

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

I awoke with a start as the harsh alarm penetrated the morning silence. It was time to drag my old body out of bed and deal with my life chores set before me. Actually I was half awake anyway, my mind still buzzing with problems that had brought alternating phases of cold sweats and depression throughout the night. It had been a tough night and, no doubt, the prelude to another horrible day. It was still dark out and the few unconscious moments of sleep had been a bit of a reprieve from the usual rabid bombardment of my mind with thoughts of my dim future.

Suddenly, I caught and stopped my mind's turmoil for a brief moment and slid into a new sliver of awareness. This is peaceful I thought, my wife is snuggled beside me and it feels warm and quiet here. I will just take a few minutes to enjoy this.

Sadly, it was short lived. My mind drifted off again into a sea of negativity. I was reminded of my problems. Everything it seemed was just going wrong for my wife and I. My registered savings plan for our future was a dismal example of a nest egg. The market had crashed and the portfolio was a quarter of what I had started with. Costs were increasing and we still had a huge mortgage. House values were down below the mortgage I was carrying. I shuddered at the bank finding this out when the term was up. Maybe if I got lucky property would go up. My credit cards were at a maximum. There was not enough to squeeze in a holiday to Hawaii. Taxes were up. Property taxes were due. My God! Where in hell were we going to get the money? There was nothing left even though we both worked.

As I sat there and sulked, I felt cheated in life. Why do others get rich, I asked myself? We work like troopers and get nowhere. I am fifty-five years old and have zero for retirement. My wife's self-employment helps but we are always moving backwards. The one time I try to make an investment in a small side business and claim losses on my tax return is the one time the tax creeps tell me they won't allow it. Now they are threatening to garnishee my wages. My line of credit is at a maximum and the bank is starting to send threatening letters because I am a few measly months behind. How else do they think I could get the car fixed? How the hell do they expect me to get to work to pay the scumbags? Boy I would love to stick it to those bastards.

They don't care about people at all.

And you know what, it is not as if I haven't gotten anywhere. I am the CEO of a small computer company but even that is a hassle. All I do is pay the government and conflict with my partner or the directors. The economy has devastated our cash flow and the stress to make payroll is making me sick. No wonder I have hypertension and my doctor thinks I may have a neurological disease.

At that moment my thoughts raced into the mire of fear and apprehension about the future. I don't have any confidence any more. Everything I try fails. What good was all that university education that I paid for? I have worked all my life. My only salvation is to sit down with a beer and watch television and see all the others having a crappy go of life. I have tried to write a book and I have great hobbies but who the hell has time for it? My wife tells me to keep spirits up and be thankful I still have a job but how can I feel good about myself? I always fail at things and it's getting worse. If I could get a break - maybe win the lotto - God it's enough to make one think about suicide!

Finally, it was my wife that broke this horrible thought pattern. "I think we better get up," she said, "it's late."

So back into the grind. Shower, shave, dress, and breakfast. God I hope the car starts. A little smooch and then off to work. Oh, crap, I need some gas. More delay. More effort. Finally, off onto the freeway to sit and listen to all the bad news on the radio. How depressing is this, I thought, watching all those other miserable souls sitting trapped in the morning rush. God, there must be more to life than this I thought.

Finally I got to work. The morning was pathetic, as you might guess. There was conflict happening everywhere and I had one crisis after another to deal with. By noon I had had it. Perhaps my bag lunch and a walk in the park today would be a good idea.

The park was instantly refreshing. But just as quickly as that emotion hit me, a new picture emerged. There were a few flowers and greenery here and there, but benches covered in crap and bird shit caught my eye. Garbage cans screaming for the collector and people scurrying everywhere seemed to overshadow the smell of flowers. No place to sit. I felt disturbed. I stood there in a daze and I must have looked pretty destitute. Suddenly, it was at that

moment of stupor someone spoke. Oddly, I could feel him without seeing him. I felt a rash of goose bumps invade my flesh.

“Excuse me, sir,” he said. “You look like you need a place to sit and I have a nice clean bench right here. I would be happy to let you share it if you don’t mind the company.” My untrustworthy nature stepped out instantly. Oh sure, I thought, another bench bum looking for a handout. But there was something hauntingly strange about this guy. “Thanks,” I muttered, “I didn’t want to get bird shit on my suit as I have an important meeting this afternoon.” He smirked at me and sat down. I sat at the other end, sheepishly pulling out my lunch bag. As I stared at the bag, I dropped into my usual stupor. Imagine this I thought, fifty-five years old, a CEO in a decent company and I am sitting in the park with a bag lunch beside a bum. What did I do to deserve this?

Just at that moment, my view shifted to a kid on a bicycle who came wobbling along the path. He was about ten years old and obviously not skilled at riding a bike. You could tell he didn’t have much control and didn’t have the momentum or balance to keep the bike up, quite expectedly, over he went with a thud. I knew it. I seemed to sense when shit was about to happen. The next scene was predictable. The kid started to scream in agony lying on the ground in front of us. Unemotionally, I stared at the scene as other people started to point at the kid and rapidly converge.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see the man beside me get up and pick the boy up to console him. “Easy son,” he said, “easy, easy, everything is all right.” The child was close to going into shock. Totally oblivious to all the commotion, the man held him close and comforted the screaming kid. The sobbing subsided. “You’re ok,” he said, “tell me where it hurts most and I can help you get rid of the pain.” Stuttering, the kid said: “My arm, my arm and shoulder hurt!” So who let this little monster loose I thought. Where are his dumb parents? By this time people had converged, all staring like idiots. “Ok,” said the man, “I am going to give you some special healing energy to help you, is that ok?” The boy sobbed acceptance and the man placed one hand on the kid’s shoulder, and the other held his hand. You could see him really concentrating, totally undistracted by the noise. I can tell you it was weird. It was as though some sort of invisible energy was moving between them. About thirty seconds had gone by and you could see a frantic mother pushing through the spectators. She stopped abruptly. Looking at the bike on the ground and the boy limp in the man’s arms, she screamed. “Oh God, what has happened? Is he dead?” Give me a break I thought. She was probably out boozing with her buddies.

The man’s voice penetrated the chaos. Dead silence. “He is just fine,” replied the man, “he was frightened from the fall off his bike and I am helping him ease the pain. He will be better now.” With that, he set the kid down in front of him and asked if the arm was ok. It was hard to believe it was ok looking at the massive scrapes.

“Yes, sir,” said the little guy, “thank you, it feels fine.” He then turned to his mother.

The lady looked at the kid’s arm, probably thinking the same as me. She came over and asked: “What did you do?”

“Oh nothing special, I helped him ease the pain by facilitating some energy flow through the arm with Reiki energy. He has some nasty scrapes and you may want to have his bones checked as he took quite a tumble.”

“Thank you sir,” she said a bit befuddled, “I am very grateful.” As she picked up the bike and turned to walk away, the kid looked back and gave the man a huge beaming smile. “Bye.” he said.

The crowd dispersed. The man sat down again as if nothing had happened and opened his book. He seemed so calm. If people have an aura, this guy had a beauty! Too bad I couldn’t see it but there was something about this guy that kept bothering me. I just sat there like an idiot trying to understand what had taken place and what he said he did to the kid. The scene was about to change again.

Seemingly out of nowhere, a decrepit old bum hobbled over. Good God, I could smell this guy a mile away - surely he had shit in his pants. My vision of this bum formed rapidly. He was a terrible mess, clothes tattered, unshaven, a perfect picture of a bum. God, I thought, I guess I am in good shape compared to this guy. You could tell he wanted a handout. I knew it. Man, I thought, I hope he passes by me. He must have sensed my distaste. He went directly to my bench buddy. “Say there buddy,” he choked in his sour-hung-over breath, “can ya spare any change?” As he stood there, my eyes could not believe how a guy could get this bad. Very calmly, the man looked up sympathetically at the bum for about five seconds and then smiled. He then reached in his jacket pocket. “Sorry, I don’t have any change but will this hundred dollar bill be ok?” I think the bum was speechless for the first time in his dismal life. As he handed the bill over, so was I. I just stared in disbelief. After a thirty second dead silence the

bum recovered and with a trembling mouth said: “I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I almost feel like I don’t deserve it but for a precious moment you made me realize that there is more to life than depression, feeling sorry for myself and begging from others. Are you sure you can afford this?”

“My dear sir,” answered the gentleman, “it has nothing to do with affording it. I know you need it and if it can bring you only a few moments of joy, I am more than happy myself.” The air was thick. I could feel the emotion. As the silence captured us all, the bum’s eyes welled up with tears. “Sir,” he sobbed, “I have had a bad time of life even though I have known better and once was a successful businessman with my own company. I must tell you bad times, bad luck and financial hardships took it all away and have made me destitute with little hope except for depression and sorrow. But you have given me a feeling of joy and warmth for a few seconds that I once used to have. I will make you a promise, sir, that I will use the hundred dollars as a very special gift to help rebuild myself and my life back to what it was. I thank you for what you have done and I will remember you forever.”

I watched like an idiot. What were these goose bumps I got? The gentleman replied: “You are very welcome, sir. You have also made me feel very good to know that I can help you recover the good aspects of life again. I know that you have the answer on how you can bring joy back and that it lies within yourself.” He then got up and shook the bum’s hand, wishing him well on his journey. Then he reached with his other arm to give the bum a hug. Boy, I thought, this guy must be as nuts as the bum. It would take some powerful soap to wash off the smell. I sat there amazed as the bum hugged back. They both let go, gazed at each other for a split second and the bum turned slowly and then walked away briskly. Somehow, I felt the conviction of his purpose. He was off to his next destiny. The gentleman sat down again and picked up his book and started reading.

Wow, I thought to myself, I wonder if he really will do something. It was then that I caught myself staring at this guy. He was getting gray, casually but well dressed and he seemed very well spoken. He looked to be in his fifties the same as me. I had this gnawing curiosity about who this guy was. I guess I was looking pretty stupid trying to get a look at what he was reading when he caught my intrusion. He spoke softly.

“The book is pretty special to me. I was waiting to meet a friend and had this with me. It’s one of my favorites and I read it now and again to refresh my mind.”

Of course I felt like an idiot. “Sorry, I was just curious, but I was more interested in why you gave that bum so much?”

“Well, it was pretty obvious that he needed it pretty bad and I felt I could help him. It was my first impulse. It was simply my reaction to think from the heart. He obviously has a harder time to find money than me and a hundred dollars will have much more effect on him than it will on me.”

Thinking from the heart? That was a new one for me. It was like some stupid spontaneous compulsion that I uttered the next comment. I could actually feel myself mincing my words quietly, trying to smile. “Well, I could use about a hundred thousand right now. Has your heart got any to spare?”

He looked at me with warm but penetrating eyes and smiled. “Are you having some financial problems? You do look a bit tense. Is something wrong in your life?”

Suddenly I had an audience. It was like I had a lead in. “Wrong!” I snorted, “It’s pretty hard to find anything right and I work as hard as anybody else. All I seem to do is get into debt and get nowhere except depressed about my future.”

It didn’t phase him. “Well, I am sorry to hear that. Is there anything I can help with? I have found solutions are always around you and within you if know where to look and how to ask. Why don’t you take this book and read it in your spare time. I am sure it will help you set a new journey and I think it may be better than me giving you a hundred thousand dollars.”

I thought a minute about what a stupid ass I must have looked like. While feeling I needed to get out of this place, I glanced at my watch and it was now 1:30PM. I felt panic. Man, I was already five minutes late for a board meeting. It was pretty hard to see how a book was going to help me. Maybe it was another one of those get rich quick or management conditioning books. Man, I’d seen them all! But I decided to take it and be polite.

“I don’t even know your name and I have to urgently leave. My name is Tom and I will take you up on the book. Thank you very much. How can I get it back to you?”

“Tom, I am pleased to meet you. Don’t concern yourself about the book. My name is John and I hope it helps.”

I didn’t even shake hands. I just turned and went, still thinking about the bum and his comments. There was a lasting burning image of the bum’s tears in my mind that would not go away.

Things moved fast that day. There was one problem after another draining me dry. By the end of the day I had so many new problems it was difficult to keep my composure. It was horrible and 5PM was a partial escape. As I started to leave, something stopped me. Glancing down, I picked up the book John gave me.

The drive home was less horrible for some reason. I guess the hourly news took my focus as it had so much bad stuff to report it was like a reprieve. Expecting to relax at home, when I got there, my wife Pam told me there were several messages from the tax hounds, the bank and a collection agency. Shit, here we go again I thought, is there no end to this crap? The word frazzled was not adequate to describe me. All I could think about was fear. My thoughts bombarded me like arrows. What if we lost the house, my job, my health? I better look into bankruptcy. I immersed myself into a pitiful state of fear. I wanted to cry but what the hell would that help? I know my wife Pam could feel my anguish. “Tom,” she said, “have this nice cold beer and sit down with me.”

So I did. And I tried to compose myself. I was trembling. I felt ill. I took a few sips and began to feel my brain slow down. Pam sat down beside me and held my hand. It settled me. I let loose with my frustrations.

“Well, honey, I had a pretty bad day as usual. Everywhere I turn there are these problems that suck out my energy. We don’t seem to get anywhere and now I am having some pretty ugly scenes with the directors. I think they may be looking for a younger guy at the helm. Then there is this bill crap you gave me. It never ends.”

“Tommy, you must have had something nice happen today?”

I just looked at her. I know she felt my tension. She was grasping to change the mood. It broke my thought pattern. “Well, Pam, I did have an interesting lunch when I went down to the park. I met an unusual man, a very cool guy who healed a kid with some energy and then he changed a bum’s life with a hundred dollar bill. It was pretty bizarre. He gave me a book he was reading and I didn’t even get his full name or where to return it.”

“Oh,” she said with a fresh smile, “you see, things can’t be all bad. Why don’t you try to relax and just think about us while I get supper?”

I felt the softness and the concern but it just didn’t help. I was thinking about us. What are we to do? And so it went. My life’s journey was a path of crisis to crisis.

It was on a weekend that I was sipping a beer at home and noticed the book on the table. The beer was like a little trigger to stop the mind noise for a brief time. I recalled the park situation and my curiosity began to get the better of me. I picked up the book and looked at the title. I don’t know why but something compelled me to open it. I randomly opened the book and looked at the page. I began to read:

‘...every person has a polarity to them that varies between love and fear. Every thought is one or the other but whether it is love or fear depends upon the source. Every thought invokes energy that manifests itself into action causing an experience. Just like you can choose to get up now or not, transforming a thought into physical action, you can choose thoughts if good and reject them if bad. It is through intent that this manifestation occurs and this is how you can either reactively follow, or proactively create your destiny. The power is yours to take by simple intent.’

Oh, yeah, sure! Give me a break! Suddenly another thought wave came. Wow, that’s pretty heavy, I now thought. I began to think about the bum and what he said about changing his life. Is it as simple as that I asked myself? Curiosity made me flip to another area of the book. My eyes stopped at a certain place.

‘...there are the purest of thoughts based on love, truth and joy and there are the others that can quickly become rooted in fear if not checked. The tendency is to not understand the basis and power of these three fundamental forces of love, truth and joy and become consumed into fear, hatred and conflict. This aspect forms the basis for your soul’s duality, one with a higher spiritual purpose and the other being the physical body that you and the soul are trapped in. The link between the two is your mind.’

That was enough. Soul’s duality? I put the book down and leaned back. This was a bit far out. Somebody should tell this soul to get to work on some spirit stuff! But there was a lingering notion left about the paragraph. I would have to think about that. Then, like clockwork, it was a mere thirty seconds before my mind started to fill with less spiritual thoughts. It was time to get back on the fear channel with things that were going wrong and what was I

going to do. I noticed this pervasive process and wondered why that crap always came into my head when I was having a nice philosophical moment? That night those two paragraphs raced around in my head as if they had been branded into the brain. Then they would get chased out by those negative fear demons. I would try to bring the nice thoughts back again. By morning, once again the bad crap had won. I had slept only an hour. I must have looked pretty bad.

At breakfast, I was pretty quiet. As I said goodbye to my wife, I said, "You know, I have a strange feeling I am going to meet this guy again."

It was odd, but those words in the book kept haunting me as I drove to work. But it wasn't long before my mind was filled with the usual negative information. I seemed to get it everywhere. There was bad news on the radio, thinking of what I was going to tell the banker, things at work. Life just dragged on in endless agony like a broken spinning record.

Then there was an interesting change. It wasn't until about three weeks later that something strange happened. My wife and I had decided to take a weekend outing and take the canoe out for a paddle. I had almost forgotten I had it. Pam convinced me to get out. It was a nice day and I was trying desperately to make a life for us by having a few peaceful moments among the deluge of daily problems.

Well, after the hassle of trying to strap it on the car, we finally got to the lake. There was junk all over the shore but the tranquility captured me as we launched the canoe into the still waters. Ahh, this is better. How refreshing it was as we slid into another time and place. Man, I thought, why can't life be like this all the time? Nice and simple, pure and peaceful. Pam beamed with the stillness and beauty of nature. Then, insidiously my thoughts changed pushing the others out. Where did I go wrong? I obviously made some wrong choices. Why can't I find more peace and joy? I had to catch myself from dropping back into what problems would have me in fear next week.

On the way home, we decided to stop at a pub for a beer and a burger. We would both enjoy that and I knew of a great place close by. As we entered the pub, I could not believe my eyes. There was John sitting at a table by the fireplace. My God, I thought, how strange. Reflecting instantly to that stupid moment of asking for the hundred thousand dollars, my first impulse was to avoid him or leave. But Pam was so excited about stopping for this beer and burger. As we sat down, I sheepishly pointed out to Pam that this was the guy. It was John. Her reaction was immediate. "So why not invite him over?" she beamed. It was too late, As I was getting up, John noticed us and came over.

"Well hi, Tom," he said with excitement, "nice to see you again. I just noticed you. Why don't you and your friend come and join us over there?"

Interesting, I thought. On one hand I knew I would see him again and on the other hand I wanted to avoid him. Was I going nuts? I had been thinking quite a lot about John and what he had told me. I had even picked up that book and scanned a few more sections but this was so different to what I was used to reading. It was fascinating but it did not really sink in. I was drawn to it but I really needed the time to concentrate on this new age stuff. Anyway, I was still struggling with the old age stuff so I had rationalized myself out of spending the effort. It didn't matter now however. Pam was up like a shot. "We would be honored," she said as her smile exploded.

"Sure, John," I responded. "nice to see you again." So we accepted John's offer and headed over. After introductions, we sat and chatted. John's wife, Joy was radiant. She and Pam hit it off instantly. Like two long lost buddies, they quickly absorbed each other's communications. I was now drawn to John like a magnet. I don't know what we talked about but the words between the four of us flowed as if we had been friends for decades. John and his wife Joy were so fascinating. We were oblivious to everything around us. Before we knew it, several hours passed and several glasses of wine and beer disappeared. When I looked at my watch, I was startled at the time. Obviously no one else cared. I broke the mood. "Christ, look at the time," I interjected, "I think we better go, Pam."

Dead silence. I immediately felt like I had pissed in the soup. It was time to leave. We all stood up at the same time. I extended my hand to say goodbye. I felt John's hand was warm and firm. I almost felt a buzz go through me. Then John's wife came over and gave me a hug. Man, I thought, that's different! I was not used to that, but it felt very warm and sincere.

"Tom," she said, "you and Pam must come over for dinner some evening and we can continue our chat. It was so very nice to meet both of you. I know John feels the same. It is as if we have known you two before. What about

next weekend? Are you available?"

I was quite taken by that. It was a strange thing for her to say about us knowing her before but the comment bounced away. "We would be delighted." Pam replied. As we turned and walked away, I couldn't help but wonder what it was we spent several hours talking about. Life is strange, I thought to myself. My wife was quite taken as well. "What a neat couple," she said, "Tommy, I really enjoyed the whole day and what a nice end to an evening. They certainly have an interesting life. Makes you really wonder what it is in life you really want and really need, doesn't it, Tommy?"

Feeling a few hairs on my neck rise, I instantly took exception. I paused. Something had stopped me. I wasn't sure how to take that comment. First, I didn't think we really talked about anything important. Secondly, what was Pam suggesting here? Didn't we know what we needed? Then something hit me. I had a flashback to the second paragraph I read in John's book. Duality? Maybe we don't know what we want. But it was a great day. The time flew but it did feel comfortable and peaceful, and it had really cost us nothing. After a few seconds, unlike my usual reaction, I had to concur. "Yes, we had a nice simple day and met some great people. Sometimes I also wonder about all these rainbows we chase when the pot of gold may already be at our feet. Maybe we just don't recognize it." Pam smiled and held my hand tighter.

Geez, that squeeze was a nice reaction. It felt good. I felt a buzz. Usually I would have launched an attack at poor innocent Pam. So why did I agree with her this time I thought to myself? Where did that comment come from? Was that me that said it? Then impulsively a new thought fired through my mind. I was about to say something to kill the mood, and possibly ruin the essence of the whole day. It was the old me escaping again. My ego couldn't take it. The question 'Pam, what the hell do you really mean by that?' was forming when I heard 'Let it be' through a little mysterious voice in me. So I left it alone. It was like a first encounter with another entity.

Isn't that interesting I thought. I recalled the two paragraphs I had read in John's book. I could have changed the goodness of a whole day with one stupid comment from the ego. I couldn't help being perplexed. Can one simple statement be that powerful as to create a days worth of negative feelings? And I had had the choice. And can one statement also be so powerful as to create a complete day of positive energy?

