asked Walter.

“Sure. The concept is that we write a book about One World governance, wherein all nations on Earth join together to co-govern with Earth care, as in environmental consciousness, at the helm of all concerted efforts, along with true well fare for all the people and the other denizens on Earth. This would entail de-militarization worldwide, along with promotion of all the energy-saving methods—solar, wind, better insulation, better fleet mileage—but would expand to include guidelines on building, for example; no more demolition, but rather preservation. Limits on new vehicle production, as well as ways to include systems of sharing so not everyone needs to own everything, and so on ... on and on.”

“That sounds fantastic,” noted Walter, “de-militarization and all that, but you will never get everyone to agree. There are ancient hatreds at work in most of those warring nations. The leaders ... okay, the presiders, loathe each other, some of them, so how would you get started?”

“Here’s how it works, Walter. First, after all this research, they will publish a book detailing how, with One World governance, there will be abundant benefits for everyone—better lives to be lived. The immense, obscene military budgets will be applied to education, welfare, medical care, making a huge difference in the lives of ... well, of everyone, because there will be much less pollution, and starvation will be taken care of—fresh water, not to mention the lightening of the energy field when war becomes archaic. Nothing is more pathetically horrible than war. And, think about it – after sharing four years of study and of life – playing together, talking together, they will all be on the same page via their studies and will not want to even consider war any more. Their classmates would see to that. It is unbelievable, ghastly really, that war is still being practiced and condoned.”

“Don’t I know it—absurd, male posturing b.s.!”

“Anyway, my little foundation will subsidize the book, which will go out in every language as a paper book and an ebook so that it will be disseminated to everyone. Every nation is invited to send four of their best and brightest to a campus for a four-year course in earth governance. They then will return home to stand for election—the electorate having being educated via yearly books to the workability of these students joining in earth-rescue governmental efforts, so that the entire culture of earth can begin to change into a progressive, conscious, co-creative manifestation of care, peace, health, and love.”

“Wow, Mister Perfecto, that’s a wildly ambitious concept. Can you flesh it out for me a bit, because I am getting goosebumps here?”

“Well, sure. With the proceeds from the book sales, we will bring all the leading lights in various courses on earth governance, both as professors and then as guest lecturers, to our campus to expose the students to the best thinking available. We have already identified the campus: two Patagonian army bases a half day south of here—think officer houses, bunkhouses, gymnasiums, playing fields, lecture halls, rolling hills and old oak trees, all scattered on the hills outside the two towns only a half-hour drive apart. The Argentine government will surely become invested, not just for the lease income but even more for the worldwide prominence it will provide.

“And this will go on and on, Walter, as the four elected presidors will serve only one term, to minimize self-interest, and the university of earth rescue will continually provide new leaders equipped with the latest means for welfare. This will work because these individuals from all over the world will be living, playing, studying, and planning together, so they will not only be guaranteed election by the educated electorate, who will be seeing what an amazing new world it will be and that they will be able to live in peace and plenty, everyone will bury old hatchets and eagerly dig up scepters of reason and implementation of what they learned. Excuse me, I get going so fast, and there is so much to this, that I’m afraid I don’t put it very well.”

Walter was mesmerized. “Not at all, Tio. This is fascinating. It’s a bit like the U.N. or the Olympics in some way but more complete and with incredible, enduring potential. When will you launch the first books?”

“Ah, Walter. Like so many projects these days, however well thought out and begun, this one needs more funding to ensure we can create, produce, and distribute our best work. The funds I provided are running low, so my team have some feelers out. We are eager to get this going, but we want to do it right.”

“What if I put in a grant of twenty-five million dollars for that purpose, from the company? Would that get the job done?”

Tio, sitting with his arms folded around his legs, rocked backward as if blown by a sudden wind. “Whoa there, Walter. That would be phenomenal, but it’s more than we need. Of course, with that as a foundation, we could do a heck of a promotional campaign. And we could make the initial lease payment to the Argies. Are you absolutely serious? I mean, really?”

“I am, and I could have even more in reserve if necessary. It’s high time my company puts something into healing the earth after all the money we’ve taken out by plundering its resources. I have a lot of changes in mind for when I get back. This will be the first.”

“Fantastic, Walter. I congratulate you. You really are a Bridge, a *Puente*, such a fitting meaning for your family name. I always felt that the money energy would appear when the time was right. Nice to find it here in these magic mountains with you, Walter. And che, do you see how we are seeing that when energies align, Flow is found and, when embraced, anything can happen, even changing entire cultures – whole civilizations?”

Nothing more needed to be said. Both men were beaming, lost in their little worlds of marvel.

## Chapter 17

The next morning around the maté fire, Walter joined Marcos and Tawny. He was aflame with energy, having slept deeply and encountered dreams of loveliness, dreams of mysterious beauty. Marcos excused himself to check on the horses. Walter turned to Tawny and without preamble blurted out that he felt so alive and figured it had to be because he loved her for all that she had brought to the table of his life, for opening the space for him to remember how life could be.

“Of course you do, super Dupe, and I love you too. I’m as excited as Tio to start working with you on projects for real healing of our little planet.”

“But I mean, I was thinking I just wanted to be with you, to run away together and be in love with you, and...”

"Oh, Walter. You're in love all right, but not with me. And I'm not going to run anywhere. I'm home. Dupe, you've always been in love with just one girl, just one woman. She's back in the States and we've begun working with her also."

“What? You mean Stephanie? That ended ten years ago, and not well. I broke her heart and have felt guilty about it ever since. I mean, I had that disease I told you about up in the states, the shaking, the cane – all of that, and the family doctor convinced me that I could not run both the corporation and manage a family – impose my condition on a wife and maybe have genetically impaired kids...and then my grandfather insisted that I not tell anyone about the disease for financial reasons – the stock price etc, so I had to invent the lie that we were breaking up because of her environmental activism. It almost killed me, and it devastated her, I mean we have maintained a minimal contact, but I can't imagine she would still love me, or take me back.”

But Tawny, of course, knew better and told Walter about her time with Steph in San Francisco.

Walter felt how much he had always loved Stephanie and began to sob gently as he was overwhelmed by the immensity of what he was discovering. He felt he'd been forced and fooled into leaving her. He began to see his family legacy as more a disease than a gift. Accepting the full responsibility of managing this gift/curse meant the exclusion of almost everything else from his life, including, especially, the fullness of a relationship with a woman he had always loved.

As Walter began excitedly to make departure plans, Marcos, who had wandered off to leave him to his ruminations, returned to the fire. He told Walter he had seen Mr. Eye hugging a tree. “No way!” said Walter, picturing Mike hugging a tree, and began to laugh.

“He's trying it out,” said Marcos. “Really, you should see him with that big belly and his cigar bumping into the bark.” Walter could hardly stop chuckling. And he could hardly believe how great he felt, how much lighter than he was used to. He began to talk with Marcos again about Natural Capitalism and resource sustainability, and Marcos then revealed yet another surprise for him. Like Tawny, he had met and conferred with Stephanie in San Francisco, because she had



helped co-develop many of the fundamental concepts of Natural Capitalism. Of course she had, thought Walter. Everyone but me has been awake – well, me and Mike Eye.

Walter was even more inspired now and could hardly wait to return to Stephanie and see if she still had feelings for him as Tawny had assured him. With a rejuvenated sense of self, purpose, and invigorated desire for Stephanie that was a vast yearning in his heart, Walter imagined a whole new life opening up for him. But first he needed to talk about his appreciation and love for his new family. “I have no words to adequately express my gratitude for all you have given me. I know that I can re-create my business plan and join Tio Perfecto in his project to educate leaders for a new global, conscious governance. And I know it is time for me to try to reconnect with Stephanie and the love I abandoned in my youth. You have given me such a tremendous gift.”

As they talked, Walter fine-tuned his new game plan. Honestly, despite Tawny’s encouragement, he had no real idea what Stephanie thought of him after all this time. If she had given up on him long ago, he wouldn’t blame her. He had little real idea what her personal situation was, other than Tawny telling him she wasn’t married. Would she want to reconnect just because Walter was now in cahoots with Marcos, Tawny, and Tio Perfecto? Was it possible that she still loved him as he now knew he loved her with a remembered intensity – a longing? He couldn’t know, really, until he saw her, but his being was alive with re-discovered dreams and a bright shining smile was newly upon his soul.

What Walter did know now was that he had never stopped loving Stephanie, and he came to see that he’d freed her from what would have been a miserable marriage to the ill head of a corporation that stood then for everything she was against. In fact, her relationship with Walter, and the coldness with which she’d been treated by the family, probably clarified Stephanie’s ethical stance in relation to what she saw as corporate plunder.

In his mind’s imagining, Walter saw himself, this rejuvenated man, running away with Steph, first for some sailing and then to an estancia of their own. And then stepped in the remnants of responsibility as he remembered that that would violate his promise of a commitment to ten years more of stewardship of the corporation. He talked his conflict over with Marcos, who steered him toward the idea of partnering with Steph to change the company to a responsible entity, along the lines of Natural Capitalism. Together they would manage the assets to provide more work, less mechanical dependency, and a sustainable return for the shareholders and the world. Trees would be planted, protected, not bulldozed.

Yes, they would go sailing and then, refreshed and ready, would take on the reformation of the company for those ten years. Then they could see about that estancia. Walter had never felt so alive, so purposeful, so eager to begin his life anew.

As endings are really just new beginnings, like old Tio Perfecto said, the energy of these sharings, these little words, this book goes on and on, and none can say, now, who or what it may touch.

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Walter, a son of God (we are all children of the Creative Energy), has begun a great healing and is a new man. He has opened to find the man/child within. Blessed by the energy of Tawny, of her self-sufficient family, of the wilds of Patagonia, of Tio Perfecto, and of the revealed

remembering of Stephanie's steadfast love, Walter chose to internalize those blessings and cure himself, and his responsibility – the corporation. He chose to care. When he caught himself wondering about all the “lost” years, he quickly applied his novel concept of choice to tweak his perception to appreciation. As perfection reigns perfectly, he could see that those years brought him to a new “here,” a place of great teeming excitement with life, knowings about relationship, and true responsibility. He knew that the contrast provided during those years would be the source of much light as his enlightenment began her gentle ministrations on his mind.

Walter felt like a teenager, yearning to get to the first telephone so he could call Steph and tell her all about his renaissance, and that he loved her still and was on his way to be with her.

Two days later, after riding back to the estancia and lovingly hugging everyone, he rode off to that first telephone, and with much anticipation called Steph. Her immediate and emotion-filled response completely assured him that she was as much in love with him as he was with her. This filled his heart with a renewed longing to return to the States and embrace the only woman he had ever loved.

He contacted his corporate office to inform them of his return. He told his secretary not to send the jet. He would catch the overnight bus to Buenos Aires and return home flying coach on a commercial airline. He smiled at hearing the surprise in her voice, knowing that the comfort and pleasure of flying in the Gulfstream would be more than made up with the happy feeling of lessening his individual environmental footprint—a concept he had not previously considered.

Throughout most of the flight home, Walter felt his heart surge with warmth as he anticipated his reunion with Steph. He felt his sexual desire awake and let out a moan that turned the head of the woman next to him. Walter laughed and apologized for alarming her. But he knew again that he could love and be loved, and that knowing sent a wave of warm energy from his head to his toes. He recognized new changes in his thought patterns and relaxed as he observed them: no judgment, no fear, just a deepening curiosity. When his flight arrived, Walter arose and felt like he was walking on air. That wonderful feeling of such detached lightness caused him to twice be bumped by hurrying passengers on the walkway from the plane, but he was not bothered. He had abandoned his cane, along with his obsessive corporate concerns, before he left Patagonia, and getting bumped and shoved by hurrying humans was, in a strange way, almost a pleasure for him.

Walter did not have to wait long to see Stephanie. She was there, waiting for him. She was even more beautiful than he remembered, having come fully into her own in the intervening years. Tears welled up as their eyes locked, their breath harmonized, and they fell into each other's embrace, their hands gently reached for the other's cheek, then their lips touched softly as time dissolved.

Walter whispered to her, “I've missed you so. I've loved you so. I love you so. As I look back on us, I realize the biggest mistake of my life was leaving you. I lied to you darling, they made me lie. I was sick, but now I am more than well. I feel so alive. Wait until I tell you about what WE are going to do with the company. So much has happened. I've had the most amazing experience. I see now that I made the choice I was conditioned to make and not the choice of my true self. I've been shown great lessons Steph. I see now what you so passionately embraced while we were planning our future. What you so passionately embrace today.”

Stephanie felt her desire for Walter as she listened to this love, her love. She finally found her voice, “Dupe, I’ve held you close to my heart all this time and my love for you is as passionate as it was the day we parted ways. I forgave you the moment it happened. Yes, I grieved for the loss of our dreams, our unborn children, I longed for your warmth. I always held a small hope we’d reunite and when I met Tawny and Marcos that hope was re-ignited.”

As this dream unfolded, Stephanie shared, “Walter, I love you so much. I want to hear all that you have come to know and I want you to know all that I have co-created to correct the imbalance between man and Mother Earth.”

Walter, smiling, said, “Steph, when I experienced my transformative awareness, it became clear to me that we are meant to be together and to work together ... it’s always better when we’re together. I must tell you about this thing called ‘flow’ – we are in it now.”

“I know it, I feel it.”

She continued, “I have dedicated my love to creating an internationally recognized alliance that moves to correct the disharmony between man and Mother Earth. There is alchemy with the combination of all our resources. When I met Tawny, she said I reminded her of her jaguar. We had an instant connection. She inspired and in some ways co-created the [Jaguar Ambassadors Gang \(JAG\)](#). We recognize the importance of bringing forth the wisdom of the feminine, that part of our psyche that nurtures, listens, is guided by intuition, feeling, empathy, and creates a vision fueled by Love.

“We express our passion on the [JAG](#) website and describe our Extinction Parades. I organize volunteers across the country that coordinate Extinction Parades to engage parents, children, and teachers to reveal the devastation of all the species that our ego-based culture destroys. These parades are fun and alive! They create community awareness about how to stop consuming the nonessential products that so clutter our lives and need to be lessened. These parades inspire everyone to reunite with their love for our Mother Earth. It is beginning to change the way individuals make decisions. These choices directly relate to whether one’s behavior supports perpetuating life on Mother Earth or contributes to the decimation of our natural world. Raising this consciousness about our massive consumerism is the perfect foundation for what comes next, Ego-Revolution. It is time to make a difference and we can.”

“Extinction Parades? Ego-Revolution? These fit with what I learned from Tio Perfecto about Natural Capitalism. You’re right, my love, there is alchemy here. You have lived your responsibility to the earth. I join you now, because now I understand.”

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## Afterword

Blessed readers, I want to share, here, the invitation to deepen the interaction between us, from third to first person. You see, Walter was a victim, and his life has been warped with enlightenments and evolutions and now he is a true hero and there are extreme emotions being experienced as he frees himself from the confines of his conditioning to return to Love.

Many parents and guardians impose on their “charges” a great resounding echo from their conditioning. Why? Well, one answer is to keep it all going in a misguided attempt to validate their failures, because they don’t know any better. Walter, a “good” boy but terribly uneducated about anything beyond business, got sick. We have treatments, but no cure, for nervous disorders like Parkinson’s. These diseases are neither easily diagnosed nor very well understood. Walter’s illness may prove to be just a physical manifestation of his lack of ease after love was foregone to attend to the conformative and murderous responsibility imposed on him.

Parents, please take note, for when we try to enforce our ideas on our precious offspring, who have come here with their own programs, fresh from God, we may be visiting a tragedy upon all concerned. At best we are wasting opportunities to love, and turning our best beloveds into other.

Walter has gained some enlightenment and seeks now Love and Freedom. In the movie, this is all surrounded by music ... his revelations, his return to Stephanie, the restructuring of the company, and emotions run wild. Here, we need to build a little picture of Love’s light being released to shine on the Truth to witness the joy that has been liberated in Walter’s being. But then, what is the Truth? As Free Choice is paramount for us all, we will each—via our choices of Attitude, crafted by Perfection—be establishing our own snowflake, fingerprint realities.

If you’ve reached this point in these words, you will know that I am anti-consumerism. My truth embraces a simplicity, but one arrived at via a privileged super highway to, and through, a glittering complexity. I have a heartfelt desire to offer shortcuts to any who would find an agreement, for I truly embrace the lovely grace, and the fun, therein.

I am also well aware of the depths of conditioning we have all experienced and of the lethal hold they have on our mentalities.

So this book, the Jaguar Girl Project—which prays you join our energy through the website—and the movie, offer avenues for new ways of Being, new ways of looking at how we choose to experience life. I know. I know that obstacles abound as I search deep, and then even more deeply, for words to express what I feel here. For I have but a glimpse, call it a guess, of the grace-full offerings encapsulated in this Change. What I can say, and do offer here, is that they are well worth attending.

The challenge? To peer deeply into the very structure of our thought and value structures, to truly witness our Story as we do, as we be, as we enjoy, as we grow ... and as we love. Our diseases, pains, confusions, hatreds are sourced from Fear, the opposite of Love. Fear, an immediate offspring of dis-education, melts and slinks away under the light of Truth and Love.

It is not easy, not a rowboat pond in the park, and many choose to “rest” in denial and simply do what they are told.

Just think about it. I am sometimes overmuch with this thinking and sometimes feel blocked and impotent. I pray that you, as you open, will send energy to us all.

Back to Fun, as all life is an adventure, one that never ends, even as one experiences Death, perhaps Choice could be spurred to mount the steed of simplicity, to take a little stroll through self-sufficiency, maybe toward self-knowledge and surely, into Love. And why not?

The other ways have been pretty thoroughly explored over time and have adherents aplenty. The results are in: state of the world, numbers and health of the dominant species, etc. As towers topple and ecosystems perish, the invitation acquires a certain stridency... what's next? As you proceed on your ride, remember to pack along Faith, Fun, humor, release and Love. Enjoy.

As sudden summer storms wash away the faint and fading traces of spring's trespass, so does reality intrude to geld my best guesses as to how to present these feelings which so sometimes tiptoe across my heart fields. Would that I could more fully express these "bleatings" (I am liking this new word from my editor), so that then you could come back with amped up revelations which would carry us a little further down the old line.

You see the agreed upon "reality" is such a solid challenge to the gifts and wonderments available as life is led, that it almost always gains attention of wayward wanderers and wafts them away from realms of revelations which are then but glimpsed in dreams and so are easily discounted as rantings and raves. But I know, somewhere deep in my psyche – in my little being – that these glances are the gifts waiting bestowment as time's sway unfolds, as true realities take the floor and shoo away these temporary gildings and geldings which so distract, dis ease, and even annihilate and annoy. There is a magic lot out there, people, it has owned me and will not let me, completely, go. That many of you will open only partially is a given – even it is a perfect thing in that most do not find that choice as they go along, as they do what they are told, so persuasively and invadingly, by all who have gone before.

But, look – there in the back row – what makes you remember the enticing elopements offered by energies that do not conform, that beckon from afar, promising peace and plenty within the confines of today's strictures? Hold. Why? Because it happens that, when the way is chosen such that positivity pounces first on all that occurs, then those energies so oft obfuscated by the demands of rude reality, get to take the floor, and – once enjoined – can waltz one to the far side of living, of Love.

Who, then, am I, and with what pretended authority do I issue these heady invites? Good question, madam. Not only was I never a "been", and therefore not even a "has been", nor a "wannabe been," I am shy of attention and these offerings come with self dictated caveats which go up against the nudgings of my muses, and maybe the angels, that deem that I "owe" something back for all that has been presented me. OK, fine. Here they are, then.

To address the question, I would say that if, indeed, there is anything of value for others herein it would be inspired from my decades of living in deep Nature. You know there are myriad shenanigans operative in the "civilized" world – considerations and worries abound and incentivize all manner of bizarre and self-destructive behavior; ego games, jealousies, betrayals, back biting, infidelities, and lies to name but a few. This is a funny way to "enjoy" one's incarnation and makes the experience more of an endurance test. It need not be so. That is a choice, like all trails are chosen – all experience. It is, at the same time, not easy and also as easy as simply choosing it.

Right, freaking Tio damn Perfecto with his endless bleats can be seen to wreck a good story line and can be discarded summarily, sure. Or. Or, if life is lacking certain somethings for you, his bleats could be attended, opened to, digested and given a little space – a tiny try. Who knows what might happen then. For me what happened, and continues to happen, is that between and

atwixt all that life brings on, there is a funny little glow dominant in my going. I would share the whys and hows if able, if receptivity could be engaged, turned on, and fired up. Your call.

Poorly said – acknowledged, but the invitation is to enjoy the sexy story, the novella – sure, but to sample the sophomoric sharings in the hopes that there is value, and alternative action, hidden therein. There is – for me. Good luck. ETC. Thanks for reading.

We take a glimpse at Walter as he dissolves into the arms of Stephanie, and they lock into what seems an endless embrace. There they are, once again energetically discussing their life together: the sailing trip and so on, interspersed with plans for the corporation to begin its transformation into a responsible entity via Earth attention and a natural sustainability.

Walter and Stephanie’s love is magnified by the course of events that led them back to one another, and while there are no guarantees in this living (who would want that?), there are twin heart-loads of intention to pick the fruits of Creation together.

"Pick the fruits, Walter? I like that."

"Yes, Macanudo told me, '*disfrutar*' is Castellano for 'enjoy,' pick the 'fruta', the fruit."

"Outstanding. Let's get started."

"I think I'll warm up with some pears. They are looking nice and ripe to me."

"Okay, I'm going for a banana myself," said Stephanie, as she glanced downwards and then they began to laugh.

And we can take a look at a new campfire. There's Mac and Mike, hanging out together.

"Mac, how comes you always dancin' so much?"

"Well, Mike, this is all a dance, and brother we were born to dance."

"Not me. Nope. Step on my own toes."

"Everyone takes a turn at entertaining their fire-mates. Your turn, Mike."

"I hear ya, mate. You know, that's really what I've been doin' my whole damn life, trying to make my mates laugh. That's why I talk funny and wear this stupid tie."

"Life is funny and it's a dance," sang Tio. "Che, when you gonna offer me one of those stogies?"

"Well get on up here and we'll do the Stogie Shuffle."

"Yes sir. Now how do you do the Stogie Shuffle?"

"I don't know yet," admitted Mike, "but I'm thinkin' that first you light your stogie. Here you go." Eye gave Mac a cigar and pulled a piece of wood from the fire to light it for him. Then they moved away from the fire, and started the Shuffle, both men waving their lit cigar ends around in

various looping patterns and laughing while they took turns making up verses of the Stogie Shuffle Song.

And that leaves Tawny and Marcos. “My goodness, you did it, Tawny! Look what you’ve done.”

“Hey, we all did it,” she offered. “Maybe the Jaguar did it. Anyway, it sure was a lot of fun, and I love to picture Stephanie and Dupe together.”

“Si, si, señorita. Me too.”

And a great silence surrounded them, punctured only by the fire that crackled on about Change and about endings ... and new beginnings

“I’ve got to go in two days for that tournament,” said Marcos, his full attention now on Tawny’s face, her eyes. “Don’t suppose you’d like to come?”

“Well, Marcos, yes and no. I guess more ‘no’ for now. Thank you, but I just need to be here and catch up. I’ve got that new filly that I’m training. I want to spend time with Granny and Val. There’s the harvest, pregnancy testing on the cows. But what happens if you come back?”

“We’ll just have to see. What’s the ‘yes’ part?”

“Come closer and I’ll show you, it is my vote that our time has come, hombre.”

“Tawny, you wild thing, you can’t imagine how long I have waited for this moment. I have been savoring this coming together for years.”

Eyes aflash, she moved into his waiting arms as he twirled her, mouths on mouths, and smiles smothering smiles.

And they all lived happily ever after.

No, really.

Won’t you?

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Here is a little Fun for You

The Jaguar Girl Project is also a movie, a website, and a collection of people from all over the world.

We are wanting to first whisper, then sing, and then chorus the news of this Change, and all the new(s) coming onto the Earth. We intend to share these wondrous energies with Everyone, and we are doing it joyfully and humbly, offering that anyone can join the energy by casting a click vote as the website is experienced and shared.

[WARP Place](#)—for interactive energies concerned with building a conscious community of creative and appreciative **W**riters, **A**rtists, **R**eaders, and **P**hotographers worldwide.

[Jaguar Ambassadors Gang](#)—for then sharing the means for decimating excess consumption to save Mother Earth from the attendant pollutions. A unique, proactive, and toothy movement. It is past time to really do something, and this works, AND it is fun! Thanks for allowing in this advertisement. It is why the book was written.

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OH JAGUAR, LIKE A MIGHTY SILENT  
SIREN IN THE DEEP NIGHT  
YOU PROWL THE MAJESTIC WAYS  
OF YOUR SYLVAN QUEENDOM,  
LENDING GRACE AS YOU GO,  
TRAILING DREAMS OF LONG AGO,  
AND STOKING FIRES FOR US ALL,  
FIRES AGAINST THE COLD,

I SEE YOU IN MY SOUL,  
I FEEL YOU IN MY HEART  
I NEED YOU TO BE WHOLE  
THAT WE BE NOT APART

OH, JAGUAR DON'T GO AWAY,  
WE NEED YOU TO STAY  
DON'T GO AWAY, PLEASE,  
PLEASE DON'T GO AWAY,  
WE ALL NEED YOU TO STAY

HERE I DEDICATE THIS SINGING SONG TO YOU, IT SURGES FROM OUR SOUL,  
MAY IT CARESS THE LIVING FUR THAT  
CLOAKS THE MAGNIFICENCE OF YOU.  
WE SING THE WORLD TO SAVE A PLACE, HIGH AND WILD FOR YOUR PRIDE.  
WE GATHER IN HEART CIRCLES TO SALUTE YOU AS YOU PEER AND FADE AWAY,

OH GREAT CAT THAT WE HUNT YOU  
AND YOUR HOME HAUNTS MY BEING,  
I ROAM WITH YOU THE HIGH AND FAR-WAYS, HIDING EVER FARTHER, AS  
FENCES AND ROADWAYS BIND, BENEATH  
THE ROAR OF HIGH SKIES TORMENT,  
AND LIFE DEVOLVES INTO TWO-LEGGED  
AGGRESSION AND LACK OF GRACE.

BUT HOLD, PLEASE HOLD,  
THE VISION OF WILDERNESS HARMONY,  
LIGHT, EVEN NOW, PENETRATES THE WAYS OF MAN, AND WILL SURELY STRIDE INTO BEING,  
INTO SPIRIT, WE NEED YOU, JAGUAR, SHOW US THE WAY.

FORGIVE US FOR WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE ARE DOING TO YOUR BEINGS.



**Jaguar Girl Book Report – Provided by Russell Fuller, chief editor at WARPplace (I call him “bosn”, below, because he was onboard our ocean going ketch, The Starship, back in the seventies, and turned out to be the best at providing the guy on watch with; coffee thermos, appropriate tunes, a joint, and great company. We met at university and went on to be hippies and “teachers” together and are now co-creating the WARP project)**

Here we go. I can’t say I remembered this as well as I thought I would, but it was probably 10 or so years ago, so ... I do think that the same things that resonating with me before resonated this time, and I think the things that annoyed me last time made the same impression again.

What I did was take this at face value and try to be of as much help as possible by honoring the structure, flow, and characters. As I usually do, I tried to enhance the flow, though I think of it as rhythm, of paragraphs, transitions between paragraphs and sometimes sentences. And I tried to improve the logic when something didn’t make good sense to me. Also fixed a lot of grammar and quote marks and so on. Sometimes I found a better word choice when you seemed to be mixing metaphors or that kind of thing. I deleted redundancies, sometimes modified what I considered too exaggerated, sometimes toned down a bit something that was just too syrupy or wafty or whatever. Got the accent on maté, which should be picked up on conversion. I added one paragraph of additional Mike Eye rant against Tio after Tio does the 100<sup>th</sup> monkey spiel. I think it’s pretty funny but underlying it is a serious question. Oh, and there’s a short paragraph of Tawny and Marcos reacting:

“Yeah,” said Mike Eye, riled up now. “So what if they dropped a million homeless people down here in your wonderland, then dropped a million of them monkeys with their coconuts. How happy would you be then, Mister Perfecto, when the magic is wall-to-wall monkeys and homeless people, none of them willing to work like a regular person? And then they could airlift in a million CEOs, who also don’t work. Now that would make me happy. I’d like a ringside seat to watch three million CEOs, monkeys, and homeless people going to war on one another over a bunch o’ coconuts. Don’t think it couldn’t happen here.”

Marcos and Tawny couldn’t take it anymore. They had already burst out laughing but now they were on their backs with their legs pulled up toward their chin and arms clasped around their lower legs, and they were rolling all over the place, laughing so hard they burst into tears, then suddenly rolling down the hill a ways.

So, it’s as good as I can make it without doing major work of rethinking/restructuring/re-envisioning.

To the good:

1. The whole introduction that begins: “*Once upon a time, not so long ago but very far away, there was a beautiful place, lovely with fairness and ripe with nature.*” [my italics] This whole passage is a fairy tale, and the story of Christina, Mikhail, Katy and Valeria is beautifully told. [Hmm, did I just realize I don’t know who fathered the twins?] I’d say that ends with the arrival of Tio at the end of Chapter 2.

2. The whole meditation near the end is laid out and expressed as beautifully as anyone could ask for. Just reading the words, you want to follow along, tense and relax, inhale and exhale.
3. Tawny: A lot of what Tawny is and does is very exciting, and the reader loves the way she loves the land in all its various aspects and seasons. Most exciting is her long ride home that takes up many pages and she is wonderfully smart, spirited, conscious, earthy, observant of details AND what they mean to her at the moment. That sort of passage, of which you are obviously capable owing to your own detailed observation and love and an enthusiasm or at least willingness to keep trying to express your gratitude in words. In these three places (beginning, Tawny ride, meditation), your writing is as fine as anything you've done that I've seen.
4. In Katie, Tawny, Walter, Mom Doss, Sky, and Sedg are all well honored. Hugo is a nicely drawn minor character.
5. I like the descriptions of the animals (horses, saddle/blanket gear), and the lands, along with some of the wildlife common to the region. I especially liked the birds, including the condor of course but also the little wrens and so on.

**Che Bosn mine, searched the doc and could find no “wrens” – couple of “wrenches”, no mas. Must have come from some other piece of mine. I like little wrens also.**

6. I like Mike Eye because he has some personality, he's a nut job out of his element, he's argumentative, not graceful.  
When the competition is all in Come to Jesus mode, Mike Eye may be the most interesting character in the book, even though he was conceived as comic foil.

**Eye is based on another mutual friend – take a guess. Hint, he will play Mike Eye in the movie.**

7. The gypsy woman is a wonderful attempt to do something different, an independent, thoughtful, solitary, just a bit off-her-rocker woman. The idea of her journal (I had her reading it aloud to her guests rather than as a found object) is a terrific conceit but a delicate one to pull off and I don't think you made it. You really have to lay out ahead of time exactly what her speech flaws are and aren't; otherwise you lose consistency and the voice loses integrity. This is one section you could rework for the next edition.

**Not sure what is meant by “integrity”, but I did introduce the flaw piece, hope it helps.**

8. My favorite scene in the book is when Tawny bumps into Walter after failing the day before, accidentally knocks him down, his glasses fly off, and even though Tawny has an ulterior motive, it's still a very human interaction and a great relief from Tio talk. Even though girl bumps into boy, girl gets boy, trouble ensues is as old as Noah's Ark, you've done it nicely here.

9. I also like the scene of Walter lurching from bar to bar. It shows his humanity and feelings and despair. Could be worked on to be more colorful and slightly less dramatic, but it's fine.

However, there are lots of difficulties here that could only really be fixed with a reimagining of the whole thing, something I don't think you want to do.

1. Because you love them all so much, these characters are also quite inhibited, mostly Tawny and Walter. I think it's a mistake to identify the character so closely with their real-world counterparts. It doesn't feel like you have a free hand with these characters.

**Feeling a bit stupid here, cuz I don't quite know how love and inhibition work, or don't work, together. Tawny is a composite with some elements of daughter Sky, but a lot of imagination and writer's license added. Walter also steps away from his real life component. In any event I have spiced them up, and added some details – hope it helps.**

2. Structure: well the book starts out (and could be said to end) as a fairytale, has a middle about Tawny and her adventures with Walter and Tio and her horse that could be I guess a novella, and much of the last half is given over to Tio and his cosmology, much too much I'd say. So in trying to be all three, it is none of them: not a fairy tale, novella, or cosmology.

**Except that the entire structure of the book means to carry one along on hopefully interesting story lines, adventure, love and all that, as a vehicle for Earth Love enhancement hints and ops for the reader. Interestingly, it was conceived at first as a book to be read to young'uns. Now, of course, what with the additions of some sexual innuendos and a couple of "dirty" words it has warped into something else. The entire founding energy was, and still is, to create a movie (sorry, see below) that will be the first environmentally important dissemination creation, one that will play all over the world in various guises, and one that will help change attitudes towards Mother Earth, and even change civilization. How's that for pompous?**

3. So the spine of the story is the interweaving of Walter and Steph (boy meets/gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl in the end, fade to black) with the story of Tawny, under the guidance of Tio, growing up in these beautiful lands, loving them, defending them, and finding the right way to defend them against big odds. You can certainly use the boy-girl story, it's the most used and clichéd story ever, you just have to be conscious of that. Your spin on the old story is in the interweaving.
4. The characters, beginning with Mikhail. I don't know if you realize this, but there are very few descriptions of any of the characters, when it is precisely in those details that character and perhaps cosmology are best expressed. We have lots about what the people do and where they are but not so much about who they are.

**Good point and one I have addressed and, hopefully, rectified with more descriptive detail.**

5. You can probably correct me, but as far as I can remember or easily see, there is little or no physical description of Christina, Mikhail, Katy, Valeria, Alixandra, Stephanie. We're

told that Tawny has blue eyes and that she and Marcos have blonde hair, that Tio has a long beard, and that Walter wears glasses and has a bald spot, and I think we do get something on Mike Eye. For the most part, we don't know what the people look like, are they fat or thin, tall or small, dark or light, scarred or not, round or oval face, mustache or clean shaven. For the most part, we don't know what the people wear, what colors they favor, do the women wear skirts? What about boots, spurs, what kinds of hats, what do they all wear when they dress up (as for Alixa's funeral).

**See point 4, above.**

6. Emotion: Mike is really the only person who gets convincingly angry. Certainly Tawny, Steph, and Walter have good reasons to express their anger. They need to not be able to live up to the cosmology so have a reason to seek out Tio, who should be harder to find. One he appears or leaves like the smoke; that's very good.

**I have attempted to humanize Walter and Steph a bit more, as well as make Tio more realistically elusive. Tawny was pretty angry and upset when her condor was shot, and Walter was solidly distressed when he witnessed the destruction done in his name. Now we have Tawny crying over Alixa, perplexing more over Marcos, getting excited about Alixa losing her virginity, pissed at Mike Eye, and enraptured with her jaguar friend.**

7. Alixa: I have no idea why she's there. She goes off to the city and plays polo. We have no idea what she looks like, how she became so athletic, how she plowed her (angry, sad, impassioned?) energy into getting super fit for polo, why she goes for that instead of what Tawny's doing. She and Tawny have no discernible relationship. She could have all kinds of push-pull-dance with Tawny, but as written, she's just a placeholder. She could be deleted with no loss.

**Right, though I would miss her as she stands as contrast to Tawny by going to Buenos Aires and indulging in city life – pretty much the opposite of the Love Story with Mother Earth that Tawny insists on, (until she doesn't vis a vis her trip to San Francisco). Alixa's town death, in a car, also stands as not only contrast but also as an example of dealing with death, which is such an important piece of the cosmology that I wanted to work it in. Very few humans know how to handle the death of a beloved and presenting it is delicate, and, in many cases, downright impossible. Still, I wanted to try because of the importance for evolution and for freedom. This is, of course, a whole 'nother book – probably beyond my ability or desire. In any event, in the re-write I have tried to bring her out a bit more, to make her less of a placeholder without lengthening overmuch the story, or taking away from the main characters.**

8. Marcos is not much more than a placeholder: blonde, great polo player, some undefined relationship with each of the twins, goes to U.S. with Tawny. Tawny seems oddly relieved at Alixa's death (undescribed "car accident"), as it allows her some time with Marcos. This casts Tawny in a bad light, whether intended or not. But all she and Marcos do together is giggle.

**OK. I have attempted to bring him out some more too. He is way interested in Tawny, is dealing with his father's command that he be a lawyer, even though he wants to play polo and get back to the land. He is also the link between city and country via the radio and reporting on the Alixa tragedy and bringing her body back. Then he links the United States and the Stephanie connection. He is also more useful now on the mountain trip, introducing Natural Capitalism to Walter – a key, key point in the book. He and Tawny “live happily ever after”, remember.**

9. Even Steph is not much more than a placeholder. We don't know what she looks like, how she walks, what her voice is like, titties and stuff. Why does Walter love her so and she him?

**Well, OK, I have added some descriptive detail. Titties? All my female characters have great tits, bosn, you have known that for decades (of decadence!) Actually I have endowed the active and authoritative Stephanie with small breasts (And they are perfect!)**

10. So we get plot and dialogue but no character development. The only person who changes is Walter. Everyone else does their thing, with no character arc.

**Again, the main purpose of the book is the Love Story with Mother Earth. Tawny has it. Val and Katy have it. Tio adopts it. Marcos misses it when he is captive in the city, and yearns to return. Alixa lets it go. Steph uses it for her entire career. Walter forgets that he has it and then remembers (with tears), and even Mike begins to get it. When he hugs the tree and then shares a stogie dance with Tio, there is a fun indication of change, even evolution. Even Tawny changes. Look at how she immediately agrees to go to B.A. and to San Francisco to save the lands, even though she denied going earlier to be with Marcos – tempting as it was.**

**Character arc? I love that term! Not sure how to apply to the book without taking them one by one and writing more and more about them? But I can agree with you. Just keep in mind that I am not a writer, and that this is not literature – not Faulkner nor Hemingway, not even close. I am who I am, pretty much – a guy trying to share a cosmology of care to help effect Earth Rescue. That, and I am determinably lazy.**

11. Why is everyone the most gorgeous in the world, the best in the world? Tio was the best quarterback, but who cares? Marcos and Alixa are among the best in the world, but we don't know how they got there, don't see them play, don't see a relationship.

**Oh, I don't know, bosn. I guess because I thought it would be fun and increase reader interest. But I have deleted the quarterback piece from Tio's bio. I have dropped Alixa down to being just someone who has a little attraction as an under-rated player, and have left Marcos up there so he can play in the “Star” tournament.**

12. So about now, maybe you're saying it isn't supposed to be a novella or novel, but even short stories have character description, development, changes.

13. The biggest problem is Tio. He's annoying and boring and pompous. He's really not a person; he's like a ventriloquist dummy or the Wizard of Oz or something speaking your cosmology. And he takes over and ruins everything that was special or light or delicate.

**Right.** Well “ruins” is a demanding word here, especially in light of the fact that I want him to do the opposite of “ruin”. What would that be? I do see your point and have tried to humanize the sumbitch. He says a couple of times now that he is just a ranter, and a “bleater”, and takes the time to ask the girls if they really want to hear his raves and blathers. They do, of course. That is because I MADE them want to – writer’s license and all that.

Now here is where I come back at you a little bit. Sit down. Probably because you have known me for fifty years (yikes, don’t tell the girls), and have been a bit of a captive presence – sailboats, smoky dens, and such – you are either tired of my malarkey, or have your own, or plain don’t believe or like much of what is cosmologized (is that a word? Is now) in this book. You have also seen me live my life during my 20’s and 30’s, and know, firsthand, what a frenetically energized dude I was – probably with theories even then, but assuredly with less ability to effectively share.

Pretend just for a moment that, for whatever reason, that because I have had the privileged opportunity, by living my life overflowing with outstanding friends, family, adventures, wealths, funs, challenges, death threats, lawsuits, etc etc and living on the mightiest seas and lands in creation with a studious mind open to the hints and nudges of Nature – where was I? Oh yeah – pretend, just open to this, that I have learned something of tremendous value thereby. I know, I know – how could a lowly piss ant like me do that? We are pretending here, sir. I mean you know me as an overactive doer, party animal, damn the torpedoes, womanizing, player sort of a guy – hairy buff parties, devil’s triangle invader, panty raids etc, but what you don’t know is that I have lived on these magic lands quite meditatively most of my last 25 years. That means hours and days alone with my thoughts and, more importantly, with the murmurs, caresses, hints and nudges of deep and abiding Nature. I hold it that these lands do constitute an authoritative Power Spot and I guess I would feel cowardly, or unappreciated, or unworthy even, were I not to attempt to share what has been shared with me here. And I have learned, ok – invented, many aspects of what life may be about on this planet, and have dared and cared to propose to propound them.

And this is horribly sharded ground here with super dangerous Ego traps littering the landscape such that even as I write I wonder if I do dare publish this. You know I have studied the “masters” – Krishnamurti, Gurdjieff, Castenada, the Conversations with God guy, Marciniak, Tolle, Depak etc, I even know old Ken Wilbur personally, and none of these dudes offer a complete cosmology leading to a combination of personal happiness with Earth Care. Nor are any complete within themselves that I have seen. Compiled, yes they constitute some mighty steps, yup. And we all know about my ego – how I often like to sneak into my writings that I was captain of my high school (I often say “prep” school) tennis team, state champs and all that (see, I did it again!). Was it Ted Turner who said, “If I didn’t have such a big ego, I would be perfect”?

**So if you are still pretending, as ordered by your skipper (ha), that there is value, and even a lot of value, in this presentation and sharing, via my invented ventriloquist dummy (I like that, bosn- good imaging) with Tawny and then Walter etc, of understanding of life on Earth and how to amp up one's Creation Enjoyment piece, then the boring parts become the skeleton for personal movement. I am sorry that you think that he ruins everything that was special, or light, or delicate. My hope was that he would be received with appreciation as revelations are applied to one's little life on earth – admittedly a pompous proposition. Way pompous, and – maybe – way beyond my scope. But I wanted, and still want, to try. It is so so so worth it! BTW I have attempted to humanize him, so as to moderate his pompousness somewhat, thanks.**

**Who is to know what the average reader will make of these offerings? Let's not tell them that they are invented and offered by a pompous, pampered, privileged, uh ... pissant playboy – give them a chance to accede to some life enjoyment enhancements. Maybe they will give simplicity a try and lessen their pollution footprints – some of them, eh? As is precisely the founding intention of all of this; the book, the websites, the movies, the movements etc.**

**I also tried to not make it boring – the dances and jokes etc – while still fleshing it all out, as a skeleton without say a femur, falls down and dies. So I did not want to leave the reader hanging with an incomplete, albeit shorter, version, as all the pieces hinge together and build on one another.**

**And now a commercial message; Check out “Flow – commonsense cosmology for the not yet enlightened everyperson, and a life lover's guide to creation enjoyment”, for a more complete and even more “boring” presentation of this same author's life hints. It is available at [www.warpplac.com](http://www.warpplac.com). Not been there, better do it!**

14. There's a lot of important stuff that's just not believable.

a. Walter and Steph: They don't do anything, they're just in soaring love. They don't have a fight and break up. Walter just ends it. Then she waits for 10 years with no expectation of Walter showing up. That doesn't happen. If they had these feelings, they would be checking in with each other, Walter would tell her about the illness (which I changed to Parkinson's from just some nerve condition that's slowly killing him), they'd meet at hotels for a weekend. She'd break it off, get married to someone else. Have two kids, but then the guy turns out to be bad for one reason or another. She's just gotten divorced when she meets Walter again.

b. Walter and Tawny: Not believable that she would so easily move him off of his whole life responsibility/legacy so easily. We see some nice scenes but not much to indicate falling in love. If she's just seducing/manipulating him, which isn't nice but is for a good cause, that should be made more clear. Also, he's apparently in love with her now, though they haven't even kissed.

We know for Walter that love is a very deep thing and he's come to Patagonia as much for her as to see what was going on, more for her—to perform an act of contrition that would make her love him too. But she just brushes him off and says, Oh no, somebody's waiting for you in the States.

c. Walter and the DuPuente Company: He's the head of the whole thing yet doesn't seem to know anything much about this huge project on a big piece of relatively pristine land. We don't see the Board or the workers or the buildings or anything.

d. Mike Eye and Patagonia: Mike Eye sometimes talks like a lech and sometimes like a regular but is more suited to maybe being a foreman or enforcer/bodyguard. We're missing the second in command, who is a guy in a suit who knows how to talk to and bribe various officials.

e. Tawny/Tio: Like you said, in the country, news passes through radio, passers-by, people on the trail. It's not believable that they would not know about a huge project invading close-by lands.

f. Everyone (but Mike Eye) has the same philosophy/cosmology, which apparently took Tio a long time to refine and still has questions. No one really pushes against him.

**Am melding these points. Walter can't tell Steph the real reason for breaking it off (his disease and how that would affect the stock price etc), and now they do stay in minimal touch, you are correct on that point. But I don't want to take the time to go into details about her life, lazy me.**

**We do see the Board of directors a little bit, but again, the details are not, to me, important. The Patagonia Project is one miniscule piece of the multi-national corporation and Walter, with no operative environmental consciousness pays it but little heed.**

**Tawny does know about the impending invasion via the helicopter arrival, which is the first piece. The machines move in while she is in the states. I think I cleaned that up a bit.**

**Mike Eye is both the engineer and the briber. He is head of the Project.**

**No one pushes against old Tio – sort of. Well Mike Eye does actually, even farts on him.**

#### 15. There's no jaguar and no real Jaguar Girl

a. I was hoping that much of the story would be about Tawny and the jaguar, not how she sometimes saw him, but how if she went to the right place on the right night with the right attitude, he would come to her. Maybe Tio would teach her how to conjure up the jaguar, what kind of magic would draw him out. Tio knew how to do this but could not



himself, but she saw the Jaguar in Tawny's eyes and so he taught her from his study of the old ways.

b. And she would try and fail, try and fail, and want to give up, but **Tio** would urge her to keep trying, to breathe, to not look for him but see him in the corner of her eye.

c. And one day, after seeing him approach but then leave when she moved a muscle, finally she was perfectly still, like a rock, and he came to her and their eyes went buzz-a-buzz, and then he would let her touch him sometimes and still alter he would come and sit down and let her pet him.

d. Then the Jaguar began showing the girl where he lived, his range, his view, where he slept, how he hunted, how he used the shadows. How he used trickery, treachery, speed, brute strength. She began to go with him on all fours, learning to go ever more quickly and with new musculature, developing hard callouses on her knees but also learning a special way to walk using her feet and hands. She began to share his kill.

e. She showed him how to make a fire. He was terrified and didn't come back for weeks, but then she tried again with a small fire and held him there and showed him it could provide warmth.

f. Then they began hard play together, grabbing at each other, gently clawing and biting, then wrestling around. Sometimes he would get angry or slip back into pure fight or flight mode and forget for a moment who she was, and so everything was baby steps, but Tawny also knew that she might be doing what no other human had ever quite done.

g. Inevitably, finally, they had what would seem to outsiders as some sort of sexual activity, during which she acquired the form and coloration and yelps of the jaguar.

h. And after that, if everything was right, she could assume the jaguar form and characteristics without the sexual part, and they roamed the night together as two jaguars, and she became, though no one else would understand or even know much about it, Jaguar Girl.

**Well said, and now, sort of, part of the book, see. I did concentrate some descriptions now of her interactions and even touching of her jaguar, thanks for this – much better.**

16. Speaking of which, there's no sex in here. Gotta have sex to make all this more believable. Maybe Tawny loses her virginity to Marcos or some gaucho or someone passing through. Maybe **Tio** sneaks down to hump the gypsy woman, and no one knows.

a. Walter and Steph have to have sex before they break up (not just a great love), then later when they meet for weekends, even once when she's married, and so on.

b. And the big, hypnotizing sex is what Tawny puts on Walter: first night just wild woman, crazy uninhibited, doing stuff Walter had never had done to him. But on the SECOND time, when he's going to have to decide does he want to be with this woman,

can he take off for Patagonia, that's when Tawny brings out the big guns and during the sex, Walter becomes almost delirious, scared but then brought back in, as Tawny becomes the Jaguar.

**I disagree on some of this, much as I like sex and dearly approve of it, as you know. This is not a Fifty Shades of Jaguar Girl book, though. I feel that it taints, albeit slightly, the intention of the writing. But now I have gotten old Tio down the hill and, supposedly, on top of the gypsy woman. I have left Walter and Steph to their loneliness and professional dedications, after spicing up their relationship with some petting etc. However Walter and Tawny never have a sexual relationship. She is quite a bit younger for one thing and he is a kind, considerate, recent recluse who is a bit suddenly coming out to remember and then reclaim his preferred world, plus he IS in love with Steph even though it is buried under heaps of smelly responsibility. But I can like your "big guns" sex with Tawny becoming the jaguar – wow.**

17. Now, if you think of that being Sky and Sedge, you're out to lunch, got no chance to write that. So move these characters off of their real-life counterparts and let them breathe, let them show you who they are.

**Well, of course I own them as I invented them, however ineffectually – that is who they are. Lunch? Great idea.**

18. For me, that would be more of a story of Jaguar Girl and an Earth Story and so on. I know you want to sneak in all this cosmology, but you can't have it both ways. Here you've sacrificed what could be a beautiful short novel about the girl and lands and animals and Jaguar to let Tio bleat on and on.

**Well, this pretty much sums up your focus. I hear you old bosn, but need to stick to my intentions here with the hope that some, maybe even mucho, will profit from the bleats – should be fun to find out. (see Review)**

19. I wonder if I overreacted to so much Tio after reading *Flow* with the Tio mask off. But then I thought, well, if people read free *Flow* when they register, probably the next thing they might read is *JG: A Love Story w/Mother Earth*, and if I were Joe Reader I'd feel tricked into being lathered up with cosmology from an old, seemingly brilliant fellow who bleats away at anyone who will listen about four billion more years of suntrips when we'd just like to read about an incredible horse-ride or someone getting laid and have the cosmology be organically discovered from different kinds of growth experiences.

**Ditto.**

So, I've done what I could, have said my piece, hope to god I didn't hurt your feelings in any way (am just being about the book), and don't know what to do with this. What it is, is a lot of pieces of things, some exquisite, some beautifully drawn, but it isn't one coherent thing. It needs a lot less Tio and a lot more rock'n'roll.

There's no movie here. The first part is just beautiful introduction to the story. Then you have a story outline of boy-meet-gets-loses-reclaims girl intertwined with outline of guy is stuck in his

family company, gives up his true love, doesn't seem to know much of what his company does, gets seduced, thinks he's in love, comes to Patagonia, stops the project goes home. There are well-described or fully developed characters. You said Sky wrote a screenplay? What angle did she take? I think anyone would say the same about Tio—he's always in the way. Just when we get some action, we always have to stop and listen to the wisdom of Tio before we can go have fun again, live life and stuff.

Tio is also much too available. If they *really* need him, they have to go on a junior vision quest to find him. Or sometimes he appears out of nowhere, through the smoke, to listen and then maybe deliver back a Zen Koan or a Buddhist Thingie or Jesus Sermon on the Mount or a scary story about being stuck between incarnations. His saving grace is that he does little dances around the fire, which makes me think of Doog Roots.

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 Anyway, I love ya. Love this whole project. It's very invigorating and I'm hopeful that our talents and intentions and team work and love can carry the day, because though we haven't got much feedback, what we've gotten has been of the good kind.

**Love you too, fellow. I think this is good – way good. It gives me a forum for chatting with old Joe Reader through our interactions and also a way to better express, and then defend, my intentions. Maybe there should be a “caveat lector”, warning readers that the adventure action is meant to convey a cosmology? Which is then hoped to effect some Earth Care behavior?**

**In any event I have actually enjoyed the re-write, with attention on your points, most all of which are valid and of value. We have an improved version here now – still not literature, but it is what it is.**

**Oh – one final point. This IS a movie! And the movie will be much better than the book, you will see. It will be able to address many of the points you emphasize; character development, operational details, looks, energies between the perps, breast size, emotions, the love of the land, etc. See [www.jagauarambassadorsgang.org](http://www.jagauarambassadorsgang.org) to understand how it will not only be a movie, but will become the best selling movie of all times, produced in many countries and enjoyed in supper club milieus where it will run for years as a lunch and dinner and dancing experience. This is the IVE piece invented by Tio P – interactive viewing event, which revolutionizes the entire movie industry.**

**It is also the birthing ground of P.O.W.E.R.**

**Ego time – I have never heard of any single better idea in the history of the world for meaningful management of the various political entities. This is not the near useless, ball less, U.N., nor is it some doped up Utopian version. This is a believable, doable concept. The way the world has performed on governance issues is way beyond pathetic – way worse than criminal and it is time to get some immodest proposals out there on the table. Our behavior, on many, if not almost all, levels is un-sustainable. Everyone with an operative brain knows that. Where they do not go, durn few of them, is what does it look like when it is no longer sustained? Which is pretty much the meaning and understanding**

of the word. It is time to do something about it rather than just invading another Middle East country, or printing a few more trillion dollars.

Can I end here?

Not with a bad taste in my mouth, I don't.

So bring back the soaring violins and remember the Love Story as offered by that boring old bleater, Uncle F. Perfect. For Earth's is a Love Story. Granted it is a huge one, and a long one, replete with all manner of experiences, emotions, trials and trails. Good guys and bad guys abound and all are sons and daughters of God, doing the best we can as we toddle onwards towards an ever more glorious gladdening of our going – the waiting and beckoning inevitable experience of heaven on Earth. Gotta take care of the playing field, kids. I really want my grandchildren's' children to see, or feel, a Jaguar, or at least his footprint on our Mother. Please.

AND NOW A BLEAT ON THE CONCEPT OF "BELIEF". I WAS RECENTLY ASKED IF I BELIEVE IN GOD. BELIEF IS FROM THE LATIN ROOT CREDERE; TO BELIEVE, TO TRUST. I GO ON AND ON ABOUT TRUST, BUT ONLY USE THE WORD "BELIEVE" IN THE COMMON SENSE, AND NOT THE MINEFIELD SENSE OF A STOUT, INFLEXIBLE, AND SOMEWHAT SENSITIVE CONVICTION ABOUT THE WAY CERTAIN NEBULOUS, AS IN MYSTERIOUS, ENERGIES ARE.

I AM SOLIDLY SELFISH AND SELF SERVING. I DON'T HAVE ANY BELIEFS ABOUT ANYTHING MYSTERIOUS, EXCEPT THAT THEY ARE, INDEED, MYSTERIOUS AND BEYOND MY KEN. THAT THEY ARE ALSO BEYOND THE KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGIOUS FANATICS IS ALSO OBVIOUS TO ANYONE WITH A FUNCTIONING BRAIN. THE ONLY MYSTERY INVOLVED THERE IS HOW THEY CAN BE SO WARLIKE ABOUT THEIR LITTLE IDEAS. WHO IN THE WIDE WORLD CARES WHAT AMIN BELIEVES?

SO, DO I BELIEVE IN REINCARNATION, MY BRAIN ACCESS CORRELATION WITH SUNCLOCK, GOD, THAT SPACE NEVER ENDS. OF COURSE I DON'T. THERE IS NOTHING WORTHY OF MY WORRY THERE. "WAIT" YOU ARE SAYING. BUT IT IS TRUE. INDEED I HAVE HAD SOME FUN INVENTING MY COSMOLOGY AND THROWING IT OUT THERE IN THESE SILLY BOOKS, BUT I COULD CARE LESS IF ANY OF IT IS TRUE OR NOT. DOES NOT MATTER.

BUT DO I BELIEVE THAT INVENTING A COSMOLOGY WHICH LEADS TO GREAT HEALTH AND HAPPINESS AND INTO THE SUBLIME ARMS OF FLOW, IS A TRUE THING? NOPE – THAT IS NOT BELIEF, THAT IS KNOWLEDGE. I HAVE SEEN IT THE SAME WAY I HAVE SEEN THAT FALLING OFF A LOG IS TRUE.

Welcome to the Jaguar Girl energy. This book is the predecessor of a Project which intends to do its little part to *change the world*.  
How?

Change is upon us now, and it may even upgrade its dramatics as Balance proffers its effect on a world where change is begged, daily, in every newspaper.

There is a rising excitement on the globe, as manifestations gather, for we know, on a cellular level, that this Change is Universally special - as such our souls chose to witness this happening. On a physical level, confusion - held at bay by fearful insistence on conformity and consumption - presents its offerings for growth. As symbols of false prosperity topple like dominoes in the first tremors of quakes to follow, Change gathers momentum for new guises of Love. All the more do we, God's children, need perspectives to process the excitement, the confusion, the Love that ever abounds.

This book, the website [www.jaguargirl.com](http://www.jaguargirl.com), the movie to follow, offer avenues of understandings such that Change be cherished for the outpouring of Love that births, guides, and nurtures the beloved players - YOU.

How?

Believe it or not, it is the 'F' word - Fun.

Check it out.