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THE BROKEN JUKE BOX

Jeffery saw the open door and walked out of the building. He had only one thought...how wonderful it is to be outside. As he lifted his eyes to the blue sky with its wispy white clouds and bright sunlight, the palms of his hands followed...how wonderful that such light exists!

Sally ended her break in the cafeteria and said "Later girls" to the rest of the nurses. She left out the back way into the dock area because she had business in the supply room. Knowing there would be several boxes for her to pick up, she went over to the big over-hang doors to pick up a hand truck. That's when she noticed the open exit door. It should have been locked shut. She went over to it and stuck her head out. Was there anyone out there and had just forgotten to close it? No body.

There was not a truck, no one walking around...but it must have been the delivery man. He was here a while ago. The door was supposed to be self closing, but it was broken as usual. The janitor wouldn't have left it open; he said that he was too responsible. It was the delivery man, she concluded. She closed the door, wishing she could have been there to bawl him out. He was cute. She felt sorry she missed him, but when the door slammed shut, so did the thought. A sanitarium was not a good place to meet a body.

Dr. Ross's secretary Dorothy poked her head into the rec' room and called out, "Has anyone seen Jeff?"

Jeff was an hour late for his time with Dr. Ross. He was usually very prompt and didn't have to be rounded up like most patients. There was no response from the inmates sitting at the various tables, just the mummer of everyone talking, not all of them talking to themselves.

"The one they call Jesus!" she called out, wanting desperately for someone to answer.

One voice with a deep southern accent answered, "Babe, he done an' gone ta Heaben an' he ain't comin' back fo' anotha two thousan' yars." Chuckles rippled across the room. Dorothy gritted her teeth, being quite piqued, and left to look elsewhere.

Raphael was the head nurse. When she got word that Jeff was missing and that not one person had seen him anywhere, she slammed his metal file folder against her desk. Her mouth pruned inward, and she stormed out of her office. She rounded up all the nurses having to do with Jeff and drilled them with her shrill voice. She found out that it had been lunchtime since anyone had seen him. Nurse Raphael stormed down to the cafeteria. Dinner was being placed into the steam table. She questioned each worker. Yes, each one said, he had been eating at his usual table with his friend John. John Bobo, she found, was too drugged up to say anything coherently. She went to Dr. Ross. He authorized a complete search of the whole compound. The police were informed, not that he was dangerous, but they wanted him back if he had left the sanitarium. Guards were placed at each door, both inside and outside. Every room and hallway was searched. All air ducts and crawl spaces were probed. Nurse Raphael fumed as she chewed the end of her pencil. All reports added up to one fact: Jeffery John Doe was not in the building or the whole of the compound. Somebody was going to get fired!

Sally had noticed all the commotion and found out from a fellow nurse that someone had escaped. She remembered the open door and had covered her mouth with her dainty hand. When asked

what was wrong, she simply replied that she had forgotten something and skirted away. She was not going to tell anyone what she knew and jeopardize her job. Her last job didn't work out because she fraternized with the patients, and Nurse Raphael who knew everything about everybody didn't particularly like that fact. She had been fired after persuading one patient not to take his medicine. She was being very careful with this new job, trying to prevent getting on the wrong side of the head nurse. It was a miracle she got this job at all. She thought maybe Dr. Ross was sweet on her, but she didn't investigate that idea.

Sally was completely ignorant, though, of having been seen closing that door. It had been her friend Dorothy. Sally found out when in line for dinner in the cafeteria and had turned a very beautiful pink. Dorothy had said, "Well, Sally, aren't you going to say anything about that open door you closed?" She laughed merrily at seeing the shock on Sally's face. It hadn't occurred to Dorothy to connect the missing Jeff with Sally closing that door until she had been bawled out by Nurse Raphael.

"What are you talking about?" responded Sally defensively, putting her hand up to her mouth.

"I'm talking about," Dorothy said, seeing peas being put on her plate. She turned to the serving lady and said, "I don't want those peas. Will you give me some green beans please. Thank you." The serving lady was openly aggravated having to throw out the peas, screwing up her face and taking up a long soliloquy. Dorothy turned back to Sally. "You know, the exit door down on the docks?"

Sally pressed her lips together and gave Dorothy a hard look. Dorothy responded with an "Oh!" looking around at all the ears that could hear. She motioned to Sally with her head, meaning, "Let's go sit at a corner table so we can be alone." As they left the line with their trays full and steaming, they spotted a corner table by the back window looking out onto the dock area. Sally sat down and looked at the large over-hang doors and pictured in her mind one of them opening to let in that handsome delivery man. She then caught herself staring at the exit door. It held a particular fascination. She imagined that if she were to open it and go out, she would just disappear like that Jeff guy did.

"You can see how easily it is for someone to see you from here," Dorothy said.

"Um hum." Sally put her coffee down and turned her head towards Dorothy. "What can I do Dorothy? I can't afford to lose this job. I can't be responsible for...for this missing person ...and I'm scared stiff of Nurse Raphael!"

"You should have spoken up, but it's too late now."

"That nurse is mean!" Sally said biting into her roast beef. "You gonna tell?" she mumbled.

"You know I wouldn't. You should be glad it was me that saw you. I didn't speak up then, you know. Now it might be me that gets into trouble."

"Okay, okay, I know!" Sally dabbed at her mashed potatoes and stabbed at her peas, trying to put everything on her fork at

once. "What was he in for? What was he like?"

"Who?"

"Jeff!...Jeff! The guy that disappeared."

"Oh, Jeff," and Dorothy took a bite of her buttered bun. "He was..." It was hard to talk with her mouth full. "He was brought in for walking down Main Street in the nude. When they found that he was a mental retard and didn't know of any family, they sent him here. Nurse Raphael named him Jeffery because of his deep blue eyes. You should see them..." Dorothy said dreamily. "They are so clear, and they look right through you."

"I thought they would throw someone like that in jail."

"They did, but since he seemed to be on drugs, they sent him over here for treatment...but his eyes, they make you want to faint right into his arms."

Sally giggled. "I still can't see why they sent him over here. There's all kinds of looneys on the streets that we have no room for here. What makes him so special?"

"It's his eyes..." They both laughed. "I guess they didn't have the heart to turn him back out onto the streets. He's so innocent. You would have to meet him and look into those darling eyes. You would be feeling sorry for him yourself, or fall madly in love with him. I guess the police felt sorry for him." Dorothy stared at Sally with the eyes of a cow.

"Well, I guess you fell for him."

"You would too...and he's always cleaning up someone else's mess or trying to straighten out quarrels or trying to comfort

someone. You should see him," Dorothy said, getting very excited. "He is so pure and innocent, like he has never reached puberty or something. He can't even dress himself...I had to dress him once. He just sat there and smiled at me."

"That would give me the willies!"

"It's sort of sad that they continue to give him drugs and shock therapy, but it doesn't seem to phase him somehow. He doesn't belong here. He belongs in a monastery. I never believed there could be anything holy about a man, but he..." Dorothy said as she faded off into her own thoughts.

"Well," said Sally, finishing up the rest of her coffee, "Lunch is over and I won't ever get to see your `holy' man now."

Sally's and Dorothy's conversation ended as a large shadow crept over their trays. Both hearts sunk as they turned to find Nurse Raphael looming over them.

"Will you girls follow me to my office please?" she said with a forced smile.

Sally and Dorothy quietly obeyed, feeling as though they were turkeys being led to the chopping block. They just knew they were going to get fired. Sally got off the bus the next morning having a weird feeling inside her. She attributed it to a dream she had. The feeling of that dream wouldn't leave. As she approached the gate of the sanitarium, she didn't enjoy the nice chill of the morning air as usual. It was the only time during the summer that was comfortable. Her mind was dwelling on that chewing-out she and Dorothy received yesterday from Nurse Raphael and mixed it up

with that dream which seemed to be of that Jeff guy. His disappearance seemed to have become some kind of climax in her life that she didn't understand...what a fiasco...a mental case on the loose...the city is full of them. One more wouldn't hurt, she thought. Yet, Nurse Raphael made her feel that she was responsible for letting him out...a person not able to take care of himself. He can't feed or clothe himself (she thought). He will probably starve if they don't find him. The one-time chewing-out wasn't so bad as the feeling that this sort of thing might happen often between she and this head nurse.

Breakfast churned in her stomach as she touched the tall cold iron gate. It had a red brick arch overhead. Once through that gate, something seemed to say inside of her, you can never turn back. She pulled away from the gate. She wasn't going to be forced into any situation. She never would open that gate again. Holding her purse close against her sick stomach, she walked quickly away in the opposite direction from the bus stop.

She came upon a little park full of shade trees with benches along its sinuous paths. She sat down on one of the ice cold cement benches. She could feel the spirit of the place and sought it to fill her emptiness. But she got up again, feeling restless and cold. What the hell, she thought, was she doing walking away from her job? She walked on, and the further she got from her job, the further from that sanitarium, the freer she felt. She began to feel giddy. She felt like dancing and twirling around one of those zinc painted lamp posts and singing, but no, she decided, putting her hand on one the posts, seeing the paint peel off... the

pole was too dirty, and for sure, everyone would look at her funny. She saw a policeman glance her way...so, she just held those feelings inside herself. She smiled, held her purse close to her bosom and walked on.

Sally walked all day, walking away from her brownstone apartment, away from her job, away from her life. The thought of going back to her apartment brought on feelings of dread. For some reason, it was like going home to a sick mother who would drain all the life from her like a vampire. She needed no one to feed upon her, especially herself. Her mother had long since died, but the spirit of her mother lived on in that ugly old apartment and took the form of her apartment. She knew that if she went back to it today after walking away from her job, that apartment and all its responsibilities would engulf her. She felt that she would die there a spiritual death, having to find some job she couldn't stand, become alone and afraid, becoming another old maid that had to work in order to just survive. If the job didn't kill her, the economic system would. The new spirit and freedom she had found today, the courage to go on living free could die. She would hold herself to that new found freedom.

Sally was now on the edge of town. The buildings were run-down shacks. They hadn't been painted in decades. A lot of the windows were broken out or boarded up...stores boarded up...red brick ware houses...multistoried boarded up windows...graffiti painted everywhere as high as arms could reach...more of it social than vulgar. The people were black...a black neighborhood! How did

she get here? Walk fast. Keep your head up. Look for a bus stop.

What was a nurse, a white-on-white nurse doing in this neighborhood? She must be lost. That's right, she must be lost. She was embarrassed. She could feel everyone staring at her. Her face was surely red, her heart was pounding so. She walked faster. It was getting dark. She didn't want to be caught in this neighborhood in the dark with dark-on-dark watching her with white eyes piercing through the blackness...white teeth grinning like Alice-in-Wonderland Cheshire cats.

"What ire you a doin' chil'?" came a voice out of the darkness.

"Huh?" Sally jerked.

"I say, what ire you a doin'?"

Sally saw what she thought was a homeless bag lady wearing a black sweater that was too big for her stout body. Her gray bristly hair stuck out in several places from a red and black scarf. White teeth spoke out of the blackness that was a face, "You lookin' fo' da Lo'd in dis place? Don' look fo'im heah chil', he ain't heah," cried the bag lady with the fierceness of a mountain lion on a city street with its ears pulled back and its white fangs ready to tear a person's flesh.

Sally began to run down the street with her hair standing on end. Her whole being reverberated with the sound of that woman's raspy voice. She heard her call again.

"What chu gonna do?" trailed the lady's voice as Sally ran

down the street. "Look fo'im in da wildaness? He ain't in no wildaness. Don' look fo'im in no wildaness!"

Sally saw a bus drive up to a bus stop on the opposite corner of a cross street. With all her strength, she ran, yelling, hoping the bus driver would hear her. The bus started pulling away from the corner and crossed the street. Sally had run out into the street to catch the bus, but now she had to run back to the other side waving her hand at the bus. The bus driver or someone must have seen her, for the bus crossed the intersection and stopped.

Sally clamored aboard completely out of breath, and the bus pulled away. She had no breath to say "Thank you," but she managed a smile as she put her coins in the coin box. Haltingly, she moved to an empty seat above the left front wheel. Hugging her purse, Sally stared straight ahead and tried to catch her breath. She sat as stiff as possible...blacks on each side of her and in front of her. She was sure they hated her. She could feel their piercing eyes. She breathed slowly so as not to smell them...something oily...it was an oily smell she couldn't identify. Trying not to breathe and needing so desperately to breathe, she almost burst.

Staring out the opposite window, Sally saw a Greyhound Bus Depot sign. It was an inspiration, for reflected off the window as though it were passing through the greyhound was the image of her bank logo. She twisted around to see it out of the window behind her as it passed down the street. She almost sat in the

lap of the elderly black lady next to her.

"Watch it lady!" the black lady cried, grabbing her bag of groceries.

Sally grabbed the cord above her head and rang the bell. She popped out of her seat and raced for the door.

"Wait 'till the bus stops, lady!" called out the bus driver. "Oh," she said, and went back a step, holding to the chrome rod above her. She jerked suddenly as the bus came to an abrupt stop. She quickly exited and ran over to the bank.

Using her bank card, Sally withdrew all of her bank account from the night-teller machine. She had enough for the bus fare and a few hundred from her savings account. She had an aunt she figured she could live with in California until she could find another job. That sounded safe enough. She took her money, put it in her purse and headed for the bus depot across the street. She didn't have to wait long before she was gliding down the freeway and crossing a bridge over the river. Leaning her seat back, she fell asleep quickly. She dreamed of that funny guy that had escaped from the sanitarium...Jeff.

CHAPTER TWO

Jeff hopped out of the truck overjoyed at what he saw before him. Here was a gas station out in the middle of nowhere. It might be New Mexico or Arizona, he wasn't sure, but...he didn't care. It had a restaurant and gift store inside. In the window, there was a "Help Wanted" sign, just like he knew there would be. He thanked the driver of the pick-up he came in as they both met at the pump. The man started filling up with ethyl. He also thanked the man for all the long and interesting conversations they had. He had been picked up in Amarillo...and how he got from the east coast, he didn't remember.

"Is this where you want to be?" asked the kindly gentleman crowned with white hair. He smiled through his neatly trimmed white mustache.

"Yes. This is my new job," Jeff said, beaming, and returning the smile. Jeff always grinned from ear to ear when he smiled.

"Gerber's" glowed red against a brightly lit background. The almost rectangular, almost oval sign hung high above the entrance and brought daylight to the area around the pumps and the low red building. Just beyond the swarms of beetles bombarding the sign, over to the left, Jeff could make out the double door garage. Tinkering section, thought Jeff. The other wing of the building was bare except for a red brick composite siding. The large picture windows showed a long soda counter on the left with the rest of the room scattered with tables and chairs. He could see a parting in the center of the tables which led to a darkened hallway...probably the restrooms, he

thought. Red leather booths seemed to line the back wall. There was an old man behind a scrolled and silver cash register sitting on a stool reading a newspaper. Towards the window was a glass case filled with all kinds of gums and mints and little nick-nacks and souvenirs

Night spread its peace in all directions from this little place. This was the right place, alright. A swath of stars were the only other lights seen out beyond the influence of "Gerber's". There was a surprising absence of old tin signs which usually cluttered places such as this. The place looked clean of advertising inside and out...no nostalgia to attract a person, yet, it had a homey feeling about it. It had a living presence, like God sitting in the Holy of Holies...and the holiness stretched out in all directions into the dark night.

Jeff waited for the driver, contemplating the place in ecstasy. As both men entered the front door, a little bell above them tinkled joyously. Jeff quickly grabbed the "Help Wanted" sign from the window and waited patiently behind the old man as he paid for his gas. They said goodbye to each other and the bell tinkled again as the old man left. That left Jeff grinning at Mr. Gerber, the owner of the place. He placed the big awkward sign on the counter on the right of the cash register.

"I'm your man," Jeff said with glee.

Mr. Gerber stared at him a moment. He was bald on top, had large ears, nose and lips. What gray hair he had was just around his ears and hanging down his neck. He looked like a white Indian.

"So you're my replacement." He didn't interview Jeff, he

just said, "Gettin' too old for this business...maybe I've outgrown it," he said with a mischievous smile, showing his gold fillings. He came out from behind the counter through a worn dark wood swinging door taking the "Help Wanted" sign with him. His movements were slow and careful. He turned back towards Jeff and handed him the sign.

"You mind staying up all night?" Mr. Gerber asked.

"No...I don't sleep much," responded Jeff, handling the sign as though he didn't know what to do with it.

Mr. Gerber pushed the air with his forefinger. "You'll need that sign," he said. "Put it back in the window."

Jeff grinned and obediently replaced the sign in the window. When he turned around, Mr. Gerber was gone.

Taking his place behind the cash register, Jeff sat down on the stool and sat there grinning. Everything was turning out just as he believed it would, for he had dreamed it.

Morning came and Mr. Gerber found Jeff out front turned east enjoying the fiery clouds of sunrise. The morning chill was breathed deeply by both. Without turning, Jeff said, "I'm going to enjoy this place, Mr. Gerber."

"Yes, it's beautiful come rain or come shine," Mr. Gerber said, petting the black cat that sat on his shoulder. He walked up to Jeff's right side.

"How's Meow today," Jeff asked as though he had been introduced, which he hadn't. "Oh, he's as old and cantankerous as me and still purring."

"Good...that's fine."

When the sun shone bright with white light pouring over the landscape and reaching its fingers through the clouds and over the sky, they both turned to see the sun's shadow held in the finger tips of the western horizon.

"You notice it too," said Jeff with gratitude to know that there was someone like himself.

"Yes," he replied, "then you must be Jeffery." The one he had seen in his dreams.

"I AM," Jeff replied with a smile as their eyes met.

"You are my dream friend. We have met many times."

"That is right," Jeff responded, shaking the old man's hand.

Meow growled in warning not to get too close.

"He's all right Meow," said Mr. Gerber, petting the old cat. Then, turning back to Jeff, "Well..." he said introspectively as he put his finger to his mouth, "I will be entering a different kind of dream scape soon."

"Meow has said as much."

"Yes, I'm getting tired of this one...not that it isn't good and beautiful...there's just something more that I want now...and I go willingly."

"You seem tired when you wake up nowadays," Jeff sympathized.

"Yes..." and Mr. Gerber looked upward, rubbed the back of his leathery neck, full of wrinkles like chicken feet, and said, "Well, I guess I'd better go out back and prepare."

"Okay."

"You can go ahead and take care of this customer?"

"Sure thing, Mr Gerber."

Mr. Gerber went in through the front door with Meow on his shoulder. He tried to pet the cat again, but she hissed and jumped down, running for the back door. They had had a disagreement about Jeff. She waited and growled for him to open the door.

Jeff turned toward the sun to watch for the customer coming down the road. He couldn't see him yet, but he shaded his eyes with his hand and waited for a moment. Like Mr. Gerber, he could feel him coming. In another moment, a dark speck showed up in the glare of the sun. In a couple of minutes, a red Ranger came down the highway and drove to a stop by the pumps. Jeff greeted the man eagerly.

"What will you have?"

"Oh, premium unleaded," he said, sticking his head out of the window and being surprised at being served even though he didn't see any self-service signs.

As Jeff started pumping, the man got out.

"Would you like some breakfast this beautiful morning?" Jeff asked with his usual grin from ear to ear.

"Humph? Oh, I was just thinking how my mother made such good eggs and bacon and home-made biscuits." He hadn't planned on it, but the boy's cheerfulness was inviting. "How about some fresh coffee? You have some fresh coffee? I've been driving all night and still have a way to go," he added.

"Yes sir, comin' right up."

"Oh, where's the old man that used to be here?"

"He's out back taking care of something."

"No one at the counter?"

Jeff pointed to the "Help Wanted" sign.

"Oh, I see...help wanted. Well, I wont bother today."

"No bother. Come right in," Jeff said as he headed for the front door to usher the man in.

"Tank full?"

"Yes sir." Jeff pointed to the numbers on the pump.

Queer, thought the man, scratching the back of his neck. Usually takes longer to fill the tank. "Okee dokee, let's see them vittles," he said imitating Jeff's assumed accent.

Up to the counter the man came, twirling around on the round red leather stool. He laughed a little and felt quite giddy. Jeff went through the swinging door in the counter and disappeared into the kitchen. It wasn't a minute later when he came out with eggs and bacon sizzling on a hot oval white plate. There were home-made biscuits filled with melting butter and a little side dish of jelly. Placing that before the man, he reached under the counter for silverware rolled up in a cloth napkin and gave that with a glistening smile to the man. As Jeff turned around, the smell of fresh roasted coffee filled the air, whereas before, there had been none. He turned back around rattling a cup and saucer and sat that down in front of the man without spilling a drop. The man was awed at how fast he got his food, and it tasted better than fast food service.

"This is just how I like it," said the man who now was the one grinning from ear to ear. "How did you know?"

"And here's some nice refreshing spring water, not well

water," Jeff said as he placed a tall glass before the man. "Is there anything else I can get you?"

"Not unless," the man answered with a mouthful, trying to swallow. "Not unless you have today's paper, which I doubt. This is a pretty isolated place."

"Today's newspaper coming right up," and Jeff reached under the counter and handed him a paper that smelled like fresh printer's ink.

"Well, well, now that's service," the man said as he flipped open the paper. It almost crackled.

"I am pleased to serve my first customer," Jeff said, wiping down the counter. After a while, Jeff asked, "What's your name?"

"Rob McCormic...business man, salesman. What's your handle?"

"I Am...Jeff."

They talked a while as Jeff cleaned up the counter. Rob told him about selling seeds and veterinary medicine to cattle feeders and ranchers and other paraphernalia that had to do with cattle production. Jeff said that he was and always will be Jeff. Right now, he was serving counter.

As the cash register rang, Rob asked, "And why did you find yourself out here in the middle of nowhere, if I may ask?"

"I dreamed about being out here on a plane underneath the vastness of sky and stars for a long time. It's wonderful for the spirit."

"Well, keep healthy." As Rob opened the door and the bell tinkled, he heard an old Indian chant. "Ugh, is that Mr. Gerber I hear?"

"Yes," said Jeff matter-of-factly.

"I always thought he was an Indian, but I never heard him do that

before."

Jeff escorted Rob back to his Ranger. "We could go talk to him, but he doesn't want to be disturbed right now."

"Well," and Rob put his hand on the door and turned to face Jeff, "I guess I'll see him next time around."

"Sure, if you want to." Only if you want to join him on his next journey, thought Jeff. "Thanks now, and have a good trip."

"Thank you for them good vittles and the good company." He got in and slammed the door. Sticking his head out he added, "Get's lonesome out here!"

"Yes, but not lonely. Goodbye."

"Bye."

Jeff watched the red Ranger disappear into the horizon and over the rippling hills. He then went back inside.

Out back Mr. Gerber was sitting cross-legged by a hole in the ground, chanting. He was dressed in brightly colored homespun instead of store-bought clothes with a red bandanna tied around his head. Meow was sitting on his shoulder again, sometimes licking his cheek, nibbling on his ear or pawing at his face, slowly, as if to see if he were still there. It didn't seem to bother Mr. Gerber; he kept on chanting.

Jeff went out the back door to check on his dream friend. He caught the screen door behind him so it wouldn't slam. He stooped down on the step and waited for awhile. He wound up sitting cross-legged himself.

Every morning for several days, Jeff kept watch with Mr.

Gerber as he waited for his death to come. Whenever he sensed a customer coming, Jeff would leave and serve him or sometimes a family with children who swarmed over the store and the outside. Whenever the children wanted to watch the Indian outside, their parents would usually get embarrassed, but would refrain from yelling at them or hitting them whenever Jeff was present. They would get even more embarrassed when he would tell them that the old man was dying. They would whisk their children away as though they had been exposed to a plague.

It was on an evening after a particularly fiery sunset that the old man died. He raised up quickly, turned around towards Jeff having a startled expression on his face. Meow, the black cat, for some unknown reason, rose up and arched its back, started hissing and scratching its master. That caused the old man to fall backwards into the hole and onto a cement slab. Meow leaped as the old man fell. He hit his head on the slab and broke both his head and his neck. Blood oozed from his nose and drained from the back of his head onto the slab. Both Jeff and the old man had been startled by such a violent death. Meow arched his back again and hissed and ran off to the north, to the mountains and was never seen again. That was the end, so Jeff covered the old man with rocks and then with dirt.

A Greyhound bus pulled up out front. There were a lot of people to be served. There would not be a proper time to say any goodbyes to the old man, especially after one of the customers handed him the "Help Wanted" sign. She was wearing a nurse's uniform, and her name was Sally. Her nurse's uniform immediately served

as a waitress's dress, as she was put to work then and there.

CHAPTER THREE

Joe had been homeless for years. He had wandered the streets of the city for food and clothing, stealing what he could get away with, even slipping bottles of whiskey from the pockets of other homeless, though, not from his territory. He looked like a lion with his main of matted hair and beard. He lived in a cardboard box in an alley community of cardboard boxes. He frequently got into fights, but being congruent with his looks, he fought like a lion and therefore survived.

Joe's story started in Viet Nam. He was forced to kill the people he was sent over there to protect as well as the enemy. Sometimes he couldn't even tell who his enemy was. Was it little children who were dressed up as live bombs to blow both you and themselves to pieces? Was it the innocent bystanders that got in the line of fire or who were witnesses to a patrol? Was it your own troops when they got out of line? He had rebelled against the killing...the senseless killing! He had gone mad, tried to kill his officers, been thrown into brig, tried to wipe out his memories with drugs and alcohol...he got sent home on a medical. Even though freed from drugs, he slipped out of the hospital and out of society and back into drugs.

Ned was Joe's only friend, a black unemployed musician who lived next to him. They had been buddies for a long time and looked out for each other. They shared what they got with each other, even the alcohol and pills. They didn't mess with needles, it was to

much like another war they didn't want any part of.

They often talked late into the night about philosophy and how the world is made. Social issues caused heated arguments and talks about the cutting edge of science would cause elation sucked out of a bottle. They especially liked to tell each other their dreams and try to interpret them, but most often, Joe's dreams were nightmares of Viet Nam. Ned would hold him in his arms as Joe screamed and cried.

One morning, very early, when Ned would have rather slept in, Joe woke Ned up. He was very excited.

"Ned, Ned, I'm out of the jungle!" he cried. "Ned, I'm out of the jungle!"

Ned wandered around in his brain, trying to reach out through veils of numbness to his friend. He rubbed his face and groaned, trying wake up...oh, yes...bad dreams...Joe has bad dreams...have to comfort him. He tried to sit up and put his arm around Joe.

"No, no, Ned! I'm out! I'm out in the clearing!"

Oh, yes, thought Ned, now I remember. Joe always has these dreams that he can't get back into the clearing and gets stuck in the jungle...oh...now he's out. He had always been lost.

"Woa, boy," said Ned groggily. "Calm down now. Tell me what happenin'."

Joe got comfortable inside Ned's box. They both were bent over with their arms around each other, trying to fit.

"It was a man all in white," Joe began. "He took me by the

hand and led me out of the jungle into a big field. No, not a field, but a desert...like Arizona."

"What'd the man look like?" asked Ned curiously.

"He wore a white smock. He smiled at me...and his eyes just gleamed with joy! Heh, heh...makes me happy, Ned...makes me happy! I feel drunk! But I know I'm stone cold sober, Ned, and happy!"

Ned prided himself on being a psycho-analyst, so he got as close to Joe as possible and asked him to give him a few details about the dream.

"At first, I heard him call my name, see?"

"Um-hum," Ned intoned.

"Then I thought that was no slant-head...couldn't be. Had to be a friendly."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. The voice was beautiful, but it could be a trick."

"Yeah!"

"But it wasn't. When I thought that, I saw a light in the bushes...a light I could sense was good. But I held my gun just to make sure. The whole jungle lit up, and I put down that heavy gun. I thought the end was come."

"The end was come!"

"I thought for sure I had died, for I saw this being of light. I walked toward him."

"Who was he?"

"I don't know, but I did know! I recognized him, like I knew him

before. He smiled at me and took my hand. I felt safe with him...like a big brother I never had...and Ned, you know what?"

"What?"

Joe's eyes welled up with tears as he said, "He loved me. Ned, he loved me...more than anyone."

"Man, whatchoo gonna do with all this love an' happiness?"

"Ned," Joe said facing him, "he took me by the hand, and we went down this trail to where the jungle ended. No more darkness...no more fear; and there I was right out in the middle of good old Arizona on a highway. We went down this highway for miles until we came to this gas station. He pointed to this 'Help Wanted' sign in the window. Then I woke up. Ned...I think he wants my help! I think he wants me to go there and help him."

"Man, that was just a dream!" said Ned shocked that Joe would think of leaving him. "Yoe can't go off an' help no dream char-actor...yoe awake? Yoe show yoe ain't still a dreamin'?"

"Man, I'm more awake than I ever have been."

They both sat in silence wondering about Joe's dream. It was a sign all right...of something. It was unlike Joe to have anything but nightmares from Hell about fighting the Viet Cong. Now Joe had a dream right out of Heaven, and he thought it to be about a real person and a real place, somewhere you can just go right on down to. Joe was usually a practical person, Ned thought, but if he were planning to just get right up and leave to go off to a dream world, well, didn't that beat all!

"Joe, you ain't really plannin' to just up and go and leave me, the best

and only friend yoe got, are yoe?" and he hugged Joe a little tighter.

"Ned, there comes a time when a person has to stand on his own...when he has to take the initiative."

"You can't leave the city! Yoe loves the city. Yoe is a sworn enemy to so-ciety."

Joe got up and out of the box, having tugged away from his only friend. "A man has got to do what a man has got to do," he said.

"Whera is yoe goin'?"

"I'm 'goin'," he mocked, "to Arizona!"

"You mean right now? This very minute?"

"Out of the jungle, out of the city...out into the big country! I'm going big time, Ned, big time." The lion stretched and went on down the ally, leaving everything behind.

"Yoe can git lost...long ways." Ned lay back down. It wasn't quite dawn yet, and he wasn't quite done sleeping. Let the whitey go, he thought, don't need'im nowise. Don't need nobody.

Joe didn't pick up anything, he just walked out into the street and kept on walking. He didn't look back and didn't feel like looking back. He had a bright and wonderful day ahead of him. He was out of the jungle and leaving this concrete jungle. He looked around as he went, soaking up the cool fresh morning. The city was just waking up. The stars were twinkling

out, being replaced by the lights in the brownstones blinking on. The night people were turning in, saying goodbyes to their friends, others were getting up for day work. People were coming home from night jobs, and early wormers were leaving for theirs. Joe made his way to the docks. The market place had been alive for a couple of hours receiving and selling produce, meat and fish coming off the ships and trains. Boxes were being stacked, commands were being yelled out. Trucks missed each other by inches as they made their way through the noisy working crowds. Fork lifts ran in and out of holes of light in the darkness. Up in the sky, streaks of light heralded the brightening day.

Joe crossed a bridge of steel and concrete that day into a natural light. The street lamps of artificiality blinked off one by one as he passed them. He pretended to shoot them out with his finger as they went out, and he laughed. He had never before felt so light and cheery without help from drugs. This feeling he had was a clean feeling...like he had bathed on the inside.

Afternoon about four o'clock, Joe found himself in the suburbs in an alley, and by force of habit, he being hungry, he was looking in the dark green dumpsters. In one, he found half a pizza...what a find! It was as fresh as last night. He gobbled down two pieces at once and slapped the other two pieces in the

form of a sandwich into his G.I. pants pocket. A premonition took hold of him. He looked queerly at the next dumpster. He tilted his head. After years of looking in dumpsters, he started getting these premonitions of what was in the next dumpster. He was usually right. He would thus be able to find whatever he needed. He would say a polite "Thank You" to whatever gave him these blessings.

Joe walked over to the dumpster. He lifted the lid. It was pretty hot. He lifted the lid and pushed it backwards. It slammed down with a bang! He jerked, expecting someone to complain. He waited a moment. The alley was silent. People were at work...children were at school. He looked inside. Someone had just had a garage sale and what was left over was simply thrown away. There was clothing and boxes of magazines and books. But that's not what he was looking for. He rummaged deeper. When he felt what he was looking for, tears came to his eyes. A lump grew in his throat as he lifted up the little green leather case. It was soft but rigid and oblong. He knew there was an old straight razor inside. He opened the box. He caressed the blade with his finger. It was perfectly preserved. He sobbed in great big sobs, closing the box and leaning on the dumpster. The razor brought back long ago memories that he had forgotten, memories of his

beloved grandfather.

He had been the dearest old man, the only one that had ever told him he loved him. He had died when Joe was six years old. The old man had taken him on long walks in the woods and showed him the beautiful things in Nature and all the relationships of the plants and animals, the earth and man. He taught him to love his fellow man and be kind and forgiving like he himself was...but all that had been buried along with the old man...had been buried by all the experiences of his life...buried under the rifle fire of war. His knees became like jelly. He sunk down by the side of the dumpster and whimpered. A gentle hand seemed to touch his shoulder and he was comforted.

After a while, Joe was able to gather a kit of sorts with changes of clothes, eating utensils and a small amount of food. He slung that on his back in a kid's school pack, and he was on his way. He would walk to Arizona (if he couldn't catch a ride on a train or hitch-hike).

CHAPTER FOUR

Rob McCormick pulled into Gerber's place. The sun was just settling down behind the western horizon. He saw Gerber's sign and the large overhead lights come on. A clean shaven boy with a crew cut and a smile met him as he stopped at the pumps. He wore a pair of camouflaged G.I. trousers with a half dozen pockets on each side and a T-shirt. In one of those pockets, he carried a flat green box containing a straight razor.

"Hi, I'm Joe. What'll you have?" he said, bending down to look at Rob.

"Premium unleaded, and fill'er up, please," answered Rob.

Rob stepped out of his red Ranger while Joe cleaned his windows. He figured on going inside, say "Hello" to Mr. Gerber, and go to the restroom. When he went inside, he saw a blond waitress waiting on some Mexicans. Must be their beat-up old Chevy out there in the garage, he thought. He went to the restroom after having scanned the restaurant and seeing neither Mr. Gerber nor that young guy Jeff. There was a loud gurgling of the toilet that followed him out of the restroom. He looked around again and saw Jeff at the cash register. Jeff raised his hand.

"Glad you came, Rob; how are you doing?"

"Oh, hello, Jeff," Rob said, sitting down at the counter next to Jeff. "How's the cook? Looks like Mr. Gerber's got some more help. By the way, Where is the old man?"

"He's out back," replied Jeff.

"Oh, busy again, like last time I was here?"

"I reckon so," Jeff said in imitation of the western drawl and then smiled, handing him a cup of freshly brewed coffee and some silverware in a cloth napkin. "You hungry?" he asked to change the subject.

"I smell veal cutlets in the kitchen. I think that's what I'll have."

"Comin' right up, just as you like 'em."

Jeff disappeared through the swinging kitchen door, and Sally appeared before him, adding a glass of water to his table set.

"And what's your name, little girl?" He picked up his coffee, took a sip, smelled the aroma and thought he was in heaven. It was perfect...didn't need sugar or cream.

"Sally," she said, beaming.

"Rob, Rob McCormick," he said, offering his hand over the counter. She took it, and he gave her a little squeeze. "I've

never seen this place so alive. What happened to it? Mr. Gerber has lots of help now, and he still has that 'Help' sign in the window. Where is Mr. Gerber? Haven't seen him last time or this. He's usually sittin' on his stool over there whenever I come in."

"Oh, he's out back...wandering around, I suppose. He has the biggest back yard!"

"Now that he's got so much help, he doesn't need to work, eh? He's retired, eh?"

"You can say that," Sally said as she hurried and wiped the counter off.

Jeff came in with Rob's dish filled to the brim with veal cutlets, mashed potatoes, lots of pan gravy over the lot with a side dish of green beans and a salad.

"Yessiree, this place is alive," Rob said as he dove into his dinner. "New paint job," he said between chews. "Repairs every where...the garage open. The restroom seems brand new, its so clean."

"We've been keeping ourselves busy, but you can thank Joe outside for most of it," said Sally.

"The guy outside?"

"Yes, excuse me. I have more customers."

"Sure, sure!"

Sally came back to the counter after all the orders were

taken.

"Nice," continued Rob. "Yes, I like it. Reminds me of somewhere I went when I was a kid...Say! What made you come out here, out in the middle of nowhere? An' where do you live, anyway?"

"That's Jeff's doings," Sally answered all starry-eyed. "He sort of called out to us, and we answered. You would understand if you knew Jeff. And as for our living quarters, Joe's building some cabins out back. We all live with Jeff now, until they're finished."

"Cabins?"

"Yes. We're building some cabins out back."

"Oh, that's what Mr. Gerber is doing, eh? Turning this place into a motel?" Rob asked, chomping down his last bites.

"No, Jeff is building us a place to live. I'm assuming there will be others coming, and they will need places to live."

"But no motel?" he said wiping his mouth.

"No motel."

"A resort? Naw, that sounds a bit fishy. Here now, what does Mr. Gerber have to say about all this?"

"I simply don't know." Sally stared out into space and then said, "a hospice, I guess. Someplace where people who are tired

can come and rest...take a vacation and work at the same time."

"Huh?"

"Excuse me, there's a table for me to clean."

Rob looked over his shoulder and saw the Mexicans leaving. Jeff was escorting them out. Sally started cleaning their table. Rob studied Jeff. He seemed ageless. His being radiated youth, life, and health. It was instant knowledge just to look at him that he loved life, loved people, and loved serving them. Rob thought Jeff could grin down a wild bear, but unlike the legend of Davey Crockett, he would do it without devilment or any kind of belligerence. He would simply love the bear into compliance. That's what Rob felt in his presence...just simple love. It tamed his curiosity and his animosity, wondering what all these strangers were doing here at Mr. Gerber's. He forgot for the moment and just thought on his wonderful dinner and how well a cook was this Jeff. He watched as Jeff escorted the Mexicans out to their awaiting car. The bell above the door rang twice as the door was opened, Jeff putting a protective arm around the family and talking to them in their own language as the door closed. They must have fixed that old Chevy while they ate. The spell of reverence was broken when he remembered that they didn't pay.

"Say, Sally," he called out as she was entering the kitchen

from the north end with a pile of dishes in her arms.

"Yes?" she responded. She sat the dishes down just inside the door and walked towards him, smiling, and staying behind the counter.

"Do people have to pay before they eat, here?"

"No, of course not." She picked up a towel, and started wiping the counter.

"Then those people didn't pay a dime!" he said, cocking his head, half smiling, his eyes asking wildly.

"Charity case."

"Charity case? Well, I'll..."

Sally pointed to a board that hung over the counter. It said, "Charity Never Faileth."

Rob read the sign and said, "Well I'll be. You can't make a living this way! Does that come out of Jeff's salary then?" Rob stood up. The red leather stool twirled as he got off of it. "I pay for what I get," he said under his breath, but rather loudly.

"That will be three ninety five."

Sally walked over to the silver scrolled cash register. Rob followed, tapping each of the cushioned stools as he passed.

"We don't work for salaries," Sally said as she rang up his bill.

He felt now that this place was alien, like it had been taken over by these strangers and they just were taking advantage of a poor old man whom they perhaps kept locked up in the back somewhere. He wanted to go out back to where he knew Mr. Gerber's living quarters were and see if he was alright. He decided that he would slip around the building as soon as he got outside.

"You know, Rob," Sally interjected as he approached the door, "Jeff said there is an Infinite Supply if you know how to ask. I don't think we will go broke."

Rob shrugged his shoulders, opened the door, the bell tinkled, he shut the door, the bell tinkled again. He looked around. Both Jeff and the Mexicans were gone. Maybe Jeff went around back. Maybe he was in the garage with that Joe guy. He could hear someone swishing gasoline around as though he were cleaning something. He could smell it too. Anyway, Rob went in the opposite direction and went around back to see Mr. Gerber.

Rob saw a couple of one roomed cabins that had been framed on the west side. He noticed two cement slabs in front of him, so the cabins with the building would make a U-shape. Mr. Gerber's apartment was stuck out from the building on the east side, the door facing west. Not seeing Mr. Gerber around, Rob crossed one of the foundations and went over to Mr. Gerber's apartment door.

He knocked. He was surprised when Jeff answered.

"Uh, where is Mr. Gerber?" Rob asked, stretching his neck so as to see inside the apartment.

"He's not here, Rob."

"Well, yea," Rob stammered, embarrassed at his deceit. "That girl Sally said he was wondering around."

Jeff looked up at the oncoming stars and said, "Yes, I think he may be doing that."

"And may I ask what are you doing in his apartment?"

"Why, I live here, Rob. We all live here until we can get the cabins built. Then we will have our own sleeping quarters."

"Oh. That must be tight quarters, everybody sleeping in there with Mr. Gerber."

Jeff thought of everyone piling into Mr. Gerber's grave in order to get a good night's sleep and started laughing heartily.

"What's wrong?" Rob asked, very annoyed. "What did I say?"

"No, no, Rob," Jeff said, still laughing a little. "We don't sleep with Mr. Gerber."

"Well where in the heck does Mr. Gerber live, any how?" Rob was getting angry. "I don't see the Hell where he could unless you've run him off! You keep saying 'He's out back. He's out back.' Well, I don't see him!"

Jeff stepped out of the door and put his arm around Rob. He walked him out beyond the building and the cabins into the dark of the night. There was a faint red line over the horizon, showing where the sunset had gone. Stars were filling the dark blue of the sky. Rob felt all of this and love pouring forth from Jeff. He felt bewildered. Rob could see Jeff's hand swinging across the night and the stars as the back porch light caught it and made it glow as he started talking.

"Rob, Mr. Gerber has wondered off, leaving all his mortal possessions behind. And he does have quite a big backyard."

That night as Rob drove east, he felt like his car was flying. He couldn't feel the ground. He was full of wonder as if he had seen the stars for the first time. Jeff was a magician, a weaver of magic spells. He never did find out about Mr. Gerber, but he didn't care right now. He was thinking of the freedom to just up and leave your job, leave your need for money and things and just begin a new life, like the one Jeff had described. He was fascinated with the freedom those kids had...total freedom to live in Shangrila.

CHAPTER FIVE

Another bus stopped at Mr. Gerber's, and a somewhat bewildered young man stepped off. He was husky and tall, had short blond hair on a head that looked like it would just fit into a football helmet. The chin strap would have covered his thick double chin. He weighed close to three hundred pounds, and his name was Mick. Unlike the other passengers who were getting off to get something to eat, Mick was here to stay. He didn't know why, but that "Help Wanted" sign called to him. He knew instinctively that there would be friends here.

Mick's life had been filled with attempts to win his parents' love by making good grades in school for his mom and performing on the football field both in high school and in college for his dad. He had left a sweet-heart behind in the mid-west who had been chosen by his parents because she was a daughter of a long time family friend. He had never had a life of his own. He was a whiz at computers and electronics, but his parents wanted him to study law. He had quit college and his family on an impulse without saying goodbye, gotten on this bus to California and Silicon Chip Valley, and here he was. This little bus stop out in the middle of the wilderness was a hole he

just fell into, and he was bewildered. Yet, he seemed to have been here before, and that feeling of de'j` a vu was so powerful, he couldn't resist it.

"What you want to get off at this God-forsaken-place anyway?" asked the bus driver when Mick had asked for his luggage. "What goes on at this place anyhow? Last month, a girl in a nurse's uniform got off my bus without any luggage at all and started workin' here just as is."

"Thank you," Mick said as the bus driver handed him his duffel bag and suitcase. "I donno."

The bus driver tore off his ticket stubs and gave Mick a receipt, saying, "Mail this part to this address and you'll get part of yer money back, if the mail ever passes by this way."

"Okay," Mick said distractedly as he stared at the "Help Wanted" sign. As he stared, He saw a blond waitress waiting on people inside. He said to himself, "That's her."

Sally instantly fell in love when she saw this tall brawny man come in clumsily carrying his luggage through the door. She watched him drop his bags as he tried to pick up that old warn-out sign. She almost laughed out loud. She said "Him" to herself as though putting her mark on him. Seeing him reach for that sign, she knew that he would be staying here, and she was

excited. She felt warm in her tummy. She always had that feeling when something good was about to happen to her. She went over to the cash register, forgetting the order she had in her hand. The two of them tried several times to look each other in the eyes, but the thrill of it was too over powering, and so they flicked glances at each other, half smiling.

Mick placed the old "Help Wanted" sign on the counter. That got them started.

"Oh," Sally said. "Jeff is expecting you." She smiled pleasingly. "Would you prefer to eat first or put on an apron now? I could sure use the help with all these bus people."

"Oh, um, give me an apron. I can help out right now."

Sally handed him a clean apron from underneath the counter. He was nervous and couldn't seem to tie it behind him.

"Bring the strings around front," Sally laughed. "Tie it in front."

Mick laughed too, from nervousness and from being near her. After tyeing it, he extended his hand and said, "My name is Mick...uh, Mick Jansen."

"Sally," Sally responded, "and we drop our last names here. We're all one family here."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Start taking orders from these grumbling customers. Here's an order book. Just place the orders on that wheel behind the counter there," and she pointed to a slot in the wall where the wheel was. He could see Jeff smiling at him.

"Is that Jeff?" he pointed with a nod of his head.

"Yes. I'll make sure everyone has water and silverware."

Jeff started putting out orders with his usual swiftness as soon as the passengers arrived. Everyone was amazed at the good food. They were always complimenting Sally and Mick at the food. Joe was outside making sure the bus was in ship shape.

When it was time to go, the bus driver called out, "All bus passengers will now board the bus. The bus is now loading for all previous bus passengers and anybody else who wants to leave this God-forsaken place. The bus will leave in exactly five minutes." He looked particularly at Mick and Sally who stood together down at the end of the counter where the dish-washing took place. He shook his head after all the passengers passed through the door and mumbled to himself, "You'd never catch me livin' in a God-forsaken place like this."

Jeff was outside standing by the bus to tell the bus driver and all the passengers farewell. He assured the driver that God was indeed in this place, and by the time Jeff got through

talking to him, the driver wanted to retract his statement. He left, feeling light on his feet and on his seat. He too felt that his vehicle was flying. He would never forget Jeff's soothing words. He thought that Jeff had such a great spirit in him that he couldn't be sure that Jeff wasn't God himself!

Inside, Mick and Sally started cleaning up, putting the dishes on trolleys and taking them to the dishwasher just inside the kitchen.

"Know how to run a dishwasher, Mick?" Sally asked.

"I've run a couple in college," he replied.

"I'll put the soap in the tank for you. You can rinse the dishes off in the sink there." She then lifted up the sprayer hose. "Use this sprayer."

Sally stopped a moment and leaned her bottom against the steel table next to the dishwasher. "I'm sorry...I seem to be a bit too bossy. You tell me to shut up if I get in your way."

"Oh, no, no!" Mick exclaimed. "You're doing alright. You're not bossy. I know what bossy people are like. You're just explaining. I'll take it from here."

"Thank you...I'll go clean the tables."

Mick turned the water on in the tub of a sink, found a yellow plastic bottle of detergent which he grabbed and asked,

"Put some of this in the sink?"

Sally turned to see what he was holding, and all of a sudden they were breast to breast and stomach to stomach...well, almost...she was a little shorter. They both blushed at being in a tight space alone with each other.

"Yes," she smiled, "and then you push my button," she said as she reached around him. "...I mean, this button on the machine." Just as he was about to put his arms around her, she giggled and quickly slipped out through the door. She yelled out that she would go ahead and get the tables and counter.

Mick yelled back. "Sure!" He was trembling and didn't stop trembling until he he was halfway through scrubbing the dishes and putting them into trays to go into the dishwasher.

After everything was cleaned up, Mick wanted to know where to put his things and where he was going to sleep. Sally led him to the back door and showed him the cabins being built. Joe had been busy. He had covered one of the frames with tar paper and chicken wire and was inside putting in some sheet rock. The roof was not on, and, as they discovered when they went outside, there was a doorway on the east side and an open window hole waiting for its window on the north side of the little cabin. There was just enough room for two beds and a chest of drawers or a desk.

"This is your place," Sally said. Yet, there was someone else's backpack and sleeping roll on the bare floor. She noticed him looking at Joe's stuff as he set his luggage inside.

"You'll be sharing sleeping quarters with Joe, I'm afraid until we get more cabins built."

Mick went "Whew!" to himself; he thought that might be her gear. He looked down at her as he leaned his elbow against the door post...prettiest girl he'd ever seen!

"Joe is our mechanic and all 'round fixer-upper," she said with a wave of her hand towards Joe in way of introduction.

At that, Joe turned around with his hand out. Joe and Mick exchanged cordial greetings, and Joe turned back to his work.

There was only one thing on Mick's mind, though, and he asked Sally, "and where do you sleep?"

"With Jeff in the apartment behind the store," she answered, pointing to the northwest corner of the building just east of the back door.

Mick's heart sank as he said, "Oh." He reckoned that Sally was Jeff's girl. He would back off. He must have looked mighty gloomy all of a sudden, for Sally started laughing.

"Not with him, silly! Just in his apartment...untill one of the cabins are available."

Mick turned red and simply said "Oh" again. Joe chuckled to himself as he overheard the conversation and kept on working.

Sally took Mick's hand and walked him over to the apartment as though to show him that she was trustworthy. She opened the door. There was one bed, a chest of drawers, and a writing table on the east side. A stand-up closet was on the west side. Another door led into the men's room. Seeing only one bed, Mick asked where she slept.

"On the bed, of course!" She said in mock surprise. "You see, Jeff doesn't sleep...not very much, anyway. When he does, he sleeps during the day...you know, while we're working. Or he takes cat naps at the cash register. He mostly meditates."

Sally looked into Mick's eyes to see his reaction. He looked a little bewildered, but he smiled.

"Do you have a blanket?" she asked as she stepped over and opened the closet.

"One," he said.

"Well, there seems to be a couple more in here. You can make a bed roll. And yes," she said reaching a little further back behind the blankets, "there is a sheet." She pulled these things down from the upper shelf and gave them to him.

"He meditates, huh?"

"Yes."

"Doesn't sleep?"

"Not much."

"But I sense that he dreams a lot."

"You too? I mean, He contacts you when you're dreaming, doesn't he?"

They moved back into the yard and stepped up to the back door.

"Yes, he does." Mick looked closely into Sally's eyes. She had this angel glow that he just couldn't shake.

"He's teaching us," Sally remarked, "through dreams... teaching us to dream and meditate as he does."

"Really?" asked Mick as he pushed the door open for her.
"Tell me more."

Sally poured them both some coffee, and they sat down at the table near the back door where they could look out the full length window out into Nature. Sally saw Nature as Mr. Gerber's big back yard with its mountains in the far distance. She hoped to get Mick to see the same as she saw. They faced each other after having taken a long look outside. Mick had only been looking to see what Sally was looking at. They now looked at each other almost to the point of giggling.

"Tell me about Jeff," Mick asked again, trying to get control of himself and of the funny situation. He knew that she knew that he knew...and that was dangerous for him.

"He's rather child-like actually. I told you already that he doesn't sleep. He has no need of sleep...or sex."

"Or what?"

"As I said, he's completely child-like. I have to bathe him and get him dressed, tie his shoes...He doesn't know how to tie his shoes. Either that, or he just doesn't care. If I didn't help him, he would just go naked. He's completely innocent. And his whole life seems devoted to making other people happy."

Sally took a sip of her coffee, and Mick took a sip of his.

"You like doing that?"

"Doing what?"

"Bathing him and all that."

"I don't mind it. I'm a nurse. I'm used to tending patients. I've worked in a retirement home, in a hospital, of course, and I've worked in a sanatorium. That's the last place I worked. In fact," she said, taking another sip, "that is where I came into contact with Jeff."

"You mean that you met him in an insane asylum?"

"I didn't call it that." Sally cocked her head. "I didn't actually meet there, but he was a patient there, and I heard a great deal about him. I had a friend that tended him...on a separate floor."

Sally suddenly blushed, turned her head away from Mick and giggled.

"What is that for?" Mick asked with a smile growing on his face.

"I made the head nurse mad the day before I left."

"Why? What'd you do?"

"I didn't tell anyone that I had seen the back door open and one of the patients disappeared. I wasn't about to say anything, but the head nurse caught my friend and I talking about it. She bawled us out pretty good...I didn't go back to work the next day...started walking...got on the bus...then I was here."

Mick's mouth opened and closed. "I have a premonition," he said slowly, "that you are going to tell me that that escaped...I mean that person that escaped from the loony bin is this Jeff guy I've come to see." He smiled really big and raised his eyebrows.

"Yes...It's a mystery though. I was headed out to San Bernardino, stopped here, and something told me to get off and

stay. When I met Jeff and he told me his name, I about flipped! I immediately knew it was the same Jeff that had disappeared...and here he was! He knew my name and where I had worked, even told me he was expecting me!"

"He knew where you came from?"

"He said that he had heard a lot about me."

"What?" Mick heard Jeff and Joe talking out back.

"What what?"

"Oh, what did he know about you."

"Oh...that I was a little too helpful, a little too friendly with the patients. I wouldn't always give them their medication...damned drugs ! They drug the old people. They drug the mentally retarded and the handicapped. They drug the feeble minded...all so they don't have to deal with them and treat them as human beings. I got fired from one job for doing that."

"Drugging people?"

"No!...not giving them the drugs. Then it was difficult to get the next job..."

"The one where Jeff was?"

"Yes, and then I had to go and get the head nurse set against me...I left her high and dry. I just disappeared too. I don't care though. I'm out here now, and I'm free."

CHAPTER SIX

After several nights spent in motels and after traveling from Tucson and Albuquerque to Amarillo and back, selling cattle paraphernalia from steel fencing to immunization and vitamin shots, Rob McCormick was back to his old self again. He was no longer under the spell of Jeff and the freedom's he offered. He was back making the big bucks, enjoying the people he met and the slaps on the backs and the hand-shaking and friendly talk. But through all this, each morning he awoke with this nagging suspicion that perhaps something bad had happened to Mr. Gerber. Even if it wasn't murder, that the old man died without a proper Christian burial, or maybe he had wandered off and died out there in the desert. Mr. Gerber was an Indian and could have gone out to die alone, leaving his business to these youngsters, illegally, of course. Perhaps they had just stayed on after Mr. Gerber's death and hadn't settled the estate properly...somehow, he felt they were there illegally. That thought was the thorn in his side. Who owned the place now? Surely, not those upstarts. There was probably a relative, and he'd bet that they didn't contact anyone concerning his death. That was illegal too.

Rob had a permanent hotel room in Albuquerque, shared with a

roommate named Richland McGomery. Rob's name being Robert, they called each other Rob and Rich, and robbing the rich was a private joke between them. They were both traveling salesmen. They met in a bar in Albuquerque and had noticed each other's briefcases. Both had the initials "R.M." stamped on them. They struck up a quick friendship, as they had a lot in common. They especially had this overwhelming desire to rob the rich, legally, of course, through good salesmanship, transferring money from big bank accounts into their own pockets. The best way, they both agreed over a good scotch whiskey, is to make friends with the rich and use magnetic personality, common sense, and a bit of a sixth sense they both possessed, to sell, sell, sell. They both were making several thousand a month. They had money coming out their ears, and all they did with it was to stock pile it. They really had nothing or nobody to spend it on, and they never took any time off. They were having too much fun making it.

Rob told Rich one night when they were both in the hotel room at the same time of Mr. Gerber's place out in the middle of Arizona's nowhere, of his death and this Jeff guy taking over the place, building cabins out back, and talking a lot of philosophy like he was a guru or some prophet. He had talked about an ideology that would destroy the lives of salesmen for sure. He

wanted to do away with money. That was bad enough, but he had kept Mr. Gerber's death from him, putting him off each time he had come by. He said all this sitting on the edge of the bed, waiting for his turn in the shower.

"Good God in Hell," Rich swore as he came out of the shower.

"This is a job for the police. Have you contacted anyone yet?"

"Not yet."

"Well, don't. My nose smells money in this."

"What? Blackmail? This guy doesn't have any money. What he takes in, he gives to the poor!"

"There's the property in limbo, and I have a lawyer that could land that right into our laps."

Rob laughed gently as he entered the shower. "Who would want property out in the middle of nowhere?"

"Might be nothing, but it might be an ace in the hole. Anyway, next time you go out there, you ought to take a state trooper or sheriff with you. There ought to be one that knows the place."

"There is," Rob yelled back from under the shower.

"Well, it makes sense to poke the law's nose into this. My nose tells me that if we play this out right, there's money in it

for us."

"Maybe," Rob said, stepping back into the room drying off his head with his towel. "Maybe. Anyway, something fishy is going on, and I don't like it."

Back in Arizona, Rob looked up Norm Langerly, the trooper he had met at Gerber's. He told him the story of Mr. Gerber's death and about the guy Jeff and the others having taken over the place, and the strange feeling that something bad has happened. With a little more friendly talk, Rob found out that the highway department was extending a freeway north from Tuscon and would intersect the highway right at Mr. Gerber's. The land was to be acquired by the state, for the freeway was to go right through Mr. Gerber's building.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mick wondered why the boss seemed to be ignoring him. The restaurant was cleaned up. He and Sally had done that. When he had asked her what he should do next, she simply told him to ask Jeff. He found his new boss working on an old truck in the garage along with Joe. They were head and shoulders under the hood. He stood there a minute, and when no one paid attention to him, he cleared his throat. Jeff raised his head and asked for a wrench. Mick handed it to him and watched a while. Finally, Jeff raised his head out of his hole and wiped his hands on a rag. He looked at Mick and smiled, so Mick immediately asked him what he wanted him to do. Jeff didn't like his attitude, so he said, "Anything you like," and turned back to Joe who was busily talking about the carburetor. Mick wandered away quite bewildered.

Mick went back inside where Sally sat waiting behind the cash register for customers. She sat on that tall stool and was leaning against the wall. She looked as though she were dozing. It made her look a little stupid and vulnerable, he thought. Not wanting to wake her, he headed for the back door, but she came down off the stool and leaned her elbow on the counter, looking at him. He turned back and sat down in front of her on one of the

red leather stools.

"You look like a little lost puppy," she giggled.

"I am lost. I don't know what I'm doing here."

"You have plenty of time to figure that out."

"Maybe so," and he swung around on the red stool, coming to rest in front of some very pretty googly eyes, deep blue eyes.

"Let's go out to a movie," he said.

"Fat chance," she laughed. "But I hear there is a nice sci-fi on the celestial screen at night."

"Let's dance." He jerked his head towards the back corner near the door. There was an old fashioned juke box back there with red and yellow tube lights curving around the top, swooping down the front edges and splashing down around the bottom and up the middle in lots of little lights. "Got a juke box," he said, his heart pounding at her physical closeness.

"Can't. It's broken," she replied softly.

Mick jumped up and was at the colorful machine in two hops.

"I can fix it." He said. "I can fix anything electric."

"Well, there you are. Joe isn't an electrician. You've found your place."

Within the hour, with some tools he found in the garage, Mick and Sally were swinging to some old-time country western

music.

Jeff walked in and the music stopped. Mick walked over to the box and put his hand on it, wondering.

"Must have blown a fuse," he said with a sheepish grin on his face. Looking back at Jeff's angry face, Mick turned beet red.

Jeff stared at Mick. "Go out into that back field and keep on going," he pointed, "until you find your silence."

Like a meek lamb, hypnotized under a great will, Mick took off, feeling even more bewildered.

"That's pretty rough treatment, don't you think?" asked Sally angrily, feeling very protective towards her new friend.

"Sally...I'm sorry I had to turn off the music."

"You have a remote?" she said, caught completely off guard by the wind of his love that flowed from him.

"I am the remote."

"Oh?"

"You remember, don't you? The other day I told you that everything in the Universe is Vibration, and that vibrations can add to or cancel each other?"

"Yes." She backed up to the counter and took a seat on one of the stools.

"Well, thought is vibration and electricity is vibration. My thoughts simply canceled out the electricity, and the juke box shut off."

"Okay, but what about Mick? Why did you do that to him?"

"That's a private matter between him and me. I have to build a bridge over that ragging torrent inside him. Trust me. I know what to do."

"Okay," she said, scratching her nose, wanting reassurance.

Jeff went over to her and gave her a hug. "I know that gave you quite a shock too. We need the silence. Just keep the volume down on that juke box. The volume control is in back."

Jeff turned and went out the back door to his room. He lay on the bed and dreamed of Mick.

Mick walked by sage brush and cactus and lizards. He could see rocks and hills of rocks jutting up out of the parched land to the north. They seemed only a mile away, but having been on such walks before, he knew they were much farther off. Blue mountains could be seen farther off peaking up over the rocks and stretching out into the western horizon. The hills and rock went on forever to the east, blending into the distant Rocky Mountains. There is the Great Divide, he thought. What a barren and desolate wilderness, yet, he could feel the vibrant life

force of the land. He breathed it into his lungs and it shot out his toes and finger tips. He felt more alive out here than anytime he had spent in the city.

Mick walked on until dusk, feeling neither the heat nor the hunger and thirst. The land was alive and guiding him, giving him energy. He arrived at an outcropping of sandstone shaped into massive boulders by weather's hand. There was a little alcove of smaller boulders, just right to sit on and rest in the shade of the larger masses. Mick entered and sat down, looking back at what he imagined to be the restaurant...a little speck on the southern horizon. He began to feel a massive peace, actually a presence. It was what might be termed listening to the mountains. Before long, that presence felt like the presence of a person sitting just to the left of him on another small boulder. As he turned to look, Mick's hair stood on end. Chills went all over him. It was Jeff. Jeff smiled pleasantly.

"Don't be alarmed," Jeff said, "It's only me."

With that, Mick felt an overwhelming feeling of love and peace fill his whole being. Still, he was surprised.

"How did you get here?" he asked.

"I've always been here, Mick."

"Huh?"

"We've always been here together like this. We know each other. We're not strangers."

"My dreams!" Mick suddenly realized.

"Yes, your dreams. I am in your dreams and you are in mine."

"You were in my dreams." Mick then looked around and said, "And this place. I remember this place...and the restaurant out in the middle of nowhere! When I saw it from the bus, I just had to get off, but I didn't remember why!" Mick was all excited.

Jeff put his fingers up to his lips. "Shhh...listen to the mountains. Listen to these rocks. Listen...to the land. It has something to say...to you."

Surely, the land, the mountains in the distance and these rocks were saying something, but it wasn't a verbal left-brain something. It was a feeling communicating ideas...subliminal ideas...but not ideas...energy...the source of life and a way of life. The land was getting inside Mick.

When Mick came to his senses, Jeff was gone, and the clear night sky was filled with a carpet of stars. Mick felt renewed ...reborn. He breathed fresh air for the first time in his life. He started walking beneath that heavenly canopy. He couldn't see the restaurant, only darkness beneath uncountable splendor. It was the night of the new moon. Never-the-less, Mick walked

towards the restaurant. It was as though the land had opened up a path before him, and Mother Earth put a dimple on the horizon for him to follow...or was it a star? He could feel his way back. Something new had been awakened within his consciousness...or did he have it all along and had not paid attention to it? It was, for no better words, his land sense. In his dreams, he would be running in the darkness with Jeff. He would never run into things like the cactus or chaparral and sage; he ran through them. As he remembered this, he started running. It was exhilarating. Letting his land sense guide him, he ran looking only at the stars.

Soon, one star out shown the the rest on the bright horizon. Mick knew that was Gerber's place...Jeff's place now. He wondered where the name of Gerber came from. No one had ever told him. As he approached the building, the star became the back porch light. Mick started walking to catch his breath. As he walked over one little knoll, his hair stood on end. He felt someone buried down there. He stooped down and cried.

* * *

"Norm Langerly," the trooper said, introducing himself to Jeff. He had been sent here to investigate the disappearance of a

Mr. Gerber. He didn't mind doing this stretch of road at night. There would be, most likely, less people in the place. He and Jeff shook hands as he sat down at the counter.

"You must be Jeff," said Norm.

"I Am," said Jeff, handing Norm a menu and a glass of water.

"What can I get for you?" he smiled boyishly.

"Oh, just coffee and a donut, thank you. It smells good. Getting cold out, and I have to stay awake."

"Yes," Jeff replied, pressing the lever on the coffee maker.

"Temperature's dropping. It will be very cold here soon."

"Yes, it looks that way."

Jeff brought the cup of hot steaming coffee with its fresh sweet aroma along with a giant chocolate donut. "Home-made," he said.

"How did you know? I forgot to say which kind I wanted."

"Oh, it's in your face."

"No kidding?" Norm said, taking a sip of elegance. "I imagine you do good business here...with what business you get."

Norm glanced at Joe and Sally who were sitting at one of the tables in the northern corner talking and eating a late supper.

Norm asked between bites of chocolate donut, "What ever happened to Mr. Gerber?" He looked back to Jeff. "Is he still around?"

"He comes and goes," Jeff answered, wiping down the counter. It had been wiped down several times without ever getting dirty.

Norm took a sip of coffee and asked, "Is he here now?"

"He's out back," Jeff pointed to the back door.

"Can I speak to him?"

"If you really want to," Jeff said a little surprised. "He might be a little busy right now."

"What would he be doing this time of night?"

Norm turned on his stool to follow Jeff. He came from behind the counter and headed for the back door. He looked wistfully out the window.

"Visiting all those stars out there, I Imagine," Jeff said rather romantically.

Just then, Mick came in through the back door. He almost knocked Jeff over. Jeff fought hard to not laugh. Mick blurted out, "Hey, there's a grave out there!"

Sally never knew about Mr. Gerber's grave, that is, no one had said that there was one, but she had suspected that there was from some of the things that Jeff had said. Also, she had seen him kneel down on the ground behind the cabins and talk to Mr. Gerber as though he had been underground. She was now embarrassed for Jeff and said to Mick, "You need to practice your silence,"

glancing over to the officer.

"Huh!" Mick gasped as he saw the officer and appraised the situation. He quickly sat down beside Sally and stared at Jeff. He put his hands between his legs like a dog putting its tail between its legs.

Norm got up and walked over to this suspicious foursome. He stood behind Mick, putting his hands on the lad's shoulders and asked Jeff, "What grave?"

Jeff said, wondering if he had done something wrong, "Oh, you found the old Indian burial ground out there?" because there was an old burial ground where he and Mick had met.

"Yes," replied Mick, ready to cover for his boss. "It's pretty neat."

Norm eyed them suspiciously. "You should call the state university," he said.

"No telephone," replied Jeff.

"Well, how do you get your supplies?" asked Norm. "You have a truck, I suppose."

"It's not working yet," said Jeff. "We use Universal Supply."

"Oh, a route?"

"A direct route."

"That's good," Norm said, feeling a little puzzled. "Well, I'd better be getting back on the road. Thank's for the donut."

Norm wasn't used to paying for his food at these food stops, and Jeff wasn't aware of the need for him to pay. They both ignored the cash register.

Jeff waved, "Goodbye Norm, come again."

Norm turned and smiled as he opened the front door. "Goodbye," he said, wondering why he liked these kids when he knew they were covering up Mr. Gerber's death. The doorbell tinkled as the door shut. He walked over to his patrol car, got in and sped away. He would get a hold of the sheriff's office to investigate further. It sounded like the big guy that walked through the back door had let something slip. Everyone had become quiet like they all knew there was a grave out back. And then that Jeff turned the subject around and gave a very plausible explanation of an Indian burial place somewhere out back. But it wasn't this that threw him. He felt as though there had been an actual force that stopped the conversation, turned him around and shoved him out the door. It felt like getting caught in one of those revolving doors, trying to get into the building and coming right back out again. The sheriff can get a search warrant, he

thought, and come search for a grave. He was sure the judge would allow that. The man has disappeared.

Jeff's little group set looking at each other in silence. Jeff sat down beside them, smiling, happy-go-lucky, and tried to change their gloomy mood.

"What's up", he asked.

Sally spoke first. She spoke from her intuition without really knowing for sure Mr. Gerber was buried out there.

"What are we going to do about Mr. Gerber's grave for Gosh sake?"

"Was that Mr. Gerber's grave?" Mick asked, haunching his shoulders. "It wasn't even marked."

"Ghoulish," remarked Joe. He looked around to Jeff and asked, "What's the story, Jeff."

"He died."

"Well, who buried him?" Joe again. "Did you?"

"He dug his own grave, sang his death song, went into it and died. I covered him up. It was sort of like putting him to bed. I tell you this because you are my friends." And he turned to Mick, "You will be free when you always tell the truth."

"But I was only..."

"A lie is not a very good cover, Mick. I am free. I need no

cover."

"But what are we going to do?" asked Sally. "Someone's sure to find out and arrest you, and maybe us too!"

"Be free. Don't worry. Do as I've been teaching you." He rose and said, "It's time for bed. Tend to your meditations. It's more important to sleep. The way I've been teaching you will open up a new world of freedom for you. That's why I brought you here. There will be others coming to be taught by you. When you become awake by becoming quiet, listening, pondering, and living by the truth you will find, your different paths will be opened up to you, and you will no longer be lost. You can do what you've always wanted to do. It might not be what you expected, and it may not be like my path, but it will be for you and others you may help along the way."

"Like the way you are helping us?" asked Mick.

"In your own appointed way," Jeff replied. "Now go to bed. I'll watch the store tonight."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Mick's cabin had recently been finished, and as he entered and closed the door, he stood at the small north window. It was just big enough to look out of and at the height of his face. He looked at the grave site that he had sensed. There was a power there. He now sensed the fierceness of the power, but also the happiness of the man that was buried there. We watched and listened for a long time. The power filled his wonder. He sat down on his bed that was rolled across the floor.

Mick undressed and lay down under the covers, wondering, pondering...still listening to the grave and it's power. After a while, he found himself standing at the grave, looking down at it. Sally was there too. He hadn't noticed until his amazement passed. She too was peering intently down at the grave. He then noticed something else. It looked like the grave had a door like a storm cellar, laying length-wise on the south end of the mound.

Jeff joined the two who had discovered each other and were now holding hands. He looked at them, smiled, and put his finger to his lips so they would be silent. He pointed to the door of

the grave. Both Mick and Sally sensed something very important about that door. They stared at it for what seemed like an hour. They felt frozen in time. Suddenly, and without warning, the door slowly opened. They saw a hand on the door's edge. Someone was opening the grave from the underside. Sally's and Mick's bodies felt prickly all over, their hairs standing on end. The man they saw stepping out of the cellar-like grave was dressed like a native American. He had long white hair coming from underneath a red bandanna and a white mustache. He smiled at the two, and Jeff introduced Mr. Gerber. Looking at him, they understood why he would want the grave to be unmarked. They beheld before them a man of power, and he glowed. Here was a free man. He was not bound by earthly law and could come and go as he pleased.

Mr. Gerber walked over to Sally and Mick and took their hands. Smiling, he took their right hands and made them hold them as if he were hooking them together. Then he took their left hands and did the same thing. They stood there, looking at each other, like in a square dance.

Sally slowly smiled and blushed. Other than that expression at that time, she had an intense staring expression on her face. Mick noticed that she also glowed, but not with the intensity of Mr. Gerber and Jeff.

Mr. Gerber pointed to the northern landscape. It looked angular and sharp like an abstract painting in blues and coral. Bright stars shown overhead in the dark blue sky as if they were very close. They seemed close enough to touch. Sally and Mick looked at Mr. Gerber again. They turned in slow motion. They looked and saw him grab hold of some of the stars with his thick boned hand and pull himself up into the sky. He walked among the stars. As they stared, watching him, he became translucent. His eyes shown, and the joints in his bones shown like stars. He became a constellation.

Jeff pointed to a rock outcropping. He took Mick by the hand who held Sally by the other hand, and they stepped over to it as though it were a painting on an over-sized canvas. But as they stepped, the outcropping grew proportionally to the right size. Mick recognized the place where he and Jeff had met before. Jeff pointed to a crack in the wall and motioned to them as though he wanted them to enter. They entered, having to go in sideways. Inside, the starlight was bright. It appeared that this was a place of burial. There were bodies all in the fetal position, everyone of them wrapped up in nets. Perhaps they had been placed in here by a spirit boom from off a ghost ship that had been sailing amongst those stars.

Jeff bent over two of the bodies, saying something to them, perhaps...he chanted something. He took garments from each of the bodies and handed them to Mick and Sally. He told them to put them on. They did so, their old clothes seemed to have disappeared. Bringing them out again, Jeff joined their hands together as Mr. Gerber had done, and they noticed that they were standing at the center of a circle of dancing ghosts, the dead ones that were buried in the cave. Jeff was chanting with the Indians. The drums were not inseparable from Mick's and Sally's heartbeats.

Mick woke up. He could hear someone knocking on his door. He saw through the little window on the door that it was Sally. He got up. It was dark outside. The flood light outside made her look ghostly. He opened the door and let her in.

"I had the strangest dream," she said.

"Me too."

"Are we married?" she asked, taking his hands in that same interlocking as in the dream.

"I think so."

Mick and Sally embraced and looked out the little north window, seeing a bright moon shining on the outcropping across the wide flat valley.

* * *

Jeff sat in back on the oil drum and leaned back against the garage. There weren't going to be any customers for a couple of hours, so he used this time to talk to his little group of disciples. He looked at Sally and Mick.

"Sally, I want you to move in with Mick. Joe has moved into his own cabin."

Sally looked at Mick starry-eyed, tilted her head a little to see his face and smiled.

"When two people like you," Jeff continued, "are in each other's dreams, you shouldn't be separated." He then changed the subject a little, looking into the cool blue sky wistfully. "As we become more aware, we find ourselves crossing boundaries. Our beliefs start changing. We can even find each other's boundaries. Each of you have given me permission to cross your boundaries and enter into your dreams, into your lives. Dreams can be used, and often are...a vehicle into greater awareness...to expand your consciousness.

"Mick and Sally have crossed each other's boundaries. They are soul-mates. They have perhaps met in another life and fell in love there. Perhaps they agreed to meet here in this life, but it is evident that they needed to meet to find a fullness of joy.

Joy creates its own means for expression. Whenever there is an opportunity for joy to be expressed, events will unfold like the opening of a flower, and it will be expressed. It is a vital force in the Universe affecting our lives. The things of the heart is what is most important in this life. All things are subordinate to the heart. All men and women and children are connected in the depths of each heart. In the depths, everyone becomes one, as though there is but one person in the Universe, and that person is God. And it is only in loving and serving each other that God is found.

"Sometimes we need suffering to open up those depths of the heart so we can find each other and so we can find God. If we find one, we find the other...and true love is this..." Jeff said as his eyes glowed in the sunlight, like the liquid eyes of a baby. "If we love one person, we love all. If we hate one person, we hate all. Not one person is separate from God, and at those lower depths of the heart, not one person is separate from another."

Everyone turned expectantly towards the back door. The intruding world stumbled out. Sally thought, well, here comes the suffering. There was a sheriff and his two deputies. Behind them was a plain-clothes-man brandishing what looked like a metal

detector except where it should have been a flat disc, it bulged in the center. The sheriff was stocky, wore a light beige jacket. The two deputies were two blue giants that stood beside him like bodyguards. One was carrying a shovel, the other, a pick-ax.

"Which one of you is Jeff?" asked the sheriff. He instinctively looked a Jeff, the tall dark-haired one whose eyes looked straight through him to Eternity.

"I Am," said Jeff, smiling. He jumped off the oil barrel and extended his hand.

"I'm Sheriff Potts," he said, filling Jeff's hand with official looking papers. "Received a complaint. You'll see our papers are in order. We're investigating a possible grave site. There's an ordinance, you know, about having graves out here." He winked at the others. "Anyone know of a grave back here? Save us some time."

Mick looked around hesitantly at everyone. He felt the group's consent and then said, "I do."

"Would you?" asked the sheriff, pointing with his hand towards the back.

Mick led the way with the sheriff beside him. The deputies followed the man with the detector. Sally, Joe and Jeff led up the rear. Jeff was completely unconcerned.

Mick pointed to a noticeable mound of earth just behind the last cabin. Everyone stood around looking down at the ground as the man with the detector waved his wand over the mound. As numbers showed up in bright red on the handle of the wand, he called out to one of the deputies who plotted the numbers on a graph attached to a clipboard. After he was through, he set the device gently on the ground and took the clipboard. Drawing about a dozen lines through the numbers on the clipboard, he showed it to the sheriff. There was an audible gasp from the little crowd peering over the sheriff's shoulder. The lines drawn were a set of cross sections, when put together, looked like a man's body resting on a cement slab.

Sheriff Potts took a radio from his belt and started talking. He called for a wagon from the coroner's office to pick up the body.

This smaller radio used the car radio to call through an even larger radio at a relay station down the road in a rancher's barn. It reminded Jeff's little group of other things taught by Jeff...the fact that prayers are effective only when directed to a power higher than themselves. They all prayed silently for protection, especially for Jeff.

"We're going to have to remove the body, or what remains we

find," the sheriff explained to the little group. He signaled his deputies and they started digging.

It wasn't a minute into the digging when each deputy started feeling rather uncomfortable. At first, they felt a little guilty and commented on the fact. One cleared his throat, and the other pulled on his tight collar. Each loosened his tie. As the deputies dug deeper and deeper, the air became heavier, and gusts of desert air startled the diggers. Their hands began to shake, and they sweated profusely. They glanced at each other after every shovel full and wondered what was going on. Terror then began coming like shock waves of electricity up from the ground. Even their instruments of sacrilege tried to jump out of their hands. The two husky men thought the experience would only be a matter of manual labor. Instead, they had to fight off a desire to yell and run away. They looked often at the sheriff who looked at them wonderingly and said, "Well, go on!" They were wide-eyed when they threw down their tools.

"Sheriff," they said in unison, "we can't do this."

"What?" the sheriff said, dumbfounded. "Go on! Whadaya mean? Two grown men scared of skin and bones? Seen too many horror shows? Two of my own men who have never flinched at the bloodiest of accidents? Two of my own men turning against me who have

bravely rescued dozens can't turn a spade? Is the ax too heavy?"

All they could do was to look at him from the other side of the grave with wide eyes. The sheriff took off his beige Stetson and scratched his head. He had never seen anything like it. His deputies were scared of something...terrified beyond reason. He wouldn't throw down his hat and walk away in defeat. He would get that body out.

"Hand me that body bag, Rowely!" he said angrily to one of his deputies. He started down the hole with the body bag in his hand. Mick spoke up.

"I'll retrieve the body, Sheriff, if you promise me you will respect him, and that he will have a decent burial." Mick was surprised at his words, but he stood by himself.

"I'll see to it," the sheriff said authoritatively. "He'll be buried as soon as his relatives have been notified."

"What if he has no relatives?" asked Sally.

"I'll still see to it."

So the sheriff climbed back up still holding the body bag, and Mick climbed down in his stead, reverently. This was a place of power. Only one who had respect for the dead one and who loved him could retrieve the body. It didn't take long before Mick had carefully removed the soil and placed the body of Mr. Gerber into

the body bag. They lifted the body up and lay it on the ground.

"He did have a descent burial," said Jeff to the sheriff, but the sheriff didn't listen.

By this time, the coroner's van had arrived. Mr. Gerber's body was placed carefully and reverently in the back of the van by Mick and Sally. The sheriff objected, but he couldn't stop them. His deputies wouldn't go near the body. As they left, the sheriff took off his hat, and whacking his deputies across the neck and shoulders, drove them into their car, grumbling and cursing. The coroner's van sped off and the sheriff's car followed.

Sally and Mick returned to the grave site and found Jeff sitting on the ground weeping with Joe's arm around him. Joe was saying something about those blankity-blank pigs. Sally felt sick in the pit of her stomach, and she was a little angry. Mick seemed to take everything in stride, wondering if he would ever fit in. He was bewildered by the whole thing. Joe was simply angry that his best friend had been hurt.

Sally stood on the other side of Jeff, putting her arm around him and her head on his shoulder.

"Now what shall we do?" she asked.

"We shall make this grave into a root cellar," Jeff sniffed.

He tried laughing as he said, "we shall eat fruit and roots," but he only sniffed and smiled really big as he wiped his eyes dry.

CHAPTER NINE

Sheriff Potts returned a couple of weeks later with a warrant for Jeff's arrest. There had been a coroner's inquest and it was determined that Mr. Gerber had been murdered by a blunt instrument to the head. Rob McCormic had been one of the witnesses. He had told how Jeff had tried to pretend Mr. Gerber was alive but only unavailable, and when he could not produce him, he finally admitted that he was dead. State trooper Langerly testified to something similar, that Jeff tried to say that Mr. Gerber was alive. Jeff became the prime suspect. He was handcuffed with his hands behind his back, put in the sheriff's car and looked back only momentarily as the car sped away.

Sally and Mick strolled back into the restaurant and Joe, back into the garage. The door bell tinkled upon opening and upon shutting the door. Mick put his arm around Sally. They were solemn and did not speak, but looked around the restaurant. They sat down at the counter and looked at each other. Reaching out with their hands, they touched, and then held each other, wondering about each other. Jeff had sealed their relationship. What would they do now without Jeff?

"What now?" Mick asked.

"That's what I was going to ask you. You're the man."

"I don't feel much like a man."

"Well, thanks a lot!" Sally said, jerking her hands back.

Mick quickly tried to recover them, placing his hands over hers as they sat in her lap.

"Not without Jeff," he said in apology. "I love you very much. And I'm sure about our relationship...that it's forever. But I just feel lost without Jeff."

Sally got up to get her arm around Mick. "I do too," she said.

Mick got up, and Sally followed. They started wandering around the room, straightening chairs and the table settings of napkins and silverware. They wound their way around to the north end and then behind the counter. They had never seen all its particulars before. There was more to it than just the sink and coffee machine at one end and the cash register at the other end. They walked down past empty ice cream bins and two big soda spigots which looked like giant birds with black beaks, enormous blank eyes on the sides of their heads, and each having a single black plume sticking up...the handles. There were syrup pumps above the ice cream bins for sodas. Sally lifted the lid on one...empty and clean. Under the counter were rows of soda

glasses and boxes of straws. On the other side were stacks of clean dishes and bowls. There were bins of silver wrapped up in cloth napkins. Mr. Gerber couldn't stand anything cheap. They passed the double stainless steel sink with a hose and sprayer attachment and a smaller sink on its south side. There was an ice cream scoop in it which Sally picked up. Everything was clean. She put it back. They passed the large coffee maker. It didn't smell like coffee anymore. It too was clean.

Jeff was the cleanest and most imaginative soda jerk. He put charisma into his sodas and ice cream sundaes. Charisma, thought Sally. That was Jeff, all right, except his charisma was of the spiritual kind.

Sally watched as Mick opened up the stainless steel refrigerator door. The cream pitchers were empty and clean. There was no more milk in the glass pitchers. The butter patties were missing. It was white and porcelain and gleaming, all the walls reflecting the single little light bulb. Jeff was like that, reflecting all that was good. Mick closed the door. No one had set things up for business this morning. Jeff usually took care of that unless he was off on one of his rare excursions into that big back yard. Everything they looked at reminded them of Jeff, even the transparent pie and pastry tower which he kept filled.

It too was empty and clean. The place seemed deserted. Jeff was the life here. Here they were thinking of Jeff as if he were dead. What were they to do without him?

"Well, if a customer comes," Mick said, wiping his hand across the counter, "we won't be ready for him."

"Yea, I guess we'd better get this place set up," Sally replied. "I don't see any stores out here at all. The store room is this way."

As they went through the door into the kitchen, passing the open window where Jeff had always placed the hot meals from the kitchen and grill, Mick said astonished, "I thought we all came here to stay. I don't know why I thought that, but I thought we were going to have a little group here...maybe start a little community or something."

Mick looked at the kitchen. It was clean. Not a spot of grease or anything. It looked unused. Sally rubbed her hand across the white porcelain front edge of the grill. The rough brown tiled floor had recently been cleaned. The place smelled like a dairy, like milk. Water sat around the floor drain near the stove. They both looked around at the immaculately clean kitchen with its cold stoves and convection ovens. The shelves were almost empty but very organized. Every little box or can was

neatly placed. Looking into the little walk-in refrigerator, they saw it empty. It wasn't even on. They slowly closed the door. They looked at each other with their mouths open. Something was wrong. They went to the pantry more quickly. They opened the door and looked in. Sally went in and put her hands on one of the many empty shelves.

"It's empty," she said with some bewilderment.

"It looks like we've run out of everything," said Mick, putting his hands on her shoulders. "Have you ever been back here?"

"No, Jeff took care of all this...I assumed."

Sally looked on each shelf in disbelief. Mick spotted a flour barrel on the floor in the far left corner. They walked over to it...lifted the lid. There was about a cup of flour, they guessed, at the bottom. Sally closed the lid.

"Or we never had any to begin with," she said.

"Hugh?"

"Look. Maybe we never had any supplies at all, ever."

"Oh?" Mick raised his eyebrows and scratched his blond head. "It seems weird." He whistled the theme from the "Twilight Zone".

"Stop that."

They moved back into the kitchen.

"Well, I know we did eat, and so did the customers."

"Jeff must have stayed up all night cleaning the kitchen,"

Sally said, still in a daze.

"Looks like the whole place has been not only cleaned, but cleaned out."

"Maybe we never had any supplies," repeated Sally. "Remember what he was telling us about Universal Supply the other day?"

"Yes."

"And that everything is light and vibration, and that everything is thought?"

"Yes?"

"Mick," she turned around and held his arm. "Mick...I think we have us another Jesus or something. That's not blasphemous, is it? I mean, do you think? Has Jeff achieved the same power as the five loaves and two fishes, and zap, with a little flour he has a plate of fried chicken and mashed potatoes?"

"Beats me. I'm all new to this stuff."

"He is so innocent," she said calmly as she turned slowly towards the south wall as if to follow with an inner vision, seeing Jeff go down the highway to jail.

Joe came inside the restaurant and looked around. He saw

Sally and Mick through the little service window. He poked his head through the kitchen door.

"Come on kids, I've got the truck runnin'," Joe called.

"Let's take her for a spin. Close up this place, and let's go."

"This place is already closed," Sally said dejectedly. "It was never opened this morning."

"Grab your gear and let's go," said Joe, and then he left out the back way.

Sally looked up to Mick. "We might as well. Nothing here without Jeff." Mick put his arm around her and escorted her out.

"I wanted to stay," she said slowly, going out the kitchen door.

"I know, I wanted to too."

They strolled out the back and viewed the distant hills and remembered how they got married. It had been an uncertain wedding, very unorthodox, but they wanted each other, and they wanted to stay...stay here, stay together, unencumbered with the things of this world. They weren't too sure that they would be married if they left here. Maybe they would have to be married all over again if they lived somewhere else.

"Maybe we can come back," Mick said, but somehow he didn't believe it. He opened the door to their cabin.

"Maybe," Sally said wistfully.

After they packed their bags, and Sally really hadn't anything to pack since she had only brought the one nurse uniform which she was wearing...anyway, what other things she found in the store to make up a toilet kit, and that she put with Mick's clothes, they threw everything into the back of the old gray 1950 Dodge pick-up, piled in the front seat with Joe at the wheel, and sped off down the highway on the trail of dreams Jeff had left them.

Halfway towards the horizon and still out in the middle of nowhere, Sally asked Joe, "Where are we going?"

"To rescue Jeff and Mr. Gerber, of course!" Joe said excitedly.

"Oh," Sally said rather reservedly.

Here they were going for a ride to town like it was a Sunday drive, and they were out just for the sake of riding, like it was a thing of habit. Maybe it felt like that because the truck wouldn't go over fifty miles an hour. Sally and Mick sat like bumps on a log, not saying anything, not really thinking, just politely accepting what Joe had said. They had nothing else to do.

It was a long drive to town. Everyone sat silently watching

the scenery through new born eyes as though the earth was just created, and they had never seen rocks, hills, mountains, blue sky and white clouds, birds and grass and wild flowers, cactus, small trees and occasional livestock. Everything was clean and bright and beautiful...beautifully organized with supreme design. Everything they saw, even the asphalt seemed holy, a legacy given them by Jeff.

They were caught up in this wonderland and thinking about the singularity that Jeff was in this landscape of their lives. He was a living miracle who fed them on the energies of life itself...light and life...from himself. In the weeks they had known Jeff, they had been eating from his kitchen, from his alchemy. Had there been food in the pantry, and all of a sudden they ran out of everything? Or was there that magic Jeff often talked about, as Jesus had fed the thousands from a loaf of bread and a few fishes? But he had fed them not only food for the body, but his innocence. His charity and his wisdom had fed their souls.

Stars shown in the sky before they reached town. Night had pulled over her a blanket of darkness to warm the soul with the deepness of space. The infinitude of stars came out to view and every heart in the truck wanted to stop and gaze, but the town

also was upon them, and the lights of civilization covered the stars with another blanket, one of artificial light. Everyone yawned. They had no money to spend on a motel. They would sleep in the truck tonight and see Jeff tomorrow.

Joe slept in the back in an old sleeping bag that had belonged to Mr. Gerber. Sally and Mick giggled in the cab trying to share the front seat and a single blanket. They had plenty to eat from a survival pack that also had belonged to Mr. Gerber. Joe had found that too, behind the front seat. They parked in the city park. No one disturbed them, so they went fast asleep.

CHAPTER TEN

Everyone was up at dawn and used the park facilities for breakfast. They had to use the restrooms at the bus depot. While there, Sally felt the nostalgia of the depot and perhaps had a premonition that she would be taking a bus somewhere. California was where she was heading before. A chill ran down her spine as she thought that perhaps Mick wouldn't be coming with her, but she called the whole thought stupid and chided herself. They knew that Joe would never leave the homestead at Mr. Gerber's. He was very attached to Jeff. Who knows, Jeff could be acquitted. He didn't kill anybody! He just didn't report the death.

Jeff was the first thing on Joe's mind when he awoke this morning and was the one thing on his mind all the time. They had to go see Jeff as soon as possible. He wanted to see if they were treating him alright and see if he needed anything. One thing for sure, he needed a lawyer, at least someone to represent him. Joe was well familiar with courts and court procedure, having been in court several times in his life for stealing, assault and battery, and trespassing. He had never conformed to society. Joe therefore thought himself the best choice to represent Jeff.

Only he could look after Jeff's best interests. They were two of a kind.

When they got to the sheriff's office, they found that they had to wait several hours before they could see Jeff. They went back to the park and waited in the truck. They got tired of that, so they waited in the park. When they got tired of that, they decided to tour the town. That was particularly interesting to Joe, since he wanted to find the good sources of supply in case they needed anything.

Capitol buildings and county courthouses with their domed roofs which were part of the alabaster city gleam always caught the eye of each of them. They all shared common feelings where it came to marble buildings with columns, statues above, and frescoes inside on the walls. It gave them a feeling of grandeur and reverence, especially when Jeff was inside one of them. The green domed county court house would be the ideal place to start the tour. Joe could see where the jail and the court room was. When they got there, Sally didn't really want to go in. She figured it would be depressing. It seemed impressive enough just to see the outside. She would rather go window shopping, so she and Mick left Joe to himself. They would meet later at the time they could see Jeff.

Sally and Mick passed clothing stores, shoe stores with the smell of new leather seeping out the cracks around the doors, and an appliance store. That proved to be a Sears catalog outlet. It was a dinky town, they thought, not to have a full sized Sears...very rural.

Before Mick and Sally left Joe to himself, he looked Sally over very carefully and got her measurements without her noticing. He knew that she was longing for some clothes. That's why she wanted to go window shopping. He disliked her having to wear that nurse's uniform forever. She needed clothes, and he knew right where to get them. He had a keen sense of direction towards things needed. He had always been able to find clothes in dumpsters and garbage cans that weren't too bad. He had no qualms about alley's, so he went.

Sally and Mick continuing their little walk held each other's waists. She had her hand in his back pocket and he had his on her well-formed hip.

"Mick," she asked, starring into one window, "Mick, are we going to stay together?"

"Aren't we married?" he answered.

"Of course we are!" she said through her teeth, pulling him tightly against her. "After all, you know!"

"But, would you want a marriage license?"

"Well..." she said, and like an excited little girl, she added, "we could pick one up at the court house!"

"We don't have any money."

"Oh."

Sally thought a moment as they walked on. The town wasn't big enough for a three hour tour, so they walked across the street and headed in the opposite direction. Then she thought of something.

"Oh! I have a bus ticket we could cash in," she said enthusiastically and smiling.

"So do I. But we could go to California with them."

"We could hitch-hike."

"We might get robbed."

"Of what?"

"We might get beat up or shot or raped!"

"Oh, loosen up! How long have you known Jeff and can say something like that? Where's your..."

"Just kidding, just kidding. I would just rather ride than walk."

"Then we'll ride." Sally was getting rather peeved and dejected. They were having their first argument.

"In a bus?"

"In Joe's truck! You forget?"

"Oh yes...but what if Joe wants to go back to the diner?"

"Well, just believe me. We'll be riding. Maybe it will be by bus."

"Yeah, maybe so."

"Don't agree with me!"

Sally withdrew her arms and crossed them. Her face creased into a frown. She walked a little distance by herself. Mick caught up to her.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Maybe we won't stay together."

"Of course we will." Mick wrapped his arms around her and they stopped. He kissed her cheek. "We're married, and I love you. You're just upset. It will pass."

"I mean, what if something happens?"

"Nothing will happen."

"Your not listening."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean like Jeff taught us...to listen."

"Oh. I guess I'm pretty new to all this."

Sally felt they were standing on the edge of a cliff, ready

to jump off into a new reality, somewhere they had never been before. After a moment of silence, they continued walking with Sally holding onto Mick's left arm with both of hers, his hand on the small of her back. She told him how she felt about being ready to jump off a cliff, and that she might lose him. He related a story he had once read...a true story of some men that did that very thing as a test of their faith. They all landed safely except one. He simply disappeared. With that, she felt like she jumped herself, down into the pit of her stomach. She made him change the subject.

When the trio met back at the courthouse, Joe had some clothes for himself and Sally. He said that he left a few other odds and ends in the truck which he had moved up to the courthouse parking lot.

Sally thanked Joe, went to the restroom inside the building, carrying a full plastic shopping bag and changed clothes. She dropped her white pelt into the trash can and walked out looking like a pretty business woman. The other two met her outside and gave her a whistle as she modeled her new navy blue suit before them, and then they went down some back stairs to the sheriff's office.

Jeff was dressed in a brown jump suit a couple of shades too

light for his complexion. He looked the same radiant innocence. He smiled across the glass barrier as he sat down, glad to see his old friends.

Sally sat down in the seat before the window. Joe and Mick hunched over her shoulders.

"Well," Sally said, "What do we do now?"

"What do you want to do?" Jeff returned the question.

"I want to defend you in court," Joe blurted out.

"Go ahead," Jeff said.

"Mick and I decided to go to California," said Sally experimentally.

"Good. Stick together," Jeff said enthusiastically.

"What?" Joe stood up alarmed. "I thought we were going to have a little community!"

"We will, we will," Jeff reassured Joe.

The guards now took Jeff away.

"Where?" Joe cried over the glass. "In California?"

"No, here!" Jeff shouted back as he was pushed through a door.

"See," Joe confronted Sally as she got out of the chair.

"Not in California."

"Maybe you and Jeff can start it, Joe," said Sally. She said

it without looking at him, walking by him, and he felt hurt.

Joe looked up at Mick and thought him a big jerk for taking Sally away from him and Jeff and taking her out to California. But maybe Jeff was right. He had given them his blessings, and if he brought them out there, he could bring others. He walked by Mick with his nose in the air, pretending to snub him. But then, he smiled and grabbed both of them by the waist, walking out with them. He couldn't help it, he loved them. they were still friends.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Court procedure took nearly a month to get the trial started. Joe, Sally and Mick had run out of rations within the first week, but Joe kept them clothed and fed. Sally found some temporary work at a nursing home through a Temp Service, and Mick found some contract work outside of town. They rented a small flat, but Joe went back to being a street bum, yet a finely dressed one when he showed up in court to defend Jeff.

Joe was quick with words and convinced the judge that he could act as defense councilor. He had quite overwhelmed His Honor with a lot of legal rhetoric, showing precedents and constitutional rights and a knowledge of court procedure.

Jury members were to be selected first. The courtroom was packed with possible jurors. Instead of interrogating each person in turn, the court allowed the whole congregation to be addressed by each councilor. First, the council for the prosecution from the County Attorney's Office would speak and then Joe. The attorney for the prosecution addressed the citizens, describing the offense, giving reason why it was thought that Jeffery John Doe had murdered Mr. Gerber. He told of Rob McCormick asking the

Highway Patrol to investigate the death of Mr. Gerber, as the accused had tried to hide the fact of his death. He told then of the investigation of the Highway Patrol coming up with a grave and the Sheriff's Office coming up with the body.

"Now it's very interesting how Sheriff Potts came up with Mr. Gerber's body," continued the councilor. "It is a technical detail, a part of the evidence which the jury will be required to know. Let me tell you what a magnetic field detector is. It looks similar to a metal detector in that it has a coil of wire that acts as an antenna. Inside this coil of wire is a glass container of pure water. The hydrogen atoms inside the water (which is made up of hydrogen and oxygen) are energized by the electricity in the wire. When the electricity is turned off, the energy absorbed by the hydrogen is released as radio energy which is beamed down into the ground. That radio energy bounces off dense material and is received by the antenna coil much like a radio. Each reflection of radio energy off some dense matter is registered then as a number plotted on a graph." And the councilor held up a sheet of graph paper to show a plot and how one is made.

"A Mr. Howard was with Sheriff Potts to use this device and

make a plot of the grave site. He is a geologist friend of the sheriff. Mr. Howard took readings of the grave site in a grid fashion, turning the resulting numbers into several plots which he formed into a three dimensional grid resulting in the contours of a body.

"If there are any who do not understand this technical jargon?...please come up to the bench afterwards.

"The coroner upon examining the body of the deceased found that it was indeed Mr. Gerber and that the cause of death was falling onto or being pushed onto a cement slab which was found at the bottom of the grave. It will be my job as county attorney to prove that the accused did indeed push the deceased into the grave that had been especially dug for that purpose.

"It will be the job of the council for the defense, Mr. Joseph Baker to refute the evidence and to find flaws in the testimonies of the witnesses." Having said that, the councilor began asking questions of the assembled citizens.

Did anyone know the defendant Jeffery John Doe? (They called him that because he professed not to know his name.) Did anyone know Mr. Gerber? There were a couple of people who had known him,

but that was of little consequence to the prosecuting attorney. What he wanted to know was if there was anyone who had eaten at Mr. Gerber's place while the accused worked there, and did they become acquainted with the defendant. There was one. He noticed that he was a Mexican, and he asked him several questions to reveal what he knew about Jeff, and how he felt about him. He noted everything down on his legal pad. Was there anyone biased by the fact that the defendant was from the east? or that he used to be a patient in an insane asylum? Joe objected to the use of the words "insane asylum." The two councilors were asked to approach the bench. Joe asked that the words "mental health clinic" be used. Words were shot back and forth, and then the two went back to the group being questioned. The attorney asked several more questions and then the citizens were turned out for a ten minute break.

Joe's turn to ask questions came up next after everyone came back to their seats. He started out by asking if anyone would be biased on the grounds of religion. One woman asked if she might know his religion. She was taken up to the bench and told in private what his religion was. She then asked if he taught

violence of any kind or asked that any of his followers shun civil authority. Joe assured her, the prosecutor and His Honor that such was not the case. Yet, it was this very thing, that of being against authority that Joe became accused of and was therefore not allowed to proceed in either selecting the jury or defending Jeff. The questions Joe asked the selected group were judged anti-social by the prosecutor and the judge.

Joe had asked if any were prejudiced against a man not recognizing political authority, prejudiced against any man starting up a community opposed to the use of money, and was there anyone prejudiced against a man who considered property as belonging only to the creator of that property, namely, God. There were several people who asked if Jeff were a Communist. They were each brought up to the bench one by one, and Joe explained to them, to His Honor, and to the other councilor that Jeff taught that the state first of all had no authority and therefore could not own property, as no one else also could not own property, as it belonged to the one who created it in the first place. Joe explained that Jeff did not teach violence. He had no violence in him, and that the state procured its

authority and property by the force of arms alone, and as Jeff could not and would not do this, he could not be a Communist nor a Socialist. His Honor asked if Jeff were not an anarchist. Joe again explained that Jeff was not violent, and that all he came to do was to help those people who needed him.

Joe went on to ask if any were ignorant of court proceedings and went about explaining many things which the prosecuting attorney failed to do. Next, the floor was given back to the prosecuting attorney who added some final questions.

"I will ask, is there anyone here present who thinks he cannot be objective in a murder trial? I also ask, is there anyone who thinks that he cannot follow the directions of the judge who will indeed give the jury directions from time to time?"

There were no hands raised, but there were several grunts from the gallery. It seemed that everyone understood.

"Okay, I give the last twenty minutes to the defense." The prosecuting attorney smiled and sat down at his desk, which was not facing the judge as in the movies, but was out in the middle of the room, facing the defender's desk.

Joe stood up, walked around the desks to the railing that separated the people in the gallery from the rest of the courtroom. He faced the crowd, smiled ceremoniously and started.

"If there is to be any evidence or any witnesses to the alleged crime of murder, it cannot and must not be refuted. The actions of the defendant came about according to him by a mystical experience. For those who are to be jurors in this case, Jeff's belief structure needs to be understood. Jeff was put into a mental institution, not for his beliefs, but for his belief structure. He was found wondering down town in the nude."

Joe's audience chuckled. The judge used his gavel to restore order and warned the gallery that there was to be no further outburst. He warned Joe not to sound funny in the least.

"Jeff left the institution after having made contact with Mr. Gerber. He shortly arrived at Mr. Gerber's where he was immediately hired by him. It is Jeff's story that he gave the establishment to him the night of his death. Both Jeff and Mr. Gerber had the notion that land cannot be owned, and that one man's word was his bond. Mr. Gerber simply told Jeff he could have the place after his death, which he knew was to be imminent,

and that it was his turn to run the place. No papers were signed or exchanged, because that would be recognizing the authority of the state, which neither of them did."

There was a mummer in the courtroom.

"Jeff told us that the old man had dug his own grave, went through an Indian ceremony and fell into the grave. Jeff simply covered him up. One thing that may not be mentioned, but I will mention it here, is that of the scratches on Mr. Gerber's face. That was caused by Mr. Gerber's cat. Upon scratching its master, the old man simply lost his balance and fell into the grave. It was going to be a root cellar. That is Jeff's story the prosecutor will have to disprove.

"Now about Jeff's beliefs...his whole belief system overrides this whole arrest and court trial."

As Joe talked, the bailiff handed some papers to the judge. The judge motioned to the prosecuting attorney. They talked at the bench while Joe gave his little speech.

"And I say to you that neither the judge here, nor the police, nor the Congress of the United States has authority. The only authority they possess is that same which is gained by

wielding the sword, which is the same wielded by every potentate found running down the hallowed halls of history. And not one legislature has the authority to enact laws. The only law there is, is the Law of Nature, like the law of gravity, the laws of actions and reactions, and the laws of chemical combinations. Man cannot make laws, Jeff taught; he can only make agreements, and that my brothers and sisters can only be done in a true democracy devoid of hungry power seekers! I say that..."

"Clear the court!" shouted His Honor. "I will not have my court turned into a political soap-box."

Two policemen grabbed Joe and started dragging him away. He called back to the people, waving his note-pad, "Here we have proof, ladies and gentlemen that we live in a police state! The only authority they have is the authority of brute force!"

"I am sorry for this outburst, ladies and gentlemen," said the judge. " I will not have this court abused in any way. You may all be excused. You will be notified later as to your position, and whether or not you are to return to this proceeding. You are dismissed."

"Court dismissed," cried the bailiff. "You will be mailed

recompense for your time if you are not called back... kindly exit out the left door in an orderly manner. You will be notified of whether you are to return at a later date."

Judge Rankor was the first to leave, and he left in a big huff, sticking out his lower lip. The papers the bailiff had given him was a notice of a warrant for the arrest of Jeffery John Doe's accomplices. They had witnesses which had seen them stealing things out of people's back yards and out of garbage cans.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Joe was surprised to see Mick in the same cell with Jeff. They had put him in the next cell to them. Joe wanted very much to talk with Jeff, but he was busy with the other prisoners, teaching them the concepts of life which he had learned. Joe grabbed the bars, stuck his nose through and whistled to Mick. Mick stood up and walked over to Joe. He felt more like a comrade, seeing Joe in jail too.

"What's up Mick? What're you doing here? Is Sally okay?"

"I thought I'd see you in here," Mick said glumly. "We got arrested for stealing, so they said...the three of us. Yeah, Sally's okay, but she's in jail too, and feeling miserable and lonely."

"Oh, I thought I got thrown in here for anarchy."

"What happened?"

"Oh, I got on my soap box in the court room...about authority. You know how I hate cops and judges. I got started on a ti-raid."

"Oh."

"Jeff doesn't look worried," Joe sighed.

"He never worries, I found out. He always seems to have the situation in hand. He says someone will come and bail us out. He said not to worry."

"Who?"

"I don't know. Just someone Jeff met...someone who knew Mr. Gerber."

"I wonder if it was one of those guys in the court room today. There was someone there who knew Mr. Gerber."

"Um hum, could be," Mick said, picking his teeth.

"Just ate?"

"Yeah. Good food. Fried chicken."

"Yes, I can smell it."

"Oh, sorry," and Mick backed up a bit.

"That's okay."

Later that day, Sally, Mick and Joe were bailed out. They were curious as to who had paid the bail, so Jeff had told Joe and Mick that the man would meet them out front. But when they were leaving their cells, Joe, upon seeing that Jeff wasn't let out, asked the guard, "What about Jeff?"

"No bail paid for him," the officer said with a business like coldness.

"I'll be all right," Jeff had turned around and reassured him. "I'll meet you on the road."

"Okay," Joe had nodded. He always took his word as hard fact. He had learned that early enough through some pretty strange experiences. He remembered that Jeff could go anywhere he wanted or needed to be.

Joe and Mick were taken to an office where they were given back their wallets, keys and other paraphernalia. They were told not to leave town. Mick's bus ticket was not given back.

Sally was waiting out front with a short bald headed man in a white short sleeve shirt and beige pants. It was a bit chilly outside and they had no coats. This man didn't seem to need any. Sally told Mick that her bus ticket wasn't given back. He said, his neither, and then she introduced Mr. Dortchek.

"Hidy do, Mick," he said, shaking Mick's hand.

Extending his hand to Joe, he said, "Loved what you said there in the court room, young man."

"Oh, that was you," Joe said, shaking the man's hand.

"Yes, and I loved what you said so much I'd like to do something for you all. I'd like to buy each of you bus tickets out of this town."

"But," Sally interjected, "they told us not to leave town."

"Yes, they did, my dear." Mr. Dortchek took Sally's arm.

"But those charges will be dropped. I know the little lady that made the complaint."

"That's nice Mr. Dortchek," said Joe, "but I have a rest-stop to run...I mean, when Jeff's not there. We don't plan to leave."

"What about you two?" Mr. Dortchek turned to Mick and Sally. Mick had Sally's other arm in his, protectively. "Do you plan to stay also?"

"No," replied Sally, "we're on our way to California."

"Well, well." Mr. Dortchek said, squeezing Sally's arm. He looked into her eyes dreamily. "I can make that happen. I have so much money I don't know what to do with it all, and why not use it to help some friends? My...I have as much money as Jeff has poverty, and since I use my money as he uses his poverty, you know, going in the same direction sort of, from opposite ends, you don't mind do you? Money is good. It makes me happy because I can do just as much as Jeff does...to those who are humble enough to accept it."

"Well," Mick said, hesitantly, since he didn't know this guy.

"Thank you," Sally said, "it's very kind of you," and she

jabbed Mick in the ribs. He gave out a little sound that was between a giggle and an "oof."

"Then why don't we go down to the bus depot, and I'll buy the tickets."

They started down the courthouse steps, and Joe blurted out, "Hey, thank's for the bail."

"Don't mention it," Mr. Dortchek said as he looked back.

When they reached the sidewalk, Joe grabbed Mick and Sally from the back with his two arms opened wide and said, "I'll be seeing you two. Love ya," and then he was off to his truck.

Tickets were bought and goodbyes were said to Mr. Dortchek. After they were waiting awhile, Mick said he wished he had gone back with Joe. He had left some things at Mr. Gerber's he wanted.

"You don't need them, do you?" asked Sally as she pulled him down into an empty seat, one of the many all attached to each other in rows in the depot.

"No, I guess not," Mick replied. He put his folded hands up to his chin as he bent over, leaning his elbows on his knees.

"Don't know what we're going to do. We have no money. I know I can get a job when we get there, but what will we do until then?"

"I was on my way to my aunt's in San Bernardino," shrugged Sally.

"Probably wouldn't want me around."

"Sure she will. She's a very kind and generous person, and she has plenty of room."

"Probably an old smelly house anyway."

"It won't be bad," Sally frowned. She couldn't understand all these negative comments. She put her head on his shoulder as she held onto his arm.

"Who would want a couple of drifters, anyway?"

"My aunt would."

"She probably has a dog. I hate dogs."

Sally sat up and stared at Mick. He was staring out the window watching buses load, unload, arrive and depart. Some buses were being serviced while passengers waited inside.

"What's wrong? Don't you want to come with me? I thought we would be together always."

Mick turned to look at her. He said tenderly, "Always." It was final. It stretched into Eternity. "Sorry," he said. "I'm pretty nervous...restless for some reason."

"What's wrong?" Her heart started pounding, for she remembered the uncanny feeling she had when they first came to town that day and went into the bus depot.

"I don't know, but isn't that our bus out there?" Mick

pointed.

Sally nodded. Then she said, "Oh!" She saw that Sheriff Potts standing at the door of the bus talking to the bus driver.

"What do we do now?" she asked.

"Come on. Maybe we can get a later bus. Let's go for a walk."

"Okay."

They got up and walked out of the depot in the opposite direction, leaving their luggage to be boarded onto the bus.

Only moments after they left the depot, Joe's truck scooted up to the curb. They heard Joe's voice as the door swung open.

"Get in quick!"

They hurried into the cab, Sally first, and then Mick who slammed the door. They rode off, not in a hurry...yet, there was still a feeling of excitement. They looked at Joe, wondering why he had come back. Joe glanced at them.

"A premonition?" he said. "Maybe. The thought came to me that you will be watched. You won't be able to leave town. Nice gesture on Mr. Dortchek's part, but..."

"Yes," said Sally. "It looks like we're stuck here. The sheriff was talking to the bus driver."

"Yeah," said Joe. "I figured that much."

It felt like night time already, but it was only mid-afternoon. When Sally and Mick had left the depot, they had somehow expected it to be dark. It was a funny feeling, and Mick sat and thought about it. In a way, in their little circle, it was dark. He noticed the city-limit sign pass by on his right.

"We going back?" Mick asked, looking quickly at Joe.

"Remember?" Joe said. "Jeff said he would meet us along the road."

"Oh, yes." Mick pondered. How would he do that? Then he thought of the clean kitchen and pantry in the restaurant, wondering how they had eaten. He thought of meeting Jeff out in the desert, and the strange marriage in a dream of himself and Sally, presided over by Jeff (or was it Mr. Gerber?). "I guess so," he said finally.

"What's this?" Sally asked. "We're going to meet Jeff out here on the highway?"

"That's what he said back there in the jail," Joe confirmed.

Sally thought of how he had simply walked away from the hospital that fateful day and had simply disappeared, winding up at Mr. Gerber's out there in the middle of Arizona's nowhere land.

"Yes, I guess so," she echoed Mick.

It was a long ride and Sally dozed off. She dreamed that Jeff had waved them down and they picked him up. He got in beside her in the cab. He seemed to fit fine. They rode on a little way when she noticed that the reason Jeff fit in the cab was because Mick wasn't there. She was sure he had been in the cab...She looked at Jeff.

"Where's Mick," she asked. "He was here, wasn't he?"

"He's coming with me," Jeff said. "You don't mind, do you? ...If he comes with me? You see, I just saw the Master, and he said that I can't stay here any longer. It's not safe. It would be better if I were to leave. He has some work for me to do on the other side, anyway. I asked him if I could take Mick with me to help me in my new work. He said that I would need a companion, and I suggested Mick. He said that I could as long as it was okay with you. As long as you agree. He didn't want to take him away from you, so you have to give your permission first. I really need him."

"You said it was the Master?" Sally asked pensively.

"Yes."

"It was really Him?"

"Yes."

"If it was really Him, you can take Mick with you. I don't

mind giving him up to the Master."

"Thank you," Jeff said as he kissed her on the cheek. "It won't be long, and then you can join us on the other side."

Sally woke up. She had her head on Mick's shoulder, holding onto his arm. She wept silently. Her tears dampened his shirt.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Officer Wade, a giant Indian who looked too big for his uniform, went to look in on the prisoners. He had just come on shift. He looked at the open door. He stood there a moment, and then slammed the door. Looking into the cell, he went down the roster. Everyone answered except Jeffery John Doe.

"Where's Jeffery?" he called out in a husky voice.

One of the prisoners said, "He just walked out."

"Walked out?"

"He simply walked over to the door, pushed it open and walked out. He said we should stay here."

"Stay here?...walked out?"

Officer Wade tried the door. It was locked tight. He nervously checked all the other cells. Everyone of the prisoners were all accounted for. Jeffery John Doe was missing. Officer Wade rushed out. He told the dispatcher to find Sheriff Potts. When the sheriff found out, he called all units to look out for Jeffery and gave a description of him, but for himself, he headed out for Mr. Gerber's place. On the way out, he picked up the twins. Maybe, he thought, apprehending a single criminal wasn't

as hard as digging up a grave.

Jeff was seen walking alone along the highway going to Mr. Gerber's. He was still wearing that light tan jumpsuit they had given him to wear in the jail. Sheriff Potts swerved the car in front of him. The two deputies jumped out of the car and trained their guns on him, shouting, "Don't move!" One of them rushed and threw Jeff to the ground, handcuffing him at the same time. It was in record time, like throwing a calf in a rodeo. The other deputy cheered him.

"Go oonnn! Get'im in the caaarr," Sheriff Potts growled, shaking his head at the antics of his clowns. He couldn't fire them, they were his nephews. "Let's get'im back to town."

Jeff was put between the two deputies in the back seat as though he were a prize, and the sheriff chauffeured them all back to town. When they passed the city limit sign, the sheriff glanced into the back seat through the rear view mirror. Jeff was gone! He slammed on the brakes. He had been glancing into the back seat every now and then at Jeff. He had glanced once, the car bumped over a pot hole, he glanced back again, and Jeff was gone! Having stopped, he threw his head back, seeing the faces of Laurel and Hardy.

"Where is he!" he yelled. He took off his hat and thrashed his deputies. "Well, where is he?"

They put up their arms to protect themselves from the thrashing. They were completely dumbfounded, and they were scared, as though they had just seen a ghost up close. Chills covered their bodies, and their hair stood on end. They looked at each other and at the sheriff with big round eyes.

Sheriff Potts got out and searched the car, just not believing what had happened. He got back in the car and headed on down the highway again.

"You can't even pick up one little dirty bastard!" shouted the sheriff.

"He's a magician," they said. "We had him handcuffed... sitting between us."

"He's a magician alright! Got you two hypnotized!...Well, he didn't get me, you hear? He didn't get me! You just wait! I'll get'im myself! You two miserables. I'll have your badges!"

Joe drove lazily along, going just below the speed limit. He didn't want to miss seeing Jeff. No one was talking. Sally slept on Mick's shoulder. Every now and then she would sigh. The other two figured that she was just as depressed as they were. They should have been elated, but having to duck the law, and having

the law wipe their dirty hands on them (and why couldn't they just leave them alone?), they felt dirty with a dark shadow hanging over them.

Joe noticed through the rear view mirror a red flashing light. He knew just who they were. Why in the Hell, he thought. They didn't want them to leave town, and now that they did, here they were to arrest them again. He couldn't outrace them in this old truck. Even if he could, all he would do was to go to Mr. Gerber's and become another statistic...another cult leader either killed or sent to prison for twenty years.

Worrying about the sheriff approaching, looking through his rear view mirror, he didn't see the man walking along the road, too far into the road. Mick yelled, "Joe, watch out!"

Joe swerved to the left. The man had turned around and smiled. It was Jeff. As the truck swerved, it rolled over, and Jeff was exposed to the full force of the sheriff's car. They hadn't seen him. Sheriff Potts cried, "Oh God!" and hit Jeff and swerved to the right, but too late. Jeff was dead. Mick had been thrown out of the door half way, and the cab of the truck had slammed on top of him.

Joe pulled Sally screaming away from Mick's crushed body. She cried his name again and again. Joe pulled her out of the

driver's side door, up and over, kicking and screaming.

Sheriff Potts' car had slammed into a telephone pole. The twins pulled him out of the car with only a large bleeding bump on his forehead. His seat belt had saved him from being thrown out the wind-shield. He waddled a little way, holding his head for more reasons than one. He knew that he had been the cause of the accident. Steam was rising from the buckled front end of his car. The sheriff mumbled to one of the deputies to call for assistance as he sat down on the ground and leaned against the back wheel of his car.

Jeff's lifeless body lay sprawled out in the middle of the highway. No one thought about him for a while. Joe was too busy consoling Sally who was now in his embrace and sobbing deeply into his chest. He was a little bloody himself, but nothing was broken. Sally was bruised on the legs and arms, but that was all...except that her heart was crushed. Joe had been in worse circumstances in Nam and had been bloodier. Sheriff Potts kept mumbling how sorry he was as he reconnoitered the damage from his resting place. He didn't even know about Mick, though. Sally stopped crying after some time until she realized that she was covered with Mick's blood, then she resumed crying softly into Joe's bosom, remembering Mick.

Sally and Mick and the sheriff were given first aid by the paramedics when the ambulance arrived. With a chain Joe had in the back of the pick-up, the deputies used the newly arrived sheriff's four wheeler to pull the old truck back onto its four wheels. The truck shuddered. Sally went into hysterics when she had seen Mick's lifeless and bloody body fall to the ground slowly as the truck was turned upright. Sally had to be given a sedative in the arm by the paramedics to get her to calm down. Mick's body was retrieved and put into the ambulance along with Jeff's. Joe had to restrain Sally from running to Mick. He had to keep telling her that Mick was not there, that that wasn't him.

They put Sally and Joe in the four wheeler along with the sheriff and the deputies. They followed the ambulance back to town.

A week went by and all charges had been dropped from Jeff's little group. Sally had been given her bus ticket back, but it was not of any use, just a relic to remember things by. She used the ticket Mr. Dortchek gave her and got onto the bus to California. Before she left, she and Joe had a long goodbye, and Joe told her of all his plans for the restaurant.

Mr. Dortchek had bought Mr. Gerber's place from the county. No one had any record of ownership, so it became county property, and Mr. Dortchek had pulled some strings and gave the deed to

Joe. He went back with Mr. Dortchek to run the restaurant and filling station. Mr. Dortchek financed it and stocked it. He died and left his money to Joe. Then Joe had enough capital to build a little community which, when he was old, he turned over to someone who reminded him of Jeff...an innocent like Jeff.

CONCLUSION

Sally slept in the lumbering bus as its wheels sung its plaintive note like a violin string along the black pavement. She was leaning against the window with a pillow under her head, when she noticed the bus had stopped moving. It was silent. She opened her eyes groggily. It was the darkest and the deepest part of the night. Most of the people were gone. She could see a Spanish woman with a baby across the aisle a couple of seats ahead of her. There was someone far behind her... way in the back talking in whispered tones. She moved her pillow to see out the window. The bus had stopped at a rest-stop out in the middle of nowhere. She couldn't see any other building around any where. There was a restaurant inside. She could see the big picture windows with the door in the middle. Above the door was a bright neon sign in red. It read "Gerber's". She gasped. She looked at the window where another sign read "Help Wanted" to the left of the door. She thought she had better get out and go to the bathroom at least. Could she sneak by Joe? This was nonsense. What was the bus doing here?

When she left the bus, she could hear the buzzing of the

neon lights of red and green and hear the beetles bumping into everything. The neon lights threw an eerie glow about the place that made it seem unreal, as though if you went out beyond the neon lights and the flood lamps, there would be nothing but stars.

Approaching the door, Sally saw two familiar figures being reflected from the left window. She jerked around expecting to see Mick and Jeff. They weren't there! The hair on her head stood on end. She slowly turned around to see the two reflections still there. She started shaking.

Out of the window, Mick's voice said, "Don't be frightened."

Sally stood there thinking that this could be real, and she wanted to reach out and hold Mick...just hold him. She felt so empty.

"We're alright," Mick said, smiling. "It's wonderful here. We have our own little restaurant, and we teach people."

Sally looked at Jeff. His eyes sparkled with such radiance and intelligence, she didn't know for a moment if she wasn't looking straight into the starry heavens overhead. She could not look into his eyes without being opened up like a box filled with stars...into Eternity. Just a glance into his eyes and she felt her self dissolve molecule by molecule. His smiling countenance

tore a hole into her soul, there revealed naked, open to Eternity. She felt her self being assimilated into the All. Everything she had been taught since a little girl about individualism and identity was being challenged...and then she knew. A gentle peace settled over her like the warm cuddly blankets she used to sleep under when she was a little girl. She knew that she and Jeff and Joe, and most of all, Mick, were all ONE, and that they would never be separated again. Individualism now gained a new definition. It included everyone in the ONE. She looked at Mick with new understanding. They two would be undivided, forever, always.

Sally's pillow was wet with tears. The cool dampness woke her up. Had it been a dream? No. What everyone calls reality... that is the dream. She had experienced a greater reality. Trying to hold onto everything became a burden rather fast. She couldn't hold onto everything...the meeting of many people and visiting many places. The only thing she could remember really well was Jeff's and Mick's smiling faces in the window of Mr. Gerber's and that she was comforted and satisfied.

The bus moved on into the night, its wheels making sleepy music. Sally knew that she was moving into a wonderful future.

THE END

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03/12/05

Warner Books, Inc.
1271 Avenue of the Americas
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Dear Editor,

THE RESTAURANT PROPHET is Sally's short escapade through a magical Summer in the desert of Arizona...one small magical moment that changes the lives of four people.

Sally is a nurse working in a mental hospital. She and her boss are not on good terms. She is accused of an error which lets one patient just walk out of the hospital and disappear. She doesn't show up for work the next day. She leaves for California, but because of a dream she had, she walks off the bus in Arizona at a restaurant out in the middle of no-where that has a "HELP WANTED" poster in the window. She immediately starts waiting on the customers.

Jeff, a dreamer and the escapee from the mental hospital shows up in an Arizona desert oasis called "Gerber's". Mr. Gerber hands the restaurant over to Jeff just before the old man dies. Jeff gets accused of killing the old man and taking his place as owner of the restaurant. He is arrested, but walks out of jail.

Joe is a Vietnam veteran who is released from the hells of that war in a dream in which he meets Jeff. In that dream, Jeff invites him to come to Arizona to work at the restaurant. He becomes the mechanic.

Mick is a college drop-out that's running away from his parents. He gets off the bus at that restaurant and sees that "HELP WANTED" sign. He walks in remembering a dream he had about the place. He meets Sally who puts him to work, falling head over heels in love with her. It's funny how they get married. It was in a dream. Is their marriage valid? It was orchestrated by Jeff.

Sally has to ask herself a lot of questions after Jeff is arrested and Joe wants to go into town to rescue him, the whole escapade ending up in the deaths of both Jeff and Mick. Those

questions are answered by Jeff in a dream, and she carries Mick's baby off to California.

In this story, the world expands beyond that which our society has created. Some people deny this expansion and withdraw into judgment and criticism. But the four people in this story (who represent multitudes) find a way out of the different Hells they were dropped into. Jeff opened a door and let them out. He entered their dreams.

Jeff also seems to have a way of dropping people into Hell and then dropping people altogether. He did that to Sally by taking her husband away...in a way that is never expected. But he explains afterwards in Sally's dream.

I have unusual views about life and the Universe. I have tried to express some of these in my story of Sally and Jeff.

Somehow, my dad managed to transfer the Indian heritage that was being taught him by his father (whom I never met). It was his grandmother who was the Indian. Though, he never instructed me in Indian lore or beliefs, I picked them up out of his gaze or the way he walked, or just by instinct I knew that all things are sacred and that all beings are connected.

I work as a janitor in a high school beneath the Wasatch Mountains. I study drawing and math (influenced by Buckminster Fuller), write stories and am working on a computer program for a robot...a mind, actually. I graduated in robotics, but I found out that machines don't like me. (My family belongs in an Ann Tyler novel, by-the-way.)

I write with action in mind more than description, as if I were watching a movie or television. The manuscript is 143 pages when double spaced with 40 lines per page.

Those that have read THE RESTAURANT PROPHET have enjoyed it. I enjoy it. It has a deep and loving message I would like to share with everyone.

Please read the whole manuscript. If you don't like it and you know someone who may, please send it to them. Please critique it, but please do not put it in your language. I write it in my own language. I'm always correcting other writers, and perhaps that's shameful, so I have a need to write the way I do so there will be someone whose writing I can like.

Sincerely,
Tatum Este'l