



SOUL GROUP PARABLES I

A COLLECTION OF PRE-JOSEPH
PHILOSOPHIES

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By Michael G. Reccia

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Author's Note:

Joseph - and the vast soul group of spirits he acts as the spokesperson for - never waste a word when communicating with/through me.

Whether it's Joseph himself dictating a complete chapter for one of his internationally-acclaimed books in one trance 'sitting', or members of his group - in the days prior to him introducing himself and taking front and centre stage - connecting in order to deliver aspects of their urgent message for humankind, not one second of their interactions with me has ever contained trivialities or small talk or empty conversation.

As you might expect, the soul group's mission has never been to 'shoot the breeze'. Every connection has been carefully considered, every word carefully measured, with the intent of allowing us to reflect on our spiritual nature, on our amazing capabilities as the spirits we really are, and on what might come next for us once our journey through this material vibration has reached its inevitable conclusion.

Collected in this eBook are a number of the 'philosophies' given to me by the soul group as stories in pre-Joseph days, with the imperative that these should be delivered in spiritualist churches during Sunday services.

I hope you will agree that these little 'parables' are as relevant today as when they were first presented to congregations throughout the UK some decades ago. I also trust you will find them entertaining and enjoyable, that they will give you pause for thought, and that they will resonate with you as you read them every bit as much as they were intended to do all those years ago when I was taking my first tentative steps into what has - to date - proven to be a journey of some forty-plus years.

Thank you for choosing to read Soul Group Parables One.

Michael G. Reccia.

July 2023.

Part I. The Graduate

I would agonise each and every week...

I had chosen to take Sunday services at spiritualist churches whenever possible as, rather than offer the congregations wall to wall clairvoyance as midweek services did, these also included a 'philosophy' section, which I considered to be the most important part of the proceedings. I viewed this philosophy 'half hour' as an opportunity to offer people something to think about; to present them with spiritual concepts they had perhaps not considered before.

Some mediums looked at the philosophy segment as an aspect of the service to be quickly skimmed through, and their philosophies were basically the same basic message reheated and served up again each time they visited a church. Others put considerable thought and effort into what was said and worked hard to touch the hearts and souls of their audience.

I regularly sweat blood over my philosophies. I wanted, in those pre-Joseph days, to make each service count, and to leave congregations with concepts they could mull over and take home. 'If I make them think, I've done my job,' was my personal philosophy. Prior to each service I would take myself off into the countryside

or head somewhere quiet, pace up and down and pray – ask that I be given something that would resonate and make a difference in the hearts and minds of those it was intended for.

Sometimes I would stay outdoors for hours until inspiration struck. Sometimes a theme would come to me 'in a flash'. Uniquely, I would always be given teachings in story form, usually with three separate but linked parts to each tale, and I would memorise these prior to the service (I hate reading from notes).

Jane recently unearthed a whole stack of these stories as hard copies, plus a wad of testimonials and a sheath of notes from the various workshops I used to take. Revisiting these I thought it might be interesting to offer, as this time's 'long read' article, one such story from the philosophy pile – inspired by higher vibrations (by the soul group, actually, before *Joseph* made conscious contact and began to dictate his books through me) and offered here for the first time in at least twenty years.

Ladies and gentlemen – you are sitting in silence in a church, and the medium at the lectern happens to be me. The clairvoyant section of the service has been brought to a

close with a hymn. It's time for a change of gear, for the 'philosophy' section... I take a deep breath and begin by saying - *I'd like to share a story with you all, which goes by the title of:*

The Graduate.

...We'll call him 'the graduate' – a clever and capable man.

Intelligent. Witty. In possession of a recently minted first class honours degree in Graphic Design.

Why, then, we find him wondering, is he still out of work almost two years to the day after leaving university?

It is yet another Monday morning and, as he has done every Monday for the past few months, he finds himself standing outside the Post Office with a meagre amount of currency in one hand, the result of having cashed the weekly benefits cheque that allows him to pay the rent but covers little else.

Stuffing the money into his pocket he walks slowly back up the street towards the block of flats where he lives. Ahead of him, by the side of the road, he can see a man anxiously staring at two flat tyres on a big silver BMW. They have been viciously slashed and the man seems close to panicking. His mobile phone is clamped to his ear but he's obviously having trouble making the thing work. 'Come on, come on! Useless piece of junk!' he growls at the

device. The graduate shakes his head in disbelief at the damage to the tyres as he passes by the man. 'Whatever is the world coming to?' he thinks.

A little further up the road he arrives at the newsagent's shop where he sometimes invests in a morning newspaper. The owner is standing outside the shop with his back to him, sweeping shards of broken glass from the pavement into a large shovel. The graduate is shocked to discover that the shop's windows have been smashed during the night, doubtless an act of vandalism, and that pieces of broken glass have showered the interior, contaminating chocolates, papers, soft drinks – every item of stock in the place. He sighs to himself as he walks past. Things in this neighbourhood are going from bad to worse.

A little further up the street the young girl sits huddled in the spot against the wall and on the pavement she has for some months now claimed as her own, and from which she asks passers-by for money. He always avoids the young woman's gaze as he doesn't have enough money for himself, let alone a little something extra to give to a homeless person. He feels terrible on her behalf. People shouldn't have to resort to begging in a civilised society.

As he mounts the steps that lead up to the block of flats where he lives he finds himself inching past the man with the florid face who lives in one of the flats on the floor

below him. He is struggling with a large and heavy box that all but obscures his vision and is having difficulty negotiating the double doors of the entrance.

The graduate nods a greeting, rolls his eyes in a 'what are you going to do?' gesture and slips by his neighbour who is propping open one of the doors with his back. He trudges up the three flights of stairs that lead to his modest flat, unlocks the door and kicks it shut behind him with his heel. He makes straight for the half bottle of whisky a friend gave him for Christmas, seats himself at the worn Formica table by the window that overlooks the street and pours himself a glass. As he sips the liquid fire he closes his eyes for a moment, mulls over the troubles and problems he's just witnessed and speculates to himself, 'There must be somewhere better than this. There MUST be a better place than this!'

Opening his eyes he is shocked to somehow suddenly find himself standing back on the street outside the Post Office with the money from his cashed cheque clutched in one hand. Everything around him is exactly as it had been a few minutes ago. Got to be an hallucination – but it all seems so real. A slim man in his late fifties or early sixties with distinguished-looking, greying hair and wearing a smart business suit walks up to him and asks with a concerned expression: 'Are you all right? You seem a little disorientated.'

'I am,' mumbles the graduate, preoccupied. 'I know this sounds crazy, but I've already done this once... Today, I mean... Been to the Post Office. It seems like a dream.'

'It's no dream,' replies the man. 'Your wish has been granted.'

'My wish? I don't understand. What wish?'

'You wished for a better place. You longed for a better place than this.'

Reasoning to himself that he must, in fact, have had a great deal more whisky than he remembered drinking, that he must actually still be in his flat at this moment sitting at his table and dreaming, and that he'd better just go along with the flow of the dream and follow its logical course in his mind until he wakes up, he comments, 'And this is your idea of a better place, is it? Exactly where I was in the first place? How can this be a better place?'

'That depends on you. It can be if you're prepared to make it so,' replies the man. 'Come. Let's take a walk back to your flat.'

The graduate walks warily by the side of the man in the suit until they reach the man with the BMW who is staring at his slashed tyres. Obviously this is a blow for blow replay of earlier events.

'Didn't you think to offer him the use of your mobile?'

'I don't know him,' said the graduate with a blank expression. 'And besides – what makes you think I can afford a mobile on my income?'

The businessman sighs. 'There's a 'phone in your block of flats, isn't there? You could at least have pointed him in the right direction. I'll show you how it's done. Watch and learn.' And he walks up to the man, sympathises with his plight, asks if he might be of assistance and offers him the use of his mobile phone.

'Oh, thank you. THANK YOU,' says the man. 'My wife's in hospital and I don't want to worry her by being late.' The driver gratefully makes a couple of calls, one to his wife, the other to a garage.

The graduate and the man in the suit continue on up the road until they arrive at the newsagent's shop. As before, the newsagent is standing outside, sweeping up what's left of his windows.

'Didn't you think to have a word with him? To offer a few words of comfort?' asks the man. Again, the graduate gives him a blank look. 'Watch and learn,' says the man. He walks over to the newsagent and says to him, 'I think you're very brave. It must be hard to carry on when something like this has happened.'

'Third time this year,' says the newsagent. 'I wouldn't call myself brave.

Just a matter of having to keep going – wife and kids to support.'

'Nevertheless, this must have been a difficult morning for you. I'm sorry I can't help you in any way materially but I will remember you in my thoughts – my prayers, if you like, during the day, if that's all right with you?'

The newsagent's eyes moisten. 'I think that's the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me, he replies. 'Thank you.'

'There,' says the man in the suit, returning to where the graduate is standing. 'That wouldn't have cost you a penny. The only thing you would have had to spend to make him feel better, to make his world a slightly better place, was a tiny amount of your time.'

They walk up to the spot where the girl is sitting on a blanket, knees pulled in to her chest.

'Now don't tell me I could have helped her,' says the graduate. 'I've barely enough money to keep things together myself.'

'Money isn't what she needs,' says his companion, sitting down on the dusty pavement next to the girl.

'I think you're very brave,' he says. 'You must get a lot of abuse.'

'No choice, really,' she replies. 'This is the only way I can make enough money for a bed for the night and something to eat.'

‘How are you feeling today?’ asks the man.

‘I’m not too bad, I suppose,’ she replies. ‘Legs are giving me a bit of trouble, but nothing I can’t handle.’

‘I’ve no change to give you, I’m afraid,’ says the businessman. ‘But I want you to know you’ll be in my thoughts today. I’ll ask that you get what you need.’ The girl’s eyes moisten. ‘Thank you,’ she whispers.

As they walk onwards the man in the suit says, ‘See? No money required. Just a little of your time... and you have quite a lot of that on your hands at the moment, don’t you?’

They reach the bottom step leading to the block of flats. There, once again, is the graduate’s lower-floor neighbour, struggling with the huge box. It suddenly dawns on the graduate to help the man through the double doors.

‘There’s hope for you yet,’ shouts the man in the suit as the graduate dashes up the steps to hold the double doors open. He lifts some of the file folders, for that’s what the box contains, out of the carton and leads the way up the stairs to his neighbour’s flat.

A grateful neighbour thanks him and asks if he would like to come in for a cup of tea. As he enters the flat he looks down the stairs, expecting to see the man in the suit, but he’s vanished as though into thin air. The two men chat over a cup of tea and the

graduate is surprised to discover that his neighbour is an artist. Paintings are stacked up against every wall, and a drawing board sits in an alcove. When he mentions he has a graphics degree his neighbour seems shocked. ‘I’ve been looking for a competent graphics designer to head up the art department of my print company for months,’ he says. ‘I can’t make you rich but you’ll be comfortable, and a couple of years with me should kick start your career.’

As the two men shake hands the graduate distinctly hears the voice of the man in the suit whispering in one ear. ‘...Oh, yes, and I forgot to mention. When you make this world a better place by giving out to it, it gives back to you. With interest.’

* * *

The woman’s alarm goes off at 3am precisely as it does every night. She pulls on her slippers and her dressing gown and heads downstairs to the little front bedroom where her husband, who, as a result of a fall from a ladder, has become paralysed from the neck down, needs turning in his bed. Nurses visit to take care of this during the day and right up until ten at night, but at three and seven it is up to her. Somehow she manages once again to turn her husband, who is a big, heavy man, and then returns to her bed to grab a few precious hours sleep ready for the next shift.

She loves her husband dearly, but she feels tired. Very tired. As she lies down, she can't help saying to herself, half jokingly, 'Stop the world, I want to get off!'

She closes her eyes for a brief moment, and when she opens them again finds herself not in her bed but, instead, standing on the street in front of her house. It's light and, from the amount of traffic on the road, she guesses it must be around 8.30 in the morning. The traffic isn't moving, however. Everything has stopped as though frozen in time. Drivers sit unmoving like tailor's dummies in their cars. Mothers stand on pavements like statues, their hands entwined in the hands of their children, unmoving in mid-step in a frozen school rush. She approaches the nearest mother and waves a hand in front of her face. Nothing. The woman is completely oblivious.

Intrigued and bewildered, she wanders off into the town, still wearing only her nightdress and slippers. She somehow feels drawn towards the railway station as she moves through silent streets of motionless people and, having reached it, she walks under the big archway and out onto the platform.

There, where a train, or at very least metal rails should be, she sees instead a beautiful green, grassy lawn, which slopes gently upwards towards the most beautiful and enchanting landscape she has ever

seen. In the distance are purple hills. In the foreground people in luminous coloured robes that seem to sparkle and shimmer in the overall golden light walk between and into striking, classically-styled buildings with fluted columns outside them and marble steps leading up and into them. This is exactly the kind of place she wants to be in. She's had enough of the world.

Incongruously, a silver-haired man in a black business suit stands waiting at the point where the platform meets the grass. 'Mind the gap,' he says quietly, as she prepares to cross over to the grassy slope. She looks down and sees, between the platform's edge and the start of the grassy slope, a gap of a few inches, and through it she can see stars twinkling against an inky blackness. 'So,' she reasons. 'This magical land has nothing to do with the earth – nowhere on earth could be this beautiful.'

She hops across the gap then bounds up the grassy slope, rushing past the man in the suit in her haste to enter this special land. Halfway up the slope her body suddenly slams against an unseen 'something'. It's as though she has hit an invisible pane of glass or some kind of force field. She is thrown back by the impact and lands on her back on the grass where she lies dazed as the man in the suit runs up to her. 'You'll have quite a bump on that tomorrow,' he says, pointing to her forehead.

She ignores him, gets up and once, twice more attempts to enter the beautiful landscape, each time being pushed back by the invisible barrier.

'Well, how does it feel to have had your wish granted?' asks the man.

'I don't understand,' she says.

'You wanted the world to stop. You wanted to get off. Your wish has been granted.'

'Well, yes...' she says, a little shocked. 'I just wanted to go somewhere better... Somewhere just like this, in fact,' she adds, pointing to the wondrous scene in front of her.

'And so you shall, one day,' he says. 'But not today. Not by stopping the world. And not by getting off. ...You see, the one leads to the other.'

'I don't understand,' she repeats.

'You came to earth as a soul to learn,' says the man. You needn't have done – we didn't want you to... but here you are. I know present circumstances are difficult for you and your husband, but those circumstances are leading directly to this place for both of you. You see, in order to enter into this heightened state of reality, your vibrations as the spirits you really are need to become quicker, need to 'speed up', so to speak, to become more refined, and they are doing that whilst you are on earth as a result of

you facing and overcoming challenges; as a result of you learning from your experiences. That is why you find yourself in your current circumstances. They are not around you by accident or coincidence. They are around you because you stand to benefit by negotiating your way through them. They are not a punishment from God – they are this life's golden opportunities to become more than you were when you began your life here. Don't ever wish that you could stop the world and get off. If that happened it might take a much longer time for you to enter this paradise and the ones that lie beyond and above it.

'Through your choice in coming back here, the earth has become your gateway, your schoolroom, a means of returning to glorious realities in other, higher vibrations. So be brave. Go back and tend to your husband as you have done thus far with love. Let's start the world again and resolve to go on with renewed vigour. And one day the gates to this place will open for you. And when you step through them on that day this world will stop – not for everyone, just for you – and a whole new adventure will begin.'

She thanks him and closes her eyes. Opening them again she finds herself back in her bed. The vision of the beautiful place she has seen remains with her through her sleeping hours and when it is time to get up

and turn her husband again her heart feels so much lighter.

* * *

– She stares blankly at the photographs in her hand as the private detective’s car disappears down the street. They confirm her worst fears. Her husband is having an affair. The glossy ten by eights, which are date-stamped, show him leaving some strange woman’s house on the morning when he had told his wife he was away on a business trip. They show him kissing the unknown woman.

Tears begin to run down her cheeks. She sits at her kitchen table and sobs uncontrollably. Her mascara runs and her hair becomes matted with moisture. She sits there for an age, shaking and becoming more and more depressed until, finally, she declares from between clenched teeth, ‘I wish I was dead. *I wish I was dead!*’

She closes her eyes in despair, and when she opens them again, finds she is no longer sitting at her table but, inexplicably, is standing with a group of mourners watching a coffin being lowered into the hole in the ground which has been prepared for it.

‘Well,’ a man in a black suit standing close to her enquires softly, ‘How does it feel to have your wish granted?’

‘What?’ she cries.

‘You wished you were dead,’ he says, gesturing to the coffin. ‘And now you are. Behold your mortal remains. How does it feel?’

‘What?’ she says. ‘I... I was upset. It’s just a turn of phrase.’

‘One with serious consequences,’ says the man. ‘I know it must have seemed like your world had ended, but it hadn’t... So much that was positive was to have come to you in future. ...Of course, all that is now irrelevant...’

‘So much that was positive? In my future? I don’t see how.’

‘Well,’ says the man. ‘I’m not supposed to do this, but I suppose it can’t hurt... now that you’re dead and everything. Come... I’ll show you a little of what might have been.’

He takes her by the hand and suddenly she finds herself standing not by a coffin but, instead, on a soft carpet in a pleasant lounge in someone’s pleasant house. A kind-looking man in his fifties sits on the sofa watching television. It’s obvious he can’t see either of them. A woman comes through from the kitchen and sits next to him as he reaches for his mobile. Somehow she seems familiar.

The man selects a number and a sweet-looking girl picks up the ‘phone at the other end. The woman can’t understand how she can possibly see both the caller and the

person at the other end of the call at the same time. Perhaps it's because she's dead.

The girl is obviously the couple's daughter. She laughs and jokes with them and the scene is one of near-perfect family harmony. The woman takes in the girl's features and, in amazement, turns to the man in the suit and says, 'But that's me, isn't it?'

'Close,' laughs the man. 'Actually she's your daughter... or would have been, had we not granted your wish.'

'But if that's my daughter, then the woman on the sofa must be...'

'Yes,' said the man in the suit. 'Don't you recognise yourself? A few grey hairs, but I think you'll agree you're still a respectable looking woman.'

'But if that's me,' reasons the woman, 'then the man sitting next to me is...'

'Your future husband, yes' he replies. 'Everything in this life changes. No situation is permanent on earth. The circumstances you found yourself in today were tough, but they would eventually have moved aside. They had something to teach you and your present husband, and when you'd learned valuable soul lessons from them they would have disappeared and your path would have led directly to this man, this home and your future daughter. Pity you're dead. Now you'll never meet him or give birth to her...'

For the second time that day the woman begins to cry, until the man smiles gently, touches her on the shoulder and says, 'Fooled you! Forgive me...You're not really dead. I just wanted to point out to you the folly of wishing you were. Now please go back to your life and remember all you have seen today. Your future is there for you if you just keep on keeping on. Be brave. Trust in God. Things *will* change.'

And she opens her eyes to find herself back at her kitchen table, still clutching the photographs. The pain is intense but, as she remembers where she has been, what she has seen, not quite as intense as it had been before. After all, there is a bright new future out there somewhere just waiting for her to walk into it.

* * *

- Ladies and Gentleman, we all, at one stage or another in our lives, say things like:

'There must be a better place than this.'

'Stop the world, I want to get off!'

or even

'I wish I was dead!'

Let's take these one at a time:

'There must be a better place than this.'

Yes, there are lots of places that are better than this one in the spirit realities but through our own choice we find ourselves

HERE at the moment, and one of our duties as spiritually-minded souls is to work to make the place we are living in the 'better place' we would all like it to be, by treating others with respect and with love. By being helpful, peaceful, considerate, compassionate people.

'Stop the world, I want to get off!'

Do we really want to stop the world and get off? Not if we want to progress to the worlds beyond this one, we don't. We are here on this planet, through our own choice, presented with opportunities to grow and to evolve as the spirits we really are, and we are progressing as spirits by facing and overcoming the challenges along life's path. We have placed ourselves in school. We are taking exams, if you like, and the outcome of those exams determines where we graduate to next.

'I wish I was dead!'

Do we really? No, we don't... or we shouldn't. Everything passes, including the hard times you might be going through at the moment. Those 'hard times' are there for a reason, and that reason is not to pull you

down, not to make you feel so bad about life that you don't want to carry on, but to lift your soul up, to elevate your vibrations so that, when you return to your spiritual home, you will have earned the right to live a little closer to your God, both in mind and in location.

So... what of the man in the business suit? A guardian angel, perhaps? A spirit guide, maybe? Our Higher Self, certainly. He represents the guidance and protection we have access to throughout our lives if we actively seek it. The voice from within, from the heart, that encourages us through the difficult times. The adviser and protector when the path becomes rocky. The assurance that our life is not only worthwhile but is a golden opportunity to give out and to take in Divine Light. To become more than we were when we first incarnated here. To make the most of and get the most out of a journey we instigated and therefore have to see through, but which, if travelled wisely, not only leads back to our true home but places us further along the unfolding path to infinity and bliss.

Part II. Empty Houses

While discussing the origins of my last 'long-read' blog with Tony, he at one point commented: 'Ah – so you're relating parables.' Yes, I thought, that's exactly what I used to attempt to do. What a great umbrella title for what I now intend to evolve into a series of blogs, initiated last time with 'the Graduate', a re-presentation of one of the philosophy 'stories' I delivered during services at spiritualist churches decades ago and recently rediscovered. These took shape long before conscious connection with Joseph had happened, but were nevertheless inspired by promptings from his soul group prior to the major shift in focus and delivery that would permit the 'downloading' of the Joseph Communications series of books.

As mentioned in 'the Graduate', Jane, ever the meticulous record-keeper, recently unearthed a stack of hard copy sheets she'd collected from those times when, having been inspired, I would quickly jot down the 'beats' of an intended philosophy – some of these scribblings being quite detailed, others little more than brief 'sketches'. Each of these writings exists because once I had been given an inspiration it was important that I commit it to paper in order to anchor it in my memory prior to services taking place. I discovered that only two thirds of this second entry – Empty Houses – had

been recorded in note form. It has therefore required a polish and an updating and its conclusion has needed to be retrieved from the ether by me mentally reaching back through the years to eventually recall the tale's conclusion.

Here's *Empty Houses*:

'Look,' she says to her unexpected visitor, drawing his attention to the scene outside the bedroom window. 'The leaves are beginning to fall.'

'It *is* autumn,' the young man reminds her.

'I hadn't noticed,' she says. 'Thinking about it, there couldn't be a better time to leave.'

'Why's that?' he asks.

'Well, when winter gets into these old bones I usually have around six months of painful joints to look forward to.'

He smiles.

'What are you thinking about?' he asks presently.

'Well, this may seem strange, but I'm remembering an empty house. Dan and I had been married for a year or so and we were still living with his parents. Don't get me wrong, they were very good to us, but

the place wasn't our own. We wanted somewhere we could call home and we finally found the right place.

'I remember every detail of that empty house – and I do mean empty. The previous owners had taken everything with them, right down to the curtain hooks, the light bulbs, and even the plugs from the bath and the sinks. We didn't mind. This was our first home and we set about decorating it with passion and limitless energy. The first room we completed was the nursery, because by this time Thomas was well on his way.

'We named him Thomas not for any biblical reason, you understand – although with hindsight there seemed to be some doubt about him. He was too good a baby, you see. Just perfect. And he often appeared to be far older – far wiser – than his years.

'So, when on his sixth birthday he contracted that dreadful disease, it felt to me as though God was claiming him back somehow. I will never forget that awful day – the three of us rushing to the hospital in the morning – and only two of us coming out at night.

'When we returned home, the house really was empty. Not with anticipation this time, but with lack. We couldn't hear him playing upstairs, or softly singing himself to sleep. It was as though the light had gone out of our lives, and Dan and I didn't seem

to have anything much to say to each other anymore. We eventually decided to move, thinking that a change of scene might help put things right.

'Another packing. Another unpacking. Another empty house. But it didn't satisfy. We just seemed to take our troubles with us. The house remained kind of empty ... silent and brooding, until the day I bumped into Molly, that is. And when I say "bumped into" that's exactly what happened.

'I've always hated shopping. And, I remember, I was in a department store. I'd bought whatever it was I needed to buy and I was heading for the revolving doors and freedom, head down, getting up steam, not looking where I was going. I caught a glimpse of a large lady with a cigarette in one hand and an overstuffed handbag in the other. and then – BANG! I'd ploughed into her at speed and I watched, almost in slow motion it seemed, as her bag flew up into the air, somersaulted, fell to the floor then seemed to explode, spilling its contents to the four corners of the store. It made such a noise that everyone in the room turned and looked to see what was happening. Then almost every person on that floor – or so it seemed – bent over, picked up one of the many objects that had spun out from the bag, and brought it over to me. I'd picked up the bag and had to wait until all its contents were returned to it before I could hand it back to the lady.

‘Eventually the picking-things-up-and-handing-them-to-me frenzy subsided and I dusted down the bag and offered it apologetically to the lady.

‘It was then I noticed that she was shaking. Goodness, I thought. She’s going to have a fit. I then looked at her face for the first time and noticed that tears were streaming down her cheeks behind her thick glasses. Not tears of sadness, however – she was laughing uncontrollably!

‘I handed her her bag and apologised again. She assured me that there was absolutely no problem and went on to say that she hadn’t enjoyed so hearty a laugh in many years. She seemed more concerned about me, said she couldn’t let me go home looking so upset and invited me for a coffee and a cake in the store’s cafe.

‘Well, we got on instantly. It was as though we had known each other for years – firm friends, despite having met just moments earlier.

‘Molly began to visit my house and from that time onwards laughter returned to it. As though she had brought it with her.

‘After we’d been friends for about six months I remember the frantic knocking at my front door one morning around seven o’clock. I opened it to find an excited Molly standing on the doorstep. She swept into the hallway and announced: Kid, we’re going into business!’

‘“Business?” I repeated. “Whatever are you talking about? What are we going to sell? We don’t know anything about business...”

‘“We’ll sell what we’re good at,” she replied. ‘Soft furnishings. Curtains. Cushions. Valances. You can make them and I can sell them. Get dressed. There’s something I want you to see.”

‘She bundled me into her car, at that time in the morning, and we roared off to an empty shop – the third time an empty building had featured in my life. I stood there in the front sales area, which was bare apart from a radiator and an old blind at the window, and looked at Molly as though she’d gone mad.’

‘“Look’, she said, seeming to read my thoughts. ‘I need this. *You* need this. We’re buying this shop.”

‘And we did.’

‘I was based in the shop mostly, sewing the products we intended to sell. Molly went out and sold them. She could charm the birds out of the trees, that one. Soon we had regular orders from market traders, shops, small companies... and we were doing very nicely, thank you.

‘Then, about a year into the business, Molly went into hospital. Oh, she came out all right... on *that* occasion. There was just less of her than when she had gone in.

'I remember her standing in front of me, now minus a portion of lung, and, as usual, with a cigarette in one hand, saying: "They tell me I'm a very lucky woman. They also tell me that, unless I stop smoking, the cancer could return. Well, I said to them. I've been a hundred a day girl since I was eight and I'm not going to stop now."

'I never knew when to take her seriously, but for all I know she had been smoking for that long – certainly I'd never seen her without her trademark cigarette in her hand.

'About a year later the cancer came back, and this time Molly didn't come out of hospital.

'This time I was determined not to go to pieces. In a way it was like losing Thomas again, but I asked myself what Molly would have wanted and decided she would have wanted me to carry on with the business. And so, as a tribute to her, that's exactly what I did.

'Now I was the one who had to go out and sell the goods, of course. *Little* me, who wouldn't say boo to a goose. I had to drive around and I was scared of driving. I found myself in Managing Director's offices with my folder of products and – somehow – I sold them. I did well. So well, in fact, that I needed to take on two girls, then four, then eight, until eventually there was a team of

ten people crammed into that little shop producing my soft furnishings.

'I even got into airplanes. Me – who's scared to death of flying! I went to Italy. And Germany. And France. And wherever I went I somehow ended up with an order.

'We did so well that Dan and I were able to move into another empty house, this one so big you almost needed a bus to get from one end of it to the other.

'Then, one night, Dan dropped his bombshell.

'He stood in front of me with that look and said: "I've been thinking and I've come to the conclusion that I'd like to take some time out before I get too old and – well – go around the world, and see the countries and peoples I've always dreamed of seeing before it's too late."

'Oh' I replied quietly. After considering the prospect for a couple of minutes I said: 'All right then, Dan. I don't see why we can't go. I can trust the girls for a few weeks – months if needs be, I suppose. Yes. Let's go...'

' "No", he said slowly. "You don't understand. I want to go by myself...Without you."

'Ah,' I said.

'It turned out he'd already packed his bags, and I remember that night, vividly... looking through the lounge window with my

back to him so he couldn't see my face. And I remember Dan slipping quietly out of the front door.

'There I was again, faced with an empty house. Again, I decided to move. I could afford somewhere even grander by now. Lots of rooms. Lovely gardens. But I rolled around in all those rooms all by myself for a couple of months before realising the house hadn't cured my blues at all, and that it was time to give back to the world a little of what the world had given to me. It seemed obvious. *Children*. I would in some way help children.

'I decided to sell the business and I made a pretty penny for it, I can tell you. Enough to keep me comfortably for the rest of my life and to allow me to convert all those rooms, excluding the kitchen and one lounge, into 'mini apartments'. I sorted out all the legal stuff and signed all the papers and was endlessly checked out by the authorities and then I took on a small staff and I waited. The local authorities seemed happy to take advantage of my facilities but I'd no idea whether my venture would be successful.

'Then children began to be delivered to my door. Children who had been badly treated. Children who had no parents. Children who had run away from home. Children who just needed to feel safe and know that someone understood and cared. Sometimes they would only be with me for

a few days. Sometimes for weeks. And months. But they were always made welcome and the house came alive to the sounds of laughter and innocence and love.

'...And that, young man, just about brings us up to date...'

'How curious,' she says, following a few moments of silence.

'What is?'

'Standing here with you, sort of outside of myself, looking back at myself.'

'And what do you see?'

She looks closely at the body sitting like a statue in the corner armchair, the cup of cocoa still steaming, untouched, on the small table by its side.

'Well, it's just like looking at another empty house, really... except this is one I'm relieved to vacate, if I'm honest. It's become more than a little creaky in recent years.'

'And what do you think of your life now?'

'How do you mean?'

'Any thoughts on all those empty houses? And how you filled them?'

'When I was young I was afraid of so many things. Of living. Of dying. Of being alone.'

'And now?'

'Now... I somehow see that each empty house marked the end of one thing and the beginning of another. That as one door closed, another opened. And somehow I now understand that each empty house was a necessary step. An opportunity. A metaphor for what was happening in my life... no – *what needed to happen* in my life. I coloured each one with past experiences but it also gave me the space – the room – to let in new ones. None of those houses stayed empty for long, and I'm not talking about furniture. And once one was full to the brim I moved on to another.'

'And now?'

'Now I feel young again. Energised. Liberated. Tell me... would you happen to know what comes next for me?'

'Tell me what you see...'

She peers past the young man into what has thus far just been a sort of opaque and sparkly mist. It suddenly clears to reveal the most wondrous and magical of landscapes. Everywhere there are vivid colours and intricate textures she struggles to describe. There are exotic trees and plants. A perfect sky above them. An overall golden light infusing everything. Rolling purple hills in the distance with a winding road leading up to them. And, in the foreground, by the side of that road, stands...

A house.

An empty house.

A house she recognises. A house she has imagined many times and has always dreamed of owning. And here it is. Doors. Windows. Roof. *Real. Perfect.* Right down to the smallest detail.

'It's yours,' says the young man.

'*Mine?*'

'You built it in this spot during your life on Earth. Brick by brick. Call it the end product of all your experiences, of all the 'good' and the 'bad' you went through.'

He folds his arms and raises an eyebrow. 'So...What's your next step?...'

'Well...' she says, looking down at herself. 'I suppose I can't exactly do what I did with all those other empty houses in the past... I don't seem to have anything with me except the clothes I'm standing up in.'

'Wrong,' he says. 'You've brought with you all that rich experience. In this house you can examine that experience: lessons learned, others unfolding, at leisure... And then eventually...'

'Eventually?'

'Once you've filled it to the brim with past experience and with the exciting new ones this place offers? What then?'

She gazes wistfully towards the distant hills. Feels their pull on her. Somehow knows there are even better places than the

one she now finds herself in, just beyond the horizon. 'I think I'll want to move on.'

And something suddenly occurs to her

'I know you, don't I?' she asks, realising for the first time that she's been carrying on a conversation with a young man who just suddenly appeared next to her chair as she was preparing for bed.

'Yes, of course you do...' he says gently. 'But go now. Fill your empty house. Become re-acquainted with this place and we'll talk again soon... mother'

'*Thomas?*' she cries.

His body seems to glow, then it slowly fades from view, the last thing to disappear being his smile. *Just like the Cheshire cat*, she thinks.

It all makes sense to her now. She doesn't know how she knows but she realises that Thomas only needed to visit the Earth for a short time. There was something he wanted to conclude – some kind of 'unfinished business'. Some spiritual reason for his being born and the brevity of his stay. Something to do with vibrations and energies and understandings. And she had been the means by which he was able to fulfil that short mission. Filled with joy she approaches the door of her empty house.

Which is not quite empty. As she reaches it the door opens and she is greeted by a familiar sight.

'Hi, Kid,' laughs Molly. 'Took you long enough to get here.'

For a few moments all she can focus on is the cigarette in Molly's hand. She watches the wisp of smoke slowly curling upwards from its tip.

'Oh, don't mind this,' says Molly. 'Habit. I don't need it and it can't harm me here...'

'You're going to love this place – and have I got plans for what we can do next...'

She turns to look behind her. The chair she had been sitting in, the image of her sitting in it and the room around it seem to be getting smaller. Shrinking, somehow. '*No. Correction,*' she thinks. 'They're getting further away. Now my last house is just a pinpoint.'

'...And now it's gone.'

She turns back to her new home. Smiles at Molly.

'Right,' she determines. 'Onwards and upwards. Literally.'

* * *

I think (I hope) the above is self-explanatory – today's 'parable' serving as a gentle reminder that no situation in our Earthly lives is wasted.

And that no-one is ever lost.

And that today's material challenges are tomorrow's spiritual triumphs.

And that our lives here, no matter how difficult, will one day lead us back to a place we can call home.

That place, however, will not be a fixed point. Will not be a static landscape. We are

each destined to travel that winding road that leads us into and through successively higher, successively more refined vibrations and realities, and will eventually lead us out into Infinity and to a joyful reclaiming of our angelic heritage.

Part III. Collateral Damage

Metaphor is a very powerful tool. Both Rod Serling, creator of **The Twilight Zone**, and Gene Roddenberry, creator of the original **Star Trek** series, understood that power. Understood that they could present screenplays that at core examined and commented on the human condition by anchoring them in fantastical settings and on other planets, thus making them acceptable and entertaining to their audiences. Wrapped up in the guise of science fiction and fantasy drama, they could offer morality tales regarding sex, drugs, war, oppression, spirituality and many more highly relevant themes in a weekly format that became essential viewing for their devotees.

When I took Sunday services many years ago at over fifty spiritualist churches across the country, the 'philosophy' segments of such meetings presented me with an opportunity to air – as metaphor – many spiritual concepts important to me and of great relevance to all souls here, couched in stories that the congregations could hopefully relate to and be drawn into. Each 'philosophy', one of which is below, came into being as a result of me first asking the Divine and Joseph's soul group for something relevant and appropriate to say during each service. Sometimes the theme would eventually come to me following hours of pacing with a blank mind and an

increasing sense of despair. At other times a story would arrive quickly and fully formed, and would be anchored in my mind as 'whole cloth', enabling me to recall it without notes over the course of what was typically a twenty- to twenty-five minute address.

A measure of the success of these 'philosophies', which I attribute almost entirely to higher authority rather than to my humble self, was reflected at the time in the fact that a dedicated group of people would follow me from church to church to hear them – much preferring something that offered them some spiritual concept to consider during the service as opposed to a sole focus on clairvoyance which, due to time constraints, could only be offered to a limited number of attendees during each service.

Here then, is 'Collateral Damage' the third in the Soul Group Parables series – a story recalled from those far-off days which I hope many readers can relate to, considering parallels of unrest on both the domestic and global fronts and the consequences, from a spiritual perspective, of such occurrences.

Collateral Damage

It wasn't much of a marriage.

Technically, it wasn't a marriage at all currently.

Oh, they'd kept the piece of paper in a drawer – the certificate – and there'd been a ceremony some years ago. With flowers. And confetti. And a cake. And champagne. But right now there really wasn't a lot of love lost between them.

Most evenings they argued, and tonight was no exception.

'...What do you care what I think?' Sam – the husband in name only – bellowed.

'Think? *You?* That'll be the day!' Mary – the aggrieved wife – screamed in reply.

Half a world away, somewhere very hot, a bearded man in a simple white robe stood quietly by a river.

He watched and took note as a few small pebbles vibrated and trembled, dislodged themselves from the river bank and skipped and bounced down into the water.

He slowly walked away, sadness in his eyes.

Back in England the situation got worse. Much worse. Sam's mind was finally made up. He would divorce Mary. There was simply no alternative, he considered grimly, as the garden simply wasn't big enough to bury a body in! In all seriousness he wouldn't have done anything like that, but he had to admit there had been fleeting micro-

seconds lately when his thoughts could only be described as murderous. It was time for him to get out.

Around a year later, just as the divorce papers were being finalised, he was once more called to active duty. He had served in the Army Reserve, and was now required to take part in what his recall-to-duty papers termed a 'peace-keeping exercise', in a country with sun and sand and palm trees.

He knew quite a lot about half-track vehicles, and also quite a bit about the ordnance they could carry and how to operate it, and in a matter of weeks he found himself standing on the flat bed of a swaying half-track gripping the handles of the large gun mounted there on the day when the terrorists had finally been tracked down.

They'd been picking off members of his platoon for days, but slowly the tables had been turned and the reservists now had them cornered in a rundown block of flats located at the end of a dusty street.

It was fully intended that they should be taken prisoner but it quickly became clear that the terrorists were, initially at least, much more inclined towards a fight to the death.

Suddenly, as soldiers surrounded the building in armoured cars and half-tracks and bullets pinged out from the windows of the building in response something in Sam's head just kind of snapped. It was as though

all his pent-up frustrations regarding his failed marriage and the lousy life he'd been living at home, plus the grinding down effect of long days spent crouching behind rocks in this God-forsaken place in blistering heat had come to a head. Logic went out the window and he exploded with rage. He found himself quite unable to remove his hands from the trigger mechanism of the big gun. He swung the gimballed firearm from left to right in great vicious, sweeping arcs, aiming at the building and screaming at the top of his voice as the volley of shells he unleashed tore into the flats, shattering window panes, pulverising wooden doors and reducing the cement of old walls into little more than a ragged lace curtain.

He was still screaming at the top of his voice when the surviving terrorists ran out, finally accepting the inevitability of their position, weapons tossed out ahead of their emergence from the building, hands laced behind their heads in surrender.

Still screaming as he shot them down.

Still screaming as he watched their bodies crumple into the dust.

Still screaming as he struggled against the strong hands dragging him away from the gun.

His screams turned to bitter, hopeless tears then, and from that moment onwards his life changed forever.

At the exact point the blind rage had seized Sam, in another far-off and very hot place, a bearded man in a white robe eyed the modest little river beside him with a worried look as a large boulder dislodged itself from its banks, rolled down and splashed into the water. Hairline cracks could be seen in the compacted soil where the rock had been sitting. And they were growing in size. Travelling. Opening up across the Earth like wounds.

Nerves could be seen working in the man's jaw. His brow furrowed. Trouble was brewing.

* * *

There hadn't been a court martial. Any embarrassing unpleasantness had been carefully avoided, the reasoning from higher up being that the terrorists would never have survived the encounter anyway, and that any action taken would likely have led to the same, inevitable conclusion. Sam was, however, forced to resign from the Army Reserve. Pensioned off. Ushered out quietly by the back door, so to speak, with a minimum of fuss and a maximum of secrecy regarding the event and with his reputation still intact.

Each night from then on he suffered from recurring nightmares... Visions of the terrorists. Their faces looming large at him from out of the surrounding darkness. The dreams always ending in the same way: he

would jerk bolt upright in bed; awake, drenched in sweat, eyes wide open. Conscience stabbing at his mind and heart like a knife. ...What had he done? ...*What had he done?*

Sam returned to civilian life but, growing increasingly unhappy, he decided to leave his secure occupation of many years and set out for a certain hot country, into the unknown. Not to destroy this time, but to build. A builder and carpenter by trade, he knew as a result of extensive research that the inhabitants of this particular part of the world badly needed adequate shelter. The pay wasn't much, but that wasn't important. As he cemented one brick to another, and erected walls instead of tearing them to pieces, he felt he was in some small way doing something positive to atone for what had happened that day amidst the heat and the palm trees.

A peaceful little river ran close to the village, and in his rest periods he would take himself off and sit on its banks, watching the smiling faces of the children as they splashed and played in the water and washed and watered the community's livestock.

* * *

The wave came from nowhere.

Without warning.

It beat against the river's banks, pounding them into nothingness and

spreading rapidly to completely submerge the surrounding countryside.

Adults, children and animals were swept away in the blink of an eye.

Instinctively Sam found himself clinging to the trunk of an ancient tree with firm roots and hauling himself up into its topmost branches as the water clawed and sucked at his legs and ankles.

As he hugged the branches for dear life, he could see the massive wall of water turning buildings into matchwood and sweeping people away like dolls, leaving a trail of devastation in its wake and reducing the village to a saturated wasteland of debris, mud and murky water.

Suddenly everything went quiet.

And Sam screamed into the silence as he had done during that fateful incident with the terrorists.

This time, however, he addressed his rage at the sky. He shook a tightly clenched fist at the heavens. Bellowed in anger at God. '*Why? Why!!* Why did you let these things happen? How can you allow things like this to take place?!

Through his tear-stained eyes the clouds looked blurred, but then he focussed on something extraordinary, suddenly becoming aware of someone standing beside him.

He must be hallucinating, he thought... because how else could a bearded man in a simple white robe appear next to him and seem to be hovering calmly in mid-air at tree height above the wave of destruction below?

The man uttered the single word '*Come*,' offering Sam his outstretched hand.

So compelling was the tone of his voice that Sam let go of the branches he had been clinging to, took the man's hand and discovered that, instead of falling as he had fully expected to, he, too, was suddenly floating in mid-air next to his robed companion.

'Walk with me,' was the spirit's next instruction, and Sam did exactly as requested without question, convincing himself at this point that he must be dead... that he must have drowned in the tsunami and not realised it. What other possible explanation could there be for his current circumstances... for his ability to 'fly'?

They treaded thin air and moved silently forwards together, rapidly leaving the scene of devastation below them far behind. The landscape of the hot country spooled out beneath their feet, but then, as their forward motion continued and increased they also began to soar upwards, momentarily becoming immersed in cloud before emerging into a deepening blue sky. Climbing higher still, they eventually came to

a gentle stop at a point so elevated they could observe the whole of the Earth below them from their vantage point. Not even wondering why he was still able to breathe in Earth's orbit, Sam looked down in awe at the magnificent spectacle below him, taking in the blues and greens of oceans and continents he had only previously seen from this perspective in school books and maps. Then he began to take notice of a curious phenomena below him: little outpourings – little 'bursts'... 'explosions' of dark energy that seemed to be erupting here and there from every continent. From every sea. Puzzled by what these grey and black clouds could possibly be he turned to his companion.

'You are observing the effect that humanity's violent and negative thoughts and actions are having on the planet,' the spirit explained. 'The build-up of such vibrations, pushed out daily and repeatedly by billions of souls, falls to Earth, as it were, as an irritation that penetrates and wounds and infuses the planet and eventually results in what you perceive of as heaven-sent natural disasters. Humans are not the helpless victims of such occurrences they believe themselves to be... they are, in fact, the cause of them. God did not generate or cause the violence of nature you just witnessed. Your thoughts did, in conjunction with the combined thoughts of a similar frequency generated by so many others...'

Sam looked crestfallen. 'But come...' said his companion. 'Let me show you something far more positive...'

He then experienced the sudden sensation of rapid upward movement for a second time. It ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and Sam found himself immersed in a dimension and an atmosphere and a landscape so beautiful it took his breath away. He sensed this could be nowhere on Earth. He was definitely in a 'somewhere else' situation. The fields around him were a delightful purple. The sky above him a perfect, cloudless blue. Trees, bushes and flowers, exquisite in colour and form, glowing with shades he had never seen before, punctuated the gently rolling hills on all sides.

He could hear carefree young voices behind him, and turned to discover, to his surprise, children he recognised from the village... children he had seen swept away by the wall of water just minutes ago... now at play, under the watchful eyes of serene looking souls dressed in robes of the same white as that worn by his companion.

The man in the white robe smiled at him and gestured towards the children. 'Unharméd,' he said. 'All of them. ...Spirits returned to their true 'Home'. Such a pity they had to arrive here as a result of such violence, when a change in thinking and approach to life by humanity would quickly

eliminate such untimely and distressing deaths forever.'

'Come,' he said. 'I have much more to show you.'

Again the upward movement as the spirit took him to other fabulous destinations in the spiritual spheres - in higher vibrational realities.

He found himself witnessing an impressive building being thought into existence by people - spirits in robes - sitting on lush green grass in groups, their eyes closed. He watched as the building constructed itself out of thin air as a result of the group's wishes and creative thoughts and intentions taking form.

Next he was taken to another sphere where, in a kind of pleasant hospital, a middle-aged woman lay, eyes closed, on a bed and was being thought back to health by people grouped around her bedside. He could see energy - Light - streaming out from them and towards the woman. As he watched her face changed - became younger - until eventually she opened her eyes and smiled.

'She just recently arrived here,' the spirit explained. 'She hadn't up until this point fully realised that, as a spirit, she could not be ill. She could not be unhealthy. The love-energy being streamed to her by these souls has helped her to remember that.'

'Time to go back, but before we do so let me reiterate: God doesn't cause the disasters you are experiencing on Earth in big and in little ways every day. ...Humanity does. You do. They happen as a result of your negative thinking and actions.

'You contributed to the disaster you found yourself involved in today via your negative and discordant thoughts throughout your life. ...A few pebbles here. ...A crack in the rocks there... Negative thoughts, added to the negative thoughts of millions of other people, quickly become a potent and destructive force.

'If you would change things positively on Earth build new houses by all means, but also begin to build a different type of future for yourselves and your planet by thinking in the right way. Violence causes more violence. Aggression perpetuates aggression. Each day you can make a positive difference by thinking and acting in a different way – in the right way. By acknowledging, recognising and sending out the Divine Light that is to be found within your heart. By visualising it surrounding everything and everyone in your mind's eye. By choosing love instead of anger. Light rather than darkness.

And with those words the man disappeared and suddenly Sam found himself clinging to the tree again, holding on for dear life as the waters swirled and churned below him. Then he heard the sound of a helicopter approaching him.

He waved frantically, was spotted and was quickly winched to safety.

As he was being flown to hospital he considered the life-changing things he had seen and all that the spirit had said to him and, for the first time in his life, he reached within himself and discovered the Light in his heart, which he then tried to send out into the world, something he would do each day from that day onwards.

* * *

Halfway across the world, at that very moment, a tiny flower pushed its way through a patch of rough soil and struggled upwards into the light.

It was watched by a bearded gentleman in a white robe, who crouched down next to it, cupped his hands around it and added his thoughts of love to its life force.

It slowly began to unfold its petals.

And he smiled.

Part IV. The Man Who Went To Funerals I

Don't ask me how but somehow I did it. Somehow the involved and often complex spiritual concepts given me by Joseph's soul group to replay as 'philosophies' in spiritualist churches on Sunday afternoons across the country became fixed in my memory so that I was able to deliver them, without notes, to the congregations sitting in front of me.

The following story is almost a 'novella' in its length and scope, and is one of my personal favourites. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I appreciated being able to share it with those attending the services it was initially intended for.

Here, then, is the first part of 'The Man Who Went To Funerals.'

The Man Who Went To Funerals dressed in his crisp white shirt and understated black suit, knotted his respectful black silk tie and thought about the job he was doing.

It was a good job.

And it was fortunate that he liked funerals, he considered, because he had been tasked with attending them every day now for quite some time. All kinds of funerals. All over the world. From lavish state affairs where there were so many people attending the service they spilled out

of the doors of the cathedral, down the steps and onto the pavement and the surrounding lawns and roads ...to much smaller affairs where the deceased had been so old there were very few living relatives left and, as a result, there was often just the minister and a handful of people in the chapel.

On this particular day he had three funerals scheduled and he knew his work was cut out for him – as indeed was the case every single day. He moved at speed towards the Earth and arrived bang on target in the midst of proceedings for a recently-deceased South American President. A dictator.

All the stops had been pulled out to make this an occasion the people would never forget. Outside the cathedral stood a black carriage drawn by a team of six black horses wearing black plumes on their heads. Inside, the space was packed with dignitaries from all nations plus representatives from the country's secret police and the military, and only the front pew at the left-hand side was almost empty as this had been reserved for the president's wife who knelt silently, a veil covering her face and hiding her tears.

At the front of the cathedral, facing the altar, the president's ornate, gilded coffin lay on a flower-bedecked plinth. Standing by it,

also facing the altar, was a tall man in a white dress uniform with rows of medals on his chest.

The Man Who Went To Funerals walked up the steps of the cathedral and passed unseen amongst the people who were there to pay their last respects. He strode up to the altar and, reaching the man in white standing next to the coffin, placed a hand on his shoulder. The man whirled round and cried: 'At last! Someone who can see me! ...I take it I am dead, yes?'

And *The Man Who Went To Funerals* replied, 'Yes, Mr President.'

'I thought so,' mused the president. 'For the past week I have been unable to attract anyone's attention. I take it you are some kind of angel or guardian spirit who has come to transport me to heaven?'

The other man replied, 'Well, I have come to take you to the next stage of your existence, Mr President, but before I do so I would like to ask you a question. You see, in a sense the only thing you take with you into the next life is what you have left behind in this one... and I would like to ask you what good things you consider you have left for your people?'

At this the President puffed out his chest, pulled himself up to his full height and said, 'When I came into power my country was a very poor one. We were threatened by neighbouring states and I waged war on

them because it was a matter of them attacking us or us attacking them, so I decided to strike at them first and we completely vanquished our enemies. I strengthened the military. I made sure that everyone in this country worked and there were no shirkers. I am extremely proud of what I have done and, yes, I have left something very significant behind.'

At that moment, the scene around them changed – dissolved then reformed as something new – and they were no longer standing in the cathedral but, instead, found themselves in a tired little living room where, sitting on a settee was a dark-haired young woman who very obviously couldn't see them. She was crying and holding in her hands a framed photograph of a young man in a military uniform. The President turned to *The Man Who Went To Funerals* and asked, 'Who is this girl?'

'This is Juanita Chavez. A common name in your country, is it not? Juanita Chavez lost her husband – the man whose photograph she is holding – in the war you waged against your neighbours. There are so many like her. He was just twenty-three years old – it was his third day of action on your behalf when he was killed.'

And the President replied, 'Well, what better way to die than for the glory of your own fatherland? He is a martyr! It was a glorious victory! Why is she crying?'

Immediately their surroundings changed again. Now they were standing within a fenced compound looking at a line of low huts that stretched from their eye-line almost to the horizon. *The Man Who Went To Funerals* asked, 'Mr President, do you recognise this place?'

'Of course, it is one of our intelligence camps.'

'Yes, where you brought men and women and even children from neighbouring countries because you wanted information from them. Here you had them tortured and murdered. And the President said, 'Not *murdered*... when they gave us what we wanted we stopped immediately and left them alone.'

The scenery around them dissolved and reformed again and they found themselves standing outside a dusty town hall. To an outside wall hundreds of photographs had been pinned and nailed. On the ground below the photographs were little vases with flowers in them, and rosary beads and wooden crosses and candles.

The President asked, 'Where is this?' *The Man Who Went To Funerals* replied: 'This is your neighbouring country. The one you went to war with, and this is the town hall in a small village in that country. People here have turned this side of the town hall into a shrine. Mark well the faces in the photographs, Mr President. The men, the

women and yes, even children. These are the people that 'went missing'. People who will never return. Either they were killed in the war or you took them to your 'intelligence' camps. Here people grieve daily for those loved ones who will never return.'

Suddenly an oval of intense white Light appeared just in front of the two men - a doorway into the next stage of life; the next vibration of existence. Sensing he should step through it and before he did so the President turned to *The Man Who Went To Funerals* and said, 'You seem to be suggesting, Sir, that I have done many things wrong. If I had my life to live again, I would live it in exactly the same way! I made decisions based on the good they would do for my country and I would make them again. If you are trying to tell me that, because of my choices and because of my life I am going to hell rather than to heaven then so be it. I defend entirely what I have done with my days!'

He stepped into the oval of Light. *The Man Who Went To Funerals* stepped through with him and, on the other side, the President (having secretly been terrified as to what he might find on the higher side of life) was relieved to discover he was standing not in a hellish landscape but on a sandy shore looking out towards a golden sunset. Out to sea and coming towards him he could see hundreds of small sailboats. In

each of them were people, all waving at him, all dressed in white robes, all cheering and smiling. He turned to *The Man Who Went To Funerals* and said, 'See? Even here I have a presence. Even here there are people who want me, who *need* me. I am guessing they want me to take charge of them and of this place, wherever it is!'

He smiled and looked out across the shore and the gentle waves towards the flotilla. But then, as the first boats pulled up onto the sands and their occupants jumped out and came running towards him, his expression of delight turned to one of terror as he recognised, from the photographs pinned to the crumbling plaster of the town hall the spirit had taken him to minutes ago, people he had dispatched to the spirit spheres. Men. Women. Children. They advanced on him not with guns, or knives, or even clenched fists, but with kind words, saying, 'We forgive you. We love you. We want you to know that everything is alright.'

His face a study in sheer terror, the President turned tail and ran away from the seashore, deep into the country of that strange land.

As he ran the skies grew darker and darker until he reached a grey, grimy-looking town. There, on a grey street of grey terraced houses with rotting, shuttered windows he found a front door that would open and barged in, slamming the door behind him, bolting it and cowering on his

knees in a corner by a little table in the dark. *The Man Who Went To Funerals* passed straight through the door as if it wasn't there, carrying with him a lit lantern which he placed on the table. 'Mr President, why did you run from these people?' he asked. 'They are the people you murdered, interrogated and tortured and they have come to tell you that they forgive you.'

The President shouted that he could deal with their anger and with their bitterness; with their need for revenge, but not with their love. 'I can't face their forgiveness!' he cried.

His companion said, 'As a result of your actions in life, you have put yourself by your own judgment into a place we call the Lower Astral and into this empty, grey little house. You are not a prisoner here, however. You can get out of here any time you wish to simply by opening the door and facing the people who wish to love you and to embrace you. To forgive you. There is no need to stay here and no one is judging you. God is not judging you. I am not judging you. You are judging yourself. True, there are things in your life that you will need to reconsider... and certainly in the future you will need to work to put them right, but why exist in this greyness when you can be in a very pleasant place indeed right now? Won't you come out with me?' he asked.

The President shivered, 'No, I can't face those people!'

‘Very well,’ said The Man Who Went To Funerals. ‘When you wish me to come for you, just turn towards the lantern. Look at its Light. Until then I have no choice but to leave you here. Until that moment – until you decide to come out into the Light – it’s your funeral.’

The man moved back towards the Earth and on to the second of the three funerals he would be attending this day. It, too, was quite a lavish affair, not on the scale of the presidential funeral but grand nevertheless. Rolls Royces were parked in the church grounds. Inside, the mourners wore fine suits and expensive furs. Standing by the coffin at the side of the altar was a stooped, wizened old man, bent over by the cumulative effects of years and rheumatism and arthritis. *The Man Who Went To Funerals* moved through the crowd unseen until he reached the hunched figure, who brightened as he approached and said, ‘Thank goodness, Son! Someone has come to talk to me at last! I take it I am dead? ...No-one here seems to be able to see me.’

‘You are,’ said The Man Who Went To Funerals.

‘And I take it you are some kind of guardian angel or guiding being who will take me to the next stage of my existence?’

‘Yes.’ said the man. ‘But first, and before I do so, I have to ask you why you still appear to be so old?’

‘I don’t understand,’ said the old man.

‘Why don’t you *think* yourself younger? You’re no longer in a physical body – all you need do is to imagine yourself as you were at the time when you felt healthier, less bent, less aged, and you will revert, as a spirit, to that age in outward appearance.’

The man considered this for a moment, then said, ‘Well, I rather liked being thirty-six.’

‘Then remember what it was like to be thirty-six.’ said The Man Who Went To Funerals.

The old man thought for a moment, and suddenly his hair grew back, his wrinkles disappeared, his eyes changed from their former faded, milky colour to an intense blue and he stood upright, now a young man of around thirty-six years of age.

‘That’s better,’ said The Man Who Went To Funerals.

‘And now, before I take you to the higher side of life, I would like to ask you a further question. It is this: What have you left behind? In a sense all you will take with you to your next life is what you have left behind. Not cars. Not money. But your legacy to others. So... what would you say you have done that is “good”?’

‘Well,’ said the now young-again former businessman, ‘I have provided well for my sons and for my daughter. I’ve even left a

house to my ex-wife so there is no resentment there. I have also given my chauffeur, in return for his years of faithful service, one of my Daimlers. So yes, over the years I have made sure that everyone would be comfortably off and able to live very well

as a result of the things I have left them. I am quite proud of that.'

Suddenly the scene around him dissolved then reformed as something else...

Part IV. The Man Who Went To Funerals II

Suddenly the scene around him dissolved then reformed as something else...

...and he found himself standing with *The Man Who Went To Funerals* in a solicitor's office. He could see his three sons and his daughter sitting at one side of a large desk and, on the other side, his solicitor. It was evident that none of them could see or hear him or his spirit companion. The will was being read out and the man was delighted. He felt privileged to be allowed to witness the reading of his own will, but was a little less excited to find that he could also read people's thoughts and that the thoughts emanating from his children were not at all what he would have expected them to be. As the solicitor read out the will, one of his sons was thinking, 'Well, yes, I will take this money from you, Father, and it will make up for all the times you weren't here for me!'

His daughter was thinking, 'I never wanted your money, Dad, I only wanted you. Where were you when I needed you?'

The man turned to *The Man Who Went To Funerals* looking quite perplexed as the scene around them changed again. It was as though he had travelled back through the years and was witnessing a time when he and his wife had been married only a short while. He saw himself as an even younger

man tearing away the packaging that surrounded a shiny red tricycle. Saw his eldest son, who at that time was only four, excited at the prospect of his father teaching him how to ride his new bike ...ecstatic because father and son would be together for a whole afternoon.

Suddenly, the phone rang in the house, and he saw his younger self going inside and heard himself talking on the phone to someone. His younger image came outside again and said to his wife, 'I'm so sorry but I have to go in to work again. They need me for something only I can sort this out and it's likely to take some time.' He then watched his younger self leave and was shocked at the look of utter devastation on the face of his eldest son.

The scene morphed once again. It was now the present day and he found himself standing next to his ex-wife who was holding the keys to the home he had left her. She looked up at the beautiful house in front of her and thought: 'I didn't want your house. I just wanted you to tell me occasionally that you loved me. Was that too much to ask?'

The scene changed again and now he was standing beside his chauffeur who had just parked the Daimler outside his modest home. The man was covering the car with a

tarpaulin and pulling it tight. The former businessman followed him into the house and saw him hang up the Daimler's keys on a nail in the kitchen knowing, because he could somehow read the man's thoughts, that he would never, ever drive it.

He asked The Man Who Went To Funerals, 'What is wrong with these people? Why are they so unhappy? I've left them good things. *Expensive* things. Lots of money.'

'But you didn't give them your time when you were here. You didn't express your love for them. You weren't there when they needed you. You never once praised your chauffeur for his years of selfless service You never lavished attention on your children or your ex-wife. And that's one of the main reasons she divorced you.'

At that point the portal of white Light appeared in front of the two men and they both stepped through it. On the other side, the now-young businessman was amazed to discover he was standing in the driveway of his brother's house. 'How can this be? He asked. 'My brother died ten years ago.'

'This is a replica of his house on earth,' his companion replied. 'This is the house he prepared for himself on the higher side of life as a result of his actions whilst he was on earth.'

At this point the man's brother appeared in the doorway, ran up the

driveway from his house to greet him and the two men embraced. His brother took him into the house, leaving *The Man Who Went To Funerals* to admire the beautiful garden of this splendid, semi-detached home.

His brother said to the former businessman, 'I would like to move forwards into eternity with you. We can both move onwards together. There's nothing to stop us. I've been waiting for you to come here for quite a while. I knew you were going to pass over and at what point because I asked Higher Authority if I might have that information. For now, however, you look tired. Why don't you go into the guest room – you know where it is – and lie on the bed and get some sleep?'

The man realised he was indeed very tired. He lay on the bed in the guest room and tried to sleep. Unfortunately, every time he closed his eyes it seemed as though there was some sort of weird television transmitting images in the corner of the room, and through it he could see his sons and his daughter and tune into their discontent. He could also feel and see the unhappiness of his chauffeur and his ex-wife. He tried to turn away from the images but they seemed to follow him around the room.

Suddenly, *The Man Who Went To Funerals* appeared, sitting on the edge of his bed. 'Your brother would like you to move

on and to evolve with him as a spirit, but you can't do that, can you? You can't leave your family and colleagues behind yet, can you?' he asked. 'I have, therefore, asked permission on your behalf and it has been granted. You will be allowed to return in spirit-form now and again to the Earth to inspire your children and your chauffeur and your ex-wife and all the other people who were important in your life. To advise them at certain points in their lives when they need help. To try to guide them via their intuition. They won't physically see or hear you, but perhaps they will be able to pick up your intentions through their hearts and, this way, you can put right what, in your own view, you feel you got wrong whilst you were on Earth – the fact that you didn't pay them enough attention, for example. ...Didn't openly tell them how you felt about them. Eventually, and if you wish, you will be able to move on with your brother but it could take a lifetime, relatively speaking, before you are ready to do so. I suspect that not until all those people you cared about – your children, your chauffeur, your ex-wife and others – are happy and have returned to higher vibrations themselves, will you feel your task has been accomplished and that you are able to move on yourself. It is such a pity. A few precious moments spent wisely whilst you were on Earth would have saved you so much time and angst here in the higher spheres. It is so much harder from here to reach and affect the lives of those

close to you on earth than it would have been when you were in an earthly body.'

The Man Who Went To Funerals left the businessman lying on the bed looking troubled and moved towards the Earth again, this time to visit the most modest of the three funerals he had been instructed to attend that day... the funeral of an old lady. She had been in her late nineties – and you would have expected the church to have been practically empty save for the vicar and one or two surviving relatives. Instead, it was packed. Crowded with people. The pews were absolutely full. Men and women standing at the back of the church craned their necks to see and hear the clergyman taking the service. People had obviously come from work as well, taking a couple of hours off to pay their respects. Here was a policeman in uniform. There a nurse. At the front a fireman. At the back a secretary, together with so many other souls who had taken the time to attend this modest little service. Leaning on the coffin, peering around from behind thick spectacles, was a white-haired old lady. *The Man Who Went To Funerals* made his way through the crowd unseen and stood in front of her, placing a hand on her shoulder.

As he did so, her white hair turned to a beautiful auburn colour and her wrinkles fell away. Suddenly, he was standing in front of a young woman. About twenty-eight years old. Beautiful. Upright. Vital. She smiled a

sweet smile and said, 'Thank you for doing that. I don't know how you managed it but thank you! And thank you for coming. I take it you have come to take me to "the next place"?''

'I have indeed,' the man replied. 'But before I do so, I would like to ask you a question. You see, in a sense the only thing you will take with you to the next world is what you have left behind on Earth. What would you say you have left behind, sister? What is your legacy to this world?'

And she replied, 'I wish I could say I have done great things but really I haven't. I haven't any family to speak of. They have all gone on ahead of me. I haven't had any money to leave anyone because I only had a modest little job to keep me and maintain the roof over my head... and so I'm sorry but I haven't done anything. I'm ashamed. I wish I had.'

Suddenly, the scene melted then reformed around her as something new, and she was no longer standing in the church. Instead, she found herself sitting, watching her younger self on the top deck of that bus where, quite by accident, she had sat next to the distressed young girl who, for whatever reason, had poured her heart out to her and said, between sobs, that she was feeling suicidal that day because her boyfriend had left her and she didn't know what to do. She then watched her younger self talking to the girl and counselling her and somehow knew

the girl hadn't committed suicide after she had left her.

Next, she witnessed her younger self in her own little kitchen on various days from the past pouring cups of tea for a variety of people who always, for some reason, seemed to come to her when they were in trouble. She heard herself saying to people things like: 'Of course you can stay for the night. ...Of course, I will be there if you need me. ...Of course, I will go with you to the place you are so afraid of visiting, to support you there, if you want me to go with you and it will make you feel better.'

She turned to *The Man Who Went To Funerals* and said, 'I don't understand, why are you showing me these incidents from my life?'

'Because these are the times when you made a difference to the world,' he replied. 'When you knew what to say to people; when you helped them, and somehow found the words from within you to make them feel better. These were important contributions to the lives of others,' he explained.

At that point an oval of white Light appeared in front of them and they stepped through it together. The woman then found herself on a road. Not a highway with cars on it but a perfect, perfectly flat road that led to a city in the distance. The city was amazing. It appeared to be made out of

crystal and Light. It glowed with such pretty colours, and she wanted so much to be there, so she set off with *The Man Who Went To Funerals* walking beside her. She then noticed, as she looked to one side, that there was a second road leading from the city back towards the portal of Light and that along this road all kinds of people were heading for the oval. There was a Native American in full headdress. An Inuit in furs. A Chinese Mandarin in silks. There were more conventionally-attired people too: Doctors. Nurses. Solicitors. People in work clothes. She asked *The Man Who Went To Funerals*, 'Who are these people and where are they going? Are they going back to re-incarnate on Earth?'

'No,' he replied. 'They are "guides". People who walk the path with souls on Earth who are having a hard time or who need to make important decisions. They whisper words of advice, help and encouragement to them, or try to place in their minds concepts that will help them to move, through the grace of God, in the right direction for the good of their souls. They attempt to make the course of their lives run more smoothly. To help people evolve as spirits and to become a little more God-like.'

'That sounds fascinating,' she said, 'I would love to be able to do that.'

'And, so you shall', he replied. 'Don't you remember why you went to Earth?'

'Remember?' she asked.

'Yes, as a soul you decided to return to the Earth one last time because you wanted to be a guide and felt you needed more experience in order to qualify for that work. That is why you found yourself talking to and comforting so many strangers. Why you always knew what to say, because the God within you and the guides you have around you that you were never able to physically see, were able to prompt you through your intuition to say and to do the right things.'

By this time, they had reached the city and, as she walked through an archway of Light, a man wearing a robe that seemed to be made of the same Light approached her, embraced her and said, 'Welcome back, Sister!'

She looked at him with a puzzled expression. 'Do I know you?'

He replied, 'Your memory will come back presently. I am part of the soul group – the family – you left so many years ago in order to incarnate on Earth... and we are so delighted you have come back home to us safely and that your mission has been accomplished.'

The Man Who Went To Funerals said, 'I will leave you now but will no doubt meet up with you again in the future when I attend someone else's funeral and see you there as a guide sitting unseen next to someone in the congregation.'

* * *

The Man Who Went To Funerals went back to his home in a higher vibrational reality, lay down upon his bed and took a well-earned rest.

He needed that rest because he knew that, day after day in the myriad days that would follow, he would have so much to do for so many departing souls.

* * *

What we take with us is what we leave behind. Not our cars. Or our houses. Or our money, but rather what we have done for ourselves and for others. That is why it is important each day of our lives to try to deal with the people we come into contact within the best, the most spiritual, ways we can. In the kindest and most loving ways we can, even if people do not treat us with similar kindness. Even if people treat us in quite another way. We must also consider that we are only here on Earth for a short amount of time and that the people who are around us – the people we love and who are important to us ...our partners and our friends... should be appreciated openly. How often do we tell them how we truly feel about them? We

might not be here tomorrow morning to do so. The time to show them we care is here and now.

We should also consider that we are here for a spiritual purpose and that our nine-to-five jobs are really just a means of filling in time. How do we know, for example, that we are not here to train to be a guide? How do we know who we are here to help and to elevate in consciousness? We don't! We should, therefore, listen to our inner promptings each and every day and, if we strongly feel we should do something, then we should do it. If we feel we should talk to someone in a particular way, or make time for someone, or counsel someone, or help someone, or comfort someone ...**we should do it!**

Then, when the time comes for us to stand next to our own coffin (because, let's face it, we *will* – I, writing this, and you, reading it, will not remain here forever); when the time comes to ask ourselves what we have left behind, we will be able to say, hand on heart:

'I tried to leave behind the very best for everyone...' ...and that is all that God asks of us.

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