# The Messenger’s Gift

*The Journey From Forgiveness to Greatness*

Rodney Hill

THE MESSENGER’S GIFT

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# DEDICATION

This book is a heartfelt tribute to the many authors and the countless books that have inspired me on my journey. These books provided solace and guidance during my darkest moments, offering a glimmer of hope when all seemed lost. While it would be easy to list the titles that influenced me, what truly matters is the profound impact each author had on my life. They bestowed upon me a torch of hope, which I now pass on to those who embark on this literary journey from the very first page to the very last.

I dedicate this book to all those who feel stuck, lacking hope, and experiencing helplessness. This book is specifically dedicated to you, the individuals who suffer in silence and do not know where to turn for help and change.

May the message within these pages inspire you and provide temporary respite from your current situation, allowing your mind to transcend and find solace in a distant place. May it bring peace and much-needed rest to your soul.

For those who have endured or are currently experiencing difficulties in their relationships, this book serves as a powerful reminder that your season of change is imminent. To those who believe their lives are irreparably shattered, I implore you to reconsider. Like countless others who have faced a lifetime of pain, disappointment, and heart-wrenching circumstances, take solace that your pleas have been heard and assistance is on its way.

May this book and those that follow serve as a guiding light of hope, mercy, self-forgiveness, and transformation in your life. May it empower you to become the person you are destined to be and embrace a fulfilling existence.

Know this: You are deeply loved, and your presence here, even in this moment of uncertainty, holds profound significance. You were born with a purpose: to share your unique light and make the lives of others brighter and better. Embrace the knowledge that your life carries meaning, and let your special radiance illuminate the world.

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# PREFACE

The conception and creation of *The Messenger's Gift* is a profound journey that emerged from the depths of my own cherished memories and imaginative musings as a child growing up in the enchanting embrace of the southern farmland. It is a labor of love, painstakingly nurtured through the many poignant and occasionally joyous moments that have shaped my life.

Reflecting back now, the characters in the book stand as vivid testaments to the story's genesis and its compelling message. As I reminisce upon their existence, it becomes evident that the tale and its profound meaning have served as guiding beacons, illuminating my path of personal growth and transformation.

It seems as though this extraordinary book, brimming with wisdom and insight, had already been etched within the tapestry of my soul, as I find myself effortlessly reliving the mesmerizing imagery, captivating characters, and evocative situations as if they were unfolding in the present moment.

Each page of *The Messenger's Gift* represents a portal into my past, where memories intertwine with boundless imagination, giving rise to a narrative that transcends time and place. Through these carefully crafted words, the story unravels like a delicate dance, revealing hidden truths, and unveiling the power of resilience, compassion, and self-discovery.

Within the echoes of each chapter, the reader is invited to embark on a transformative journey of their own, inviting introspection and offering solace in the face of life's trials and tribulations. The juxtaposition of tender moments and turbulent challenges forms a symphony of emotions that stir the depths of the soul, inspiring contemplation and fostering a sense of connection to something greater than ourselves.

While writing *The Messenger's Gift*, I found solace in revisiting the fragments of my childhood, embracing both the scars and the joys that have woven into the fabric of my being. Through the medium of storytelling, I discovered a cathartic release, an avenue to reconcile past wounds and illuminate the path towards personal growth and enlightenment.

The characters within these pages, born from the vivid tapestry of my memories, have become more than mere figments of imagination. They have evolved into vessels of wisdom, compassion, and resilience, whispering timeless truths, and offering solace to anyone willing to embark on this transformative odyssey.

As *The Messenger's Gift* found its shape and purpose, it became a testament to the notion that our most profound creations often emerge from the depths of our own experiences, woven with love, pain, and the relentless pursuit of understanding. It stands as both a mirror reflecting the essence of our shared humanity and a lantern guiding us towards the transformative power of storytelling, healing, and growth.

May this humble offering find its way into the hearts of readers, igniting sparks of self-discovery, sparking hope, and serving as a gentle reminder that within each of us lies the potential to embrace our own unique gifts and navigate the labyrinth of life with grace and resilience.

# INTRODUCTION

*The Messenger's Gift* is an ethereal vessel, gently nudging its readers towards a profound awakening. It serves as a beacon of light amidst the cacophony of voices, ideologies, and societal expectations that often drown out our inner whispers. In a world where external influences clamor for our attention and dictate the path we should tread, this book stands as a persistent reminder that our true purpose and meaning lie within ourselves.

While countless individuals offer well-intentioned advice on how to live our lives, *The Messenger's Gift* beckons us to question their validity and seek our own truth. It urges us to embark on a journey of introspection, peeling back the layers of societal conditioning to reveal the essence of our being. Through thought-provoking metaphors, compelling rhetorical questions, and poignant repetition, the book invites us to ponder the timeless inquiry: “Why are we here?”

The central goal of this captivating literary creation is to convey a heartfelt message to each reader: Your life holds profound purpose and meaning. It reminds us that our existence is not a mere accident, but a deliberate weave of cosmic threads, interconnecting us to something greater than ourselves. The book embraces the challenge of guiding individuals towards the right road, the one that leads them to the discovery of their unique purpose.

The writer's sincerest desire and hope lie in the depths of these pages. A desire to touch something deep within the reader's soul and rekindle the long-lost ember of desire for self-discovery. The characters of this enchanting tale stand as personifications of resilience, growth, and transcendence, beckoning us to awaken dormant dreams and rekindle the flames of our passions.

By immersing ourselves in the rich tapestry of this narrative, we are invited to embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery. As the words dance across the page, the book seeks to ignite a yearning for inner exploration, urging us to shed the shackles of complacency and embrace the fullness of our existence.

*The Messenger's Gift* is an invitation to thrive once more. It holds the power to stir dormant desires, reigniting the flame of purpose within us. It beckons us to transcend the mundane and enter a realm where the true essence of our being unfolds. Through its reflective and philosophical tone, the book invites us to embark on an odyssey of self-exploration fueled by curiosity and guided by the whispers of our souls.

May this literary masterpiece serve as a profound wake-up call for those yearning for meaning and purpose. May its gentle nudges and eloquent prose provide solace and inspiration as readers navigate the labyrinth of their existence. *The Messenger's Gift* is a testament to the transformative power of self-discovery, a compass guiding us toward a life rich in fulfillment, authenticity, and purpose.

# CHAPTER ONE

As I strolled through the historic district, I turned a corner and was greeted by a formidable sign. This sign was familiar during my daily commute to Smith's Auto Repair, where I diligently worked five long days a week. The establishment held deep roots in the town, having been a fixture for over a decade. As a legitimate business owner in this tight-knit community, a sense of accomplishment finally washed over me.

Being an entrepreneur named Peter Smith in this captivating place, I couldn't help but feel an overwhelming surge of pride. My heart yearned to fully immerse itself in this town's essence and forge my legacy alongside this iconic landmark. However, as I returned to the shop, a disquieting dissatisfaction washed over me, casting doubt upon every life and career decision I had made, questioning my existence.

The journey to this point had not been lengthy, yet doubts lingered like specters, haunting my thoughts. Was this the right path to tread? Could a lack of success in my business mirror a lack of personal fulfillment?

Arriving at Smith's Auto Repair, my mind drifted away from the present, trapped in an endless loop of reminiscing about every event that had led me here. The sign for Smith's Auto Repair seemed to mock me, standing proudly on its street corner. Reflecting upon the arduous process of building this venture, memories flooded my consciousness. There were nights soaked in sweat, devoted to tedious paperwork. Days spent persuading customers with diplomacy, attending to their needs, and meticulously filling out invoices with intricate details left me overwhelmed, bewildered, and slightly fatigued.

And for what purpose? A life left incomplete, filled with an insatiable yearning that I constantly questioned. As the sun set and darkness enveloped the skies each day, I couldn't help but wonder what it all meant. In the quiet solitude of the night, the weight of uncertainty pressed upon my weary mind, fueling an unrelenting quest for answers.

With a heavy sigh, I stepped out of my truck, commencing yet another day at Smith's Auto Repair. The crisp morning air brought little solace, but within its enigmatic aura lay a deeper realization—a realization that my unwavering dedication and hard work held the power to shape my destiny. These virtues defined me, and today, I would draw upon them again, embarking on a journey to unravel the mysteries within myself.

As I grappled with discontent and confusion, nightmares invaded my sleep. Each day felt like a stagnant expedition, with every decision and action resembling a step backward. Uncertainty loomed, and the once-promising path to contentment and peace seemed frustratingly out of reach.

Unprecedented disillusionment and self-doubt engulfed me, making it evident that I had veered off course, falling short of my true potential. Despite my relentless efforts, understanding eluded me. It felt like a heavy penalty for not exploring alternative paths beyond entrepreneurship that could have been more fulfilling and rewarding.

Overwhelmed by fear and doubt, sleep became an elusive companion. Haunting nightmares of failure cast their dark shadows upon what was once a promising journey.

Last night proved to be an extraordinary experience—a collection of surreal dreams that still clung to my mind, influencing me even now. After a satisfying meal and a refreshing shower, I prepared to surrender to peaceful slumber. However, on this particular night, sleep eluded me. I spent hours tossing and turning amidst these strange dreams, occasionally staring at the ceiling.

Restlessness consumed me as I lay in bed, tormented by incessant thoughts and an undeniable yearning for change. Uncertainty loomed as I pondered the origin of these unfamiliar emotions. Negative thoughts and haunting voices plagued my mind, leaving me in a state of bewilderment. The inexplicable unrest unsettled me, for I knew something was amiss. Why was I plagued tonight by this unexplainable unease?

The undeniable urge to escape this town consumed me above all else. Words fail to capture the profound realization that surged within me. Deep down, I sensed an innate need for a change in environment and lifestyle to unravel the true purpose of existence and free myself from the unwitting entanglements that had beset my path. My life had veered off the course I once envisioned as a child; I had lost my way.

External influences and circumstances had led me astray, shaping me into a reflection of my surroundings. I not only emulated the actions of those around me, but also stifled my vibrant dreams, succumbing to mediocrity to conform to others' desires.

Engulfed in contemplation, waves of fear crashed against me, as if stripping away an extraordinary yet undiscovered power or gift. Terror and profound sorrow gripped me tightly, refusing to loosen their grip. Desperately, I tried to redirect my thoughts, but the fear, negativity, and haunting voices persisted unrelentingly. I voiced my dissent repeatedly with unwavering determination, even screaming aloud, pleading for it all to disappear.

Unfamiliar emotions wreaked havoc within me, casting me into inner turmoil and distress. These sentiments left me hopeless and frightened, yearning for their release. But alas, they lingered, tormenting me in the present moment. It became clear that I could no longer feign happiness or pretend to be self-reliant.

Questions flooded my mind like an unyielding current. Why did fear and uncertainty permeate my very being? Why did I long for something of uncertain existence? And if it existed, could it still be attainable in my life?

The negative thoughts and voices gradually abated, leaving me drenched in a cold sweat. Tears of confusion and anxiety streamed down my face. What was happening to me? I wondered.

I leaped out of bed, hastening to the bathroom to wash away these overwhelming sensations. As I stared into the mirror, it was as if I were genuinely beholding myself for the first time in ages. At that moment, it became abundantly clear that I no longer recognized the person before me, someone who had lost sight of living life on their own terms.

What did all this signify? How could I rectify this unsettling state of affairs? Was there a solution to be found? And who could guide me toward a deeper understanding? Contemplating these questions, I realized there must be an underlying cause for my sudden confusion.

I opened the medicine cabinet and retrieved a bottle of sleep aid. Consuming two tablets, I made my way to the kitchen and swallowed them with a refreshing gulp of water. Satisfied, I returned to my bedroom, ready for a restful night.

Crawling back into bed, I turned on the television, seeking solace in a comedy show. "This will divert my mind from the chaos," I muttered aloud.

Finally, I drifted off, only to be rudely awakened by the blaring sound of my ancient alarm clock, which had faithfully served my family for three generations and now stood on its last legs.

For a few precious moments, I lay there, gathering my thoughts about the day ahead at the auto repair shop I owned. Still pondering the sleepless night, I rose from my slumber and made my way to the kitchen, yearning for the aroma of freshly brewed coffee.

As I unsealed the bag of dark roast coffee to pour its rich aroma into my coffee maker, my senses were enveloped with a delightful awakening. My eyes widened in anticipation as I prepared to start the day. The morning's most cherished ritual commenced, coinciding with a refreshing shower that invigorated my senses, preparing me for the tasks ahead. A sense of urgency drove me to tackle the workload awaiting at the shop, to begin unraveling the hold that the previous night's anxiety had on my attention.

Fully dressed after my shower, I returned to the kitchen, where my taste buds yearned for a piping hot cup of that familiar dark-roast brew. With just one sip of its robust, life-giving essence, my body jolted back into gear, casting away any remnants of drowsiness. I felt ready and eager to face another day of repair work and problem-solving.

After savoring several small sips, followed by a satisfying gulp and a quick refill, I headed towards the door, keys in hand, fueled by newfound vigor. With a cup of coffee securely clasped in one hand, I closed the door behind me and turned the key, locking it deliberately before embarking on my journey to work.

My residence was in Beaufort, an idyllic small town nestled in eastern North Carolina, where time seemed to flow leisurely, and familiarity thrived among its residents. It was a place where commercial fishermen, farmers, and retirees wove a tapestry of togetherness, finding solace in the town's timeless charm. With fewer than thirty thousand, its inhabitants shared a unique bond, akin to kindred spirits embracing the wonders and joys of life. Amidst the tranquil serenity, they discovered a rare and extraordinary peace.

My shop, situated fifteen minutes away from my house in a completely different direction, resided on the outskirts of Beaufort. It found its home within the historic industrial district, once characterized by the rhythmic symphony of saws and the resounding roar of heavy machinery. In its heyday, this area witnessed the transportation of exquisite species of mahogany, birch, pine, dark walnut, oak paneling, and cedar logs aboard bustling trains. These raw materials, skillfully transformed into magnificent hardwood floors, represented the heart and soul of the community.

Lumber milling played a vital role in the town's economic fabric. Southern Veneer, established in the early 1900s, recognized the tremendous potential of this historic area. With the support of foreign investors, they built a legacy, producing world-renowned building materials and hardwoods.

Within Southern Veneer's expansive facility, there was an in-house department catering to customers seeking specific wood brands offered by the company. This provided a valuable source of supplementary income for individuals not typically associated with the fishing and farming industries prevalent in the area. Transients, part-time college students, single parents, and breadwinners alike found an opportunity to supplement their income through this avenue of employment.

Recognizing the potential for economic growth and development, the owners embarked on a venture that would transform our beloved small town. Beaufort, situated near accessible seaports and expansive waterways, evolved into a renowned destination celebrated for its quality specialty hardwoods, building materials, lumber, and supplies. This initiative injected new life into our community, empowering it to flourish and thrive on its own terms.

Adjacent to the towering lumber plant stood Schwartz Steel, an ancient steel mill that emerged in the early 1930s to meet the soaring demand for steel and steel-based construction materials in nearby bustling cities.

The origins of Schwartz Steel trace back to Germany, where a resourceful family, charged with constructing communities, faced the challenge of displacing massive boulders obstructing their path. Through tenacity and collaboration with local engineers, they ingeniously engineered earthmovers and other machinery capable of efficiently removing and demolishing these hefty rocks and stubborn debris.

Now, it stands as a relic of the past in our town—a powerful reminder of our heritage and the distance we have traveled. Yet within its weathered walls lies an unquenchable thirst to unravel the enigmatic mysteries of life. These hidden riddles silently propel our picturesque town forward, though at a leisurely and contented pace.

Once a bustling hub of commerce, Beaufort has transformed into a haven for those seeking a serene and uncomplicated existence. Its welcoming shores have attracted individuals worldwide, offering a tranquil and purposeful way of life to those who crave a slower rhythm. Beaufort's bustling commercial seaports delivered ships filled not only with merchandise, but also with treasures and experiences that money alone could not acquire.

The key to its success lies in the genuine warmth and affection of the people who called Beaufort home. Irrespective of race, religion, or background, they embraced an ethos of giving and receiving, sharing their smiles, time, wisdom, and resources. Together, they created an intertwined fabric of unity, supporting each other with unwavering dedication, and nurturing the growth and prosperity of the entire community.

As I glided my vintage Ford pickup truck through the enchanting district, a flood of cherished childhood memories washed over me, bringing an undeniable smile to my face. Closer to my side of town, the streets pulsed with vibrant activity. People hurried to work, ran errands, or simply relished a leisurely morning stroll. Each day, I met an old friend at the local diner, where friendly banter filled the air. There, I would savor a plate of two eggs, two pancakes, and a refreshing glass of orange juice.

Approaching the familiar landmark, I felt a comforting sense of homecoming. This place, where all were embraced like family, held a special place in my heart. Memories of weekend lunches with my mom after Sunday church filled me with tranquility and belonging.

Stepping inside, the dark wooden booths immediately drew my attention with their tall backs. The warm hospitality permeated the air, embodying the genuine charm of the South. Soft, timeless melodies played in the background, transporting me to a bygone era marked by devotion and love. Coated with an ageless oil-based finish, the wooden floors emanated a sense of richness and history. The tantalizing aroma of sizzling eggs, bacon, and freshly brewed coffee enveloped the space, beckoning patrons to relax and relish a meal prepared in the authentic Southern tradition.

George Hill, a familiar face in town, possessed an extensive network of acquaintances despite his short stature, graying hair, and distinctive Southern accent. Clad in faded jeans, a white T-shirt, and worn leather boots, George greeted me with a warm smile as I entered the nostalgic diner. He saw beyond my facade without pretense, offering solace whenever I felt disheartened. Grateful for his presence, I returned his smile. Although we had been friends for years, the enigma of George's origins and mysterious past remained a mystery. I couldn't help but wonder if his life experiences were similar to mine. Yet, the desire for clarity persisted.

George repeated his question, his face filled with concern, as I savored every bite of my eggs and pancakes, complemented by a revitalizing sip of orange juice. Pausing momentarily, I raised my gaze to meet his warm, brown eyes.

"George, have you ever pondered those elusive thoughts and dreams that visit us? Those moments when we sense a restless yearning in our lives, yet struggle to grasp their true significance?"

With a knowing nod, George replied, "Indeed, I have encountered such occurrences on numerous occasions. Each dream seemed to serve as both a forewarning and a turning point in my life."

Puzzled, I voiced my confusion, "George, I find myself grappling with these dreams and sensations that arise from within. What do they signify?"

"Peter, they indicate that your life stands on the precipice of a profound transformation. You should strive to derive meaning from these dreams," George responded, his words steeped in wisdom.

Intrigued, yet overwhelmed by the distinctive divergence between these visions and my reality, I wondered if they could be attributed to the food I had consumed, financial pressures, or even the unconventional shows I indulged in. Yet none of these explanations seemed to align. Why now, and why me? Could there be a more straightforward path to comprehend this bewildering phenomenon that has befallen me?

In contemplation of George's infinite wisdom and profound insight, the haunting visions both puzzled and stirred unease within.

"The dreams carry a message, Peter," he continued. "They offer glimpses of the path ahead, revealing that your desires, passions, and talents have awakened. These new visions, voices, and nightmares unshackle you from the chains of the ordinary and pave the way to an extraordinary life. However, I must caution you that these events mark the beginning of a journey that may leave you bewildered, frustrated, and vulnerable in many ways."

 "Why?" I asked, my confusion lingering.

"In discovering the remnants of the forgotten or lost past, we uncover valuable lessons that contribute to our growth and eventual liberation," George responded.

"Peter, there are unresolved matters in your life that demand your attention. You must confront something head-on before fully embracing your power and unique talents. Your presence on this earthly plane is meant to enrich not only your own life, but also the lives of those around you. Otherwise, you risk being mired in inner turmoil, endlessly seeking answers in all the wrong places.

"As I gaze into your eyes, I see traces of weariness, restlessness, and the toll that time has taken on you. You once stood on the precipice of abandoning your envisioned life, settling for a mere existence devoid of fulfillment. Though you lived by what you believed was right, a yearning for deeper meaning persisted. It is precisely for this reason, through Divine intervention, that these dreams and voices were sent to emancipate you from the chains of illusion and unforgiveness that closed the door to your true purpose.

"Without these disruptions, setbacks, and disappointments, old patterns of thought and habits would remain unbroken, hindering any genuine path to fulfillment—an undiscovered path before you. Take solace, Peter, for something profound is about to unfold in your life. It is necessary, as it will enable you to breathe life back into the souls of those who have resigned themselves," George explained.

"I understand it may seem bewildering at this moment, but trust me, you have only begun to unlock the doors that once held you captive in fear and self-imposed limitations. You are more than just a repairman and shop owner. Your life holds purpose and significance that surpasses your current understanding. Without those chains, you will find your way to your true destiny. It appears God has made the opening move on the chessboard of your life, initiating the first steps toward a new and exhilarating world,"

I, inquisitive, interrupted, saying I believed God doesn’t care about me.

George responded, countering, "No, my dear friend. Although your mind may insist otherwise, your heart has always yearned for more than you have settled for. Deep down, you have never lost touch with this truth. Yet, you have dismissed the profound emotions and expressions residing within, continuing to embrace a mundane existence you refer to as life.

"And now, the time has come for these internal gifts to manifest in their full glory. I am eager to hear about the dream that left you unsettled and disheartened last night, eager to unravel its hidden meaning and significance."

"George, let me share what I have discovered thus far. When I awoke, I found it unusually arduous to slip back into slumber. Resting there, my mind became flooded with a torrent of negative thoughts and voices that compelled me to reflect upon the entirety of my being," I conveyed.

"Suddenly, the profession I had chosen as a mechanic and business owner seemed devoid of purpose and significance, in stark contrast to the days when my life was dedicated to deciphering the intricate workings of these machines. Fearful thoughts emerged as messengers, reminding me that the path I once knew was nearing its conclusion.

"They startled me, and now I am plagued with stress and melancholy. Now that this has unfolded, I am at a loss for what to do. That is why I confided in you. I seek solace and reassurance from someone like yourself, who can guide me in reclaiming my former life—or help me comprehend these bewildering dreams and insistent voices. I yearn for explanations to understand what is unfolding within me. Fear grips me as I sense that my existence is approaching its denouement."

"Not its end, but its transformation," George calmly responded.

"I feel adrift and uncertain about the next steps to take. Without the success of my repair business, I lack a backup plan," I confided. "Automobile repair has been my sole expertise, yet these enigmatic dreams hint at latent talents and gifts that elude my complete understanding. Am I overlooking something, George? The uncertainty and recurring dreams push me to the brink of my sanity," I expressed my bewilderment.

"Fear not, Peter," George reassured. "These dreams and thoughts unlock the door to new experiences and personal growth. It happened only once, and I have encountered these thoughts before. They persist like the incessant buzz of a mosquito, jolting us awake and keeping us vigilant. If we're not careful, we may get bitten, which will sting and cause pain. Looking back, I can affirm that these voices awaken us from the slumber of mediocrity, guiding lost souls through inner turmoil to a superior path in life.

“Throughout my journey, I have encountered these messengers—visions that seemed to herald pivotal moments or transitions. Despite my discontent with various aspects of life, these persistent echoes of thoughts and images refused to fade until I confronted unresolved issues that I thought were long buried or nonexistent, which were the very things that held me back.

“I struggled with lingering matters hidden from my sight during my formative years. Consumed by enduring animosity and resentment, I grew numb to their captivating influence. Yet, after years of failures and repeated missteps, an epiphany embraced me. Perhaps I didn't possess all the answers to my existence. My actions and demeanor finally convinced me of this undeniable truth. Late one solitary night, this realization washed over me like a gentle breeze—change was necessary.

"After surrendering to my past, I embarked on a new journey. I released my grasp on what was beyond my control and finally embraced my life. In that moment, my life began to transform. Suddenly, I found myself on the right path, achieving the aspirations I had dreamed of as a child. My purpose and plan were finally within reach, and I surpassed every goal I set," George concluded.

# CHAPTER TWO

So, I was at the shop, questioning what had once been a consistent and relatively pleasant part of my life. The previous night's restlessness had turned that upside down and left me unsettled in a way I had never experienced. What exactly was I supposed to do with my life?

An indescribable feeling washed over me as I stood in the familiar and comforting shop. Restlessness from a sleepless night mingled with uncertainty, leaving me pondering my life's true path.

Becoming a mechanic or shop owner in this town was never part of my envisioned future. It all unfolded from a deep-seated desire to explore and pursue activities that bring inner peace and boundless joy. This transformative journey led me into a world where I discovered profound connections and reclaimed control over my own destiny.

It all began with my insatiable childhood curiosity. Gifted items from my mother, I eagerly dismantled them, captivated by the intricate workings. With meticulous precision, I dissected each piece, methodically examining and reconstructing them, piece by piece.

As I reflect upon that pivotal moment in the shop, I realize it was the catalyst for the extraordinary path ahead—one embraced with a sense of purpose and an unwavering determination to unlock the mysteries that lie before me.

As my curiosity grew, I expanded my skills to repair more challenging objects like lawnmowers, weed eaters, and bicycles. With each successful fix, my trust in my instincts grew stronger, fueling my confidence to tackle even more intricate projects.

Through the lens of problem-solving, the world unfolded before my eyes, presenting endless opportunities during my childhood, and even allowing me to earn a little extra money. Soon, family and friends relied on my expertise for their various projects whenever we were in Atlanta.

Lost in contemplation, I would stay awake into the late hours of the night, immersing myself in magazines that explored the enigmatic mysteries of the world. The ability to effortlessly recall numbers, figures, and facts about any subject endlessly fascinated me.

Looking back, those moments were truly among the most blissful in my life. I had wholeheartedly followed my purpose and heeded the guidance of my inner voice. However, I also realized that I hadn't fully embraced all that life had to offer. While others indulged in social gatherings, parties, and extravagant events, I often sought solace in moments of solitude, captivated by the art of repairing things.

During my teenage years, my passion for automobile repair started to take hold. When my recently acquired vehicle unexpectedly broke down, I searched for answers, but received little help from the dealership. Frustration coursed through me, prompting a silent vow to fix my car.

I delved into magazines, frequented local shops, and sought guidance from trusted individuals. Slowly but steadily, the answers I sought began to surface. With the help of unknown strangers and technical manuals, I triumphantly restored my vehicle.

This experience spared me from exorbitant auto repair costs and propelled me towards self-employment in the automotive repair industry. Guided by a dear friend named Michael Miller, with whom an instant bond formed, I honed my skills and refined my craft.

Our weekends were filled with reunions and repairs of automobiles, where I hungrily absorbed his wisdom while he unveiled the intricate problems and their corresponding solutions. This newfound world of automobile repair claimed my thoughts and passions.

I abruptly decided to leave high school, as I felt a lack of inner peace, freedom, and clarity within its walls. Why did I choose this path? It was the simplest route, driven by a deep-rooted understanding that my true future and purpose extended beyond education itself. Instead, it lay in the realms of self-awareness and personal development.

To save money, I diligently performed numerous auto repairs for friends, family, and even strangers. Eventually, fate led me to an old, abandoned shop nestled in the historic industrial district of town. Without hesitation, I became the proud owner of this sanctuary.

The shop exuded a majestic aura, a true testament to its existence over a century ago. Its solid brick and steel structure stood resilient, withstanding the test of time. A grand metal garage door welcomed vehicles of all sizes, while a neighboring conventional door graciously invited visitors into the office.

Stepping inside, I marveled at the impressive twelve-foot ceilings adorned with radiant fluorescent lights and elegant ceiling fans. Not only did these fans provide relief during sweltering summers, but they also combated the bone-chilling winters when the crisp Atlantic Ocean air cast its frosty spell.

Regardless of the season, these fans dutifully circulated comforting air, creating an inviting atmosphere that allowed me to thrive even in the harshest winters. Their gentle hum became the familiar soundtrack to the bustling activity within.

I was greeted by a spacious and welcoming ambiance as I entered the office. Cozy couches, three coffee tables, and various magazine racks adorned the right side, immersing visitors in an atmosphere of comfort.

Towards the back wall, a table showcased various coffee, tea, and water options, accompanied by a trusty coffee maker. A vending machine stood nearby, generously stocked with snacks and candies for those seeking a quick bite while waiting for car repairs. And if that wasn't enough, a sizable cold-drink machine beckoned, offering an indulgent dose of caffeine and sugar to combat drowsiness during longer waits.

On the left side of the office, a six-foot-long counter marked the beginning and end of my interactions with customers. Always accompanied by a warm smile, it served as the hub of activity where I handled phone calls, estimates, and price quotes. It was also home to my desk and computer, allowing seamless communication and providing customers with printed diagrams of their vehicle issues and solutions.

Behind the desk, a display of certifications and awards proudly adorned the walls. These accolades showcased my dedication and expertise in serving the community's transportation needs. As my customer base grew, it became crucial for potential clients to see the credibility and proficiency I had acquired.

In this small town, I stood among the survivors. Throughout time, countless businesses have risen and fallen, whether passed down through generations or enticed by the call of adventure in a new city. Unfortunately, the pursuit of financial success eluded the majority, leaving shops and enterprises grappling just to break even. Unfortunately, I found myself in a similar predicament, perpetually burdened by financial stress and anxiety, as my expenses consistently surpassed my earnings. It seemed like an unbreakable cycle, leaving me endlessly frustrated and mentally depleted.

I couldn't help but see myself as a mouse endlessly running on a wheel, desperately seeking an escape. I needed to embrace a different mindset that distracted many business owners in Beaufort—the just-getting-by mentality.

If I were honest, I despised my life path and the person I had become in the process. Each day was accompanied by a sense of dread, despite my attempts to convince myself that things would improve. Deep down, I knew it was merely an illusion. At the age of twenty-eight, I felt trapped in my own life and career. Peculiar dreams were the catalyst that compelled me to acknowledge my reality, igniting a yearning for change.

One morning, I surveyed the repair facility as I sat in my truck outside my shop. I felt like a hollow shell, lost and insignificant. It seemed as though nobody cared about me. I was just another face in the crowd, another number in the vast sea of human existence.

I had a handful of friends like George, Louise, and Daniel, but they were primarily professional acquaintances. I realized that I lacked deeper and more intimate connections, which became a persistent and haunting memory in my mind after losing my cousin, Jason.

Looking back, I realized that with each passing month, I grew grumpier, consumed by anger and resentment. The time had come to bid farewell to this tumultuous journey in the auto repair field. While I explored various other endeavors, none excited me as much as my connection with vehicles.

Delving into their hidden issues provided solace, allowing me to distance myself from financial concerns, failed relationships, and the persistent inner voice that only arose when the repair shop stood quiet. However, I faced a dilemma—I lacked alternative skills and dropped out of high school in eleventh grade.

Auto repair was the only world I knew, the one thing I could call my own. I excelled at it and had once lived a modest life, which, upon reflection, was, in reality, a state of poverty that I stubbornly refused to admit.

We face increasingly daunting challenges in the present era, which sharply contrasts with the frenetic pace often depicted in bustling cityscapes. This is particularly evident in the realm of business.

Progress seems to move at a leisurely country pace. Some days are filled with hectic busyness from dawn till dusk, while others have a slow tempo that leaves me restless and longing for more.

Amidst the challenges, I managed to keep up with the bills, although sometimes payments were delayed. In certain months, I had to dip into my limited savings. I believed this was the reality for everyone.

Whenever a customer came to collect their vehicle but couldn't make the payment, it felt like a betrayal from those I counted on for support. Outwardly, I maintained a cheerful demeanor, but internally, I struggled with the weight of deciding which creditors to prioritize, sinking further into sadness. Each financially strained month pushed me farther from my true self, as I desperately searched for solutions to my problems.

Bill collectors became more familiar than my neighbors or friend George. The first half of the month brought uneasiness, because that's when all the bills were due, and everyone expected payment. The feeling of financial insufficiency lingered until around the tenth, when I gathered enough business to settle the debts from the previous month.

This cyclic rhythm had become exhausting as days and months passed. As a small-town resident, I often bartered to repay my debts. Although cash was the preferred option, sometimes I had to provide manual labor or other non-monetary forms of payment. Consequently, I ended up owing favors and lacking financial abundance.

Upon arriving at my shop each morning, I would see a few other shop owners. They would greet me with a friendly wave or step outside their doors for small talk before starting their day. Among them were Louise Baker, owner of Baker's Flower Shop, and Daniel Tate, owner of the Crafts and Art Depot, specializing in unique wooden decorative pieces. We would chat about the weather or upcoming games between rival schools in our small town. Over time, Daniel, Louise, and I formed a close bond, like a small family. We were three individuals united by a shared purpose—to serve others and make a difference in our own modest ways.

After my morning interaction with Louise and Daniel, I made my way to the office. Unlocking the door and flipping the lights on, I checked the mail slot and placed the few letters I’d received on the counter.

I proceeded towards the coffee pot, eager to savor a freshly brewed cup for the day ahead. As I reflected on the brief respite of the weekend, I hastened to unlock the large overhead door in the shop area, breaking the silence that had enveloped the premises. A flick of the switch on the wall activated the air compressor, powering the air guns and other tools. I pressed the button on the radio, allowing its sound to permeate the shop.

The aroma of coffee wafted through the building, enticing me to follow its scent. I made my way to the coffee station, ready for my third morning cup. Settling down at my desk, I shifted my attention to the stack of mail I had tossed aside earlier. I began sorting through the important documents, primarily bills and solicitations. Turning to the sales papers and fliers, I skimmed through them, hoping to find something interesting. I discarded the remaining documents in the trash, with nothing catching my eye.

In a matter of minutes, the shrill sound of the phone cut through the quiet air, and I eagerly snatched it up in my usual fashion, answering with a professional tone, "Smith's Auto Repair." On the other end, a calm, low voice inquired about scheduling an oil change and tire rotation. I assured them their request could be accommodated without hesitation, and asked for their name. To my surprise, it was Mrs. Haskins, the retired teacher from the high school on Highway Seventy.

A smile appeared on my face as her name resonated with familiarity. "Is this Mrs. Haskins who retired three years ago?" I asked. With a warm tone, she confirmed her identity and shared that she and her husband had been traveling the country since then. Memories flooded my mind, and I expressed my admiration for her as a teacher, conveying how much her unwavering enthusiasm had meant to me.

Her voice exuded a smile as she responded, "I also cherished your eagerness and enthusiastic demeanor, Peter." A chuckle escaped, as I was pleasantly surprised by her recollection of me after all these years. She proceeded to mention her grandson, Joseph Stacks, who had embarked on a successful career in the corporate world in New York.

Curiosity sparked within me, and I eagerly inquired about Joseph's well-being. Much to my surprise, Mrs. Haskins revealed Joseph had found his high-powered position unfulfilling. Despite leading a prominent sales force, he had followed his true passion as a photographer. Mrs. Haskins explained that he had felt the burden of societal expectations and had the courage to pursue his desires.

Silence enveloped the room as I absorbed the weight of her words. "That's wonderful," I eventually replied, acknowledging the significance of deviating from conventional paths, even if it meant initially feeling alone. Mrs. Peterson agreed, emphasizing the importance of individuals who fearlessly chase their dreams, regardless of the sacrifices involved.

Her words resonated deeply within me, causing me to question whether the repair shop truly aligned with my aspirations. A lingering sense of something missing grew stronger with each passing moment. It was as if Mrs. Haskins had unlocked a hidden perception of extraordinary potential within me as an educator. Tears welled up in my eyes, as never before had someone articulated such a profound impact, I had on their life.

Lost in thought, I finally reached for the phone to check my voicemail. As expected, local customers leaving messages seeking regular vehicle maintenance. With my familiarity with the customers and their cars, I gathered the necessary information to provide accurate quotes for the required services. In a close-knit town like Beaufort, where people cherished their older vehicles, keeping them in impeccable condition was crucial, ensuring their longevity.

Summers in Beaufort bestowed us with splendid weather and refreshing Atlantic breezes that graced the nearby beaches and waterways. However, the high humidity presented challenges, and during the winter months, it was essential to combat the effects of salt and debris on the vehicles. While I may not have been a body shop or detailer, I understood the importance of meticulous cleaning, washing, and waxing to satisfy our valued customers' needs to keep their vehicles running and looking great year-round.

After attending my morning voicemail and checking the inventory of oils and fluids, ten minutes had swiftly passed. Mrs. Haskins arrived in her well-maintained 1991 Toyota Camry, boasting a soft baby blue exterior and a warm tan interior. Mr. Haskins followed closely behind in a red '91 Ford Explorer.

Mrs. Haskins gracefully stepped out of her car, ensuring she’d securely locked the doors before entering my office. Her infectious smile and calm demeanor brightened the space as I sat behind the desk.

With genuine concern, she addressed me, "Mr. Smith, please take great care of my Camry. It has served me well, and I want to keep it running smoothly for many years." I assured her of her prompt return, but was interrupted when she added, "Peter, there's no need to rush. I have a few errands to run later tonight. Would it be okay if I retrieve my vehicle tomorrow morning?"

I reassured her that the car would be ready by then, while silently studying her appearance. Nancy appeared youthful, not a day older than forty-five, standing at a petite 5'1" and weighing around 130 pounds. Her baby blue eyes and flowing blonde hair added to her radiant elegance.

Every movement she made exuded an aura of wisdom and tranquility, a testament to her unwavering self-care. Grace and love seemed to be her steadfast allies, guiding her through life. Having dedicated most of her years to Beaufort, Nancy wholeheartedly embraced education, often underscoring the significance of living purposefully and passionately with her students.

Her words echoed in my mind long after our encounter. In that moment, Nancy's profound impact and the words she conveyed resonated deep within me. Suddenly, an internal quest awakened, urging me to seek the true meaning of life. It became clear what was missing all this time, what I had yearned for at the core: a sense of inner peace and a renewed purpose that had once guided my youth.

As realization struck me, the absence that had haunted me for so long was unveiled as the root cause of my restlessness and the profound sense of the lack of direction I felt. I contemplated the reasons behind one's voluntary embrace of a life overshadowed by unhappiness and despair. I did not anticipate this realization would ignite a transformative process, propelling me toward self-discovery. Though fear persisted, I became aware of embarking on an irreversible journey. As I delved further into introspection, I descended into uncertainties, uncertain about the path ahead.

Longing to liberate myself from the confines of my small town and the people within it, I embarked on a personal quest to unravel the true purpose buried within me and alleviate the inner torment that consumed me. My mind was flooded with questions, but answers remained elusive. Solitude and tranquility were the sole conduits through which I could grasp the missing pieces of the puzzle.

I had spent most of my life shrouded in loneliness, trapped in a state of yearning for connection that had become my stark reality. However, after a profound awakening, I became acutely aware that this existence was no longer tenable. The desire to escape from this abyss of despair and rediscover a life adorned with peace, love, and meaning burned within me. The journey towards transformation had to commence with me, and it had to begin soon.

With graceful poise, Mrs. Haskins handed me the keys and approached the exit with a gentle smile. Mr. Peterson patiently awaited her in the car. Stepping out from behind the counter, I walked towards the front entrance, bidding goodbye to the departing couple as they drove away. Lost in a maze of contemplation, I remained by the window, reflecting upon the events that had unfolded in the last few hours. Something profound stirred within me, although its true nature eluded my comprehension. These new revelations filled me with apprehension and helplessness.

Despite being the proprietor of an auto repair shop in the industrial part of town, I found the allure of my occupation and accomplishments insufficient to bring me contentment and fulfillment. It was as if a whole new world had unfolded before me, forever altering the trajectory of my life.

Clinging tightly to Mrs. Haskins's keys, I approached her vehicle with confidence. Unlocking the door effortlessly, I slid the key into the ignition, igniting the engine's mighty roar. Contemplating the precise alignment of the car as it approached the auto lift, I embarked on the mindful endeavor of an oil change and tire rotation. Amidst the mechanical duties, my thoughts involuntarily drifted back to Joseph and the countless tales surrounding him.

What ignited his remarkable transformation? How did he meticulously evaluate his options? And, above all, how did he discover solace in a realm of uncertainties? These persistent inquiries plagued me, unwilling to be disregarded.

Although I only briefly knew Joseph, his deliberate choices and thoughtful considerations shaped his unique persona. He decided to leave behind a lucrative career at a renowned company and embark on a journey of travel and photography, seeking fulfillment rather than financial gain. The mystery surrounding his shift in priorities sparked my curiosity and forced me to seek answers.

After a thorough session of vehicle maintenance, including an oil change, tire rotation, and meticulous detailing, I leisurely left the expansive bay. I gracefully parked the car in front of the office.

As the clock hands passed 2:00 p.m., I found myself idly seated in front of the computer, engrossed in a solitary game of Solitaire. The phone remained silent, accompanied by the soft whispers of a radio station playing a compilation of the top ten songs. I hummed along, allowing the lyrics to resonate within, perfectly harmonizing with the melodies.

Unexpectedly, the sound of the entrance door creaking open snapped me out of my musical trance. The mail delivery person, known for their brevity, swiftly left the mail on my counter and departed.

Sorting through the envelopes, my attention was caught by one of my favorite automotive repair magazines. Within its pages, you’ll find an insider's view of the industry, offering invaluable tips and techniques for efficient repairs, ensuring ultimate customer satisfaction. In this edition, an article explored the contrasting attributes that differentiated exceptional mechanics from their mediocre counterparts. These remarkable mechanics demonstrated an unwavering commitment and profound passion for an ever-evolving industry. On the other hand, ordinary mechanics, while competent, lack the same pride in their craftsmanship and relentless drive for progress.

The transition from greatness to mediocrity often coincides with personal transformation, causing many individuals to settle for less. As aspirations fade, they seek distractions as a means to divert attention from the decline of once-thriving careers.

These poignant words struck a chord within me, causing my heart to sink like the fateful voyage of the Titanic. At that moment, the realization washed over me—I was no longer the exceptional mechanic I once was, but rather an adept one who had veered off course.

Perspiration formed on my palms as thoughts raced through my mind at lightning speed. Everything revolved around the concept of change. I delved deep into my consciousness, searching for hints as to what had transpired, but no solace or answers emerged.

As events unfolded, I couldn't help but ponder the underlying reasons. Why was it happening here and now? Was I being guided away from the familiar toward a greater purpose? Did these changes manifest under Divine orchestration, with someone or something listening?

A subtle notion emerged, hinting that this might be an endeavor to establish communication. Being an auto repair owner and technician was not my ultimate destination, but merely a temporary rest stop on the journey. Just as this thought began to take shape, the door swung open, and George entered with his infectious laugh and enthusiastic demeanor.

"Glad to see you, George," I greeted him. "Anything interesting happened since this morning? It's been uneventful around here."

He replied, "I happened to be in the area and thought I should drop by to see my old buddy. Your words at the diner got me thinking, and that's why I'm here. So, what's on your mind, Peter?" he inquired.

"I don't know, George. It's as if I keep receiving a recurring message— maybe auto repair isn't my destined calling. It's surprising, to say the least. I can't help but ponder if something more exists out there, something intangible that eludes my grasp," I admitted, lost in contemplation.

"To be honest, Peter, I've traveled this path many times. In situations like these, we often find ourselves stuck, content with the status quo, believing that our current position, relationships, or lifestyle encompass everything life offers." George paused briefly, then continued, "You possess hidden gifts and talents, waiting for the right opportunity to manifest through you. However, embarking on this journey requires finding a sense of stillness and actively listening.

"Discovering your gifts is a deeply personal odyssey that delves into the depths of your being. Life encompasses so much more than mere existence, going through the motions day after day, getting one's hands dirty and tightening bolts."

"George, this has been my existence as far back as memory serves. It's the only reality I've ever known. Are you suggesting the existence of a higher purpose, one that surpasses my current pursuits? Something that could bring me a life overflowing with more happiness, fulfillment, and contentment?"

"Without a doubt," affirmed George without hesitation.

I struggled to fully accept this reality, although my heart whispered it was true.

"Perhaps a vacation is what I need. Some downtime to rejuvenate myself," I proposed.

George firmly held onto my arm; his voice filled with wisdom as he spoke. "Peter, pause and listen. The need for a vacation is undeniable; we all crave those moments of respite. But there comes a time when we must acknowledge that life evolves, and its twists and turns can lead us to uncharted territories.

“Even if they appear unfamiliar or uninteresting at first glance, if it's the rightful path, that's where our true selves will ultimately find solace," George expressed. His gaze carried an intensity and conviction I had never witnessed before.”

I nodded in agreement, although I didn't fully grasp his words. Although I lacked complete understanding and hadn't pieced together all the puzzle pieces, I knew his message would gain clarity with time.

"Peter, chin up," he continued, releasing his grip on my arm. He resumed his familiar demeanor and smiled. "Everything will be alright, my friend. I promise I'll be there to support you every step of the way." He headed towards the door.

I took comfort in the certainty of his presence beside me. "Hey, George, before you leave, there's something interesting that happened today, which I wanted to share with you. I believe it will catch you by surprise."

As he turned towards me, a mischievous smile played on his lips, freezing me in my tracks. "Surprise me," he dared in a challenging tone, urging me to reveal something unexpected.

I began recalling a phone conversation with Mrs. Nancy Haskins, a beloved teacher from my high school days. Despite a decade passing since our last meeting, her voice remained unmistakable. Our talk brought back memories of our old school on Highway Seventy, and we caught up on her retired life. Nancy and her husband, Fred, were embracing were returning back home from the tranquility of the Mediterranean Sea.

As we reminisced about our time together in her class, she expressed her unwavering belief in my potential for success in the business world. To her, my personality and contagious smile were the catalysts for growth and prosperity. As our conversation shifted to her husband's aspiration to embrace life's opportunities in retirement, a surge of ambition rekindled within me.

The following morning, Nancy pulled up in her impeccably clean blue Toyota Camry for me to service. We exchanged pleasantries, marveling at the passage of time and the preservation of her warm spirit. I couldn't help but beam as I revealed how her words had revived hope within me.

As I spoke, George listened intently, his eyes drifting towards the ceiling as if visualizing the scenes, I described. Without interruption, our conversation continued, and I delved into another captivating tale.

The subject eventually shifted to Nancy's grandson, Joseph Stacks, who’d unexpectedly left his vice president position at a prominent New York City telecommunication company to pursue a career in photography. His bold decision not only stunned everyone, but also sparked a profound sense of admiration for following his true calling, prompting introspection on the choices we make in life.

Baffled, I asked George, "What could possibly drive someone to dedicate their entire life to climbing the corporate ladder, only to abandon it instantly?" His response arrived with a discerning smile, his eyes revealing an abundance of profound insight.

"It occurs more frequently than one might imagine," George responded. "Individuals are perpetually confronted with the choice between heeding their heart's calling or yielding to their expectations." His words resonated within me, unsettling the bedrock of my convictions.

"But George, that seems profoundly illogical. My life is settled, content with my auto shop providing a steady income. Isn't that all one needs in a town like ours?" I pleaded, desperately seeking validation.

George gently shook his head, countering my perspective. "Peter, you're missing the essence of existence. It's not about possessions or stability; it's about finding contentment by embracing each day dedicated to what nourishes your soul.

“Whether it brings little or abundant wealth, true fulfillment arises from pursuing your passions and nurturing personal growth. Your journey towards your ultimate destiny has only just begun,” George concluded, leaving me bewildered yet yearning for inner understanding.

Silently, I acknowledged that life encompasses more than meets the eye. Guided by George, I embarked on a journey to uncover the root of my longing—to unveil the path towards genuine happiness and fulfillment.

“I came to check up on you, and from the expression on your face, it's evident that you're deeply puzzled and undergoing inner turmoil. Peter, I would appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughtful perspective with you.”

"Sure, George," I replied, hoping to glean some profound wisdom from him.

“From the partial insights you've disclosed, intertwined with my intuition and personal encounters that echo yours, it seems you hold unresolved forgiveness within, both towards yourself and others. The dreams and synchronicities you encounter are signals that this lingering resentment is present, seeking your acknowledgment. They yearn for you to embrace a future brimming with possibilities, even if they currently elude your perception.”

"That's impossible," I interjected. "What do negative thoughts and strange voices have to do with my purpose or life?"

"These negative thoughts and the profound, unfamiliar voice symbolize the anger, frustration, and pain within you that you've carried since your early childhood. You're upset about how people have treated you, how you felt wronged and taken advantage of due to your kindness," answered George.

"These voices and thoughts, Peter, reflect how you've been living your life. You've been running away from everything and everyone, pushing them away with your anger and resentment towards your own life—a life you believed was all you deserved.

“You lack trust in yourself and others, even in someone like me. We both know this. You're disappointed in Joseph Stacks, because he achieved what you've only dreamt of. But your perception of yourself keeps you anchored, accepting meager wages, a limited lifestyle, and solitude. Isn't all this true?" inquired George.

Before I could respond, he continued, "It encompasses all the disappointments, letdowns, and personal losses you've experienced. You haven't shared the details with me, but I can sense they still wield power over you, buried deep within your soul. You've never had the opportunity to confront and release them, so you can finally embrace an authentic and abundant life, liberated from hiding beneath the shadow of your circumstances. It's about time you step out and genuinely engage with the rest of the world, don't you think?

"I understand this because I've undergone many of the same struggles. They wreaked havoc on my personal and professional life until I confronted them head-on, refusing to let them dictate my future. Peter, these are not simple matters to address, but if we're both truthful with ourselves, we can acknowledge the deeply rooted issues that necessitate resolution. Only then can we truly witness the magic and miracles present in our lives."

Standing in the presence of a man I deeply respected and admired, I found myself at a loss for words, overwhelmed by emotions that surged within me. How could someone possess such a profound understanding of me without uttering a single question? George's words echoed in my mind, leaving me perplexed by his vast knowledge, while I remained ignorant of his own story. A moment of silence enveloped us as George stared out of the shop window.

Breaking the stillness, he spoke, acknowledging the weight of the situation, "I comprehend this revelation may be overwhelming, but we can explore it further later. I have a few matters to attend to this evening. What do you say? I can swing by tomorrow morning, and we can embark on a quest to unravel this enigma together, my friend."

With a nod of agreement, I wrestled against my denials. While I yearned to counter George's words, to persuade him of the misconceptions he held about me, an unexplainable silence fell upon me. He had laid bare a truth that evaded my grasp, but it sparked a yearning within—a boundless thirst for unraveling the enigma.

George paused, meeting my gaze with a gentle smile. "You are a true companion, and I would be honored to guide you as you seek your path and unearth your purpose while your inner flame continues to burn brightly.”

# CHAPTER THREE

FIRSTLY, MAKE SURE YOU READ the free guide and watch some of the videos on [www.diybookcovers.com](http://www.diybookcovers.com). In the quiet of the evening, I found myself compelled to take Mrs. Peterson's car keys and gently tuck her vehicle away in the safety of the garage. As I closed the colossal overhead door to my shop, confusion and stress washed over me, lingering from my interactions with Nancy and George earlier that day. In an unexpected moment, a wave of emotions engulfed my being, and tears began their tender descent.

In the realm of yesterday evening and today, I have embarked on a profound journey through the depths of emotions, captivated by the enigmatic intricacies of life. A deep weariness has clung to me relentlessly, my weary form devoid of rest, haunted by elusive dreams, and besieged by restless thoughts that shape my every move. Yet, within the embrace of vulnerability, a hitherto unknown fortitude has emerged, illuminating my path.

Yet, amidst this labyrinth of emotions, my spirit plummeted to harrowing depths when George unearthed sentiments that I fervently tried to hide from him and the world. The unveiling left me profoundly unsettled.

Tears welled up in my eyes, carried by a profound sense of solitude, gently tracing the contours of my face as I allowed myself to release the accumulated pain and sorrow. Following intense vulnerability, I gently wiped my face, regained composure, and summoned the strength to resolutely return to the front office with newfound resilience.

Unaware of the emotional storm, I resumed my place at the desk, seeking solace for a fleeting moment before concluding the day's work. Gazing out of the window, my eyes beheld the gathering clouds, looming with the promise of rain. In its benevolent grace, the East Coast bestowed upon us an abundance of rainfall, embellishing the world with vivid greenery, and ceaselessly replenishing the air. This quaint town swiftly captivated my heart, unveiling its modest charm and boundless offerings, leading me into deeper introspection and philosophical contemplation.

Out of nowhere, without warning or preamble, a resounding boom tore through the air, and lightning danced across the sky, followed by a torrential downpour. As the clock struck 5 p.m., I realized the past two hours had slipped into the recesses of my memory, with little to show for the day's endeavors. Exhausted in both body and mind, grappling to maintain composure throughout this daunting ordeal, I yearned for the embrace of my truck, seeking solace in its familiar shelter. The time had arrived to make my way home.

The fifteen-minute drive unfolded into an hour, as rain poured down incessantly, and thunder proclaimed its mighty existence throughout the entire journey. In these moments, one can't help but ponder nature's relentless forces and their profound impact on our lives.

As I disembarked from the truck and entered my unpretentious two-bedroom dwelling, much of the journey appeared hazy and distant. My mental presence detached from the preceding excursion.

Typically, I'd stop by the store to grab a six-pack of beer on my way home. Yet, even that steadfast routine eluded my memory amidst the aftermath of the day's events. This brought me to reflect on the transient essence of our routines and the profound impact life's circumstances have on our perception.

I bathed the kitchen in gentle illumination with a flick of the switch, drawn towards the refrigerator for a quick snack. My gaze fell upon sliced succulent turkey and a pack of sharp cheddar cheese. Assembling a few sandwiches, I relished their simple nourishment alongside a refreshing glass of water. The couch beckoned, it’s comforting embrace a sanctuary from the world's demands, allowing me to reflect upon the day's trials and tribulations. The lightning danced across the sky, accompanied by distant echoes of thunder, as the rain whispered its steady descent.

The day's memories began to infiltrate my musings—the phone call from Mrs. Peterson, the inspiration from my high school years, and her gentle words of encouragement regarding my potential for success. Nancy's visit, filled with warmth and reassurance, added further kindling to my burgeoning motivation. Mrs. Haskin's reminder about the significance of pursuing one's purpose did not surprise me. After all, it had always been a tenet emphasized in her class. However, our conversation took an unexpected turn when Joseph Stacks, who had forsaken the corporate world to pursue photography, entered the discussion.

Bewilderment and frustration mingled within me. It was not envy or resentment over Joseph's achievements, I thought, but rather a profound perplexity. He chose to relinquish it all, as if destiny had cleared his path to preside over a vast corporation. Our dialogues revolved around climbing the corporate ladder, attaining the coveted title of vice president, and owning a thriving company. And now, it all seemed inconsequential.

I grappled with understanding his decision; it unsettled me because it mirrored my own dilemma. Fixing things had always given me a sense of purpose, a lifelong pursuit I believed in wholeheartedly. Now, I found myself questioning the authenticity of that conviction. Uncertainty wove its intricate threads through every aspect of my existence. Had I been mistaken in my chosen path all along? And if so, how could I redirect myself towards the right course when it seemed I had veered so far off course? These questions surged through my mind as the comforting pitter-patter of rain against the window eventually lulled me into a deep slumber.

Hours later, as my weary eyes gradually regained consciousness, I sensed the rain had ceased its persistent downpour, yielding to a celestial spectacle of starlit wonders. Rubbing my eyes, I reached for the remote control and turned on the television, seeking solace amid the familiar company of moving images. Most shows greeted me with familiar reruns, yet among the ceaseless flickering, a new program seized my attention. It recounted the tale of a triumphant entrepreneur who had scaled the heights of success, only to abandon it all—his wife of twenty-five years and two devoted daughters included. He vanished without a trace, leaving his family grappling with confusion and loss. For years, they searched tirelessly, their hopes gradually giving way to the belief that he had been stolen away, destined for a tragic fate.

Many years later, the eldest daughter caught sight of a homeless man, pushing a worn shopping cart as she exited a store accompanied by a friend. Struck by a glimpse of familiarity, she disregarded the traffic chaos and hastened her approach. Calling out his name, the man turned, and father and daughter locked eyes. Tears flowed freely down their cheeks as they embraced one another, the swell of overwhelming emotions filling the void that marked their separation.

After over a decade of secret living, masquerading amidst the bustling streets of Los Angeles, the man reconnected with his daughters and wife. Through counseling and careful introspection, he discovered the root of his unhappiness.

No longer could he continue a life of pretense; it had been slowly eroding his soul. That man, who had once known success within his grasp, made the ultimate choice to walk away, relinquishing everything when he lost his sense of purpose and the will to truly live.

For far too long, his dreams had lain buried, and he believed himself too advanced in years to steer his destiny towards a different course. And so, he walked away from it all.

The tale, with its joyous conclusion, resonated with me. In the wake of its narrative, I switched off the television, my thoughts deep and contemplative.

The program served as a gentle reminder, arousing an awareness that I had veered off the right path. It demanded my immediate attention, urging for a profound change. Restlessness again took hold of my spirit that night, presenting itself in a different form through the enigmatic realm of dreams. I found myself journeying across an expansive desert, relentlessly pursued by a headless horseman, his spear poised ominously. As dawn broke, I abruptly awakened, my body drenched in cold sweat, just as his weapon poised to strike.

Engulfed in reflections and philosophical musings, I contemplated the ever-changing nature of life, the depths of uncertainty, and the unyielding pursuit of purpose. The rain had subsided, leaving behind a tranquil stillness, and the whispers of my own thoughts gently guided me toward the next chapter of this intricate journey.

Upon realizing that failing to find an escape from this nightmarish state could lead to succumbing to it, I sensed a disquieting discrepancy. Life had transformed into an insufferable existence in the past twenty-four hours, and the ceaseless struggle to endure felt overwhelmingly arduous.

A voice said, "Why don't you just kill yourself?" Life appeared devoid of purpose, as if I had spent it solely rectifying others' predicaments, disregarding my own. Pondering upon the absence of significance in everything else, the notion of bringing it all to an end emerged as the solitary option.

Lost in introspection, consumed by thoughts of despair, the phone's ringing shattered the silence. It was George, a kindred soul seeking solace in a late-night Western like me.

"In the midst of my turmoil, your call comes as a timely respite," I confessed, my voice tinged with raw honesty. "It has happened again."

Eagerly, George responded, "Begin at the beginning and let me in."

"In my dreams, I find myself walking across an expansive desert, pursued by a dark, headless figure brandishing a spear. Closing in, he readies to thrust the weapon through my vulnerable back, and I awaken, soaked in panic and icy sweat. It feels achingly real, George, too real." Tears stream down my face, marking my transformation into an adult prone to tears.

George patiently waits, allowing me to restore my composure before he speaks. Taking a deep breath, he gently remarks, “Peter, the moment has arrived for you to find solace and unravel the intricate threads of your mind. To find clarity. Indeed, a mechanic who lacks composure will be of little help to any town, wouldn't you agree?" A soft chuckle escapes his lips, and I smiled, grateful for the brightness he brings to my anxious and disordered mind.

In the depths of midnight, George extended an invitation to Peter, proposing a shared moment over a sip of coffee, aiming to illuminate the storm within. As the fragrance of brewing coffee filled the air, I expressed heartfelt gratitude for our shared connection. In response, George affirmed his unwavering willingness to lend a helping hand, and with that assurance, our call concluded.

Leaving my bed, I entered the bathroom intending to refresh, but paused as I caught a glimpse of my reflection. Staring back at me was a weary visage, a likeness of the walking dead. George was right — change is imperative.

Approximately twenty-five minutes later, George arrived.

"I had no idea you lived so far out," he remarked when I opened the door. "You're not fond of visitors, huh?"

"Found the cheapest place available for a bachelor like me," I replied with a wry smile. "Please, have a seat; I will pour us coffee."

I entered the kitchen and returned with two cups of robust brew. Taking a sip, I awaited George's insight.

After a moment's contemplation, he responded, "Peter, I genuinely desire to help, and delving into the depths of your personal history may prove crucial. Understand that I am not prying, but, as an educator, I believe understanding your past holds the key to navigating the present with clarity. This process will provide invaluable insights and pave the path to a brighter future.”

Uncertainty flickered in my eyes as I nodded, uncertain of his intentions, but driven by my desperate need for answers. "Indeed, it seems there is no other choice. I am prepared to go to any length to rid myself of these ceaseless worries and haunting nightmares."

George acknowledged my determination. "However, you must be honest with yourself, as well as with me. Can you manage that? Otherwise, we will be wasting our time, exacerbating matters further," he explained.

“Peter, revisiting our past and unearthing the missing pieces often proves pivotal for progress and attaining our aspirations. When life descends into chaos, devoid of purpose, exploring our history can illuminate the path to unburden ourselves from present and future sorrows. Neglecting these risks perpetuating mistakes and inadvertently sabotaging ourselves and those around us. Embracing introspection and learning from our past can unlock new avenues for growth and fulfillment. After all, doesn't true living beckon?" His reassuring smile invited me to embrace the journey.

"Yes, I yearn for existence. Yet, not in such a manner," I solemnly retorted.

George took a leisurely sip of coffee, savoring the moment and allowing his thoughts to wander. Then, he inhaled deeply and posed his first question. "Peter, would you mind sharing a bit about your childhood and where you grew up? I know you come from Beaufort, but is it your birthplace?"

"No, I was actually born in Atlanta," I responded. "That's where most of my family still resides—my mother, sister, and younger brother. When I turned five, my mother decided to relocate to Beaufort, so I consider it my hometown because it's all I've ever known."

"I see," George acknowledged. "There's a certain magic to this place—it effortlessly brings people together, creating a sense of home, even if one wasn't born here."

I nodded. "Mom made the decision to move here because the bustling city became overwhelming for our growing family. She believed a smaller town would offer better education and quality of life for her three little kids. And you know what? Moving into that little mobile home was one of the best decisions she ever made. It provided us with ample space to play outside and a cozy haven inside. In that little home, we relied on each other for safety, well-being, and love. We became a tight-knit unit."

George inquired, "Are you still close to your mom?"

I shrugged, contemplating my response. "As a child, I shared a special closeness with my mom. But as time went by, it feels like that connection has somehow faded. My love for her remains unwavering but expressing it has become a challenge that I grapple with."

"What do you mean?" George probed.

“I always had doubts about her true self, the passions that stirred within her. It seemed as though she held back a part of herself, something hidden from her children and the world. It was like there were two sides to her: one dedicated to caring for the household, her children, work, and expenses. However, this other side remained concealed, perhaps out of shame, disappointment, or anger. The reason behind it remains an enigma to me. But its presence was undeniably felt.

"I love my mom because she is a wonderful mother with a kind heart. She always provided for us. She cared deeply and wanted nothing but the best for us, giving us everything she could as a parent." I paused, collecting my thoughts before continuing, "Yet, what she didn't give us was her heart." Tears welled up in my eyes again, trickling down my cheeks.

Observing this, George empathized, "I'm sure she's an exceptional mother. No matter her circumstances, I'm certain she gave you and your siblings everything a mother could give her children. Sometimes, as parents, we shield our kids from painful truths, to protect them and ensure they have a bright future. Whatever she did or didn't do as a parent, Peter, it was all rooted in her love for you and your siblings. How often do you keep in touch with her these days?"

"I talk to her regularly, although not as frequently as an older son should. But we do have our conversations. Although, we don't delve into deep matters—just day-to-day things happening in her close-knit community. Her involvement in church activities, what she's cooking for dinner, and other small talk." I took a deep breath. "George, can we shift gears? Honestly, reflecting on my mom has stirred up emotions I'm not yet ready to confront."

George smiled gently, as if anticipating my request. "Of course," he responded. "What do you know about your father? You never mention him."

Ah, that was a thought-provoking question indeed. “Growing up, my father's presence was scarce, depriving me of the chance to truly know him as a son should. He left when I was only a tender five or six years old, abandoning my sister and brother in their infancy. His identity remains a mystery to me. Frankly, I do not want to uncover it.

“A true father's abrupt and unexplained departure, leaving his children and wife without justification, surpasses comprehension. It defies logic, leaving me bewildered. May our paths never cross again.” With a surge of anger, the final words escaped my lips, revealing the depth of my disappointment and resentment toward my father. His act of leaving my mother and forsaking us, his children, to navigate this harsh world alone ignited profound anger within me.

George fixed his gaze on me, appearing lost in thought. "Could he be the source of your mother's deep emotions?" he wondered.

"I cannot say for certain, but if that were the case, I could understand why she felt the way she did, and I cannot blame her. George, times were challenging back then, and being a single mother was no exception. But I struggle to grasp how he could simply walk away from his family, without any explanation. He packed his bags and disappeared. Upon deeper reflection, I find myself harboring a profound disdain towards him, accompanied by a genuine desire for his misfortune.”

"Peter, you don't mean that. I know it hurts right now, but time has a way of healing all wounds," George replied. "Every man must forge his own path, and sometimes, just as your path has brought you frustration and pain, his path likely burdened him with much the same. Maybe, just maybe, he left to find his own happiness and fulfillment."

I brushed off his hand resting on my shoulder. "I'm profoundly unconvinced by that reasoning. He had a wife and children to care for, and despite his inner perplexity, he still held the responsibility for his own family. There is no justification for abandoning those who rely on you so deeply.

"Never did I truly understand why my mother retreated to her room, shutting the door behind her and shedding tears. The cause of her distress and the reasons for her emotional agony remained elusive.

She never provided further explanation—simply stating that she was dealing with personal matters and that things would eventually improve. Now, I believe she was concealing her emotions. She attempted to hide the pain inflicted by my father, and it cast a profound shadow over my formative years. How can I forgive him for that?" I questioned, as overwhelming emotions surged within me.

In that fleeting moment, another profound realization struck me. "My mother reassured us that everything would be okay, reminding us of our family's resilience and the watchful eye of God. Yet, I neither saw God nor heard His voice. Nevertheless, I clung to an unwavering trust in Him, solely because my mother did.

"I don't mean to expose myself to such strong emotions, George, but you urged me to express my true feelings, so here I am, laying them bare. Perhaps it is something I should have done long ago, but it never felt necessary. I never trusted anyone or believed anyone cared for me."

"Thank you for opening up to me, Peter," George responded calmly. "You have given me much to ponder in such a short time. It will help me guide you.

"But our session is far from over—we have a lot of work ahead to set you on a path toward a more contented life. It may prove arduous, as your dreams, visions, and voices persist within your mind.

“Nevertheless, know that I am here for you. Let us conclude for the night, and I will visit your shop tomorrow morning. Are we still meeting for breakfast at the diner in a few hours?"

I confirmed our plans, observing George's departure from the house. A mix of elation and confusion enveloped me after divulging what I did. Would George truly help me? Could I alter the trajectory of my life? And if I did, would it bring me the happiness I yearned for?

# CHAPTER FOUR

Despite my meager four hours of sleep, I woke with an unexpected sense of rejuvenation and excitement for my meeting with George at the local diner. With swift movements, I rose from my bed, indulged in a refreshing shower, and relished the comforting warmth of a steaming cup of coffee. Fueled by energy, I embarked on my journey to the diner, eagerly anticipating our reunion.

As I drove, with the window partially open, I felt the embrace of fresher air, and a newfound clarity enveloped me. In those moments, a profound sense of peace permeated the depths of my being, filling me with sheer bliss. The absence of such tranquility and contentment in my life for an extended period made these precious minutes all the more cherished.

Arriving at the diner, I leaped out of my truck, a surge of excitement coursing through my veins. Upon opening the door, George's wide smile greeted me, accompanied by his infectious laughter.

As customary, I exchanged warm greetings with Betty and the other patrons at the front counter before hastening towards our cherished booth in the back. My face mirrored the brightness of George's smile, conveying a burden lifted, allowing me to feel almost normal again.

"So, Peter, how are you doing?" George inquired.

"Fantastic. My morning couldn't be better. Thank you once again, George, for lending a listening ear to my midnight musings about life."

"Anytime," George replied. "That's what friends are for during challenging times."

True to his thoughtful nature, George had already ordered my favorite breakfast—pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage, and orange juice—all waiting for me at the table. With coffee in hand, we shared knowing looks as we savored our morning meal, ready to continue the discussion where we had left off hours ago.

A brief pause hung in the air before I posed the lingering question that had occupied my thoughts. “George, as you delve into the depths of my background and family history, I am perplexed by the correlation between my recurring dreams and nightmares. I aim to overcome.

sleepless nights and decipher the meaning behind these enigmatic visions. However, sometimes, I feel adrift amidst these seemingly aimless inquiries. Could you help illuminate their purpose?”

"Peter, every action has a reason and a season, and now is the time for me to ask you a series of questions. Through this process, we can delve deeper, unraveling the mysteries that reside within you, guiding you along your destined path. Like a judge who weighs all the evidence before rendering a verdict, I am here to gain a comprehensive understanding of who you are as a whole. With this endeavor, I aim to address all your concerns and equip you with the tools needed to embrace your true self. Do we have a deal?"

"It's an excellent deal," I replied with a laugh. "I'll see you back at the shop in a few hours."

With our pact affirmed, I finished breakfast and set off for work. I felt an indescribable sense of elation leaving the diner, as if I were soaring amidst the clouds. The drive to my shop appeared swifter than usual, and deep within, I knew that this marked a significant turning point in my life—a new beginning.

Stepping out of my truck upon reaching the shop, I eagerly embraced the day's work. Louise and Daniel stood outside their respective shops, engrossed in their morning conversation.

Waving my hand in greeting, I made my way towards them. As I drew closer, Louise exclaimed, "Oh my goodness, what happened to you?” I had been found out, and the weight of sleepless nights tormented by dreams were winning the fight in my life. I smiled outwardly to help ease the tension I was feeling deep within knowing if I spoke about my internal battle now it would usher in more questions. With little insight I didn’t have the answers they wanted to hear so I said I wasn’t sleeping well and left it at that while I made my way back towards my shop both embarrassed and confused after this revelation.

Knowing my inner struggle and fight against the truth had finally revealed itself not only through my dreams, and nightmares but also outwardly as observed by Louise and Daniel. I was also afraid that Louise and Daniel, now seeing me up close and personal, would walk into my door at any moment demanding answers, which would be another problem I would have to solve.

I began an inner dialogue of both questioning my existence and my path in life. I started questioning the ideas surrounding my ideas of true success and abundance. I spent most of my morning replaying everything George and I talked about earlier during our sleepless night conversating over what the dreams were trying to teach me.

As a result, I spent most of my morning replaying everything George and I talked about earlier during our sleepless night conversating over what the dreams were trying to teach me.

Before long, my door opened, and I was startled because I thought the time had come to come clean with the truth as Lousie and Daniel wanted to know what was going on with me. To my surprise and with a sigh of relief that my worst fears was happening but through my surprise Fred and Nancy were walking through my door both smiling and beaming not only with a smile but also emanating a peace I was now trying to understand and capture in my life. I could feel the true essence of high energy flowing from within them both and it was drawing me closer even if I didn’t know why it was happening. I began asking Fred Haskins questions about the mysteries of life as I currently perceived it.

Fred looked at Nancy and it was as if they were both synchronized mentally, spiritually and physically and although no words were spoken, I knew something big would happen when he opened his mouth to tell me the truth. Fred and Nancy became quiet and listened to my questions and concerns. They both knew I was searching and seeking for a better way to live but through words and an understanding before I could step back on the path of my destiny.

I asked a few questions about finding your path or purpose in life. I asked him about discovering your purpose, achieving your goals, in an effortless way. What I really wanted to know without revealing much of what I truly I wanted which was peace, freedom, and happiness although I couldn’t articulate it at the time. I finally became quiet, Fred looked at me directly to make sure I’d said everything that was brewing inside my heart and mind and then he spoke, saying "chasing our dreams may not always prove easy. It requires soul-searching to uncover their true essence.

“The crux of achieving our goals and dreams lies in discovering our genuine desires. The secret to getting everything you say you wanted Peter lies in taking a journey, or travelling a road less travelled by so many people. Your goals and dreams doesn’t lie in wishes and fantasy, they lie and are called forth when you’ve become a master of self.

“Meaning you spend time learning and discovering what makes you Peter, well Peter,” Most of humanity spend most of their time and effort in entertaining new ideas which are gifts from God. These gifts are yours to have, however, to obtain them and gain truly lasting abundance and success like you desire Peter requires taking a different

approach and that approach have to deal with going within to retrieve these symbols of success and abundance.”

You see, Peter, most of us come into the world empty and ready to be filled with everything which brings forth the peace and happiness we’re aware we possess, however over time, our environment is often plagued with toxic people who feed us lies, deceit, and illusions which sabotages our path to obtaining the desires we all want in life. We try finding happiness, and discovering love and success, but our path to this personal road of self-discovery is put out by fears, doubt, and worry and we often fail more than we achieve along the way.

I know what you want Peter, because I can see it in your eyes, and I recognize it through the questions you’re asking me and Nancy, so I get it. I understand because I too, faced much of what you’re dealing with now, and although it may seem I achieved everything easily without any major problems.

In truth I faced much of what your facing now, and what I learned along the way is that life can only serve us in the best way when we drop the madness the world offers us, and begin the inward travels to discover who we are as an individual. Then, and only then will we discover our peace, price and sacred gifts to achieve our desires and thrive as a person for this is the only way Peter,” Fred responded to me in a way that shook me from within. His keen insight and knowing of the truth began cracking the foundation in which I spent my whole life trying to build a solid foundation building peace, freedom, happiness, success and the biggest of these things were finding true love for myself.

This sounded strange within yet, I could no longer deny what the dreams and nightmare was trying to teach me. Fred remained silent while I tried to process the wisdom of God within him. I sat there for a few minutes and then I asked one final question. So, this is why I’m starting to feel I’ve hit a brick wall thinking and asking myself, “Is this all there is to life,” I said out loud. Fred nodded in agreement, and then he said, “That is why the masses of people in this world are constantly struggling because they have no identity or sense of self.

They have simply been derailed by ideas and answers not their own. At that moment my eyes and mind lit up like a Christmas tree when it’s first plugged into its power source, electricity.

In a calm and peaceful way Fred and Nancy gave me hope because I realized that my work was no longer in the diagnosing and repairing of automobiles although important, my true mission now was to begin asking more tough questions and begin the diagnosing of my heart and mind, and therefore begin the repairing of an unhealed soul disconnected from the truth by disappointment, setbacks, loss and trauma as a child.

Fred said the power is in self-discovery and self- discovery, my friend, requires the unveiling of our own identities. This transformative process is only embarked upon by a select few. We commend those who carry within them a desire and goal as noble as opening an auto repair shop like yourself Peter, but make no mistake about it, your greatest rewards and happiness will arrive when you embark on finding your purpose in life. Too often, people merely speak of their dreams, failing to seize the opportunity to take action."

Fred's response washed over me like a tidal wave. His words resonated deeply, reminding me that the key to realizing our aspirations stems from unearthing our true selves and the desires lying within. A surge of curiosity consumed me, forcing me to ask, "But how does one discern the right path in this complex journey called life?"

"You shall know," Fred replied with wisdom gleaming within his eyes. "For it shall ignite a perpetual flame within, filling your heart brimful with joy. The mere thought of pursuing it will make you feel exuberant, as if floating high above on a kite. There is nothing else in the world that can compare."

Lost in contemplation, I was about to voice further questions when Nancy interjected, "Peter, the secret to finding your purpose resides within your heart, not your mind. It dawns upon you when you learn to differentiate reality from illusion."

"Like Joseph did," I interposed. "How often do you converse with him?"

"Once or twice a month," she responded. "And every time we do, Joseph exudes even greater enthusiasm, vitality, and zeal. He has metamorphosed into an entirely new individual. When he discovered his true aspirations and shed the facade he used to live, a light bulb illuminated his consciousness, triggering a profound transformation.

“Now, he radiates benevolence and forgiveness towards both others and himself. Never a harsh or pessimistic word escapes his lips, and his perspective on life and the world has become even more luminous.”

Peering into the genuine expressions and heartfelt smiles of Fred and Nancy, I paused. I allowed their words to seep in, contemplating the possibility of attaining such internal bliss. Expressing my gratitude with a sincere look, I looked up at them. Again, I conveyed my thanks for the opportunity to service their vehicle and the privilege of hearing the most remarkable wisdom I had ever encountered. It emanated from two individuals I admired for most of my life. As Mr. and Mrs. Haskins departed, I sat there for a few moments longer, attempting to assimilate a lifetime of wisdom conveyed to me within a sixty-minute dialogue.

What I had gleaned thus far was this: everyone I encountered seemed content, including George, Fred, Nancy Haskins, Louise, and Daniel. In stark contrast, I remained as the solitary figure, shrouded in unanswered questions about my identity and life's direction. Yet, an indescribable force compelled me to stay.

I continually reminded myself that I would forge ahead in some direction, even if it was imperfect. If things did not improve, I had reconciled with the notion of concluding my life before my twenty-ninth birthday. It seemed like the only rational course of action at the time.

Preparing to repair another vehicle, I hopped in and caught a faint whisper of my name. Scanning the area but finding no source, I proceeded to maneuver the car into the spacious garage bay for much-needed maintenance. After parking the vehicle, once again, I heard my name.

Looking up, I spotted George, grinning and waving at me in his customary manner (though usually, his distinct voice preceded his physical presence). We embraced, and I mentioned receiving positive feedback from two customers. I revealed that they had provided me with a small clue as to why I had yet to discover my purpose in life.

"Alright," said George. "Tell me this: did they offer any insights regarding your dreams or nightmares?"

"No," I replied. "I chose not to divulge that part of my life to Mrs. Haskins, as I wanted to shield her from the inner struggles I faced. Thus, I omitted that piece of information from our conversation. George, you're not upset with me for withholding it from them, are you?"

George chuckled, acknowledging that sharing everything might have been beneficial, but he held no anger towards me. Breathing a sigh of relief, I lifted the car's hood and commenced my work. "I'll work on this vehicle as we talk, if that's alright with you," I stated.

George pulled up a chair and began settling down. "Sounds good to me. Let's pick up where we left off. I bombard you with too many questions while you're focused. I understand your desire to do your best."

"That's right, George," I replied, a smile forming on my face. "Sometimes, when you ask too many questions, it feels like a trial for a crime I didn't commit," I added jokingly.

"Well, if you don't mind, I'd like to inquire about your siblings a bit more."

"Why not? You already seem to know everything else about me."

"Not quite everything," he interjected. "I still haven't discovered your true identity yet, but we can save that for last."

Taking it as my cue, I began sharing about my younger sister and brother. "My sister, Becky, holds the family together. Despite being unhappy about our father leaving, she has her own way of coping," I explained.

George leaned in, intrigued. "How does she handle it?"

"She constantly stays connected with everyone, organizing family gatherings and keeping us all informed. She's trying to maintain open lines of communication within the family, preventing us from drifting apart and never reaching out again."

"So, without her initiative, your family wouldn't communicate much," he interrupted.

"Exactly. We never really learned effective communication skills as a family. The little communication that did exist was expressed through silence, distant conversations, and small gestures showing our love for one another. It was how I grew up," I elaborated.

George listened attentively, soaking in every word. When I finished, he asked, "How often do you and your sister talk?"

"We usually speak about once a week, depending on what's going on in our lives. Funny that you ask, George, because I feel closer to my sister than the rest of my family."

George paused briefly as I used my air tool to tighten the lug nuts on the car tires. Then, he posed a significant question.

"Peter, do you love your sister more than the rest of your family?"

I took a moment to reflect before responding, "No, I don't believe so. Why do you ask?"

"Well, you've revealed much about your sister. I feel a deep connection there."

"We do have a special bond, but I care deeply for my entire family. Not reaching out doesn't mean I love them any less."

George's words struck a chord within me, causing a pang in my heart. Yet, I pushed those emotions aside and suggested, "George, let's shift gears and discuss another topic today. We can revisit this tomorrow morning after breakfast at my shop."

Continuing on, I pondered, "What are your thoughts on our high school basketball team's prospects? Can we secure victory in the finals or even at the state championships?"

"Well, if we fortify our defense and recruit skilled point guards and rebounders, maybe," George replied, giving my shoulder a friendly pat. "Peter, I admire you. Your courage and willingness for change are remarkable qualities. Few possess such desires. Many yearn for a better life, but only a select few choose the road less traveled. We still have much work ahead, and the path won't be easy. But with my support and your resolute perseverance, we will conquer. You will become the person you never expected to be and achieve unimaginable feats."

Looking up at George, a smile graced my face. I realized he was right. I also knew that I relied on his guidance, for without him, I may have succumbed to despair. Earlier on, when I found my purpose, I had decided to give up altogether.

After a brief moment, I made my way to my office, with George following closely, as if he had something else on his mind. He hesitated, perhaps deeming it an inopportune time due to our lengthy conversation. I asked if there was anything else he wanted to discuss, and he expressed that we had conversed enough for the day.

"Oh, by the way," I mentioned casually. "I've made up my mind to go on vacation starting next Monday."

He looked curious and asked, "Where are you headed?"

I shared, "I have a stack of magazines at home filled with stunning resorts. While flipping through them, I stumbled upon the perfect destination—Phoenix, Arizona. It's renowned for relaxation, fun, and soaking up the sun. I'll call to reserve a room once I'm back home."

"That's an excellent idea," he acknowledged. "Taking a trip might help you discover the missing pieces in your life. Will you be driving or flying?"

"I'll be driving," I replied eagerly. "Breathing in the fresh air and admiring the picturesque views might provide a broader perspective and perhaps reveal why I'm here and what's missing."

"I agree," George responded. "Traveling along the country's scenic routes is one of the best ways to journey. It evokes peace and serenity, amidst God's vast landscapes. In such moments, I believe God speaks to us more clearly than ever. It's a beautiful experience. I'm genuinely excited for you. Do you plan on visiting any friends or family in Arizona?"

"No, I don't have any connections in that part of the country. That's precisely why I chose it—a place where I can bask in the sun, relax, and contemplate, while listening to my heart."

George smiled at me and then glanced up at the ceiling fan spinning overhead. "Well, Peter, it's time for me to head out. I have a few more errands to run before the day ends. But if you need anything, my friend, feel free to reach out anytime."

As he walked out of the door towards his car, I stood still for a few moments, contemplating what I could do once I arrived in Phoenix. I hadn't traveled much, aside from trips to Virginia, Philadelphia, and New Jersey, let alone embarked on a cross-country journey. These ideas filled me with both excitement and trepidation. However, deep down, I knew that my life might remain incomplete without taking this leap. Returning to the car, I resumed draining the transmission fluid and replacing the filter, realizing the vehicle was overdue for maintenance. Suddenly, I heard my name being called.

I looked around but saw no one, so I walked to the side of the shop to retrieve the transmission fluid and filter. While leaning over, I heard my name again.

This time, I stood up and walked into the office, thinking someone might have entered unnoticed. But the room was empty.

As I turned around, perplexed, I heard a voice whispering in my mind, "Soon, you will face a significant choice, and it will be yours alone to make."

"Who is this?" I asked, horrified. "What do you want?"

"I want you to make a choice," the voice replied. Its gentle tone filled me suddenly with fear, stress, anxiety, and a strong urge to end everything right then and there. Out of nowhere, another voice suggested, "Why not end it all instead of enduring this misery and pain? After all, you no longer have anything to live for. Who would miss another mechanic in a small town like this? Put an end to it, and all your worries will vanish."

"What do you want from me?" I yelled back. "Leave me alone! I want nothing to do with you—I simply desire to live out the remainder of my days in peace!"

Overwhelmed, I broke down, feeling as though my life had lost its meaning. Sorrow and despair came crashing back, and I buried my face in my hands, weeping uncontrollably. I recognized the need to regain my composure before customers arrived with their repairs and questions.

Eventually, I managed to compose myself emotionally, complete the transmission flush, and tidy up the car. I sat in a daze, scanning the shop, realizing that this was no longer the solution for my long-term well-being. Backing the car out of the bay, I closed the door and headed to my office, where I sat down to contemplate my next move.

I refrained from reaching out to George, as I assumed he might be tired of bearing the weight of my troubles. After all, we had just spoken the night before, and he had recently left the shop. Instead, I directed my attention to the computer screen, delving into a search for the top resorts nestled in the captivating landscapes of Arizona. In my quest for answers, I stumbled upon the Point Hilton Resort—a name that caught my eye and stirred something within me. Without a second thought, reservations were made, and the die was cast.

With each passing moment spent gazing at images of this desert paradise, the conviction grew stronger within me. It was time to embark on a leap of faith, venturing into uncharted territory. The path ahead remained shrouded in uncertainty, yet the allure of exploration and embracing something new beckoned me forward.

After finalizing hotel arrangements, I proceeded to secure a rental car from a local agency. Reflecting upon recent events, it became clear that this was the logical next step, holding the potential to offer solace and resolve amidst the overwhelming feelings of being adrift and powerless. Without a moment's hesitation, I clicked the "buy now" button on my screen, fully aware that there was no turning back from this new journey, even if the destination itself remained obscure.

Soon the phone rang, Ricky, a loyal customer, informed me that he would be arriving later than expected to pick up his vehicle. Assuaging any concerns, he might have had, I reassured Ricky that his delay posed no issue and that I would patiently await his arrival. Though Ricky had always settled his bills promptly in the past, a nagging thought lingered—perhaps this time things would be different. Maybe he would postpone payment until the following week, causing a financial strain on my end. After all, I had devoted an entire day to working on his car and needed the income to sustain my upcoming journey.

As countless thoughts swirled in my mind, doubts began to creep in, casting shadows on the perceived wisdom of charting this transformative path. Despite troublesome worries about expenses, I decided to confront my fears head-on by checking my bank account, a reality check that would either encourage or dissuade me. To my immense relief, there was an adequate sum to cover my travels and associated expenses. It was as if the universe had conspired to align the stars in my favor, providing a glimmer of hope amid the uncertainties.

Determined to make the most of this life-altering undertaking, I yearned for the inner peace and liberation that it promised. Long had chaos disrupted my existence, challenging my understanding of normalcy. Amidst concerns about financial obligations swirling around me, I found solace in the belief that those with whom I maintained financial ties understood me on a personal level. If it meant they had to wait another month to receive their already overdue payments, I trusted that understanding would prevail.

Driven by a desire to be transparent and accountable, I reached out to each of my creditors, explaining my intended adventure and assuring them that upon my return, rejuvenated and ready to settle my debts, I would honor my commitments. Satisfied with the proactive approach I had taken, I made my decision to embark on a journey to Arizona, eager to fulfill the promises made to myself to understand my life and purpose.

In those fleeting moments before Ricky's anticipated arrival to retrieve his car, I sought distraction by delving into endless online searches for attractions and activities that awaited me in the mesmerizing state of Arizona. Among the abundant choices presented before me, Lake Havasu stood as a beacon of captivating allure, beckoning me forth. And yet, my heart's truest desire lay in beholding the majestic wonder that was the Grand Canyon, its ethereal vistas standing as a testament to the unfathomable marvels of time, far predating the arrival of my forebears in this land.

In addition to exploring the natural wonders that Arizona held, I yearned to indulge in retail therapy at its prominent shopping destinations. The Arizona Mills Mall, Scottsdale Square, and the Paradise Valley Mall all promised an array of delights and treasures awaiting discovery. While the prospect of conquering Camelback Mountain loomed large in my thoughts, the allure of a luxurious one-hour Swedish massage at a hotel spa whispered sweetly of the pampering and indulgence that awaited me.

Lost in a world of daydreams, I was abruptly jolted back to reality by the creaking of the shop's front door. Engaging in casual conversation with Ricky, I exchanged pleasantries, inquiring about his work and loved ones. As our friendly dialogue blossomed, a simple yet profound question tugged at the corners of my mind. Peering deep into Ricky's eyes, I sought to establish a connection, one that surpassed the superficial layers we often present to the world.

"Ricky, if you don't mind, I have a question to ask," I hesitated, searching for the appropriate words.

"Sure," he replied warmly, curiosity lighting up his face. "What would you like to know?"

"Ricky, I'm curious. Are you genuinely content with your current job? Do you believe that it fulfills your life's purpose? Does your work lend meaning and fulfillment to your existence?"

Without a moment's hesitation, Ricky responded, a flicker of passion gleaming in his eyes. "Yes, I truly am. As a child, I dreamt of becoming an architect, designing remarkable structures. But alongside that dream, I also aspired to create devices that could offer aid and empowerment to young children, helping them walk or ride a bike. Each day, I derive immense pleasure from knowing that my work not only adds value and significance to someone's life but also brings meaning, peace, love, and abundance to my own life and the lives of my cherished family members."

As my curiosity remained piqued, I couldn't help but press on, curious about Ricky's profound insight. "But how did you come to know? How did you discern that this was your destined path?"

Ricky paused thoughtfully for a moment, his eyes shimmering with unwavering conviction, and replied, "It's something that resonates deep within your being, from childhood, through adolescence, and even into adulthood. It's an indescribable sense. When you uncover your purpose, everything falls into harmony. Life gains more profound meaning and tranquility, although challenges still emerge. These challenges serve to refine our clarity and remind us that we each possess a unique purpose in this world. Every one of us is a miracle, with immeasurable potential to touch the lives of others."

"You didn't stumble upon your existence by chance," he continued, his warm smile radiating wisdom. "Nothing in life occurs randomly, and one's life lacks true significance until they unveil their purpose on this Earth. Why do you ask?" Ricky inquired, showing curiosity about my own journey.

"No particular reason. I was simply contemplating," I replied. "Each time we meet, you radiate a joy and serenity that never seems to wane."

"It appears that when you align yourself with your true path, others, too, sense its presence," Ricky cheerfully observed.

"It would seem so," I quietly admitted. "Uncovering my own purpose is one of the primary motivations behind this getaway, to be honest."

"In that case, it sounds like a marvelous idea," Ricky remarked, offering me his well wishes. I expressed my gratitude, returned his keys and paperwork, swiftly swiped his credit card to settle the bill, and watched as he departed through the door, leaving me alone with my contemplations. As the day gradually faded away, I securely closed the shop, ready to head home.

# CHAPTER FIVE

While driving home, apprehension consumed my mind regarding the forthcoming adventures in this extensive cross-country journey. The looming doubts emerged, questioning the rightness to stray far from my cozy hometown.

Would I handle the uncertainties? Should I delay my plans until more stable financial ground and the upcoming holidays? Thoughts of potential financial setbacks and the impending struggle to make ends meet upon my return haunted my mind.

Nevertheless, amidst this tumultuous mental space, I resolved to press on with my plans. Time seemed to stand still as I pulled up to my humble mobile home—a tranquil retreat in the midst of nowhere.

Each passing day became a blend of excitement and tension as the week progressed, consuming me from within. This journey promised a change in perspective and a shift in the fabric of my existence.

Embracing the unknown was not my usual inclination, but I have learned to appreciate that personal growth often thrives in its midst.

At least my nightly slumber returned to its usual rhythm. Yet, I wondered whether it was a reassuring sign, affirming the rightness of my choice. Only time would provide the definitive answer. If my return from Phoenix failed to yield any improvements, I knew it would lead me to the undeniable realization that my decision held the key to resolving my struggles.

When the much-awaited Friday morning arrived, I rolled out of bed with anticipation—eager to bid farewell to the week, as was my custom. After a refreshing shower and a steaming pot of coffee, I hastily left my abode, aiming to reach the diner promptly and meet George.

Although it seemed like any ordinary day, there was an undeniable brightness in the air, accompanied by smiling faces passing me by. I couldn't help but wonder if this magnificence had always been present, previously overlooked, amidst the perpetual whirlwind of my existence and recent challenges.

Why did I only grasp its essence if that assertion held true? Did it signify a restoration of tranquility, or did it merely indicate that I was finally on the right path, wholeheartedly embracing the necessity for change?

With renewed optimism, I swung open the door to the diner, instantly spotting George seated at our customary booth. A smile naturally formed on my face as I joined him at the table, and he greeted me with a grin.

"Good morning, my friend. How are things progressing with your intricate voyage planning?"

"Surprisingly well, in fact—far surpassing my initial expectations, considering the circumstances."

George leaned in, his eyes gleaming with wisdom, and gently reminded me, "We still have much to navigate with these circumstances. But just envision the unparalleled sense of triumph awaiting you when we finally conquer them!"

"Do you think we'll figure all this out?" I asked, taken aback.

"Absolutely," he chuckled. "And it all starts with your dreams. They hold the key. Hopefully, we'll have everything sorted before your trip, so you can leave with a light heart."

His words filled me with laughter, and we agreed to meet mid-morning after I finished opening the shop. Exiting the restaurant and slipping into my car, a slight lightness washed over my heart. Yet, as I reached the first traffic light, that feeling faded, swallowed by the return of the nagging voice in my head.

"What if it all goes wrong? What if it fails you?" the voice taunted.

In desperate need of silence, I turned up the volume on the radio, hoping to drown out my escalating anxiety. Alas, the music failed to provide the solace I sought. With each passing block, my nervousness intensified, leading me to eventually pull over, seeking a moment to compose myself and decide whether to proceed.

"I will not fail!" I declared, my determination ringing in the air. "This is no mistake! You may doubt me, but I will prove you wrong! Just wait and see! I will not be a failure!" Though unsure to whom I directed these words, they needed to be heard. Equally important was my willingness to listen, disregarding the opinions of passersby.

"How can you be so sure you're not a failure?" the voice persisted. "Look at your past. It appears to be a series of failures."

At that moment, frustration took over, and I pounded the steering wheel of my truck while screaming, unable to endure the voice or its acerbic remarks. Searching for answers left me empty-handed, unable to find direction. Tears streamed down my face again, my heart rapidly pounding.

Aware of the potential judgment of onlookers, I fought to regain control. I knew I could not hide from these internal tormentors. The idea of embarking on a trip and finding joy seemed pointless if the voice refused to release its hold on me.

It was then, as I arrived at the shop, that I made up my mind. I would call and cancel the entire journey; why squander money on an experience I doubted I could truly cherish?

Spotting Louise and Daniel waiting outside the shop, I offered little more than a hurried wave as I rushed into my office. Inside, I brewed a cup of coffee, filling the air with the soothing melody of soft, low-volume Southern music.

Stepping into the shop to switch on the lights, I unexpectedly slipped on a greasy spot on the floor and crashed onto the frigid concrete.

"Why?!" I cried out, struggling to my feet. "Why me, Lord? Why can't anything go right anymore?"

Responding to my outburst, Daniel and Louise appeared in the doorway, their concern evident. "What's wrong?" Louise asked, her voice laced with worry. "Peter, what happened?"

Looking at them, I realized they were true friends, deserving to know the turmoil raging within my mind. Consequently, moments later, we found ourselves in the main office area of the shop, where I began to unravel the distressing episodes of stress, anxiety, and sleepless nights that had plagued me in recent days.

"Why didn't you tell us?" Daniel questioned, a mix of confusion and hurt evident in his eyes.

"I didn't intend to burden you. I believed I could face it on my own," I responded. My words were filled with possibilities, resonating with sincerity as I contemplated the depths of self-reliance.

"Well, clearly, this is something one cannot shoulder alone," Louise interjected. "It has gone too far. I am relieved you will take a break next week, but this extends beyond mere dreams, visions, and voices. Someone or something is trying to communicate, and I cannot speak for Daniel, but I will do whatever it takes to support you through this, my friend.

“I sensed something amiss that morning when you emerged from your truck and approached us, but I chose not to intrude upon your personal life and kept my distance. However, now that I grasp the gravity of the situation, I can no longer simply stand aside."

Turning to me, Daniel asked, "Would you like to take the remainder of the day to rest?"

"No," I replied resolutely. "I have a close friend coming by mid-morning to engage in discussion, and there are a few tasks I must complete at the shop before my departure on Monday."

"Does this friend know about the dreams, visions, and voices?" Daniel inquired; his voice tinged with concern.

I assured them that he did and was helping me navigate through these disconcerting experiences. Satisfied with my response, Louise was determined to remain by my side, affirming they would not go anywhere until George arrived.

"If anything arises, simply step outside and call for one of us," she kindly said. "We will be there in an instant."

Never before had I fully grasped the extraordinary nature of our friendship, and the realization moved me to tears. "Thank you for being here," I whispered softly. "I don't know what I would have done without you," I added. My voice choked with emotion.

"Stress and worry possess the power to break even the strongest individuals, particularly when we remain oblivious to the turmoil within our lives," Daniel remarked. "That is precisely why friends exist."

Daniel and Louise departed from the shop, leaving us feeling closer than ever. As George entered, his cheerful smile waned into deep concern upon seeing my face.

"What's happening?" he asked.

I recounted another episode I experienced in the truck and the subsequent issue at the shop. "Daniel and Louise heard me screaming and rushed over to help," I concluded.

"Are you alright?" he asked, rushing to my side.

"Besides a few bruises on my knees and a bruised ego, I believe I'll be fine. At least long enough to uncover what's occurring and get to the bottom of it," I replied.

George sighed. "I had hoped we were nearing a resolution, but it appears worsening. Don't worry, Peter, we will unravel this. I promise you that, my friend. Should I return later? Perhaps you don't wish to discuss it immediately after what transpired," George suggested.

I responded with a sigh. "Now is as good a time as any, I suppose. Besides, I was waiting for your arrival. Daniel and Louise wanted to ensure you knew the situation, and I assured them you were aware.

“In retrospect, it dawns upon me that I should have shared my innermost thoughts with them much earlier. As a true friend, I must open up about the depths of my feelings. Perhaps they could have offered wisdom in the realm of possibility, preventing the situation from spiraling into irreparable chaos.”

"I agree," George said. “Self-expression and sharing are among life's most precious gifts. They emancipate the mind, enabling liberation from the shackles of the past. They release us from struggle, pain, and anguish, illuminating the path.” As I handed him a bottle of water, he took a long drink before gazing intently at me.

"Are you ready?" he asked. George knew I had a trying morning and week, offering me the opportunity to postpone our forthcoming conversation. However, I nodded, resolved to bring everything to light.

He returned a nod and initiated, "Reflecting on the previous day's events, a discussion emerged in the shop concerning your sister. Permit me to rephrase—it was an exploration of profound dialogue pertaining to your sister. Now, let us explore the depths of knowledge concerning your younger brother. What is his name?"

I paused momentarily before answering, "His name is John. He is approximately fourteen or fifteen years younger than me and is the youngest."

"How frequently do you communicate with him?" George inquired.

"Very rarely, if at all."

"Do you share any common interests?"

"I am unsure," I contemplated. "I never truly had the chance to forge a profound connection with him. As we journeyed through our formative years, my own realm consumed me, while he remained in the embrace of youth.

“My primary focus was understanding my baby brother, sister, and mother. However, our father's absence left us all detached and lost. We could not fully cultivate relationships with the constant reminder of his absence," I explained.

"My brother was a playful prankster, always infusing our home with amusement. His imagination and insights intrigued me, though I never vocalized this to him. He always managed to lift my spirits, but I never shared that with him. Despite our circumstances, I maintained my distance, hesitant to bring my internal turmoil into a somewhat tranquil environment.

"I loved my baby brother and yearned to share so much with him. However, with our significant age gap, I feared he would not truly grasp my intentions." After a moment of reflection, I smiled at George and continued, "Perhaps if I had been more open with my family, we would not be standing here, having this conversation."

I briefly looked away before continuing, "Many times, during moments with my brother and sister, I recognized our disparities. Yet, we were remarkably similar in many ways. No matter how bleak things seemed, we always sought the silver lining and found something to jest about during moments of silence.

"My brother still resides close to my mom, and they spend ample time together. As I am the only one living farther away, I have unintentionally grown distant from my brother. I feel isolated and disconnected, although I am unsure why."

"Peter, what are you still holding onto in your life? Is there any animosity, anger, or unforgiveness towards them?" George's voice softened as he posed the question.

"I am uncertain of my true emotions toward them. Whatever they may be, they run deep, and I have never fully unraveled them," I confessed.

"Do you trust your brother?" George inquired.

I pondered for a moment, my shoulders shrugging in response. "I must admit, I haven't devoted much thought to it. Families in situations like ours yearn for healing and closure—a bridging of the divides that keep us apart. We need to find a way to grow closer," I answered, my words filled with a sense of contemplation.

George, with a thoughtful expression on his face, spoke up. "The past holds valuable lessons, with cherished memories that we hold dear," he said, his words hinting at philosophy. "But there are times when dwelling too much on the past hinders us from moving forward. Could it be that you're holding onto the past?"

I considered his question, and a silence settled between us, as George patiently waited for my realization. Once again, George's wisdom struck a chord within me.

In a moment of realization, it seemed like a metaphorical light was casting its brilliance upon my thoughts, revealing the profound influence of my past on every aspect of my existence. It permeated through each decision I have ever made, provoking deep contemplation and philosophical introspection.

Despite the transparency that prevailed, I gazed down at the floor before meeting George's eyes, feeling a twinge of emotion welling up inside me. "Perhaps it's time for me to let go of what no longer serves me," I expressed, my voice softened by reflection. A gentle smile spread across George's face as he nodded in agreement.

"I realize that this journey will require time, George, as I embark on retracing my steps and reconsidering what once felt right," I solemnly acknowledged. The weight of frustration lingered in my voice as I pondered my past. "Repeatedly, I have opened myself to others and even God, only to be left disheartened, betrayed, or profoundly disappointed.

“With each occurrence, I drift further away from them. I have never wavered in my loyalty to them or to God. Yet, they have failed to honor my emotions and aspirations!" I passionately exclaimed, the echoes of past experiences resonating through my words.

"No," George calmly countered, "the past has disillusioned you, trapping you in emotional stillness. Find solace in releasing your grip on the past and relinquishing preconceived notions of how life should unfold. Only then will the essence of life be rediscovered, and its inherent value restored.

“The past can only dictate your future if you allow it to haunt your every step. You've squandered much of your youth, lacking trust in others, and shunning truly meaningful relationships, even within your own family—all because of events years ago beyond your control."

With an understanding gaze, George continued, "Your father's departure fostered resentment and unwillingness to forgive, creating a barrier that obstructs the goodness standing before you. It's a blame game we all play, not only with others but also with ourselves.

“This cycle slowly robs us of our peace, freedom, and happiness. Minute by minute, hour by hour, it erodes the ember of purpose within us, ultimately stealing our lives. Each moment and day lived out of alignment with our true selves is another day wasted. We often falsely believe that joy and happiness stem solely from external circumstances like wealth, relationships, and health.

“While important, they hold little meaning if we lack inner peace, freedom, and genuine happiness. In the accumulation of seemingly inconsequential small things over time, we question the worthiness of life, leading to the abandonment of our dreams and, ultimately, ourselves.

“It is time to reclaim our lives, focus on what truly matters, and live with purpose and intention. It's time to find joy in the little moments, connect deeply with others, and create a life that honors who we are at our core.

“Retaining our peace of mind requires us to be present in each moment, be mindful of how we live our lives, and take the necessary steps to create an environment that supports a fulfilling existence.

“We can start by being grateful for the small moments, engaging meaningfully with those around us, and dedicating time to activities that bring us joy. By taking time for ourselves, we can learn to appreciate the beauty of life.”

He paused momentarily, letting his words sink in, before proceeding. "We live in quiet desperation, consistently placing the blame on others instead of taking responsibility ourselves.

“Our once brilliantly promising future, filled with hope, dreams, and boundless aspirations, is extinguished by the weight of our past. Aren't you tired of spinning on this demanding merry-go-round, which fails to quench your inner thirst for self-expression?

“Your father's absence has hardened your heart and created a divide within your family, leaving you isolated with this void and the mounting frustrations you bear."

George's voice was filled with empathy as he spoke, "Listen, Peter, my purpose here is not to judge. Rather, I aim to shed light on the inner turmoil that plagues you.

“So, where do we go from this point? How do we transform it all? We cannot continue living with the emotions that presently consume you. We can clearly see where they have led you. The challenges you face are wake-up calls, urging you to move forward.

“Confronting the past is the only way to unlock our present peace and happiness, even if it may be tempting to dismiss these ideas as fallacious. Deep down, we both acknowledge their truth, evident in the turbulence you now endure, Peter." George's voice carried a sense of contemplation.

"The solution lies within us, buried deep. Living in the grip of the past has cost you immeasurable treasures like love, peace, happiness, and abundance. Nevertheless, these treasures remain within your reach. We must undertake the inner work required to illuminate the path leading us towards rediscovering them all."

Pausing for a moment, I collected my thoughts before responding. "I do not expect to possess all the answers to my present predicaments, nor do I expect you, George, to have them all.

“What frustrates me is the absence of any clue why this is all happening to me now, in this moment. I ponder upon a desire, a longing for a life imbued with simplicity and serenity, akin to the experiences of others. Doth this humble request perhaps exceed reason?”

George gazed at me, understanding etched in his eyes, his question penetrating my innermost thoughts. "When was the last time you visited your family in Atlanta? How often do they come to Beaufort to see you?"

"My mother hasn't visited in years due to her fear of flying, always needing a flight companion. She endures persistent back pain from multiple surgeries, relying on various medications to manage it.

“As for my brother, John, he has never visited, preferring the comforts of his own environment due to his fear of flying. On the other hand, Becky doesn't visit frequently due to her busy family life, but occasionally calls or visits every few years.

“Our conversations lack depth, as we have never taken the time to truly know each other. We carry the weight of past struggles, hindering our ability to open up. Instead, we exchange lighthearted jokes, avoiding meaningful discussions. The fear of their reactions prevents me from expressing my true emotions.”

As George keenly noted, the disconnection with my siblings gradually wore away at my vitality and self-confidence. At the heart of the matter lies this pervasive sense of isolation. How can I wholeheartedly embrace life's immense abundance while plagued by the burden of solitude? Life demands transformation, forcing us to step onto the stage, hand in hand with our fellow sojourners.

Participation in life's ups and downs, joys and sorrows, setbacks and triumphs is non-negotiable. Life encompasses it all, and we cannot evade its many facets. Hidden within its disguises lies the blessings we seek, if only we genuinely desire the rewards of our creativity and the Creator.

Through George's insightful feedback, clarity began to seep through the cracks of my understanding. I have never shared my true feelings with them, fearing rejection—just like the abandonment I experienced from my father and others. Yes, I am afraid they might leave me behind.

George comprehended the weight of my concerns. We cannot cultivate genuine connections and deep bonds without wearing masks and perpetuating illusions. Love and honest self-expression are vital for all of us. This realization struck a chord, particularly given our shared upbringing.

Some wounds are easy to forget and forgive, while others leave deeper scars that are harder to heal. We cannot simply let go of those deeply rooted issues. Breaking down these walls—the barriers we cling to— presents our greatest challenge.

His expression darkened as George contemplated all he learned from our conversation. "However," he continued, "we must delve deeper to reach the core. We must focus on you.

“The present encompasses our immediate experience, yet to forge a better future, we must bravely confront the intricacies of our past. Clues and answers lie in the past, serving as gateways to our present situations.

“Nothing will change until we address the wounds of our inner childhood. So, if you're willing, I will ask probing and personal questions about your life and thought process. Now, they may stir up strong emotions, leading to shouting, cursing, and perhaps even tears. But it's all part of the process."

Determined to regain control of my life, I nodded. If enduring these challenges means finding a way forward, I am prepared to do whatever it takes.” George nodded back.

"Let's start by exploring your childhood. What was it like growing up in the South?"

"Like most children, I was adventurous and curious about everything. Inspector Gadget could have been my middle name." I chuckle, acknowledging the truth. But then, my tone turns serious. "Yet, even as a child, I always felt different from my family. It seemed as though I didn't quite fit in that time and place."

"Where did you feel you truly belonged?" George asks.

"I don't know exactly, but I know I lived in a world where I didn't belong. I was always searching for something—I just didn't know what it was. I felt alone and out of place. It's the same way I feel now. I can't explain the feeling, but I've had it for most of my life. I never felt like the other kids.

"I always thought I would be doing something significant with my life, but here I am, years later, and I don't feel like I've even figured out what that something is. How are we supposed to know what the universe wants us to do? Are there clues? Or do we have to figure it all out on our own?" I questioned.

As tears welled up in my eyes, I swallowed the lump in my throat as I reflected on the life I had once imagined. Then, the realization hit me—I have indeed lost my life. Fear, anger, rebellion, separation, and mistrust of others have consumed me. The wounds of my past dictated my present and future if I didn't wake up and surrender to the truth. George was right. These uncomfortable and eye-opening truths stirred my emotions. Before I could delve further, the phone interrupted our conversation. It was Louise checking in to see how things were going. I assured her everything was fine, and we hung up.

I looked up at George, a concerned expression paired with a half-smile on his face. "Seems like you're popular these days. It appears I'm not the only one wishing for the best outcome and success in your life."

I grabbed a bottle of water for myself and offered George one, even though he was only halfway through his first bottle. I popped the cap and savored the cool, refreshing water. Then, I looked up at him and nodded. Indeed, as I found myself at a loss for solutions, I felt compelled to seek enlightenment and assistance from others, even when I feared potential hurt and abandonment.

"Peter," he asked, his curiosity piqued, "how did you navigate life when faced with setbacks and challenges?"

Reflecting upon the memories, I responded, "Initially, it was an adventure. In youth, we perceive the world as our conquest, and setbacks ignite a thrilling pursuit of solutions. The subsequent sense of accomplishment, akin to a surge of adrenaline, lingers in my thoughts. Remarkably, this topic enthuses me more than conversations about my family." Truly, it captivated my attention.

George was curious as he pondered, "Did this mindset persist into your adulthood? Did it bring about benefits or drawbacks as you journey through life?"

I confidently replied with little hesitation, "It greatly helped me become self-reliant and depend on my abilities. I learned to pursue everything I desired in life."

Eager to delve deeper into the conversation, George asked, "Did you achieve most of what you desired?"

“During my childhood and early teenage years, I certainly did."

With curiosity awakened, George delved deeper, questioning, "And what transpired thereafter? What event interrupted your magic's flow and disrupted your power?"

Lost in thought for a fleeting moment, frustration started building, propelling me up from my seat. This query plagued me, its answer eluding my grasp. Exasperation escaped my lips, "I am uncertain, George! Truly, I am at a loss. Reality slips through my fingers, casting doubt upon everything. Please, George, your assistance is invaluable. I'm dying inside, lost, and I don't know what to do about it! Help me, or I will kill myself just to get out of my head!"

George patiently awaited my composed state before speaking. "I comprehend the anguish you feel, but we must persist on this journey. It is the sole path to surpass the illusions fate has cast upon you and unravel a life filled with joy and abundance," he responded.

Following deep sobs and profound introspection, I wiped away the tears of pent-up frustration and anger. It dawned gradually on me; I finally surrendered to the truth after a prolonged battle, clutching onto the pain, disappointment, and fear within. The unfolding events became the catalyst for my liberation from the self-imposed prison of shame, guilt, and fear I had constructed throughout the years. I embarked on healing and growth, determined not to surrender. Or at least, that was my hope.

For far too long, I had lived in falsehood, clutching fallacious beliefs to navigate my life. I DISTANCED MYSELF FROM THEM because I believed others lacked the answers I desperately sought. I chose emotional detachment, thinking it would provide solace. But now, I comprehend it did the exact opposite.

As I distanced myself from George, I whispered weakly, "Perhaps I am the most tearful soul you have encountered."

George promptly replied, "No, you are not the most tearful soul I have encountered. In my own journey, I have shed my fair share of tears. And after we untangle the chaos in your life, I will gladly share that with you.

"When a man sheds tears, it reveals the truest emotions, thoughts, and feelings typically hidden deep within. When you weep, Peter, it shows the strength and power within you to release those emotions.

“You have heard the call for change and are willing to do everything necessary to bring about that change. Most people would not dare to take such risks. I admire not only your strength but also your desire to advance and uncover your true self," George complimented me.

Feeling feeble, I asked, "But how do I accomplish it?"

George replied, "You have already taken the first step by speaking to me, by admitting to yourself and to me the truth you hid away for years. The path to a new life begins with that initial step. You do not require all the answers before moving forward; you merely need to question your present state and courageously take a step forward, as you have already done. Embrace the necessity for change and seek enlightenment from God on how to embark on this journey."

"Do you believe I am heading in the right direction for my life?" I inquired.

"I genuinely believe you are," George assured me. "Your quest for answers attests to that. You have been seeking insights and perspectives from those around you, endeavoring to understand yourself and those who have conquered their lives through purpose."

This was a viewpoint I had not previously pondered. Could I have initiated the process of seeking change? Taking that initial step held considerable significance in itself.

"Perhaps you are right. I had never looked at it from that angle."

"I know I am right," George responded. "You are an anomaly, and the world has eagerly awaited your arrival and your message. Whatever it may be, your gift will bring the much-needed light to a world desperately yearning for answers—to alleviate their pain and anger, just as you have experienced."

Whether one sweeps floors or becomes the President of the United States of America, each individual is destined to the world while fulfilling their purpose in life. No job or occupation holds more importance than another. In the eyes of our Creator, we all stand equal, making each person's existence significant," George concluded.

Releasing a slow sigh, I responded, "George Hill, your presence has breathed new life into my soul, and for that, I am truly grateful. Rarely have I encountered someone who could convey such profound wisdom. Apart from my mother and Mrs. Peterson, no one else has provided me with encouragement or acknowledged my interests and concerns."

George solemnly replied, "I understand. Even if the people around us fail to offer their support, always remember that God applauds our every small effort. With time, you will find encouragement and support growing from within, rather than seeking it externally. I will explain further, as I can see confusion arising.

"Now, let us delve into your achievements as a child. Why did it become increasingly challenging for you to accomplish things as you grew older? Frustration emerged as you struggled to focus and complete the tasks you initially started. When you look back, you may perceive a long trail of failures and mistakes. But were they truly? The past does not dictate your future or the path you will travel; it merely reflects where you have been. That being said, let us continue," George encouraged.

"Peter, did you trust any adult besides your mother when you were a child?" George inquired, sensing the significance of their role.

"I trusted my grandmother. She inspired and reassured me in every aspect, painting a picture that all was well with me and the world. I could rely on her for answers to my questions. Her peaceful presence accompanied her wherever she went," I replied, reminiscing fondly.

"My grandfather, on the other hand, stood as a pillar of the community. Everyone looked up to him and sought his counsel. As he held high status within the community, I sought his inspiration and hope.

“Unfortunately, I failed to meet his standards and was perceived as a lazy child who disliked hard work—an attribute considered honorable and indicative of status.

“Although I indeed worked, my efforts did not please him. Consequently, I became an embarrassment, the black sheep amid his grandchildren. My younger cousin effortlessly claimed the favored position.

“As I desperately endeavored to earn my grandfather's favor, my efforts proved in vain. It seemed that nothing I did could ever satisfy him. Instead, he favored my cousin, making me feel like a disappointment I said. It took years to understand why.”

"Was your grandmother the anchor in your life during your formative years?" George asked, recognizing the importance of her influence.

"She was my everything, until..." I paused, my voice trailing off. I hesitated to confront those memories, but I knew it was necessary. Confronting my past was the key to finding my way forward.

"Until she passed away," I finally admitted, forcing the words out. "In the blink of an eye, my world shattered. My grandmother had been my guiding light, and suddenly, she was gone. The warmth, peace, and acceptance—all vanished forever.

“Time seemed to slow down, painting my world in shades of darkness. Anger engulfed me as I spiraled downward. I rebelled against everything and everyone, unable to trust even myself. It was in that moment that my nightmare began."

"Did you have anyone to turn to during that crisis?" George asked gently, displaying his palpable empathy.

"My cousin, Jason," I answered, gratitude filling my voice as I reflected on his presence during those difficult times. "As I grew older, I visited him in Atlanta more frequently, and he would come to Beaufort during the summers. It provided respite from the internal pain, a brief taste of normalcy in my life.

"Jason and I were inseparable as teenagers," I reminisced, a flicker of nostalgia coloring my words. "Where one went, the other followed. We were like Batman and Robin, fearlessly exploring every town and community we encountered. Life felt great once again. He helped fill the void within me, mending my broken heart without me even realizing it.

"Far from the bright lights and noise of the city, deep in the countryside, we would lie on the roof of an old tobacco barn nearby, gazing at the stars and envisioning a future brimming with unlimited possibilities. We made a pact to embark on that journey together.

"But as summer drew to a close, Jason went back to Atlanta for school. We were naïve about how to conquer the world, but we held on to our vision. I was thrilled about the adventures that lay ahead. It reignited meaning in my life, as each day held the promise of bringing me closer to the future we had envisioned. I had witnessed the determination of my grandfather, a farmer and commercial fisherman, and whatever little I knew about my father."

A fleeting smile touched my lips, encapsulating the innocence of days long gone. There was an abundance of vitality, a boundless zest for life within us. Yet, the weight of circumstances that prevented it from unfolding came crashing back, and I slumped in defeat.

"Where did it all go wrong?" George softly inquired, noticing the pain engulfing me.

With my head in my hands, I struggled to suppress the memories, my voice trembling as I spoke. "Why did you have to leave, Jason?" I whispered, fighting back tears. "You vanished in the dead of night, without a farewell. You betrayed me. And I can never forgive you for that. I swear, I can't. You're no different from the others—the people who abandoned me at some point in my life."

George's comforting arms enveloped me at that moment, pulling me close. It was an embrace I had yearned for, reminiscent of the warmth my grandmother and father once provided. In that embrace, I realized that George held the missing piece to my journey, the key to understanding the significance of male connection and bonding in my personal evolution. He would guide me towards finding purpose and passion for living.

"Pete, I promise I won't leave you," George reassured me, his words sincere. "You carry so much pain and hurt, but I promise not to contribute to it. You can trust me. You can count on me." Stepping back, he kept his hand on my shoulder, emanating a paternal warmth through his touch. "Tell me, how did your cousin pass away?"

"It was a girl," I exclaimed bitterly, anger resurfacing. "She harbored feelings for him, but she was already involved with someone else. A jealous man, he stalked Jason, picking fights without reason until his jealousy consumed him one night. He shot and killed my cousin—my partner in crime, the best friend I've ever had."

Silence hung heavily in the air, memories reverberating through the empty spaces. At that moment, everything seemed to lose meaning. The world revealed its dark and terrible side, and I wanted nothing to do with it.

"I sought solace from God, but my calls went unanswered. It felt as though He had forsaken me. I turned my back on Him, unwilling to rely on a God I couldn't trust—or one who would take away those I held dear. I vowed to navigate life alone. That was my first mistake," I confessed.

George inquired, "How so?"

"I endeavored to conform, emulating the footsteps I thought I should follow, striving to employ the wisdom I gleaned from those I admired. Every decision was based on appeasing others, neglecting my inner voice and purpose. Everything I touched crumbled, leaving me feeling like a failure. Unbeknownst to me, I was paving a path of anguish and discord, ignorant of the dead-end I was hurtling toward.

"With time, cynicism consumed me. I questioned the motives of others, particularly those close to me—I believed they would deceive and abandon me, just as my grandmother and cousin had. With my skewed perception, I criticized everything and everyone, convinced of my version of truth.

"But now, I realize that I was mistaken. I didn't know how to reset the course of my life. I tried every means to bury my pain, only to be consumed by it. My heart was unforgiving, my mind divided, and broken promises trailed in my wake. Fear and addiction plagued me, their influence permeating my choices."

George inquired, "Where was your mother and family during this difficult period?"

"They were still present, but I kept them at arm's length, withdrawing into my self-constructed world. I concealed my emotions, convinced nobody cared or could offer assistance."

"Did you ever consider that turning away from God and isolating yourself contributed to your downward spiral?" George asked, his voice gentle. "That these actions fueled your decline?"

"No," I replied stubbornly, crossing my arms and scowling. "I believed that if my father, grandparents, and cousin hadn't abandoned me, I wouldn't have faced such circumstances. I blamed them—and God—for allowing such a tragedy to befall me. I held resentment and vowed not to speak to Him until He explained it. I was certain of my righteousness."

As if attuning to my thoughts, George responded, "Conviction and truth are distinct entities."

A moment of silence enveloped us as we glanced up at the clock. The day was drawing to a close, and the shop was nearing its closing time. Surprisingly, the day had passed quickly, with few interruptions—no phone calls or the usual arrival of the mailman through the front door, humming or occasionally whistling. It was an anomalous day in itself.

"Well, George, another day comes to an end," I murmured.

George chuckled. "But we're not finished. Let's meet again tomorrow evening at my house for dinner. Perhaps we can conclude our conversation before you depart on Monday."

I agreed, finding his suggestion sensible, and chuckled as George jotted down his address just behind the diner. "No wonder you always beat me here every morning!" I remarked with a smile. "Well, George, I will see you tomorrow evening. And we shall carry on."

We exchanged a heartfelt embrace, and George departed, leaving me to contemplate the events of the day and the discoveries I had made about myself.

# CHAPTER FIVE

While driving home, apprehension consumed my mind regarding the forthcoming adventures in this extensive cross-country journey. The looming doubts emerged, questioning the rightness to stray far from my cozy hometown.

Would I handle the uncertainties? Should I delay my plans until more stable financial ground and the upcoming holidays? Thoughts of potential financial setbacks and the impending struggle to make ends meet upon my return haunted my mind.

Nevertheless, amidst this tumultuous mental space, I resolved to press on with my plans. Time seemed to stand still as I pulled up to my humble mobile home—a tranquil retreat in the midst of nowhere.

Each passing day became a blend of excitement and tension as the week progressed, consuming me from within. This journey promised a change in perspective and a shift in the fabric of my existence.

Embracing the unknown was not my usual inclination, but I have learned to appreciate that personal growth often thrives in its midst.

At least my nightly slumber returned to its usual rhythm. Yet, I wondered whether it was a reassuring sign, affirming the rightness of my choice. Only time would provide the definitive answer. If my return from Phoenix failed to yield any improvements, I knew it would lead me to the undeniable realization that my decision held the key to resolving my struggles.

When the much-awaited Friday morning arrived, I rolled out of bed with anticipation—eager to bid farewell to the week, as was my custom. After a refreshing shower and a steaming pot of coffee, I hastily left my abode, aiming to reach the diner promptly and meet George.

Although it seemed like any ordinary day, there was an undeniable brightness in the air, accompanied by smiling faces passing me by. I couldn't help but wonder if this magnificence had always been present, previously overlooked, amidst the perpetual whirlwind of my existence and recent challenges.

Why did I only grasp its essence if that assertion held true? Did it signify a restoration of tranquility, or did it merely indicate that I was finally on the right path, wholeheartedly embracing the necessity for change?

With renewed optimism, I swung open the door to the diner, instantly spotting George seated at our customary booth. A smile naturally formed on my face as I joined him at the table, and he greeted me with a grin.

"Good morning, my friend. How are things progressing with your intricate voyage planning?"

"Surprisingly well, in fact—far surpassing my initial expectations, considering the circumstances."

George leaned in, his eyes gleaming with wisdom, and gently reminded me, "We still have much to navigate with these circumstances. But just envision the unparalleled sense of triumph awaiting you when we finally conquer them!"

"Do you think we'll figure all this out?" I asked, taken aback.

"Absolutely," he chuckled. "And it all starts with your dreams. They hold the key. Hopefully, we'll have everything sorted before your trip, so you can leave with a light heart."

His words filled me with laughter, and we agreed to meet mid-morning after I finished opening the shop. Exiting the restaurant and slipping into my car, a slight lightness washed over my heart. Yet, as I reached the first traffic light, that feeling faded, swallowed by the return of the nagging voice in my head.

"What if it all goes wrong? What if it fails you?" the voice taunted.

In desperate need of silence, I turned up the volume on the radio, hoping to drown out my escalating anxiety. Alas, the music failed to provide the solace I sought. With each passing block, my nervousness intensified, leading me to eventually pull over, seeking a moment to compose myself and decide whether to proceed.

"I will not fail!" I declared, my determination ringing in the air. "This is no mistake! You may doubt me, but I will prove you wrong! Just wait and see! I will not be a failure!" Though unsure to whom I directed these words, they needed to be heard. Equally important was my willingness to listen, disregarding the opinions of passersby.

"How can you be so sure you're not a failure?" the voice persisted. "Look at your past. It appears to be a series of failures."

At that moment, frustration took over, and I pounded the steering wheel of my truck while screaming, unable to endure the voice or its acerbic remarks. Searching for answers left me empty-handed, unable to find direction. Tears streamed down my face again, my heart rapidly pounding.

Aware of the potential judgment of onlookers, I fought to regain control. I knew I could not hide from these internal tormentors. The idea of embarking on a trip and finding joy seemed pointless if the voice refused to release its hold on me.

It was then, as I arrived at the shop, that I made up my mind. I would call and cancel the entire journey; why squander money on an experience I doubted I could truly cherish?

Spotting Louise and Daniel waiting outside the shop, I offered little more than a hurried wave as I rushed into my office. Inside, I brewed a cup of coffee, filling the air with the soothing melody of soft, low-volume Southern music.

Stepping into the shop to switch on the lights, I unexpectedly slipped on a greasy spot on the floor and crashed onto the frigid concrete.

"Why?!" I cried out, struggling to my feet. "Why me, Lord? Why can't anything go right anymore?"

Responding to my outburst, Daniel and Louise appeared in the doorway, their concern evident. "What's wrong?" Louise asked, her voice laced with worry. "Peter, what happened?"

Looking at them, I realized they were true friends, deserving to know the turmoil raging within my mind. Consequently, moments later, we found ourselves in the main office area of the shop, where I began to unravel the distressing episodes of stress, anxiety, and sleepless nights that had plagued me in recent days.

"Why didn't you tell us?" Daniel questioned, a mix of confusion and hurt evident in his eyes.

"I didn't intend to burden you. I believed I could face it on my own," I responded. My words were filled with possibilities, resonating with sincerity as I contemplated the depths of self-reliance.

"Well, clearly, this is something one cannot shoulder alone," Louise interjected. "It has gone too far. I am relieved you will take a break next week, but this extends beyond mere dreams, visions, and voices. Someone or something is trying to communicate, and I cannot speak for Daniel, but I will do whatever it takes to support you through this, my friend.

“I sensed something amiss that morning when you emerged from your truck and approached us, but I chose not to intrude upon your personal life and kept my distance. However, now that I grasp the gravity of the situation, I can no longer simply stand aside."

Turning to me, Daniel asked, "Would you like to take the remainder of the day to rest?"

"No," I replied resolutely. "I have a close friend coming by mid-morning to engage in discussion, and there are a few tasks I must complete at the shop before my departure on Monday."

"Does this friend know about the dreams, visions, and voices?" Daniel inquired; his voice tinged with concern.

I assured them that he did and was helping me navigate through these disconcerting experiences. Satisfied with my response, Louise was determined to remain by my side, affirming they would not go anywhere until George arrived.

"If anything arises, simply step outside and call for one of us," she kindly said. "We will be there in an instant."

Never before had I fully grasped the extraordinary nature of our friendship, and the realization moved me to tears. "Thank you for being here," I whispered softly. "I don't know what I would have done without you," I added. My voice choked with emotion.

"Stress and worry possess the power to break even the strongest individuals, particularly when we remain oblivious to the turmoil within our lives," Daniel remarked. "That is precisely why friends exist."

Daniel and Louise departed from the shop, leaving us feeling closer than ever. As George entered, his cheerful smile waned into deep concern upon seeing my face.

"What's happening?" he asked.

I recounted another episode I experienced in the truck and the subsequent issue at the shop. "Daniel and Louise heard me screaming and rushed over to help," I concluded.

"Are you alright?" he asked, rushing to my side.

"Besides a few bruises on my knees and a bruised ego, I believe I'll be fine. At least long enough to uncover what's occurring and get to the bottom of it," I replied.

George sighed. "I had hoped we were nearing a resolution, but it appears worsening. Don't worry, Peter, we will unravel this. I promise you that, my friend. Should I return later? Perhaps you don't wish to discuss it immediately after what transpired," George suggested.

I responded with a sigh. "Now is as good a time as any, I suppose. Besides, I was waiting for your arrival. Daniel and Louise wanted to ensure you knew the situation, and I assured them you were aware.

“In retrospect, it dawns upon me that I should have shared my innermost thoughts with them much earlier. As a true friend, I must open up about the depths of my feelings. Perhaps they could have offered wisdom in the realm of possibility, preventing the situation from spiraling into irreparable chaos.”

"I agree," George said. “Self-expression and sharing are among life's most precious gifts. They emancipate the mind, enabling liberation from the shackles of the past. They release us from struggle, pain, and anguish, illuminating the path.” As I handed him a bottle of water, he took a long drink before gazing intently at me.

"Are you ready?" he asked. George knew I had a trying morning and week, offering me the opportunity to postpone our forthcoming conversation. However, I nodded, resolved to bring everything to light.

He returned a nod and initiated, "Reflecting on the previous day's events, a discussion emerged in the shop concerning your sister. Permit me to rephrase—it was an exploration of profound dialogue pertaining to your sister. Now, let us explore the depths of knowledge concerning your younger brother. What is his name?"

I paused momentarily before answering, "His name is John. He is approximately fourteen or fifteen years younger than me and is the youngest."

"How frequently do you communicate with him?" George inquired.

"Very rarely, if at all."

"Do you share any common interests?"

"I am unsure," I contemplated. "I never truly had the chance to forge a profound connection with him. As we journeyed through our formative years, my own realm consumed me, while he remained in the embrace of youth.

“My primary focus was understanding my baby brother, sister, and mother. However, our father's absence left us all detached and lost. We could not fully cultivate relationships with the constant reminder of his absence," I explained.

"My brother was a playful prankster, always infusing our home with amusement. His imagination and insights intrigued me, though I never vocalized this to him. He always managed to lift my spirits, but I never shared that with him. Despite our circumstances, I maintained my distance, hesitant to bring my internal turmoil into a somewhat tranquil environment.

"I loved my baby brother and yearned to share so much with him. However, with our significant age gap, I feared he would not truly grasp my intentions." After a moment of reflection, I smiled at George and continued, "Perhaps if I had been more open with my family, we would not be standing here, having this conversation."

I briefly looked away before continuing, "Many times, during moments with my brother and sister, I recognized our disparities. Yet, we were remarkably similar in many ways. No matter how bleak things seemed, we always sought the silver lining and found something to jest about during moments of silence.

"My brother still resides close to my mom, and they spend ample time together. As I am the only one living farther away, I have unintentionally grown distant from my brother. I feel isolated and disconnected, although I am unsure why."

"Peter, what are you still holding onto in your life? Is there any animosity, anger, or unforgiveness towards them?" George's voice softened as he posed the question.

"I am uncertain of my true emotions toward them. Whatever they may be, they run deep, and I have never fully unraveled them," I confessed.

"Do you trust your brother?" George inquired.

I pondered for a moment, my shoulders shrugging in response. "I must admit, I haven't devoted much thought to it. Families in situations like ours yearn for healing and closure—a bridging of the divides that keep us apart. We need to find a way to grow closer," I answered, my words filled with a sense of contemplation.

George, with a thoughtful expression on his face, spoke up. "The past holds valuable lessons, with cherished memories that we hold dear," he said, his words hinting at philosophy. "But there are times when dwelling too much on the past hinders us from moving forward. Could it be that you're holding onto the past?"

I considered his question, and a silence settled between us, as George patiently waited for my realization. Once again, George's wisdom struck a chord within me.

In a moment of realization, it seemed like a metaphorical light was casting its brilliance upon my thoughts, revealing the profound influence of my past on every aspect of my existence. It permeated through each decision I have ever made, provoking deep contemplation and philosophical introspection.

Despite the transparency that prevailed, I gazed down at the floor before meeting George's eyes, feeling a twinge of emotion welling up inside me. "Perhaps it's time for me to let go of what no longer serves me," I expressed, my voice softened by reflection. A gentle smile spread across George's face as he nodded in agreement.

"I realize that this journey will require time, George, as I embark on retracing my steps and reconsidering what once felt right," I solemnly acknowledged. The weight of frustration lingered in my voice as I pondered my past. "Repeatedly, I have opened myself to others and even God, only to be left disheartened, betrayed, or profoundly disappointed.

“With each occurrence, I drift further away from them. I have never wavered in my loyalty to them or to God. Yet, they have failed to honor my emotions and aspirations!" I passionately exclaimed, the echoes of past experiences resonating through my words.

"No," George calmly countered, "the past has disillusioned you, trapping you in emotional stillness. Find solace in releasing your grip on the past and relinquishing preconceived notions of how life should unfold. Only then will the essence of life be rediscovered, and its inherent value restored.

“The past can only dictate your future if you allow it to haunt your every step. You've squandered much of your youth, lacking trust in others, and shunning truly meaningful relationships, even within your own family—all because of events years ago beyond your control."

With an understanding gaze, George continued, "Your father's departure fostered resentment and unwillingness to forgive, creating a barrier that obstructs the goodness standing before you. It's a blame game we all play, not only with others but also with ourselves.

“This cycle slowly robs us of our peace, freedom, and happiness. Minute by minute, hour by hour, it erodes the ember of purpose within us, ultimately stealing our lives. Each moment and day lived out of alignment with our true selves is another day wasted. We often falsely believe that joy and happiness stem solely from external circumstances like wealth, relationships, and health.

“While important, they hold little meaning if we lack inner peace, freedom, and genuine happiness. In the accumulation of seemingly inconsequential small things over time, we question the worthiness of life, leading to the abandonment of our dreams and, ultimately, ourselves.

“It is time to reclaim our lives, focus on what truly matters, and live with purpose and intention. It's time to find joy in the little moments, connect deeply with others, and create a life that honors who we are at our core.

“Retaining our peace of mind requires us to be present in each moment, be mindful of how we live our lives, and take the necessary steps to create an environment that supports a fulfilling existence.

“We can start by being grateful for the small moments, engaging meaningfully with those around us, and dedicating time to activities that bring us joy. By taking time for ourselves, we can learn to appreciate the beauty of life.”

He paused momentarily, letting his words sink in, before proceeding. "We live in quiet desperation, consistently placing the blame on others instead of taking responsibility ourselves.

“Our once brilliantly promising future, filled with hope, dreams, and boundless aspirations, is extinguished by the weight of our past. Aren't you tired of spinning on this demanding merry-go-round, which fails to quench your inner thirst for self-expression?

“Your father's absence has hardened your heart and created a divide within your family, leaving you isolated with this void and the mounting frustrations you bear."

George's voice was filled with empathy as he spoke, "Listen, Peter, my purpose here is not to judge. Rather, I aim to shed light on the inner turmoil that plagues you.

“So, where do we go from this point? How do we transform it all? We cannot continue living with the emotions that presently consume you. We can clearly see where they have led you. The challenges you face are wake-up calls, urging you to move forward.

“Confronting the past is the only way to unlock our present peace and happiness, even if it may be tempting to dismiss these ideas as fallacious. Deep down, we both acknowledge their truth, evident in the turbulence you now endure, Peter." George's voice carried a sense of contemplation.

"The solution lies within us, buried deep. Living in the grip of the past has cost you immeasurable treasures like love, peace, happiness, and abundance. Nevertheless, these treasures remain within your reach. We must undertake the inner work required to illuminate the path leading us towards rediscovering them all."

Pausing for a moment, I collected my thoughts before responding. "I do not expect to possess all the answers to my present predicaments, nor do I expect you, George, to have them all.

“What frustrates me is the absence of any clue why this is all happening to me now, in this moment. I ponder upon a desire, a longing for a life imbued with simplicity and serenity, akin to the experiences of others. Doth this humble request perhaps exceed reason?”

George gazed at me, understanding etched in his eyes, his question penetrating my innermost thoughts. "When was the last time you visited your family in Atlanta? How often do they come to Beaufort to see you?"

"My mother hasn't visited in years due to her fear of flying, always needing a flight companion. She endures persistent back pain from multiple surgeries, relying on various medications to manage it.

“As for my brother, John, he has never visited, preferring the comforts of his own environment due to his fear of flying. On the other hand, Becky doesn't visit frequently due to her busy family life, but occasionally calls or visits every few years.

“Our conversations lack depth, as we have never taken the time to truly know each other. We carry the weight of past struggles, hindering our ability to open up. Instead, we exchange lighthearted jokes, avoiding meaningful discussions. The fear of their reactions prevents me from expressing my true emotions.”

As George keenly noted, the disconnection with my siblings gradually wore away at my vitality and self-confidence. At the heart of the matter lies this pervasive sense of isolation. How can I wholeheartedly embrace life's immense abundance while plagued by the burden of solitude? Life demands transformation, forcing us to step onto the stage, hand in hand with our fellow sojourners.

Participation in life's ups and downs, joys and sorrows, setbacks and triumphs is non-negotiable. Life encompasses it all, and we cannot evade its many facets. Hidden within its disguises lies the blessings we seek, if only we genuinely desire the rewards of our creativity and the Creator.

Through George's insightful feedback, clarity began to seep through the cracks of my understanding. I have never shared my true feelings with them, fearing rejection—just like the abandonment I experienced from my father and others. Yes, I am afraid they might leave me behind.

George comprehended the weight of my concerns. We cannot cultivate genuine connections and deep bonds without wearing masks and perpetuating illusions. Love and honest self-expression are vital for all of us. This realization struck a chord, particularly given our shared upbringing.

Some wounds are easy to forget and forgive, while others leave deeper scars that are harder to heal. We cannot simply let go of those deeply rooted issues. Breaking down these walls—the barriers we cling to— presents our greatest challenge.

His expression darkened as George contemplated all he learned from our conversation. "However," he continued, "we must delve deeper to reach the core. We must focus on you.

“The present encompasses our immediate experience, yet to forge a better future, we must bravely confront the intricacies of our past. Clues and answers lie in the past, serving as gateways to our present situations.

“Nothing will change until we address the wounds of our inner childhood. So, if you're willing, I will ask probing and personal questions about your life and thought process. Now, they may stir up strong emotions, leading to shouting, cursing, and perhaps even tears. But it's all part of the process."

Determined to regain control of my life, I nodded. If enduring these challenges means finding a way forward, I am prepared to do whatever it takes.” George nodded back.

"Let's start by exploring your childhood. What was it like growing up in the South?"

"Like most children, I was adventurous and curious about everything. Inspector Gadget could have been my middle name." I chuckle, acknowledging the truth. But then, my tone turns serious. "Yet, even as a child, I always felt different from my family. It seemed as though I didn't quite fit in that time and place."

"Where did you feel you truly belonged?" George asks.

"I don't know exactly, but I know I lived in a world where I didn't belong. I was always searching for something—I just didn't know what it was. I felt alone and out of place. It's the same way I feel now. I can't explain the feeling, but I've had it for most of my life. I never felt like the other kids.

"I always thought I would be doing something significant with my life, but here I am, years later, and I don't feel like I've even figured out what that something is. How are we supposed to know what the universe wants us to do? Are there clues? Or do we have to figure it all out on our own?" I questioned.

As tears welled up in my eyes, I swallowed the lump in my throat as I reflected on the life I had once imagined. Then, the realization hit me—I have indeed lost my life. Fear, anger, rebellion, separation, and mistrust of others have consumed me. The wounds of my past dictated my present and future if I didn't wake up and surrender to the truth. George was right. These uncomfortable and eye-opening truths stirred my emotions. Before I could delve further, the phone interrupted our conversation. It was Louise checking in to see how things were going. I assured her everything was fine, and we hung up.

I looked up at George, a concerned expression paired with a half-smile on his face. "Seems like you're popular these days. It appears I'm not the only one wishing for the best outcome and success in your life."

I grabbed a bottle of water for myself and offered George one, even though he was only halfway through his first bottle. I popped the cap and savored the cool, refreshing water. Then, I looked up at him and nodded. Indeed, as I found myself at a loss for solutions, I felt compelled to seek enlightenment and assistance from others, even when I feared potential hurt and abandonment.

"Peter," he asked, his curiosity piqued, "how did you navigate life when faced with setbacks and challenges?"

Reflecting upon the memories, I responded, "Initially, it was an adventure. In youth, we perceive the world as our conquest, and setbacks ignite a thrilling pursuit of solutions. The subsequent sense of accomplishment, akin to a surge of adrenaline, lingers in my thoughts. Remarkably, this topic enthuses me more than conversations about my family." Truly, it captivated my attention.

George was curious as he pondered, "Did this mindset persist into your adulthood? Did it bring about benefits or drawbacks as you journey through life?"

I confidently replied with little hesitation, "It greatly helped me become self-reliant and depend on my abilities. I learned to pursue everything I desired in life."

Eager to delve deeper into the conversation, George asked, "Did you achieve most of what you desired?"

“During my childhood and early teenage years, I certainly did."

With curiosity awakened, George delved deeper, questioning, "And what transpired thereafter? What event interrupted your magic's flow and disrupted your power?"

Lost in thought for a fleeting moment, frustration started building, propelling me up from my seat. This query plagued me, its answer eluding my grasp. Exasperation escaped my lips, "I am uncertain, George! Truly, I am at a loss. Reality slips through my fingers, casting doubt upon everything. Please, George, your assistance is invaluable. I'm dying inside, lost, and I don't know what to do about it! Help me, or I will kill myself just to get out of my head!"

George patiently awaited my composed state before speaking. "I comprehend the anguish you feel, but we must persist on this journey. It is the sole path to surpass the illusions fate has cast upon you and unravel a life filled with joy and abundance," he responded.

Following deep sobs and profound introspection, I wiped away the tears of pent-up frustration and anger. It dawned gradually on me; I finally surrendered to the truth after a prolonged battle, clutching onto the pain, disappointment, and fear within. The unfolding events became the catalyst for my liberation from the self-imposed prison of shame, guilt, and fear I had constructed throughout the years. I embarked on healing and growth, determined not to surrender. Or at least, that was my hope.

For far too long, I had lived in falsehood, clutching fallacious beliefs to navigate my life. I DISTANCED MYSELF FROM THEM because I believed others lacked the answers I desperately sought. I chose emotional detachment, thinking it would provide solace. But now, I comprehend it did the exact opposite.

As I distanced myself from George, I whispered weakly, "Perhaps I am the most tearful soul you have encountered."

George promptly replied, "No, you are not the most tearful soul I have encountered. In my own journey, I have shed my fair share of tears. And after we untangle the chaos in your life, I will gladly share that with you.

"When a man sheds tears, it reveals the truest emotions, thoughts, and feelings typically hidden deep within. When you weep, Peter, it shows the strength and power within you to release those emotions.

“You have heard the call for change and are willing to do everything necessary to bring about that change. Most people would not dare to take such risks. I admire not only your strength but also your desire to advance and uncover your true self," George complimented me.

Feeling feeble, I asked, "But how do I accomplish it?"

George replied, "You have already taken the first step by speaking to me, by admitting to yourself and to me the truth you hid away for years. The path to a new life begins with that initial step. You do not require all the answers before moving forward; you merely need to question your present state and courageously take a step forward, as you have already done. Embrace the necessity for change and seek enlightenment from God on how to embark on this journey."

"Do you believe I am heading in the right direction for my life?" I inquired.

"I genuinely believe you are," George assured me. "Your quest for answers attests to that. You have been seeking insights and perspectives from those around you, endeavoring to understand yourself and those who have conquered their lives through purpose."

This was a viewpoint I had not previously pondered. Could I have initiated the process of seeking change? Taking that initial step held considerable significance in itself.

"Perhaps you are right. I had never looked at it from that angle."

"I know I am right," George responded. "You are an anomaly, and the world has eagerly awaited your arrival and your message. Whatever it may be, your gift will bring the much-needed light to a world desperately yearning for answers—to alleviate their pain and anger, just as you have experienced."

Whether one sweeps floors or becomes the President of the United States of America, each individual is destined to the world while fulfilling their purpose in life. No job or occupation holds more importance than another. In the eyes of our Creator, we all stand equal, making each person's existence significant," George concluded.

Releasing a slow sigh, I responded, "George Hill, your presence has breathed new life into my soul, and for that, I am truly grateful. Rarely have I encountered someone who could convey such profound wisdom. Apart from my mother and Mrs. Peterson, no one else has provided me with encouragement or acknowledged my interests and concerns."

George solemnly replied, "I understand. Even if the people around us fail to offer their support, always remember that God applauds our every small effort. With time, you will find encouragement and support growing from within, rather than seeking it externally. I will explain further, as I can see confusion arising.

"Now, let us delve into your achievements as a child. Why did it become increasingly challenging for you to accomplish things as you grew older? Frustration emerged as you struggled to focus and complete the tasks you initially started. When you look back, you may perceive a long trail of failures and mistakes. But were they truly? The past does not dictate your future or the path you will travel; it merely reflects where you have been. That being said, let us continue," George encouraged.

"Peter, did you trust any adult besides your mother when you were a child?" George inquired, sensing the significance of their role.

"I trusted my grandmother. She inspired and reassured me in every aspect, painting a picture that all was well with me and the world. I could rely on her for answers to my questions. Her peaceful presence accompanied her wherever she went," I replied, reminiscing fondly.

"My grandfather, on the other hand, stood as a pillar of the community. Everyone looked up to him and sought his counsel. As he held high status within the community, I sought his inspiration and hope.

“Unfortunately, I failed to meet his standards and was perceived as a lazy child who disliked hard work—an attribute considered honorable and indicative of status.

“Although I indeed worked, my efforts did not please him. Consequently, I became an embarrassment, the black sheep amid his grandchildren. My younger cousin effortlessly claimed the favored position.

“As I desperately endeavored to earn my grandfather's favor, my efforts proved in vain. It seemed that nothing I did could ever satisfy him. Instead, he favored my cousin, making me feel like a disappointment I said. It took years to understand why.”

"Was your grandmother the anchor in your life during your formative years?" George asked, recognizing the importance of her influence.

"She was my everything, until..." I paused, my voice trailing off. I hesitated to confront those memories, but I knew it was necessary. Confronting my past was the key to finding my way forward.

"Until she passed away," I finally admitted, forcing the words out. "In the blink of an eye, my world shattered. My grandmother had been my guiding light, and suddenly, she was gone. The warmth, peace, and acceptance—all vanished forever.

“Time seemed to slow down, painting my world in shades of darkness. Anger engulfed me as I spiraled downward. I rebelled against everything and everyone, unable to trust even myself. It was in that moment that my nightmare began."

"Did you have anyone to turn to during that crisis?" George asked gently, displaying his palpable empathy.

"My cousin, Jason," I answered, gratitude filling my voice as I reflected on his presence during those difficult times. "As I grew older, I visited him in Atlanta more frequently, and he would come to Beaufort during the summers. It provided respite from the internal pain, a brief taste of normalcy in my life.

"Jason and I were inseparable as teenagers," I reminisced, a flicker of nostalgia coloring my words. "Where one went, the other followed. We were like Batman and Robin, fearlessly exploring every town and community we encountered. Life felt great once again. He helped fill the void within me, mending my broken heart without me even realizing it.

"Far from the bright lights and noise of the city, deep in the countryside, we would lie on the roof of an old tobacco barn nearby, gazing at the stars and envisioning a future brimming with unlimited possibilities. We made a pact to embark on that journey together.

"But as summer drew to a close, Jason went back to Atlanta for school. We were naïve about how to conquer the world, but we held on to our vision. I was thrilled about the adventures that lay ahead. It reignited meaning in my life, as each day held the promise of bringing me closer to the future we had envisioned. I had witnessed the determination of my grandfather, a farmer and commercial fisherman, and whatever little I knew about my father."

A fleeting smile touched my lips, encapsulating the innocence of days long gone. There was an abundance of vitality, a boundless zest for life within us. Yet, the weight of circumstances that prevented it from unfolding came crashing back, and I slumped in defeat.

"Where did it all go wrong?" George softly inquired, noticing the pain engulfing me.

With my head in my hands, I struggled to suppress the memories, my voice trembling as I spoke. "Why did you have to leave, Jason?" I whispered, fighting back tears. "You vanished in the dead of night, without a farewell. You betrayed me. And I can never forgive you for that. I swear, I can't. You're no different from the others—the people who abandoned me at some point in my life."

George's comforting arms enveloped me at that moment, pulling me close. It was an embrace I had yearned for, reminiscent of the warmth my grandmother and father once provided. In that embrace, I realized that George held the missing piece to my journey, the key to understanding the significance of male connection and bonding in my personal evolution. He would guide me towards finding purpose and passion for living.

"Pete, I promise I won't leave you," George reassured me, his words sincere. "You carry so much pain and hurt, but I promise not to contribute to it. You can trust me. You can count on me." Stepping back, he kept his hand on my shoulder, emanating a paternal warmth through his touch. "Tell me, how did your cousin pass away?"

"It was a girl," I exclaimed bitterly, anger resurfacing. "She harbored feelings for him, but she was already involved with someone else. A jealous man, he stalked Jason, picking fights without reason until his jealousy consumed him one night. He shot and killed my cousin—my partner in crime, the best friend I've ever had."

Silence hung heavily in the air, memories reverberating through the empty spaces. At that moment, everything seemed to lose meaning. The world revealed its dark and terrible side, and I wanted nothing to do with it.

"I sought solace from God, but my calls went unanswered. It felt as though He had forsaken me. I turned my back on Him, unwilling to rely on a God I couldn't trust—or one who would take away those I held dear. I vowed to navigate life alone. That was my first mistake," I confessed.

George inquired, "How so?"

"I endeavored to conform, emulating the footsteps I thought I should follow, striving to employ the wisdom I gleaned from those I admired. Every decision was based on appeasing others, neglecting my inner voice and purpose. Everything I touched crumbled, leaving me feeling like a failure. Unbeknownst to me, I was paving a path of anguish and discord, ignorant of the dead-end I was hurtling toward.

"With time, cynicism consumed me. I questioned the motives of others, particularly those close to me—I believed they would deceive and abandon me, just as my grandmother and cousin had. With my skewed perception, I criticized everything and everyone, convinced of my version of truth.

"But now, I realize that I was mistaken. I didn't know how to reset the course of my life. I tried every means to bury my pain, only to be consumed by it. My heart was unforgiving, my mind divided, and broken promises trailed in my wake. Fear and addiction plagued me, their influence permeating my choices."

George inquired, "Where was your mother and family during this difficult period?"

"They were still present, but I kept them at arm's length, withdrawing into my self-constructed world. I concealed my emotions, convinced nobody cared or could offer assistance."

"Did you ever consider that turning away from God and isolating yourself contributed to your downward spiral?" George asked, his voice gentle. "That these actions fueled your decline?"

"No," I replied stubbornly, crossing my arms and scowling. "I believed that if my father, grandparents, and cousin hadn't abandoned me, I wouldn't have faced such circumstances. I blamed them—and God—for allowing such a tragedy to befall me. I held resentment and vowed not to speak to Him until He explained it. I was certain of my righteousness."

As if attuning to my thoughts, George responded, "Conviction and truth are distinct entities."

A moment of silence enveloped us as we glanced up at the clock. The day was drawing to a close, and the shop was nearing its closing time. Surprisingly, the day had passed quickly, with few interruptions—no phone calls or the usual arrival of the mailman through the front door, humming or occasionally whistling. It was an anomalous day in itself.

"Well, George, another day comes to an end," I murmured.

George chuckled. "But we're not finished. Let's meet again tomorrow evening at my house for dinner. Perhaps we can conclude our conversation before you depart on Monday."

I agreed, finding his suggestion sensible, and chuckled as George jotted down his address just behind the diner. "No wonder you always beat me here every morning!" I remarked with a smile. "Well, George, I will see you tomorrow evening. And we shall carry on."

We exchanged a heartfelt embrace, and George departed, leaving me to contemplate the events of the day and the discoveries I had made about myself.

# CHAPTER SIX

Upon awakening, I was serenaded by a symphony of chirping birds, accompanied by a thoughtful call from George. Immersed in the embrace of rejuvenation, I contemplated the road to sustained tranquillity. In recognizing the hurdles ahead, George drew solace from my unwavering dedication to our ongoing dialogue.

The profound influence of our preceding conversation had begun to mend the fragments of my existence. Honestly, the support and friendship of George have proven to be immeasurable treasures on this journey of self-discovery.

With plans to pick up a rental car and run errands before our dinner, I eagerly looked forward to the evening. After a refreshing shower and coffee, I began the day's tasks with unprecedented inner peace. The prospect of meaningful conversations provided comfort and sparked a desire for profound understanding.

Before heading to George's place, I paused at home to enjoy a sandwich and relax in front of the TV. As usual, my exhaustion led me to doze off in the comfort of my easy chair, transporting me into a dream.

In a dream, I found myself in the presence of a figure cloaked in darkness, their hair and eyes matching the obsidian shroud. They spoke to me, imploring me to make a momentous decision, promising that the right path would vanquish their existence and bestow salvation upon humankind.

Conversely, a single wrong choice would unleash unrelenting pursuit and dire consequences upon our species. It was a profound choice, one with the power to reshape the trajectory of life on our planet.

Startled and longing to escape the dream, I found myself frantically searching for an exit. The man persisted, revealing that he had intervened on my behalf, delivering the message of the Creator. This Divine intervention encompassed future dreams and visions that would offer guidance and illuminate the plan of the Creator. However, the choice lay with me, Peter Smith, to determine my path.

Startled awake, my heart raced, leaving me breathless. Doubts flooded my mind—I could not embark on a journey to Arizona in my current state, plagued by incessant dreams and voices. My destination seemed closer to the local asylum than the intended pilgrimage.

At 4:00 PM, I prepared for dinner with George, meditating on the pivotal crossroads I had arrived at. The desired path required courage and a decision regarding the trajectory of my life. Should I ask George to accompany me to Arizona? It entailed bracing myself for intense dialogue and the inevitable questions he would pose. The time to choose came sooner than expected.

On reaching George's residence, I admired the quaint, white colonial house adorned with three majestic pillars and inviting wooden rocking chairs on the porch. The well-tended lawn boasted rose bushes and charming, unfamiliar plants. A Gray Ford F-150 caught my attention—a surprise from George, who I had known to drive only a beat-up car. During our dinner, I anticipated peeling the layers of George's persona, uncovering his true identity and the reasons behind his presence in Beaufort.

As I parked my truck and approached the porch, George greeted me warmly, welcoming me inside. The house before me was a stunning display of beauty—an enchanting spectacle. Reflected in the gleaming, stained hardwood floors was my own image, while the tall, vaulted ceilings, embellished with elegant ceiling fans, radiated an aura of elegance. Each room exuded an ambiance of warmth, acceptance, and love. The immaculate kitchen boasted countless amenities, and the spacious bedrooms could comfortably accommodate two. Lastly, the extensive collection of books in the grand study showcased George's wisdom and knowledge. Enveloped in serenity, I marvelled at the seamless harmony between the house and the man I had long admired.

Looking through the books, I noticed that nearly every one of them delved into the pursuit of joy in life. The self-help literature reminded me of my youthful endeavors to absorb wisdom and aspire to greatness.

One particular book caught my eye—a classic I had explored during my formative years: *The Greatest Miracle in the World* by Og Mandino.

I revisited its pages several times, and its profound impact on me during high school still lingered. This masterpiece of literature conveyed the empowering message that each individual possessed the capacity to create the life they desired, for we are all treasured miracles, endowed with all that's necessary to learn, grow, and flourish. Our inherent potential lies within.

Although it had remained unused for some time, I now recalled the invaluable tools it discussed, and the extraordinary gifts bestowed upon each person by the Creator. Eagerly, I flipped through the familiar pages, my heart brimming with joy.

As I perused pages 89 through 102, a few choice words caught my attention. *“You are my greatest miracle. You are the greatest miracle in the world. Never have I lost faith in you since that day when I first spun you from a giant wave and tossed you helplessly on the sands. As you measure time, that was more than five hundred million years ago.*

*“There were many models, many shapes, many sizes, before I reached perfection in you more than thirty thousand years ago. I have made no further effort to improve on you in all these years. For how could one improve on a miracle? You were a marvel to behold, and I was pleased.*

*“I gave you this world and dominion over it. Then, to enable you to reach your full potential, I placed my hand upon you, once more, and endowed you with powers unknown to any other creature in the universe, even unto this day.*

*“I gave you the power to think, I gave you the power to love, I gave you the power to will, I gave you the power to laugh, I gave you the power to imagine, I gave you the power to create, I gave you the power to plan, I gave you the power to speak, I gave you the power to pray.”*

*My eyes quickly switched to the next page, where I picked up these words.*

*“Choose to love rather than hate, choose to laugh rather than cry, choose to create rather than destroy, choose to persevere rather than quit, choose to praise rather than gossip, choose to heal rather than moan, choose to give rather than steal, choose to act rather than procrastinate, choose to grow rather than rot, choose to pray rather than curse, choose to live rather than die."*

Within me arose a profound sensation, dispelling any notion of happenstance or wasted existence. Instead, I sensed the presence of miracles patiently waiting for my discovery, if only I found the courage to embark on this quest.

With a gentle smile, I met George's gaze, and in that silent exchange, we acknowledged an inexplicable connection that transcended superficial encounters. Placing the book back on the desk, I remarked, "Your discerning taste in literature is remarkable. It seems as though you have unravelled life's enigmatic threads."

George's response was humble yet profound, "I cannot claim to possess all the answers. When we believe we have comprehended life's intricacies, the Divine presents us with new assignments and tests to conquer.

“The volumes of books adorning these walls, and filling these shelves, serve as symbols of the countless challenges and trials that I have personally embraced and conquered. While I have triumphed over some, I have faced countless failures, revisiting them until I gleaned the desired wisdom.

“These books serve as guiding beacons for individuals like us, waypoints for those moments when we deviate from life's path and struggle to rediscover the route to enlightenment."

Curiosity roused me as I softly inquired, "What truly defines 'home,' then?"

George responded with solemn certainty, "As you touched upon moments ago, 'home' is the tranquillity and love that resides within us. It is the sanctuary where we find solace in our Divine connection—our connection to God. It is the space where we can unabashedly be ourselves, living with authenticity and sincerity. It is where our tears are tenderly wiped away, and where God whispers comforting words into our receptive ears, reigniting our inner strength as we venture forth into the world with renewed perspective."

As I absorbed George's words, he continued, "The quest for 'home' is a deeply ingrained aspiration shared by all, whether consciously acknowledged or not. Despite dwelling in a world fixated on material possessions, many individuals spend their lives trying to find their identity and purpose through these fleeting means. However, wisdom and truth are the essence of 'home'—a profound gift bestowed upon us by God."

George's voice resonated with conviction, as he further explained, "Despite the seductive allure perpetuated by advertisements and glossy magazines, this gift cannot be purchased with wealth or possessions. With over seven billion individuals inhabiting this planet, the majority seek validation, just as I once did, and as you are now, Peter. Society urges us to seek validation externally, unaware that it can be found within ourselves—awaiting our sincere supplication. Access to this Divine gift is not reserved for the unique few; it is a birthright available to all."

His sincerity permeated his words as he continued, "Purpose and peace forever reside within us, unlocking the possibilities that the external world deems unattainable. Yet, this revelation dawns only when we discover unwavering certainty within ourselves, forsaking anything incongruous with our heartfelt convictions. Whether it is specialized knowledge or relationships, any aspect conflicting with our authentic truth must be shed.

"Inward tranquillity and introspection breed conviction," he emphasized, "cultivating a mind that aligns with our personal beliefs, propelling us unhindered towards our goals and aspirations. When certainty resides within, we cease the pursuit of external answers. Without comprehending our purpose and the truth, we drift aimlessly amidst external pursuits, forever yearning for fulfillment. We mistakenly seek solace in superficial avenues, failing to realize that they can never fill the void within.

“To embark on meaningful endeavors filled with passion, love, and purpose, we must undertake a journey inward—a voyage often arduous, particularly when societal norms beckon us elsewhere for clarity and significance. This pursuit offers no shortcuts, despite humanity's ceaseless attempts to fabricate them. Some spend a lifetime before realizing they sought meaning in illusions. Eventually, every avenue explored leads back to the heart," he signified, pointing to his chest.

A mischievous grin crossed George's face as he added, "I sense your eagerness to delve deeper into these matters—and to discover more about both myself, and you. All will be expounded upon over dinner."

"You've read my mind." I chuckled in response. "I have long pondered when I would truly come to know this stranger who has become my dearest friend."

George's words left me bewildered, but I couldn't help being captivated by the profound wisdom he shared. As I marvelled at his study's grandeur, I felt like I had entered another realm. Reluctantly leaving, I explored the rest of his majestic house, astounded by its regal beauty and exquisite craftsmanship.

Returning to the living room, I noticed a small television that seemed out of place. George invited me to make myself comfortable and offered me a drink while we waited for dinner. "Tea would be wonderful," I replied softly, still absorbed in the thoughts from our conversation. The room seemed to hold an enchanting aura, captivating my gaze as I admired its every detail.

George, noticing my admiration, smiled and remarked, "It's everything I envisioned for my retreat from the bustling world."

"It appears your endeavors have rewarded you well, George."

"Indeed, they have. And soon, they will do the same for you, once we uncover the path to your future," George assured me.

During that dinner, our conversation delved into the profound turmoil that had consumed my existence. George spoke about the profound impact of my cousin and best friend's departure, and how it shattered the foundation of my connections, rendering me distrustful and solitary. I confided in him in that profound moment, realizing that Jason truly comprehended me like no other soul could. Pondering, contemplating, observing his departure. “An unwillingness to start anew and explain myself compelled me to withdraw. And so, I carried the weight of our shared memories, dreams, and plans, treasured in seclusion from the rest of the world."

George inquired, "Why did you feel the need to distance yourself from your family?"

I sighed, recalling those painful days. "Because I believed no one could truly comprehend the depth of my grief. Jason and I had shared everything, and without him, I sought solace in solitude. I spent endless hours in my room or outdoors, immersed in my own world, attempting to navigate my life whilst grappling with the immense void in my heart and soul."

"And how did this journey unfold for you?" George asked, his eyes filled with empathy.

"It didn't," I confessed. "Every endeavor I pursued ended in failure. I jumped from one scheme to another, chasing after success and wealth. If one plan didn't deliver immediate results, I swiftly moved on to the next. Auto repair became a refuge for me in my early teens, my escape from the pain buried within. Repairing things allowed me to evade the conversations and reminiscing that would have reopened old wounds. The garage became my sanctuary."

George listened intently, aware of the hidden struggles beneath my achievements. "The shop provided a shield for the enduring pain of losing loved ones. Though others praised my craftsmanship, deep down, I was crumbling inside. I loathed my existence, harboring resentment towards others and even towards the Divine for subjecting me to such suffering. The brunt of my anger was directed at God. I questioned why He had burdened me with countless trials and forsaken me in my darkest moments."

I let out a weary sigh. "I turned my back on God and the world, convinced there was no purpose in listening to a deity who remained silent amidst my anguish. I had been taught God loved His children, but it felt like He had forsaken me. His silence felt like a betrayal, leaving me wounded and desperate for answers."

"How so?" George asked gently.

I raised my voice, frustration bursting out from within as I said, "It's because of everything I went through! I thought I'd never find my way out of those grim circumstances. Everywhere I turned, I faced abuse, whether verbal or physical. Trust became an elusive concept, as I grew wary of those around me and the world itself. My anger consumed me."

George gazed at me with affectionate and gentle eyes, uttering words that stirred something deep within my being. "Your pain and sorrow will soon fade away," he assured me. Tears welled up in my eyes as I yearned to believe him, though nagging doubts tugged at me. The echoes of past betrayals cautioned me against vulnerability. It had been so long since I’d placed my trust in someone, yet this man—a known fixture in my life was rekindling a glimmer of trust and forgiveness within me, all with his heartfelt words.

In a sudden burst of energy, George sprang up, declaring that dinner awaited us, and I reflexively followed him into the kitchen. As we busied ourselves with the meal, he asked, "Have you considered what you will encounter on your journey?" I was on the brink of confessing my change of heart, doubting whether I should embark on the trip at all, when he interrupted.

"This time of the year, is perfect. You'll be blessed with delightful weather in the eighties," he chimed in.

 I interjected, "That's exactly why I feel hesitant."

He stared at me, his expression a blend of shock and disbelief, almost dropping the steaks and potatoes he had just retrieved from the oven. "Why the hesitation?" George inquired.

"It's just that there's so much to attend to at the shop, and my mounting bills..." My voice trailed off with a sigh.

He let out a disapproving snort. "That's insufficient cause to reconsider, Peter. If you fail to seize this opportunity, regret will permeate your later years. It would be a tragic waste to allow fear and worry to rob you of the adventure and excitement that await.

"Not only that," he continued, "I perceive this journey will unveil hidden talents within you, dormant until this leap is taken, Peter."

"What talents?" I scoffed. "Do you mean my knack for fixing vehicles? Because from what I can tell, that's the extent of my abilities and skills."

"No, Peter, there's something greater in your future—something beyond your wildest imagination. That's why it's vital for you to embark on this journey, or else the life you know will wither away," George assured me.

I stared at him, with a mixture of horror and fascination coursing through me. Deep down, I knew he spoke the truth. If I didn't embrace change, if my life didn't start to improve, I had already decided to fade away from it.

"I don't know what wonders await you," George continued with certainty in his voice, "but I am certain you possess them. I see the signs, like the soft glow of greatness awakening within your spirit. You possess what the world has been longing for."

"How do you know?" I whispered, barely audible.

"When one discovers and embraces their own truth, they can discern it in others," he said. His response was profound yet straightforward.

I paused, my mind racing. What did it all mean? What did he mean? And how was I to find the answers? Then it struck me—a response to a question I realized I had been asking myself all throughout my life, however the dreams and nightmares made it more upfront and in my face. It remained a constant reminder of my forgotten promises to my cousin and myself so long ago.

"I will only embark on this journey if you accompany me," I declared, resolute.

George hesitated, carefully weighing his words before responding. "Well, Peter, that's the proposition. I appreciate the invitation, but perhaps this voyage is meant for you, and you are alone." He set the steaks on the table, as if ending the conversation. However, I wasn't willing to let him off the hook.

Nonchalantly, I shrugged and proclaimed, "In that case, it's decided. I won't go. You're all I have presently, and if you decline to join me, then there's no journey for me."

It wasn't merely the fact that I couldn't embark on this trip or journey alone, for deep down, I knew my own capabilities. What indeed seemed insurmountable was the prospect of facing my inner demons while undertaking this solo venture.

The haunting messages of despair echoed in my mind, and the darkness of my dreams only added to the uncertainty I was willing to confront alone. Yet, amidst these challenges, a deeper bond had formed between George and me, surpassing mere friendship.

In my eyes, he had become the father figure I had longed for my entire life. In him, an abundance of serenity, love, and compassion had eluded me until now.

Moreover, George was my existence's sole foundation of reliability and trustworthiness. Amidst my contemplation, these elements intertwined as I anxiously waited for George's response to my pressing question.

As minutes ticked by during our dinner, a moment of silence embraced us. Suddenly, George broke the stillness, his eyes shining mischievously. "So, when shall we embark on our Monday morning voyage?"

Laughter erupted from within me, flowing like an untamed river. In that instant, the notion of embarking on this journey together took form: envisioning our attire, exploring the places we would traverse, and mapping out the routes we would follow. Ideas infused the room, illuminating it like a radiant sun, and joy swept over me, effervescent in my heart.

After ample time, a profound sense of purpose washed over me, revealing a new chapter unfurling before my eyes, even if I couldn't fully grasp its magnitude. It resonated deeply, as if we stood on the edge of something extraordinary. While an aura of uncertainty veiled the path ahead, George and I shared an intuition, a belief that it would irrevocably transform our lives in unimaginable ways.

That night, I slumbered peacefully, awakened by the cheerful melodies of birdsong on a Sunday morning. An amalgamation of excitement and inner tranquillity enveloped me as I stepped into the shower, and then made my way to the coffeemaker, brimming with enthusiasm for the weeks ahead. My bags were packed, and only tidying up the house remained before departure.

However, the morning and afternoon were consumed by errands, and before I knew it, evening cast its shadow upon us. It was the final night before our grand journey, and sleep eluded me as I prepared for bed.

Anticipation for the morning departure kept me awake, and amidst the waiting, I perused magazines and brochures on the nightstand, immersing myself in the splendor and culture of Arizona.

The mountains' grandeur, the Grand Canyon's captivating beauty, and the majestic skyline of downtown Phoenix stirred my soul. Suddenly, a thought burst forth in my mind like a revelation: "Believe and trust, and all shall be yours."

A broad smile traced its way across my face as I welcomed this notion, and minutes later, slumber embraced me. When the alarm sounded at six the following morning, I rose, showered, and dressed, with thoughts already consumed by the road ahead. Foregoing my usual coffee routine, I decided to indulge in breakfast at the diner with George before embarking on our adventure.

Before leaving the house, I knelt beside my bed and whispered a simple prayer, "God, though I'm uncertain if you're listening this morning, I humbly ask for a remarkable journey to Arizona and back with my dearest friend, George."

Before I could complete my thoughts, a voice reassured me, "You have my blessings, for you are cherished and beloved." With a smile, I rose, extinguished all the lights, and locked the doors.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

At the stroke of 7 a.m., George hopped into my car on Choice Street. He greeted me warmly, stowing his suitcases in the back seat before settling into the passenger seat. With joyful expressions, we made our way to the local diner, where we indulged in a hearty breakfast and discussed the adventure that awaited us. By 8 a.m., we were already cruising westward along Highway 70, bound for Raleigh, North Carolina.

We engaged in light banter during that initial hour, occasionally pausing to admire the scenic rolling hills and verdant pastures. As we reached Kinston, NC, I took a deep breath, releasing a question that had occupied my thoughts, "What kind of shows do you find solace in during your spare moments?"

George paused momentarily, contemplating his TV viewing habits throughout the years. "In my younger days, television captivated me. However, as time passed, my interest gradually waned. Nowadays, I rarely tune in, except when I yearn for some laughter, revisit timeless comedies or indulge in classic Western films. Instead, I find solace and allure in the tranquillity of my study."

Eyes gleaming with curiosity, I looked to George for reassurance. "Fear not, my friend," he said, "as we venture on this arduous journey together, we'll have ample time to form a profound connection and explore the many questions lingering in your mind." George's mention of television prompted him to inquire further about my perspectives and experiences.

I nodded, acknowledging that the moment was opportune.

"Excellent," George replied, a subtle and introspective smile adorning his face. "This opportunity grants me the chance to ponder upon our recent dialogues and aid you in unravelling life's enigmatic gifts amidst tumultuous moments. So, please, do divulge to me what transpired once you relinquished hope and allowed life to gracefully slip through your grasp?"

"Well," I began, my voice assuming a contemplative timbre, "I found myself adrift, devoid of purpose. My sole desire was to escape the world and surrender to my own pain. But then, an unforeseen miracle shattered my desolation. In high school, I crossed paths with a captivating young woman just when I thought fate had forsaken me. Michelle—her name echoed a new life through my desolate existence. All the sorrow, anguish, and guilt dissipated as I found solace in her kindred spirit. She revived my empty soul. Our endless conversations, tranquil walks along the beach, and the warmth of our embrace rekindled a flicker of light within me—a glimmer of hope I had long believed extinguished. With her cascading dark locks and captivating brown eyes, she allowed me to catch a glimpse of sunshine after the storm. She reignited my dreams, breathed life into my aspirations, and taught me how to truly live once again.

"George, the situation swiftly transformed into a haunting ordeal. We both carried hidden wounds from the past and naively believed that our connection alone would heal them. But alas, our progress and the growth of love and trust were hindered by the weight of our emotional baggage.

“Frequently, we permit external influences and past mistakes to impact our decision-making. Regrettably, our previous habits and unfavourable thought patterns resurfaced, leading to frequent arguments. Jealousy materialized as a formidable power, shattering the trust and love we previously deemed unshakeable. Yet, these reflections compel us to ponder the more profound implications of our actions and the lessons they hold.

“After the radiant bliss of our relationship waned, the quest for that same euphoria led us astray. Tragically, an affair unfolded, serving as the catalyst that irreparably shattered our world. In a mere six months, a devastating trifecta befell me—the loss of beloved grandparents, my cousin's departure, and now the vanishing of the woman I believed to be my true love; all gone instantly. Alas, life's fickleness and unpredictability reveal themselves in such relentless ways.

“Once again, betrayal shattered me, causing happiness and trust to distance themselves from me. The ensuing waves of depression and guilt swelled within me, leaving ruin in their wake. The things I had once found solace in were now in ruins, swiftly replaced by bitterness, judgment, unforgiveness, and fear. I began not trusting anyone anymore and held a more profound hatred for women.

"In my anger, my mind began to play tricks on me, and I fell deeper into depression and became fearful and suicidal. I wanted to take my life. Unfortunately, these ideas were fleeting, hindered by my stubbornness and hesitant manner in confronting my inner turmoil.

“I had persuaded myself that slumber provided the sole refuge, a way to detach from the world entirely. By relinquishing all endeavors, disappointments, obstacles, and failures could be avoided. I craved solitude, dissipating into the depths of my introspection," I remarked.

“Buried within, there existed an unsatisfied longing for the company of a woman, a cherished affection now fading. Being happiness, peace, and an overwhelming sense of love. I yearned to relive those cherished moments once more. However, like persistent adversaries, my inner voice and anger pushed everything away. In their wake, only three temporary havens remained: auto repair, alcohol, and pornography. In this realm, detached from emotions and feelings, I sought solace from the bleeding heart and the haunting emptiness that lingered.”

 "What followed after this?" George pondered.

“In these three concealed realms, I have unearthed solitude, acceptance, and love—a haven from a world that bred mistrust. Within their embrace, I sought solace and tranquillity, pondering the enigmatic depths of existence.

“Mrs. Haskins, a perceptive teacher, indeed witnessed my essence, unveiling a sanctuary in her classroom where I could briefly escape my tribulations. There, I could veil my struggles and the turmoil that plagued my home, though she couldn't grasp their profoundness. Somehow, Mrs. Haskins discerned a flickering spark of uniqueness, a hidden potential yearning to be kindled. Through her unwavering encouragement, she became the guiding light in my life, a beacon of hope ever-present but never intrusive.

“Nevertheless, even with Mrs. Haskins's support, the anguish of Michelle's departure rendered enduring high school unbearable. Encircled by peers who seemed to speak an unknown language, I sensed an absence of genuine understanding or connection. I felt like a stranger in a foreign land. Doubts consumed me, questioning my worthiness as a human being, while love seemed a distant relic. Darkness enveloped my thoughts, tempting me with escape or an end to it all. Yet, deep down, fleeing was no solution. All I yearned for was the fading of the nightmarish pain that afflicted my soul.

“After profound contemplation, I decided to leave high school behind, convinced I could navigate the world on my own terms. I clung to my part-time job at the local grocery store during the evenings, immersing myself in various automotive repair gigs during the day. In the art of repairing cars, I discovered solace and serenity, an elusive sanctuary where judgment and sorrow held no power.

“Automotive repair shaped my identity, molding how I perceived myself and how others perceived me. Yet, a growing detachment from reality consumed me, driven by fear and self-sabotage whenever someone dared to get close. The person I had become was unrecognizable even to me.”

Across our dialogue, George listened intently, jotting down notes, and interjecting with thought-provoking inquiries. After hours of sharing my journey, I glanced at him, realizing how much I had unveiled.

“Now, I find myself immersed in profound introspection. As the proprietor of a humble auto repair business, I sense a disquieting void and isolation, uncertain where to turn. Along my odyssey, trust has been fractured in various ways, straining personal and professional relationships. Regrettably, I distanced myself from dear friends and even those extending their hands in friendship and support.” Tears welled in my eyes as I met George's gaze, and my question slipped from my lips, "What recourse remains for someone like me? Is there hope amidst the perpetual stumbles through life?"

Amidst my despair, George's response, filled with comforting reassurance, penetrated deeply. "Indeed, hope endures," he proclaimed. "That is precisely why we venture on this pilgrimage to Arizona. I am here to shepherd you, my companion. You are not adrift, nor have you irrevocably shattered your existence.

“Peter, you've experienced unexpected missteps, influenced by uninformed choices and misguided assumptions. Do not despair; let us explore them together, fostering a transformative renewal in your being.”

With that, we clinked our makeshift Styrofoam cups, sipped on lukewarm coffee, and embraced the promise that the days and weeks ahead held awe and genuine contentment.

Taking a deep breath, George proclaimed, "It's remarkable how our stories converge, despite the distance that separated us. We were once strangers, yet now, as a product of some wondrous twist of fate, we are here to aid one another, closing old chapters and commencing new ones teeming with boundless possibilities."

I nodded, acknowledging the profundity in my dearest friend's words.

As we neared downtown Raleigh, George smiled at me, briefly casting his gaze out the window and meeting my eyes again. He asked, "Peter, if I may inquire, do you truly comprehend your identity and purpose?"

Furrowing my brow, I grew suspicious. "I'm not sure I follow," I responded slowly.

"When you encounter your reflection each morning, what truly meets your gaze?"

I had never given it much thought before. "I suppose I don't see much... just a tired face yearning for coffee. Why do you ask?"

“Imagine if one were to gaze repeatedly into the mirror, unable to see anything beyond their physical appearance. Reduced to a mere vessel, desires drive them and societal expectations. This lack of self-awareness leads to self-neglect, as they only embrace what others desire—a slave to their own facade.

“In this state of existence, many individuals encounter anguish and dissatisfaction, feeling trapped within their isolated realm. How does introspection challenge the fundamental truth when one fully absorbs and embraces these beliefs?” George responded, sharing his thoughts with Peter, "This signifies a pivotal moment of truth, where you embark on an introspective journey of self-discovery. Amidst the tapestry of unique dreams, whispers, and ideas, lies a priceless gift, though cunningly concealed. Peter, you shall uncover answers to your countless inquiries within them," he reassured.

As George paused, his gaze wandered towards the captivating scenery. A moment of introspection ensued, and he began to ponder. "Peter, do you experience a profound sensation when you confront your reflection each morning? Do you perceive a purpose to your existence, a meaning that transcends yourself? Does your presence bear weight and significance to others?"

As George bombarded me with these queries, my focus shifted to the road ahead, my hands gripping the steering wheel with heightened intensity. At that moment, a profound realization washed over me—the vast expanse of my understanding of myself, others, and the world remained strangely limited. Avoiding introspection and self-reflection had consumed a significant portion of my existence.

With tears welling up in my eyes, I confessed to George, "It has been truly frustrating. Every endeavor seems to fall short. The reason for these failures could be traced back to a simple truth—I perceived myself as inadequate. I fixated on my flaws, neglecting my strengths.”

George, acknowledging my realization, raised his finger in a validating gesture. Excitement lit up his face, as if he anticipated my journey of embracing the truth. “You have been led astray by misguided opinions, flawed notions, and erroneous thinking on how life should unfold.

"These approaches you adopted were not entirely your fault. You were unaware of the underlying reasons behind your thoughts. Actions unveil inner emotions; it is the thoughts that dictate your failures.”

“George, there was a time when I believed fulfillment could be found in auto repairs, drinking, and numbing myself in front of the television. But these pursuits failed to provide the deep contentment I desperately sought. I can empathize with your experience, as I, too, engaged in these actions and habits, hoping they would fill the void within me. Yet, no matter how fast I ran or how hard I tried, I couldn't escape the restlessness that dwelled deep within.

“There was an undeniable pull that I consciously ignored, hidden beneath my youthful naivety and false certainty I held. Fear and self-doubt overwhelmed the inherent dreams and aspirations that quietly yearned for my attention. In search of clarity, I took a moment to reflect and asked, ‘How did you find enlightenment?’”

George's eyes shimmered with a smile as he pondered, "I sought wisdom from the source itself. After countless trials and tribulations, I grew tired of living a facade, concealing my authentic emotions and gifts from the world. Striving to conform to societal expectations, yearning for acceptance and love. And then, a realization struck me: there had to be a profound path, compelling me to embark on a quest to unveil it."

"I must confess, it is daunting," I admitted, my laughter carrying a touch of nervousness and a hint of contemplation.

George gently shook his head, contemplating the more profound truth. "While it may appear that way, true terror lies not in the fleeting hardships of life, but rather in the paralysing agony of fear and despair. It is in the absence of solace, joy, and affection that anguish truly resides."

His search for answers led him to rediscover God's wisdom and limitless love, aspects he had once forgotten. "Once, I believed in my independence, convinced I needed no one. I felt a resonance with your sentiments. But that path led me astray, consumed by anger, obstinacy, and ignorance, resulting in a brush with the law and time spent behind bars.

"On this journey, Peter, you shall come to understand me better," he said, his voice filled with hope. "And I sincerely hope you will embrace each invaluable lesson along the way."

"With every fibre of my being, I shall," I earnestly declared.

"Now," he continued, his tone growing more philosophical, "every stumbling moment and setback you have experienced can be attributed to one thing. It was a lack of wisdom and knowledge, much like the absence I endured at your age."

I playfully interjected, "So, you're suggesting I return to school?"

George chuckled softly and replied, "Not at all. I am referring to an inner education that nurtures the radiant truth within you. This education uplifts you, revealing your true self and purpose. It bestows upon your peace, love, acceptance, joy, abundance, and forgiveness. Let me emphasize that forgiveness is the initial step towards healing.

"It is the key that unlocks the doors to your inner treasure and establishes a foundation for enduring, meaningful relationships with others. Genuine wisdom and knowledge foster unity and equality. When enlightenment is truly attained, we recognize that truth binds everything together. And when divisions arise between friends, family, or nations, you can be certain that lies and illusions have infiltrated, disrupting the harmony of oneness. Miscommunication and alienation slowly eat away at the unity we should embrace.

“In pursuing a fulfilling life, one must navigate the falsehoods surrounding us. It may seem arduous to forge our path amidst this barrage of deceptions. Yet, disillusionment and distorted perception bear heavy burdens.

“Amidst the shadows cast by anger, fear, and self-condemnation, clarity of thought becomes compromised. Our inquisitive nature dims as our worldview becomes clouded by negative thoughts and haunting voices. We lose touch with our genuine selves—our curiosity, truth, and wisdom.

“Contemplation arises: Have we ever indeed questioned the validity of our beliefs? The truths we hold dear may only be echoes whispered by another. Stepping into the dimly lit room of our childhood, we can recollect the grip of fear that consumed us. A sense of solace enveloped us as the lights flickered on, unveiling the truth that our imagined terrors were nothing but gentle breezes.

“Such is the nature of life, dear Peter. Misinformation, passed off as truth, binds us within a box of falsehoods. Distinguishing fact from fiction becomes a struggle, hindered by fears and uncertainties that cloud our understanding. Only when we dare to question, seeking truth's illumination, do the monsters dissipate.

“To unveil our accurate reflections, we must discard the cloak of self-deception. Our perceptions of self, others, and the world can be distorted and clouded by misplaced animosity and unresolved grievances. Life may appear unjust, our hearts hardened, as we await external remedies. Yet, the truth lies in the realization that the only thing that needs mending is our perception.

“Wisdom lies in embracing our innate worth, and passionately pursuing our aspirations. Success does not stem from chance or privilege, but from internal knowing. The unwavering belief in our abilities, attuned to our inner truths, propels us forward. We cast aside mental clutter and contradictory ideas, understanding that our true selves lie beyond superficial appearances.

“We must nurture our inner wisdom to live on our own terms, liberated from the weight of past missteps or setbacks. Let us emancipate ourselves from misconceptions and reject the role of critics in our personal narratives. Through reflection of the mirror, may we uncover not imperfections, but admiration for the profound journey we have embarked on.

“This contemplation beckons us to surpass the boundaries of illusion, delving into truth's realm. It is an invitation to reclaim our own narrative, to question and seek the wisdom that guides us along this transformative path.

“They know they are loved and cherished, with no goodness withheld. Acknowledging flaws and imperfections, they embrace themselves as imperfect beings who err, yet perceive themselves as perfect creations by the Creator. Their self-love radiates power, authority, wisdom, and the freedom to live authentically, regardless of external validation.”

Pausing, he asked, "Can you now fathom where true power lies?"

"It is all beginning to converge," I replied. "But why did God not answer when I questioned His actions? It felt like abandonment, and that is the truth," I added.

"Peter, can God, the embodiment of truth, utter falsehoods? Can He break His promises to mankind? Can He alter what is and shall forever be?" George responded, brimming with conviction. "No, Peter, God cannot change who or what He is, just as you cannot change who or what you are," George continued.

"It seems your truth and God's truth diverge somewhat. In time, you will grasp the essence of truth and understand why discovering the truth about oneself and the Creator is the greatest reward," George responded once more.

“Upon experiencing the consequences of the law and navigating through a series of missteps, I made a deliberate decision to embark on a journey of decluttering and transforming my life. One evening, I sought God for a second chance, committing to walking the right path with Him, although I was unsure of what it entailed at such a young age.

Joining the United States Marine Corps at twenty-one exposed me to remarkable role models who guided me. Drill Sergeant Wilson, or Dr. Wilson as I called him, helped navigate my tumultuous world, breaking it down into manageable fragments and providing the necessary push.

“This voyage led to profound self-discovery and, ultimately, freedom. I journeyed the world, immersed in diverse cultures, relished exceptional cuisines, and encountered countless remarkable individuals. But a yearning for stability grew within me.

“I chose Birmingham, Alabama, in the early sixties, a time of heightened tensions and stark racial disparities. I met and fell in love with a beautiful woman named Emma. Love at first sight.

“I secured a position in the billing department of a local hospital, and life appeared tranquil until the news arrived of Doctor Martin Luther King's impending visit. His march aimed to alleviate the racial tensions, and I watched most of it unfold on television from my office.

“Unfortunately, tensions escalated, and chaos erupted—fighting, shooting, and rioting ensued. We were ordered to return home, but upon arrival, policemen, ambulances, and anguished people surrounded my house. They hesitated to let me in, and as I finally ascended the stairs, I witnessed paramedics carrying Emma's lifeless body downward. The scene, stained with blood, in that tragic moment, I believed God had forsaken me, taking away the most precious person in my world.

“In the vast expanse of existence, time stretched immeasurably. Yet, it seemed to hold no solace, joy, or fulfillment. I sought refuge in drugs, alcohol, and fleeting affections, spiralling deeper.

“The world appeared as an adversary, and God was silent and distant. Life lost its essence, while I aimlessly traversed from job to job, from city to city, searching for solace, enlightenment, and serenity.

“The reasons behind it all eluded me, as did the Divine silence. The facade of a kind-hearted soul eroded, replaced once more with anger that consumed my heart. Fights, gangs, substances, and promiscuity became a desperate attempt to fill the void within. Dreams evaporated, purpose faded, and life held little significance.

“Then, by a twist of fate, I found myself in a coffee shop. A man, surrounded by companions, entered an aged diner in Birmingham. His face remained unfamiliar. Engrossed in my thoughts about my troubles, the loss of Emma, and my resentment towards God and the world, I sat with my back turned, sipping my coffee.

“Abruptly, he called out my name. ‘What will you do to bestow peace, love, and forgiveness upon the world?’ he inquired. Without turning, I quickly dismissed, ‘Nothing. Why should I give to a world that has only taken from me? Why should I return to a country that snatched away my wife's life, betraying my yearning for genuine love and happiness? I despise this country, you, and even my own existence. Leave me be.’

“With my head in my hands and eyes shut tight, I tried to conjure Emma's image, but her face eluded me. Instead, a comforting hand rested upon my shoulder. When I looked up, it was him—the one, and only Dr. Martin Luther King.

“His gaze conveyed genuine concern and compassion as he uttered, ‘My friends and I are gathered at another table. Join us for nourishment and conversation.’ His unwavering gaze and sincere empathy for my pain and loss stirred something profound within me. Since Emma's passing, the first glimpse of peace and love resonated, rekindling memories of our time together.

“Moved by this encounter, I joined him and settled in his company. As I listened to their empowering words of unity, wisdom, and camaraderie, self-pity found temporary refuge. Finally, my mind experienced a respite from ceaseless anger and questions directed towards God. The more Dr. Martin Luther King spoke, sharing kindness and profound insights, my defenses softened.

“Immersing myself in the wisdom of self-development literature and delving into the complexities of the human mind captivated and invigorated me. Once again, life sparked my curiosity.

“I embarked on a journey of studying notable men and women and exploring their actions throughout history. I scrutinized humanity's triumphs and collective failures, realizing that all depended on the thoughts and mindset of the individuals involved. Our lives were determined by the whims of our own minds. In times when people considered themselves frail and powerless, they indeed became so. Without genuine solutions, pandemonium gripped every facet of our existence.

“Before long, I found employment as a counsellor at a local youth center. Stepping into this realm, where transforming lives and uplifting others meant everything, infused my life with renewed purpose. I dedicated over three decades to this noble pursuit, eventually retiring and transitioning to an assistant coaching role at a challenging high school nearby. With grit, introspection, and unwavering enthusiasm, I transformed the school's academic standards, sports programs, and grades within five years.

“As time passed, an insatiable longing for stability took hold of me. I craved to savor the remnants of my life. With my trusty F One Fifty packed, I embarked on a journey northward to Beaufort, North Carolina, where destiny led me to a remarkable and loving woman named Nicole.

“Nicole completed me and added an extra layer of magnificence to my world. Her enticing storytelling and fervor for organic foods and recipes brought an unparalleled charm. Her infectious smile, quirky sense of humor, and delightful laughter provided solace amidst moments when the external world threatened to overwhelm me. In her presence, my walls of anger crumbled, and I willingly surrendered to her every wish.

“Our bond appeared unbreakable until that ill-fated night, when she fell gravely ill without warning. Frantically, I rushed her to the hospital, where she was swiftly whisked to the emergency room. Bereft of access to the operating theater, I stood in darkness, uncertain. Finally, a solemn-faced doctor descended the stairs and stood before me.

“His struggle to find the right words heightened anticipation. Yet, before he could utter them, I already knew the truth in my heart. ‘She's gone, isn't she?’ I choked out. Confirming my worst fears, he admitted their efforts were futile—a merciless cancer had claimed her life.

“As he walked away, a torrent of questions tormented me. How could I have missed Nicole's illness? Why had she kept it from me? How could such a beloved figure be snatched away so abruptly by a cruel disease? Why did God permit this anguish to haunt me again, robbing me of my precious angel and rendering life devoid of purpose?

“The funeral came and went, but my sorrow lingered, transforming into a profound depression. Anger and frustration consumed me, and my faith in God wavered. I vowed never to forgive Him, feeling as though everything dear to me had been mercilessly ripped away.

“The world closed in on me, its weight pressing heavily upon my shoulders. Laughter and joy became distant memories, replaced by a numbing sorrow that enveloped me. The once-familiar faces turned into mere shadows, their words unable to penetrate the thick fog of my despair.

"After years of harboring this anger, a flicker of redemption ignited within me. It compelled me to ponder the possibility of allowing God to explain His side of the story. With a heavy heart, I sought forgiveness for my silence and anger, yearning for a future conversation.

“As my days unfolded, with the weight of another loss lingering in my thoughts, a voice echoed through the emptiness: ‘Choose to live.’ I turned, finding no one behind me. The persistent voice whispered, ‘Choose to live, George.’ It was the Divine reaching out to me. Tears of elation streamed down my face, finally receiving His response. After years of emptiness and resentment, I discovered how to release my grip on the past and tune in to the gentle voice within.

“That day marked a transformation in my world, propelling me on a journey of self-discovery. I unveiled the purpose that had long eluded me, although the embers of anger did not vanish overnight. My inner landscape shifted as I followed the inner voice, guiding me toward peace. Anger surrendered to tranquillity, granting me freedom and happiness. While my purpose remained uncertain, I yearned to explore and unfold the next chapter of my life.

“God's response offered a much-needed respite, a silent interlude assuring me that He had not forgotten me. He had witnessed every pain, and every struggle, and, in His divine plan, they possessed meaning. Even within my darkest moments, glimmers of hope and reassurance flickered, whispering of an unfurling future.

“Each hardship and tear became pieces of a more excellent puzzle, gradually assembling a glimpse of what lay ahead. It comforted me, like being cradled in a warm embrace, a perpetual reminder that solitude was never my sole companion, even in my darkest hours.

“Yet, one restive night, sleep eluded me. I tossed and turned, searching for a comfortable position, but found none. The experience was akin to losing sleep, a once coveted indulgence, slipping right through my fingers. Slowly, as the hands of the clock crept towards dawn, exhaustion consumed my weary eyes, and I succumbed to a fitful slumber. A voice, gentle yet imbued with unyielding strength, whispered through the haze of my dreams. ‘George, George,’ it echoed.

“My heart skipped a beat. I sat upright, my eyes wide open in the enveloping darkness. ‘Wake up, my child, and hear my words...’ the voice continued. It was a call, a summons that stirred something deep within me. Suddenly, the room did not seem as dark, nor the night as long. A sense of calm flooded me as I sat there, waiting for the message yet to come.

“‘George, you are my cherished and blessed child,’ the voice whispered gently, yet its commanding authority resonated deep within me. ‘You are indeed a magnificent creation that leaves me in awe. I am aware of your struggles, your pain, and your losses. I witness every tear that falls and hear each sigh that escapes your lips. Remember, these trials shape you, molding you into the person you are destined to become. You are never alone, and your strength emerges from these very battles.

“‘Have faith in my plan, for I have never abandoned you. Stand resolute, be courageous, and know I am by your side every moment.’ A profound sense of solace engulfed me as these words filled the room. Such was the power of this Divine message, a guiding light offering hope, leading me through the darkest nights towards an unseen dawn.

“‘At times, life may seem unjust, my child,’ the voice continued, its tone filled with wisdom. ‘Yet, you must comprehend that you are not just a creation, but my most extraordinary masterpiece. Every heartbeat, every breath, every thought and emotion, every joy and sorrow—they all bear witness to a miracle, a miracle like no other. You, George, are that miracle.’

“‘As the world may remain oblivious, I am here to acknowledge and recognize the true marvel within you. Your life serves as a testament to the miraculous, with each passing moment adding a new chapter to your unique story. Amid trials and tribulations, always remember that you are not a product of mere chance. Instead, you are a manifestation of Divine love and purpose.

“‘Embrace this truth within your heart, allowing it to guide you as a beacon of light. Even when the path appears cluttered with obstacles, be assured your journey is not solitary. I am with you, always. The dawn awaits, holding a life filled with extraordinary potential and unyielding promise. You are nothing short of a magnificent creation, a miracle beyond compare.’

“As the voice subsided, a profound sense of peace permeated the air, accompanied by a renewed sense of purpose. This realization was immensely comforting, reminding me that I was not alone. I am seen, known, and loved immeasurably.

“Once again, I am left in awe of how God has revealed Himself to me. It was only when I audaciously decided to break free from years of disconnection fostered by anger, mistrust, and rebellion that the truth became evident: I was never truly alone.

“Amid the darkness, a Divine spark of truth ignited within me, transforming me into a beacon of hope, faith, and resilience against life's trials. During those darkest hours, I listened closely to the Divine voice whispering in my ear, reminding me that I am more than my circumstances. It was a realization that transcended the pain and loss that consumed me, revealing that I am a creation of love, purpose, and limitless potential—an unchanging truth regardless of my challenges. This eternal truth became my steadfast anchor amidst the storms, guiding me toward healing and reclaiming my life from the clutches of despair.

“As the months passed, seemingly devoid of excitement, the day profoundly impacted me. I stumbled upon a perplexing letter in my mailbox. Its enigmatic title, ‘To A Miracle,’ spoke volumes. Curiously, it bore no return address, only a distinct name and location. I pondered how someone could possess my address without truly grasping my identity.

“Who could this enigmatic entity known as 'Miracle' be? And why had this letter found its way to my humble abode? As the sands of time trickled by, the depths of this mystery only grew, stirring my insatiable curiosity. Despite the temptation that whispered, urging me to uncover its secrets, I resisted, for it occurred to me that perhaps the mail carrier had unwittingly deposited someone else's correspondence in my mailbox.

“Mr. Tipps, our amiable neighborhood postman, often engaged in brief conversations with me, especially when I tended to my verdant garden. I regarded him significantly, deeply valuing his intellect and vast knowledge. He was not just the one who delivered my mail, but also the source of occasional pleasant exchanges in those fleeting moments life offered.

“Guided by the moral compass instilled in me during my formative years, possessing an unwavering commitment to honesty and integrity, I grasped the gravity of interfering with another's mail. This understanding led my conscience to decree that I avoid opening this enigmatic missive. I planned to diligently safeguard it until Mr. Tipps graced my doorstep the following day, to gracefully return the correspondence and unveil the mix-up between destinies. Little did I fathom that this would be another twist in the intricate game orchestrated by some higher power.

“Amidst the labyrinth of wonder and bewilderment, a prevailing sense of disarray loomed. The absence of a return address left any attempt to reach the sender in vain. Rather than surreptitiously unveil the contents, I patiently waited until the ethereal hours of bedtime, yearning for the letter's potential to infuse solace and serenity within its delicate folds. In this enigmatic journey, one cannot help but wonder about the profound connections hidden amidst the intricacies of life.

“Unable to withstand the persistent tugging of my inquisitiveness, I cautiously lifted the letter, employing the utmost care. Methodically breaking the seal, I unveiled the parchment clandestinely concealed. As the folds unfurled, a captivating amalgamation of ink, texture, and intricate penmanship enveloped my senses.

“With bated breath, I delicately parted the envelope, exposing an exquisite manifestation of handwriting unlike any I had ever beheld. The hours that followed surreptitiously slipped away, consumed as I was in my diligent pursuit to distil significance from the elaborate script. Alas, my endeavors proved fruitless, as if the mesmerizing craft was intended solely for my eyes to behold.” Moved by this enigmatic gift, he explained how he perceived it as a message from the universe, a miraculous bestowal reserved solely for his being.

“The profound missive reverberated within, its essence intimately intertwining with my heart and mind, emanating solace, forgiveness, and an indescribable warmth that only the eyes of love can truly comprehend. The celestial words danced before my gaze, as if a transcendent force sought to convey something of profound significance.” George paused, his eyes brimming with tears, seemingly unable to proceed.

Curiosity consumed me as I solemnly regarded him, surprised by the abrupt cessation of words. "Pray tell, what did you read?" I inquired, anxiety seeping into my voice.

With a tremor in his tone, George replied, "Allow me to recite it aloud for you." He reached into his coat pocket, retrieving an envelope adorned with the title "To A Miracle"—an envelope that seemed to have resided there for an eternity. Clearing his throat, he embarked upon the deliberate recitation of the words...

*“While observing my beloved creation, George Hill, a profound realization dawned upon me—you surpass the mere blueprint within my thoughts. You have blossomed into a masterpiece of unmatched magnificence. Your hands, eyes, ears, and essence radiate a captivating uniqueness. Each moment spent bringing you into existence filled me with sheer delight, drawing from the boundless depths of my creative well. You are my exceptional creation, born from the very core of my creative storehouse.*

*“These experiences serve as symbolic representations of brokenness and disconnection from the truth. Yet within each individual lies a guiding light that propels them towards discovering their inherent worth, talents, and purpose. This essence reflects who I am.*

“George, allow me to explore the difficult experiences you faced while growing up. I'm here to shed light on them and provide clarity.

*“From sharing a bed with siblings to always having peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for every meal. From going to bed hungry to enduring the cold or heat just to use the bathroom outside. From wearing your siblings’ worn-out clothes to school, to enduring mockery and bullying. From witnessing your parents argue and sometimes torment you and your siblings. These experiences have shaped you into a wise sage, here to bring truth and ultimately liberate yourself and others.*

*“George, I understand that you have faced challenges with anger and relationships. The two relationships you cherished were abruptly taken away, leaving you feeling lost and purposeless. This sense of loss fueled your anger, directed not only towards yourself through defeating thoughts which crippled the ability to see the truth, and experience love again. This inner hatred towards me, God severed our union, and it made it impossible to know the love and the plans I have for you George Hill.*

*“Let me assure you, George, that I had no involvement in the departure of these two precious souls from your life. Emma and Nicole chose to transition to another realm and join me. They simply wanted to share their peace, love, and presence with you, hoping to help alleviate the lingering pain of abandonment, abuse, trauma, and emptiness within you.*

*“Emma and Nicole aspired to demonstrate the transformative power of living a life rooted in peace, freedom, happiness, and love. They believed that embracing these qualities would unlock the highest form of abundance on one's journey through life. Recognizing that your new chapter had not yet commenced, both women imparted a piece of themselves to accompany you along the way.*

*“George, you are a miracle, which is why I allowed everything, including my two little angels, to spend their last days in your presence. The fact that you endured so much pain and trauma earlier in your life kept the heavenly host and me in our heavenly realm, constantly devising the best possible outcome for the next stage of your journey, called life.*

*“We have formulated a plan to help you achieve your goals and live a fulfilling life. Through perseverance and overcoming challenges, you can find meaning and experience true happiness. By awakening, listening, learning, and embracing your freedom, you can inspire and assist others who have shared similar experiences. Together, we can create a world filled with love, purpose, and fulfillment.*

*“While I understand that nothing can replace the irreplaceable presence of Emma or Nicole, I assure you that as a miracle, you will discover an even greater love within yourself. The love you received from your wives was merely a temporary placeholder for the accurate and lasting love that awaits you when you confront your own truths and move forward.*

*“During your time with Emma and Nicole, your self-love was still in its early stages. Since you didn't have much exposure to love in your home or elsewhere, I, God, needed a way to initiate the process of introducing you and others to love. This was necessary, so that you could hold on to it long enough to recognize it when love presented itself to you. I am the love you seek, for my love surpasses any love you may have perceived. Both Emma and Nicole shared my undeniable power and love with you.*

*“Now that you've heard from me, your Creator, you can rest assured that this won't be the last message you'll hear from me. I will always be with you, and now you are aware of this when you reflect on your body and realize who is responsible for its functioning day and night. I am the one who listens in on your internal thoughts, whether they are negative judgments or positive affirmations about yourself and others.*

*“George Hill, I love you with all my heart and couldn't be prouder of where you are right now. Despite enduring immense pain, you have overcome these adversities by seeking a better path. Your journey began with delving into self-help and personal development books, ultimately leading you to the truth and discovering your life's purpose. Keep shining, George. Your story is an inspiration.*

*“It is not merely the internal battles and triumphs that shape one's identity. Still, the losses endured cultivated the courage to explore uncharted terrain: the depths within oneself seeking answers and truths. Who would persevere without the faint glimmers of miracles growing from within? Who would persist when all evidence points towards surrender and resignation? Not someone who recognizes the existence of truth and follows the trails leading to transformation and a rekindled zest for life.*

*“I want you to always remember the profound beauty within you. Never forget that you embody a true marvel to me and the world, irrespective of others' opinions or thoughts. Their perspectives do not define your authentic essence, for the presence of this letter has already unveiled your true being. As you absorb these words, your purpose for existence will become even more lucid.*

*“Your life is an extraordinary odyssey that I am confident will enrich and inspire you. As you navigate life's path, I sincerely hope you never lose sight of the exquisite beauty intrinsic to each precious moment. Allow yourself to flourish and evolve into the exceptional being I have destined you to be. Each day will present new challenges and endless opportunities, forge ahead with unwavering assurance. Be assured that I am always here, guiding you every step of the way, shielding you from harm, and rejoicing in your triumphs.*

*“Although I have acknowledged and attempted to address the concerns you raised, it seems you still remain uncertain about their significance. Curiously, the letter asks why you, George, are here. Rest assured, my dear child, I would not have allowed you to endure such pain and suffering without a purpose and magnificent plan.”*

# CHAPTER EIGHT

In my serendipitous journey, I chanced upon an extraordinary book titled *A Course in Miracles*, penned by the visionary Helen Schucman. My dear friend, George, fervently emphasized the significance of approaching this sacred text with unwavering devotion and an open heart.

Yet, for those dauntless enough to plunge into the profound depths of their authentic beings and the Divine, I wholeheartedly hold the belief that this book encapsulates wisdom that transcends customary sources. Amidst the myriad of literary works that enrich our existence, only a handpicked few possess the transformative potential akin to what *A Course in Miracles* embodies—of this, George himself can attest.

*A Course in Miracles* is not merely a book; it is a celestial compass that guides us beyond the physical realm. Authored by the remarkable Helen Schucman in 1976, it inspires us to contemplate our profound unity and oneness with God and love—a truly miraculous insight.

*A Course in Miracles* unveils the profound influence of our minds on how we perceive reality. Within its pages, a transformative mind-training course takes place—guiding us on a journey to dismantle the barriers and beliefs that uphold the illusion of our individuality and separation from the Divine.

This spiritual odyssey guides us towards liberation from judgment, fostering trust in our higher selves, and awakening the innate wisdom of our intuition.

At the core of *A Course in Miracles* teachings lies the profound understanding that relationships serve as catalysts for growth, healing, and enlightenment. The book highlights the significance of perceiving others through the lenses of love, compassion, and forgiveness—gateways to encountering Divine grace and embracing unity.

*A Course in Miracles* acts as a transformative guide, inviting readers to embark on a journey of self-discovery and inner healing. It urges us to release the hold of the ego on our thoughts and perceptions, making space for the Holy Spirit or Higher Self to lead us towards peace, happiness, and spiritual awakening.

At its core, *A Course in Miracles* reveals a profound truth: our existence is not defined by separation but by our inherent oneness with the Divine. It establishes a foundation for understanding our purpose and significance beyond the physical realm, inspiring us to awaken to the limitless potential within ourselves.

As we delve into the teachings of *A Course in Miracles*, we transcend the illusions and limitations of the ego, embracing a broader and interconnected view of reality. By recognizing the power within our thoughts, words, and actions, we actively cultivate an inner landscape rooted in love, forgiveness, and spiritual awakening.

*A Course in Miracles* serves as a guiding light, encouraging us to break free from the chains of illusion and embark on a profound journey towards self-realization. It calls upon us to embrace the inherent miracles that reside within us, offering a profound shift in perception and a deep connection to the boundless love and unity that encompasses us all.

Reflecting on my personal voyage, I now understand that there are no coincidences in the Divine plan. Each experience unfolds as a precious gift, and miracles await us when we become devoted seekers of truth, as George so wisely expressed. *“A Course in Miracles* became the first beacon that illuminated my heart.

George continued, “The words penetrated deep within, compelling me to embark on a profound journey of self-discovery after the loss of my beloved wives. Amidst the tumultuous mix of grief and fleeting moments of happiness, I grappled with feelings of abandonment, shame, guilt, and anger towards myself and the higher power that seemed to deal me an unfavorable hand in life.

“Jealousy consumed me as I compared myself to those who seemingly possessed the blessings I yearned for. Why were they chosen instead of me?”

 With fervor, I confided in George, our hearts entwined in mutual understanding. “Let us strive to become seekers of truth, forever embracing the brilliance of *A Course in Miracles* and the miracles it bestows upon us. Through its profound teachings, we find solace, wisdom, and the revelation of our eternal connection to the Divine.”

In that pivotal moment, an epiphany washed over me—a profound realization of the veiled envy I harbored towards Joseph Stacks, Mrs. Peterson's nephew. Joseph had forsaken a successful corporate career and embraced the enigmatic path of a photographer. The guilt, shame, and conviction became undeniable truths that resonated deep within me. However, I masked these sentiments with a smile, concealing the root and essence from which they sprang.

With a fleeting glance and a few words, George shattered the silence. "Peter, this book is everything. It holds the missing piece that has forever transformed my life. And as a dear friend, I pass this wisdom on to you. Without it, you wouldn't recognize the person standing before you today. Just moments before stumbling upon it in the library, I was lost in the darkest corners of my existence."

George's words offered profound insight into the realm of choice and the inherent wonder within each individual. As he shared his wisdom, a mixture of awe and unease overwhelmed me. Fear, worry, and even a hint of resentment tainted my expectation of unwavering support from George on this transformative journey. But despite my concerns, his kindness and encouragement surpassed all expectations, providing solace. In that moment, a deep connection unfolded, leaving me captivated and deep in thought.

Lost in contemplation, my gaze traveled beyond the rugged mountains of North Carolina to the passing Interstate 40. George's words lingered, prompting questions about the intricate design of the universe. If choice empowered us, why did life often feel like an arduous struggle? Why does happiness seem elusive despite our relentless pursuit of success?

Curiosity compelled me to voice these queries to George. With a gentle smile, he acknowledged that until now, I had unwittingly followed a predetermined path. Unaware of the possibility of living a life filled with happiness, abundance, joy, and peace, I had allowed life to unfold, accepting whatever came my way. Looking back, there was truth in my perception, for expecting nothing often yields meager outcomes.

George continued to enlighten me, eloquently explaining how negativity had consumed me, isolating me from the world and distorting my perspective. Pain and a destitute mindset had tainted my soul, leaving me estranged from the essence of life itself. With utmost sincerity, George offered to redirect my course, guiding me towards the profound purpose of existence.

Lost in a cascade of revelations, I nodded, unsure if my mind could handle any more. With gentle poise, George posed a question, urging me to redefine my perception of happiness and success. As I gazed at the ever-changing scenery outside the window, my thoughts turned back to the road ahead, contemplating the true essence of fulfillment. I confessed that my understanding of happiness and success had been clouded by societal norms and external expectations.

Anticipating my response, George nodded. He shared his own youthful struggles, grappling with similar uncertainties, guided solely by the wisdom of others. Genuine wealth and success had eluded him until he’d experienced the devastating loss of his first wife, Emma.

Through the pain and subsequent self-reflection, he discovered that true wealth stemmed from the love of family, friends, and cherished ones. He emphasized that success materialized through the giving and receiving of genuine love. Finding solace in treasuring fleeting moments, both with loved ones and strangers he encountered.

Eager to share his personal journey, George unraveled a startling revelation—the hidden chapters of his life, his marriage to Betty from the diner. For over five years, they had shared their lives together. Yet, George, with unwavering dedication, had prioritized helping me unravel my own challenges and seek resolution.

Captivated by the depth of his story, I met George's gaze, comprehension mingling with curiosity. Silently, a longing to know more about him and his wife emanated from my eyes. Sensing my unspoken plea, George paused, briefly glancing towards the window, as if summoning the courage for the forthcoming revelation.

Clearing his throat, he began to unveil the tale, confirming my initial doubts: Betty, his longtime wife, was indeed the same Betty from the diner. The synchronicity in their connection engulfed me, leaving me astounded and yearning for a deeper understanding.

With heartfelt sincerity, George confessed he had intended to share this truth earlier. However, the unfolding circumstances of my own growth compelled him to prioritize my journey. As we embarked on this transformative expedition, George revealed the truth: Betty, the woman who resonated so deeply with my own sense of home, was his dearly beloved wife.

As the weight of those words settled, my mind spun in an attempt to comprehend the implications of this revelation. "I'm confused," I replied, casting a puzzled glance at George.

Sensing my confusion, George responded with understanding, "I knew this would be perplexing for you, Peter. That's why I waited to tell you.

“After losing Nicole, I found myself plunging into an abyss of anger and depression. She was the anchor of my world. I used to avoid this diner because she would always lovingly prepare a comforting breakfast, accompanied by an abundance of coffee. But after her passing, I felt utterly powerless. Directionless and devoid of guidance, my despair grew so deep that my appetite waned, leaving me with little desire to eat.

“One day, seeking solace, I ventured into the adjacent diner. Over time, I developed a connection with a waitress and owner of the diner, although I didn’t know it at the time, because I was so consumed with grief, sadness and depression over losing both my wives and I was lonely and dead within, seeking relief and love in which I thought would never happen again. But I began to notice the smile, joy, and peace Betty shared as she served meals to the patrons, and I couldn’t help but be drawn to her soul and spirit to see if I too could gain more of what she shared with everyone she met at the dinner. I confided in her about the losses of Emma and Nicole, baring their significance in my life. Betty never intruded, simply offering a listening ear.

“Looking back now, I realize that she became my counselor, and eventually, my wife, although I was oblivious to it at the time. The diner slowly transformed into my sanctuary, a place where I sought solace and companionship from Betty, who also carried the burden of losing her spouse to cancer.

“Our bond and courtship flourished, yet we agreed to keep it hidden until the timing felt right. Betty became the beacon that illuminated my darkest moments. Her warm smile and unwavering attention instantly alleviated my sorrow and pain. The diner also became her refuge, providing solace and healing as she attended to the customers.

“To ensure its long-lasting prosperity, I made a significant investment in the diner, envisioning its success for years to come. Now, you understand, Peter," George revealed. However, I pointed out that there were no pictures of Betty in his house when I dined with him last Sunday.

"That's because Betty knew of my plans to have dinner with you, so she spent her time at the diner doing inventory and making small repairs where needed, something I normally do on Sunday’s after closing time. The second reason you didn’t see any of her stuff at my home is because she is in the process of selling her home, and we haven't had the chance to pack her belongings and move them to my place," George clarified.

“Absorbing all this information could feel overwhelming, Peter, especially given your current circumstances. However, I want to assure you that once things settle down for you, I will share everything. I'm actually planning on inviting you over for dinner again with me and Betty this time, so you can spend some quality time with both of us. But until then, I kindly ask you to keep what I've shared about Betty and our marriage strictly confidential. When the timing is right, we will celebrate our joyous milestones together, including your new career endeavor.

By the way, Peter, Betty is aware of your circumstances, and my plans to go with you across country so you can discover who you are and find your passions and purpose in life. She sends both her love, and support to you as she knows what it’s like to lose hope, living in despair and live without hope, George explained.

“Understanding your mental state at the moment, Peter, I truly believe that the sudden eruption of events plaguing your sleep is driving you towards discovering your purpose and destiny. The unsettling dreams, nightmares, and voices you've been experiencing are all part of a bigger journey. No one should ever feel trapped or helpless when faced with life's challenges. There is always a path forward, and you have the ability to carve your own way.”

“It's crucial to have faith in your capacity to make things happen when you deeply desire them. You hold the power to overcome any obstacle that stands in your way,” I thought. “George's unwavering faith in you, conveyed through this gifted book, has made a tremendous impact. George has revealed more of himself than ever before, providing you with encouragement and guiding you towards transforming your life positively. Now, he shares this message with you—the potential to do the same lies within you. Believe in yourself, never give up on what truly matters, and the rest will fall into place. With faith, hope, and determination, anything becomes possible. And remember, sometimes the answer lies in the most unexpected places.”

As we crossed the state line into Tennessee, a picturesque landscape unfolded before our eyes. We couldn't help but pause and admire the vast rolling hills, embraced by towering mountains, as the sun set in the distance. George commented on the time, suggesting that we should find a place for dinner and a hotel. Luckily, we soon spotted a Hampton Inn at the first corner of the next town, and we agreed that it would be our haven for the night. Upon parking the car and stepping into the reception area, a warm welcome awaited us from the receptionist. Thankfully, there were available rooms, and we were delighted to learn that a complimentary breakfast would be served in the morning.

Before we entered our room, I took the opportunity to consult the receptionist for recommendations on local eateries. To my surprise, the receptionist graciously offered suggestions and provided a pamphlet outlining the numerous attractions of the charming town. Although our original plan was to dine out, we found ourselves comfortably sprawled out on our respective beds, engaged in conversation for a few more precious minutes. Little did we anticipate that our dinner plans would soon take an unforeseen turn, as a series of events began to unfold before us.

"You will discover profound insights about yourself during this journey, Peter. I can sense it," George whispered softly.

"Really?" I replied, my eyelids fighting against drowsiness. "At the very least, I can unwind and relish some respite from the demands of daily life."

George's words captured my attention. "Oh, you will gain much more than mere relaxation. This sojourn will lead you to a pivotal juncture, a destination that will mold the course of your existence."

Nodding in agreement, I succumbed to slumber. Sometime later, as I roused from sleep, I noticed George gazing out of the window, observing the flow of traffic below. He stole one last glance before retrieving his wallet and marching toward the door.

Curious, I trailed behind him, inquiring about the sight that had captivated his outside attention. Despite requesting a brief wait before dinner, so as to ensure a restful night's sleep for the arduous journey westward the next day, George uttered another intriguing remark.

"It perplexes me how, as human beings, we adeptly navigate treacherous roads fraught with obstacles and surprises, ultimately arriving at our intended destination. Yet, when it comes to traversing the easy path towards love, harmony, bliss, and abundance, we often find ourselves grappling. We opt for convoluted routes without truly comprehending why we make such choices."

As the roads and highways stretched before our eyes, I contemplated the guidance they provided, contrasting it with life's capricious nature. A smile adorned my face as I expressed this observation to George, who proffered an alternative perspective. He posited that life indeed offers directions, yet we frequently fail to recognize them amidst our pursuit of convenience and comfort. Instead, we embrace complications and choose paths devoid of sensibility and tranquility. In doing so, we inevitably encounter obstacles, dedicating countless hours and days attempting to fix that which may not even exist, chasing after illusions we believe to be true.

George likened humans to herds of sheep, meandering without a clear destination in mind. His words challenged everything we had ever known and implored us to tap into the gifts we had been bestowed. Intrigued, I sauntered toward the shower, only to have my thoughts interrupted as my reflection caught my eye in the mirror. George's words reverberated in my mind, urging me to embark on a more profound introspection.

As I peered into my own eyes, an initial sense of trepidation enveloped me. What would I discover if I dared to truly see? However, curiosity prevailed, prompting me to scrutinize my reflection more intently. To my astonishment, I encountered a stranger—a shattered and burdened young man, consumed by anger, pain, unforgiveness, and emptiness. It was the first time I truly beheld myself in such a vulnerable state, realizing that I had become a fragmented individual, trampled upon by numerous souls, ignorant of the weight they carried with each step.

The realization struck me with great force—I was broken. There was no denying or evading this acknowledgment. Overwhelmed by horror and shame, I averted my gaze from the mirror, only to find my eyes inexplicably drawn back to it. This time, I witnessed a version of myself relentlessly pursuing and attacking those who endeavored to extend their support. The individuals who generously bestowed their gifts upon me were met with disregard and rejection. I had forfeited faith in the inherent goodness of others and had grown incapable of recognizing or appreciating acts of kindness directed towards me. Even when positivity emerged, I managed to undermine and sabotage it, perpetuating my own cycle of misery.

I was confronted once again with the harsh reality that the life I had been living was a far cry from the childhood dreams I’d shared with my cousin, Jason. Years were wasted as I evaded my true passions, causing immense suffering to myself.

When I finally emerged from the bathroom, tears streamed down my face uncontrollably. George, visibly concerned, approached me, and gently placed his large hands on my shoulders, offering solace and support. "Don't worry, Peter," he reassured me in a comforting tone.

I gazed at George, yearning for guidance as he had found. Seated on his bed, he closed his eyes, inviting stillness to envelop him. After a moment, his eyes fluttered open, unveiling a triumphant grin. "All shall be well with you, Peter. I have received assurance from the depths of my being," he declared.

Overwhelmed by emotion, I hoarsely questioned him, pondering how he had profoundly impacted me. My understanding of life had been upturned, leaving me disoriented and burdened by an unsettling ambiguity. A part of me felt inclined to blame George, holding him accountable for intruding upon my peace of mind.

With kindness, he responded, acknowledging the depths of my struggle, and assuring me that my turmoil simply represented resistance from my former self. This resistance derived from fear—an unwillingness to release the old version of myself. My transformation frightened this familiar persona, for it signified the birth of a new life without fears, doubts, and false teachings. Familiarity clung to me, instigating a skirmish against the person who sought to aid me.

Guilt and shame permeated my being as the truth in George's words resounded within me. Fear had driven me to lash out at him, and I felt an overwhelming sense of remorse. "I am sorry for my behavior, George," I murmured apologetically. "It is all so overwhelming and unfamiliar to me. I am unsure of what to think or believe anymore. I do not even trust myself."

Recognizing the depths of my struggle, George spoke compassionately. He shared his journey, recounting the similar emotions he had experienced during the transition periods in his own life. He referenced a remarkable mentor, Dr. Wayne Dyer, who encapsulated the evolution of personal truths throughout one's existence. Our dreams and possibilities stretch before us in the morning of our lives, vibrant with youth and vitality.

Our imaginations soar, and we possess the strength to manifest these dreams into reality.

As we reach the midpoint of life, the wisdom passed down to us by others subtly shapes the boundaries of our perceived limitations. It's not intentional deception, but rather the inheritance of lessons learned that unknowingly govern our thoughts and actions.

Our aspirations fracture, certainty wavers, and fear instilled by others takes hold. Skepticism meets our beliefs, and slowly, our dreams dissipate, replaced by anger and reliance on unhealthy coping mechanisms.

In the mid-afternoon of our lives, we grapple with strife, stress, worry, anxiety, and pain. Pretending to have control and understanding, we fall prey to life's hidden adversary. Reflecting on George's story, I found resonance with my own. Curiosity arose, and I eagerly sought George's perspective on this concealed adversary, hoping to gain insight.

His reply was simple yet profound. He affirmed that this adversary emerges from conforming to societal expectations, following the well-trodden path that leads to failure. We unknowingly allow ourselves to be deceived, guided astray by ideas that never truly belonged to us.

Instead of acknowledging our role in the broken aspects of our lives—failed relationships, job transitions, financial difficulties, detrimental habits—we place blame on others. It becomes a way to avoid facing the truth, masking reality with self-delusion and clinging to rigid identities we have adopted.

Restless and burdened by loneliness, we often find life devoid of meaning and hope, despite our accomplishments. The root cause lies in neglecting love—the fundamental essence that gives purpose to humanity. However, love remains unseen until we embrace the truth. By confronting life's illusions of scarcity, inadequacy, and unworthiness, we open ourselves to the profound experience of love.

In the twilight of our lives, we awaken to the harsh reality that our energy, struggles, and fights were in vain. Reflecting upon the passing years, we come to realize that our path was not of our own choosing. As we stand at this juncture, torn between conforming to societal expectations and nourishing our hearts and souls, denial becomes our initial response—a futile attempt to find momentary solace. Yet, such endeavors often lead us astray. Subsequently, feelings of despondency and anger may consume us, directed both inwardly and outwardly for allowing this predicament to unfold. We berate ourselves for missing opportunities and silencing our internal voice in the pursuit of personal desires.

Nevertheless, as the dusk of our lives approach, sadness, depression, and anger offer an unexpected revelation—peace and liberation. Surrendering to the persistent inner voice that longs to connect with us, our focus shifts inward. Through this transformational shift, we awaken from the realm of an aimless and senseless world, redirecting our gaze towards our authentic selves.

A quick smile accompanies his words. "I understand if this seems perplexing to you at present. Rest is necessary for both of us; we have a long path ahead, and there is much to discuss," George responded.

His words struck a chord within me—I’d once heard them from my grandfather's lips when I was younger. Surprised, he asks, "What is it?"

"I could have sworn I was listening to my grandfather," I slowly respond, then shake my head. "Apologies for the peculiarity; the events of the past weeks have left me disoriented, unsure of where I stand."

"Indeed, change possesses the ability to topple us from our pedestals, urging us to contemplate the grand panorama," George acknowledges. "Goodnight, Peter."

As he extinguished the light, he settled into rest for the night. Aware of the impending continued journey and the need for vigilance, sleep eluded me. Instead, I lay there, contemplating his words and relating them to my own experiences.

If I've gleaned this much on the initial day of our expedition, I wonder, what other revelations lie in wait?

In a dream, I observed three figures at a distance, their backs turned towards me. Engrossed in conversation and mirth, their words elude my ears. I beckon to them, but their laughter persists, oblivious to my presence. Piercing the silence with my voice, I implore their attention. Yet again, they ignore me, steeped in their shared revelry.

Growing incensed, I resolve to sever all ties if they persist in their aloofness. If this is the game they wish to play, I pledge never to engage with them again.

Suddenly, all three figures paused and stared at me. "We are not engaged in a game," one asserted. "Your game has inflicted profound anguish and sorrow upon you."

To my astonishment, I discerned that these figures are my grandfather, great-grandfather, and cousin, Jason. "Why do you hold such resentment towards us?" they inquired in unison. "Why do you bear the burden of anger, disappointment, and pain wherever you traverse? Embrace forgiveness, release us, and allow us to rejoice in the embrace of peace and love. Forgive us, forgive yourself, forgive God, and forgive all—only then shall clarity grace your path, and the treasures within your heart shall manifest."

"But I confess, I am oblivious to the treasures and purpose within me," I admit quietly. "I am but a weary, washed-up mechanic, burdened by the weight of my existence."

"Seek the truth," they replied softly before fading away, leaving only the silence behind.

"Oh, please, don't leave me!" I cried out, desperately longing for more insight. Their departure left an ache within me. It felt so real, those encounters with three relatives urging me to forgive, warning that without forgiveness, my life would remain stagnant.

"Fear not," George interrupted my distress, shaking me awake abruptly. "They speak the truth," he affirmed. "But before forgiving them, we must first grant forgiveness to ourselves. This can only be achieved through knowledge and understanding. The truth serves as the foundation, allowing us to embrace God's forgiveness with open hearts. Ultimately, it is His perspective that holds true significance, Peter. Nothing else matters. We are created in His image, illustrating the stark contrast between love and hate, forgiveness and unforgiveness.

"We must first comprehend our essence and identity," George continued, his voice soothing and wise. "We must embrace ourselves unconditionally, irrespective of past transgressions. From this vantage point, we observe the world through the eyes of our Creator, shedding illusions that have plagued us for far too long—falsehoods born from misconceptions and self-imposed limitations. It is only through this process that we can truly unburden ourselves and answer the call from within.

“As the chains of deceit, pain, anger, and unforgiveness begin to fall away, our minds and hearts transform into sanctuaries. There, wisdom and truth find their home. This profound metamorphosis rebuilds the very foundation of our self-worth, eroded over a lifetime.

“Forgiveness, a transcendent act that reaches beyond our past, extends its embrace to encompass the truth of our present. Within the arms of truth, love flourishes, dismantling the barriers of discord, division, and fear. By extending forgiveness to others, we foster unity and nurture a more compassionate world.

“Sadly, many of us are taught to forgive others first, a backward approach that fails to offer genuine forgiveness. It deceives us into thinking that we have forgiven, while our pain and anger silently fester within, resurfacing in different areas of our lives to wreak havoc.

“The path to true forgiveness begins within ourselves. To love others, we must embark on an inward journey of self-love. Through the lens of love, we can genuinely forgive and extend compassion to others. By listening to the call of our hearts and embracing the wisdom and truth within, we embark on our hero's journey—a journey that profoundly shapes our lives.

“One fundamental truth emerges: there is nothing to forgive, for mistakes are the product of individuals who were unaware of better choices at the time. And if they remain stuck, unaware still, time will eventually lead them to the path of truth.

“Now is the time to surrender and accept our present circumstances. Release resistance and cease battling against everything and everyone. Instead, align yourself with a new path. For those sincerely seeking change and a brighter future, internal questions will find their answers, and desires will be granted.”

George smiled warmly, his sincerity shining through. After considering it all, I finally expressed my readiness to embark on this transformative journey.

"Thank you," he replied with gratitude. "We will begin our journey downstairs after breakfast." Thirty minutes passed in a comfortable silence until curiosity got the best of me.

"George, I thought you were going to start my training or life lessons this morning."

He turned to me, offering reassurance. "We have plenty of time, Peter. This journey, spanning over four thousand miles roundtrip, lays the groundwork for your next phase in life.

“I have been contemplating how to explain and teach in a way that resonates with your heart and mind. It is easy to say that it will be straightforward, but ensuring the lessons truly penetrate and linger within you—that is the real challenge.

"Peter, let me share what I have learned on my own journey through the years." George took a deep breath. "Do you remember when our journey began, and I asked you to describe what you saw when you looked in the mirror? I have repeatedly asked you that and similar questions. Your responses have been vague. You mentioned casually glancing in the mirror to wash your face and brush your teeth. It appears you have never questioned why you are here, have you?"

"Not even once," I confess. "But what does that have to do with my troubles and the unsettling dreams, visions, and voices that haunt me?"

“Peter, I believe one of the challenges you face lies in your inability to recognize and embrace the abundance of small blessings that have graced your life. Cultivating gratitude for these little joys is paramount, for they possess the power to transform your perspective and bring forth positive change.”

"Just ponder," I said, seeking clarification, "can I consider myself a blessing and a friend to you? Does that count? And what about my shop, my friends Daniel and Louise, all my customers, Beaufort, Betty at our beloved diner, and my mother, sister, and brother? Are these the small things you speak of?"

"Yes, indeed," George affirmed. "It commences with the appreciation of the small things. Consider them as subtle signals from a higher power, reassuring you of His presence in your life. Once you acquire the ability to recognize these cues, they guide you toward grander things, such as encounters with individuals who convey profound messages or offer words of encouragement. It could be a friend's phone call or, at times, even material gains.

“As we embark on the next stage of our journey, we are confronted with an array of wonders and challenges that shape our path. Our dreams serve as a compass, guiding us in the right direction. When we are on the correct path, we witness the rewards and blessings that lie ahead. Even if a dream reveals a disaster, it is still a Divine blessing, as it unveils the perils of remaining on our current course.

“During this next stage, we begin to perceive God's guidance not through spoken words, but through our thoughts. He responds to our inquiries and enlightens our minds with fresh ideas and insights, filling the void that once resided within us.

"Are you still listening?" I nodded, and he continued. "God leads us slowly, intending to bestow upon us the utmost blessings that a child of an infinite Creator could desire. These messages flow between God's mind and ours. And let me remind you, Peter, everything happens within us, so there is no need to search for external validation. There's no need. As we progress, we draw closer to the point where God reveals Himself through profound sensations and emotions—beyond our human comprehension. It is a sensation that cannot be encapsulated in words, a Divine affirmation of God's eternal presence by our side. Our connection with Him remains unbreakable in this realm and the next, an everlasting bond that transcends all boundaries.

“At every phase of our spiritual journey, our Creator consistently reveals Himself, nurturing our unwavering trust in Him day by day, until we no longer seek answers from the external world. God's guidance emanates from within, where the eternal truth resides, steering us away from the deceiving ideologies influenced by our senses and emotions.

"We no longer need to rely on the overwhelming influx of messages bombarding us daily in the outside world. Our hidden anger, unforgiveness, and other issues are brought to the surface first, so that we may recognize what is holding us back. God helps us remove these barriers and sets us free to move forward by revealing what is often kept unconscious and move it into our conscious space. It here where it seems like madness, chaos and bad luck seems unjustified in what was once a manageable existence.

"Let us revisit our conversation about the mirror. When you can gaze into it and be grateful for every aspect of your life—your health, finances, loved ones, regardless of how things may appear presently—that is when your true journey of listening to the Divine messenger begins. It dwells within you, within everyone.

“You have embarked on this journey and are swiftly heading toward discovering your purpose in life. There is nothing you can do to avoid it unless you decide to change your mind. Everything that has transpired thus far has been a steppingstone to a life-altering future since your dreams and nightmares began. However, my insight can only offer guidance on this new path, but in the end, once you uncover the truth about yourself, the decision will be yours. Just like everyone else, you possess free will. You must decide for yourself."

I remained silent, recognizing that any response on my part would only heighten the fear consuming me.

Noticing my silence, George continued. "You possess immense potential, but there is much you need to discover before your gift is bestowed upon you by God. I understand that you have endured many hardships, and I do not take your past experiences with your family lightly. I want to assure you that it is time to disembark from the train of heartbreak, poverty, and self-doubt. I comprehend your feeling of inadequacy and your belief that you have little to offer others. There is a profound longing within you, hidden in the shadows, as you mend vehicles and resolve transient mobility issues for others. Each day, you gaze out into the vast world, yearning for more, aspiring to achieve more, and desiring to share your love wholeheartedly.”

I nodded, wondering how he could possess such a deep understanding of me. It perfectly encapsulated what I had been experiencing. Yet, these sentiments could not be put into words.

George gently placed his hand on my arm. "But I would be deceiving you if I agreed with that statement. Your life is not devoid of value. That notion is as untrue for you as it is for anyone else on this planet. Your life holds meaning, and you, my friend, are meaningful. That is precisely why everything is unfolding as it is.

“In life, there are no coincidences; everything occurs at its appointed time with a purpose, as I have repeatedly mentioned. And now, that time has arrived for you. Love and peace stand at the threshold of your heart, softly urging you to let go of anger and unforgiveness or to choose a different path. It beckons you to question how much longer you will ignore its call. How much longer will you avert your gaze from purpose and tranquility, content with the meager remnants of existence you have accepted thus far? I have witnessed the challenges you face, primarily stemming from pessimism and self-doubt, which gradually erode your self-worth, draining the energy from your being.

“At this moment, I can imagine that you perceive your struggle as a battle between yourself, the world, and God—because who else would oppose you in your quest for freedom and the expression of your heart?"

I attempted to articulate what I was feeling and respond to his question, but he tightened his grip on my arm.

"You do not have to explain, Peter," he said compassionately. "Remember, I have been there too. There is no need to justify anything. When I first realized all of this, it was daunting and unfamiliar. I knew that life was about to transform, and something new would take its place. I understand.

“But resist the messages and gifts that God is trying to send. Solitude has been embraced for far too long, as if life owes a debt for past tribulations. And indeed, life does bear a responsibility... but when will one pause, still their heart, and listen for it? By pushing away these offerings, life is hindered from bestowing what is truly desired. How much longer will one endure the numbness within? How much longer will the unfillable void persist?

"Peter, you possess great intelligence and a multitude of talents and abilities, which I would hate to see squandered—much like mine almost were years ago. But that is the path you tread if you continue to cling to insignificant and trivial emotions."

At that moment, silence could no longer be upheld. "How can you regard my feelings as insignificant and trivial?" I protested. "You have not walked in my shoes, nor have you experienced the injustices that I have. Have you lived a life shrouded in uncertainty and countless adversities? Did you ever awaken to the sound of a lonely and despondent mother's tears, with the thought that she had failed in life and failed her children? What about the pangs of hunger that rouse you from slumber, a cruel reminder that even after checking the refrigerator ten times, no sustenance awaits? Have you ever worn clothes so wore from repeated use, their shrinking so pronounced from frequent washings that running or bending might cause them to rip? Have you ever felt such shame in your appearance that you abstained from attending school, simply to evade the taunts and bullying?

"This is my reality, George, and nothing you say or do can alter it. None of this was asked for—it was the hand dealt. When God distributed gifts and blessings, my family and I were left with meager scraps. How can trust and faith be bestowed upon a God who, despite teachings of abundant blessings, has not blessed you or your kin? He does not hear my pleas, and I feel His opposition most. I exist in a state of persistent apprehension, forever uncertain if my actions meet with Divine approval or disapproval. So, who can blame me for relinquishing Him, forging my own path instead?"

"But where has your path led you?" George gently questioned. "Is this not how you ended up here?"

"It had been working well until life robbed me of all I held dear," I replied. "George, until your God can hear His creation without inflicting pain, I shall not entertain the notion of reverting to Him. Presently, my world lies in disarray, and it appears you imply it is due to my upbringing and beliefs. It seems as though your intentions are not to help me... but to manipulate me into embracing something to which I vehemently object. I would rather conclude this conversation before it progresses further."

George raised his hands in surrender. "I merely desire for you to embrace an open mind, to explore possibilities that may aid you. I am here for whatever you need, and when you are ready to discuss this further, know that I am here."

I reached for the stereo knob in an attempt to calm myself. One part of me recognized that I overreacted, but the other part refused to be silenced.

"I will listen to music, if you do not object. I do not wish to delve into this anymore."

I sensed George casting a glance at me, yet he remained silent. His gaze rested upon the scenery unfolding outside the window as he reclined his seat. Before long, the hushed, rhythmic breathing of a man who had succumbed to tranquil slumber filled the air.

Over the next few hours, the space between us resonated with the soothing melodies of mellow jazz unfurling from the car speakers. I exerted my utmost effort to dismiss George's words, and he exercised restraint by not broaching the topic again. I hoped he understood that my frustration was not directed at him—rather, it stemmed from being overwhelmed. May it not tarnish the journey we embarked upon together.

And then, as we departed from Memphis and traversed the bridge stretching across the Mississippi River, I muted the volume of the music. The spectacle before us was too captivating to hoard within.

"George, what a mesmerizing panorama lies before us. Behold the expanse of this river."

George opened his eyes and adjusted his seat, taking in the sight to which I gestured. "It truly emanates grandeur, does it not?" he mused. "You know, this river is the longest in the country. It encapsulates a vast tapestry of history. It served as the bedrock for countless dreams. Along this river, an array of goods was transported, and that legacy endures." He paused briefly, checking the clock. "It seems we are making good progress on our journey toward the oasis in the desert."

"Yes, indeed," I concurred, surprised. The miles sailed by swiftly, and a sense of ease enveloped me, casting off layers of burdens carried for far too long. Each mile clocked away from home alleviated some weight from my weary shoulders.

Nevertheless, troubled thoughts had lingered for the past hour, and I decided to voice them. Yet, I hesitated, uncertain of the path to tread.

"What's wrong, Peter?" George inquired as he sensed the struggle etched upon my face.

"I just wanted to apologize for my outburst earlier. I struggled to find the words," I finally admitted.

George chuckled in a reassuring manner. "It's alright, Peter. I comprehend where you are coming from. I have found myself in similar predicaments. Let us move past it and embark on a fresh start," he proposed.

His easy acceptance brought a wave of relief over me. I grinned at him, engulfed in gratitude for our connection. I couldn't fathom how we had found each other, but in that very moment, I felt true happiness.

"As I lay there, Peter, I contemplated a better way to assist you. Instead of inundating you with convoluted information, what if we engage in a question-and-answer discourse?" George suggested, his voice full of amusement. "Even I, at times, fail to comprehend half of the things I say. How does that sound to you?"

"I'm all for it," I replied with a laugh. "That sounds much more manageable for me," I added. Settling into my seat, I pondered the first question I wished to ask. And then, it dawned upon me.

"First question, George. Why do you think my father left us when we were so young? We didn't deserve to be abandoned like that."

George let out a sigh and took a moment to gather his thoughts. "There could have been countless reasons, Peter. However, as I've grown older and reflected upon life, I believe that he was likely grappling with inner turmoil and pain. Instead of projecting it onto you and your family, your father chose to carry his fear, anger, and frustration elsewhere. Perhaps he feared that by staying, he would only continue to disappoint you," George explained.

"During that time, he probably believed it was the right course of action. He reckoned that he didn't deserve to be a father to you, your sister, your mother, or your little brother. I am not justifying his actions, but he may have grown up in a tumultuous and agonizing environment himself. Perhaps he never learned how to be a father.

"People cope with pain in different ways, and leaving was his way of attempting to unravel his own struggles and heal his wounded soul. Your father left while you were young so that you wouldn't adopt his habits and behaviors. He didn't want his children and wife to perceive him as a failure or anything less than a genuine father. Trust me when I say that he thinks about you and your family every single day and holds deep affection for all of you," George reassured.

"If he truly loved us, why didn't he keep in touch or let us know where he was?" I questioned, finding it difficult to believe George's words. "We would have cherished the opportunity to see him. I miss him, and thoughts of him consume my mind every day. My mom, brother, and sister miss him just as much. Why didn't he send us a letter, assuring us of his well-being? His departure... it made us feel as though we had done something wrong. Have you ever experienced the feeling of losing a part of yourself and attempting to move forward, feeling unworthy, as if you are carrying the weight of the world without anyone helping you bear the burden?"

George met my gaze, his eyes filled with understanding. "Yes, I have. Do you recall what I shared with you during our dinner at my house?"

"But you have never experienced a father leaving you," I stubbornly retorted.

"No, but my circumstances were even more trying. Allow me to explain," George began. He proceeded to unveil the harsh reality of enduring his father's wrath, the daily mental and physical abuse he endured. His father's indulgences and absence of work, the pain of witnessing his mother being beaten, and the struggle for basic necessities within their cramped home.

"And what about sustenance?" I interjected, recollecting the scarcity my own family faced, surviving on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for dinner, occasionally receiving home-cooked meals from local churches. I remembered the absence of indoor toilets, the dreams of having regular baths, and any semblance of privacy. Our house remained devoid of visitors, as the fear of unexpected altercations loomed. My siblings sought solace beyond those walls we called home.

George continued, “Upon reaching adulthood, my siblings and I became strangers, each pursuing our escape from the nightmare we had collectively weathered. It was during this time that my life spiraled downwards into a dark abyss of vices—drugs, alcohol, promiscuity, gambling, and involvement with gangs. I became everything I had vowed never to be. Brushing against the law a few times opened my eyes to the need for change. Thus, at the age of twenty-one, I made the decision to join the Marines. With guidance and support, my life gradually began to improve. However, the issues with my father and the strained relationships he had with my siblings persisted. They had sworn never to speak to him again, but I chose a different path—one that yearned for a meaningful connection with him.

“After completing my military service, I returned to my hometown to reconcile with my father. Time had taken its toll on him—his strength withered, his eyesight faded—yet, he still clung to authority and control, often expressing them through anger, guilt, and force. But I knew his time drew nearer, so when I received a call from my mother, who still resided with the man who had caused her immense pain, informing me that my father desired to see me, I heeded the call. I understood that he needed closure before departing from this world.

“As I entered the room, a faint glimmer of light appeared in his eyes, and he reached for my hand. I grasped it, and he looked up, uttering words that touched my heart. ‘George,’ he spoke, ‘I am well aware of the burdens I placed upon your mother, you, and your other siblings throughout the years. The weight of these burdens has haunted me for quite some time now, and I knew I needed to relinquish them before my time comes to an end. Please convey to your sisters and brothers that I do not hold them responsible for detaching themselves from me all these years, especially considering the hell I put them through. Ask them for their forgiveness. Tell them that I love them and that I am immensely proud of them for not succumbing to the same fate as me. As I approach the end of my journey, I want you to know that I love you, and I am proud of every accomplishment you have achieved despite the hardships you faced because of me. Take care of your mother and siblings for me. I love you, my son.’”

George closed his eyes, symbolizing the conclusion of a significant chapter in his life. Within that chapter, he discovered solace, love, serenity, and the power of forgiveness. These elements offered fleeting liberation until unforeseen events brought forth a tragic loss—the passing of his first wife in Alabama. In that moment, dormant emotions and unanswered questions resurfaced with unprecedented intensity.

George believed that he had transcended his pain when he professed forgiveness towards his father. However, the truth revealed itself: it was his father who sought forgiveness, while George himself had yet to truly grant it. He had suppressed his genuine feelings, hoping that simply being present by his father's deathbed would suffice. In doing so, he deceived both his father and himself. Despite the numerous opportunities presented by God to extend forgiveness, George repeatedly turned away, convinced that he had already done so.

It was later that George realized his forgiveness towards his father had merely been spoken, lacking the depth of his entire heart. Something held him back, and traces of anger towards his father still lingered. He acknowledged his father's genuine remorse for the suffering he had caused and tried to find closure. Yet, George couldn't bring himself to close that chapter. It wasn't just a lack of evidence; it pertained to his father's true remorse for the inflicted torment. It was only after the passing of George's second wife that he began to comprehend the emotions his father carried towards the end of his own life.

Each failure in his professional life, relationships, or any other endeavor accentuated the fact that he hadn't truly forgiven his father or his past. George discovered that forgiveness was the sole path out of his self-imposed prison. The lingering presence of failure reminded him that a part of himself remained lost and incomplete. Without mending the broken pieces of his heart and mind, without letting go and offering forgiveness to all, including himself, he couldn't expect harmony and fulfillment in the long run. He had to first forgive himself for following the lies, illusions, and inadvertently hurting others along the way.

"Peter, carrying the burden of lying, cheating, fear, restlessness, and anger is a choice made by those who resist forgiveness," responded George. “When someone refuses to forgive, regardless of the circumstances, they detach themselves from truth and reality—from the genuine perspective or God's perspective, which asserts the equality of all individuals without judgment of superiority or inferiority.

“This detachment leads to a blame game where fault lies solely with others. Anger and frustration accompany this delusion, exerting control over one's thoughts and behavior. The relentless voice in our minds urges us to strive for more in every aspect of life. However, this insatiable desire eventually leads to exhaustion and a descent to our lowest point. In the depths of this abyss, profound truths about ourselves and those around us are revealed. It is in the presence of Divine guidance that we can learn invaluable principles for crafting a more fulfilling existence. With time, introspection, and acceptance of our flawed thinking, we have the potential to transform and heal our wounded hearts, cultivating healthier relationships.”

George concluded, expressing that the pursuit of external rewards often proves elusive, mirroring the internal conflict and unfinished endeavors within. By embracing forgiveness, he had discovered a path towards true liberation.

“Allow me, Peter, to explain it this way if you will,” George responded, and I nodded in approval, encouraging him to continue. “Sometimes, we yearn for a remedy to uplift our spirits, only to discover that it is merely an illusion. Instead, the issue grows larger and more formidable with each occurrence. It leaves us feeling diminished, unwanted, and insignificant. It fosters a sense of brokenness and imperfection, as if repair and wholeness are forever out of reach. Hence, we seek out and consume more substances in hopes of finding a greater fix. More alcohol, drugs, sex, money, education—anything we believe will make the problem disappear. We yearn for love and acceptance, striving to find inner peace through others.

"Unforgiveness is the underlying problem; the other habits and behaviors are simply surface symptoms revealing our inner turmoil. Many fail to comprehend that unforgiveness is the invisible barrier that prevents them from attaining a life of peace, abundance, and genuine relationships. Without eliminating this stumbling block, it will continue to divert you and others off course, leading you to a place of deep darkness called depression, fear, and loneliness," explained George.

"I have experienced numerous failures and grew increasingly bitter toward God, thinking He was against me. I spent a considerable amount of time dwelling in misery and torment before my heart finally softened. I drove back to my father's grave and expressed my true feelings. It was then, and only then, that I wholeheartedly forgave him. From that day forward, my life took an unexpected turn, and my healing journey commenced.

"As I mentioned earlier, it was when I apologized to God one day for my anger and expressed my desire for reconciliation that things began to change. I had stopped communicating with God, but He never ceased to listen to me. One day, He spoke up and started guiding me back to a path of the heart and His unconditional love for me. I made a vow to God that when given the opportunity, I would help others learn the lessons of forgiveness and assist them in discovering their own path and purpose in life.

"Peter, you have a choice to make. You can hold on to anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness, thereby subjecting yourself to a lifetime of suffering. Alternatively, you can release the past and embark on a fresh journey. Embrace eternal joy and laughter by forgiving yourself and others, and allow love to fill your heart. Liberate yourself from the constant escape and seize the opportunity to truly live, dream, and be your authentic self. Do not be afraid to extend forgiveness to your father, cousin, grandparents, and even God. It is through forgiveness that you will experience genuine liberation.

"You will regain your power and finally rid yourself of that nagging pain and emptiness you have long eluded. Most importantly, you will ultimately discover your passion and purpose in life. I believe that is what you genuinely desire," replied George.

 I fell silent for a moment, contemplating his words, before finally responding, "Yes, I do."

"All those books you see in my house?" George continued. "They serve as reminders for me to listen to God and follow my heart's guidance. They remind me to pay attention to the inner voice that tells me what is right and wrong. God answered my prayer by sending you, a gift and a breath of fresh air. You arrived precisely when I asked God about my purpose in life, and He responded by bringing you into my life."

"What happened to your siblings?" I asked, trying to digest all that George had shared.

George looked downward, gazing out the window. "They all passed away," he whispered softly. "Each of them suffered miserably and never forgave our father for what he did to them. They wasted away slowly, consumed by anger and addiction. And because they never let go of their anger and allowed themselves to forgive, they lived with the same emptiness you have felt. Fear, anger, worry, and addictions drowned their lives, and those things ultimately took their lives."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I replied, uncertain of any other suitable response.

George nodded. "As am I. However, my purpose here is to offer guidance, not to delve into their stories. As a teacher, I aim to steer you in the right direction. Please, listen to the voice within you rather than to my words. The answers have always resided within your heart, waiting to be heard when the time was right. I have no intention of imposing my thoughts upon you—I simply want to assist you in recognizing what you already know. The truth is, God provides answers to questions that the external world couldn't resolve for most of your life. I serve as a gateway to this truth, offering guidance up to a certain extent. Beyond that point, your inner guide takes charge. Genuine solutions lie within, waiting to be discovered. By delving into our inner selves, we unearth answers, a profound knowing, and an unwavering certainty that cannot be diminished by external factors.

"You see, Peter, as a teacher, my role is to assist you in rediscovering wholeness and love. This can only happen when you surrender your heart and mind to the creative force awakening within you."

"Well, that certainly gives me a fresh perspective on my own problems," I murmured as he concluded. "I never truly realized the extent of what you've endured, George," I confessed.

George chuckled. "Every individual bears a unique story yearning to be shared. However, only a few dare to unveil their narratives to the world. Sharing these stories is often perceived as a sign of weakness, inferiority, and shame, causing individuals to bury them deep within their souls. They continue to wear masks throughout their lives, burdened by guilt and shame, adhering to the lessons ingrained in them. They internalize their pain, fearing the consequences of revealing these profound, dark secrets, expecting judgment from others.

“Unknown to many, our behaviors inadvertently reveal our secrets, habits, and attitudes. These actions offer glimpses into uncharted depths, often incomprehensible to others. Eventually, the weight of concealed secrets, shattered relationships, and personal struggles becomes overwhelming, leading to a collapse. Interestingly, redemption can be found through simply sharing one's life story.”

"I don't quite grasp the concept," I responded skeptically.

"Your life is a miraculous tale, and every individual on this planet is a miracle in their own right. Each mistake, failure, or mishap along the way serves as a gift to those who still reside in the shadows of secrecy and embarrassment, as it demonstrates that even others make mistakes, reducing their sense of isolation.

“Through the exchange of stories, individuals can break free from their past, unlocking freedom and independence. These experiences reveal their true gifts and purpose in life. Each person possesses the potential to overcome the constraints of addiction and the habits that veil their unique identity and talents. These extraordinary gifts have the power to positively impact the world. However, amidst the chaos of comparison and the burden of external expectations, individuals often overlook their own potential, unknowingly setting themselves up for failure. The journey begins with self-discovery and self-acceptance, recognizing one's inherent worth and sufficiency. Liberation does not rely on others; it is an independent pursuit.”

"But what if I am uncertain of my destination or purpose? How can I liberate myself without comprehending the grand design?" I pondered.

George raised his hand slowly. "Have I not assured you that by the journey's end, clarity shall prevail? Trust me, Peter, and all shall be well."

Just then, Amarillo, Texas, emerged unexpectedly before us as the day waned, accompanied by intriguing conversations and enlightening revelations. Exhausted, we decided to locate a suitable hotel for the night. As we veered off the interstate, we stumbled upon a convenient Hampton Inn nestled at a street corner, which perfectly suited our needs.

Exiting the car, we swiftly gathered our belongings and entered the reception area. Thankfully, check-in was prompt, and in no time, we found ourselves in our room, dropping our bags and engaging in discussions about dinner plans.

"I must avail myself of a quick shower." I chuckled. "I feel as if I have collected the dust of countless miles we have ventured!"

George laughed and graciously allowed me to use the bathroom first. I indulged myself in a hot, rejuvenating shower, rinsing away the fatigue of the day.

As I glanced into the mirror, preparing to step away from the bathroom, an unanticipated voice reverberated.

"Peter, peer into the mirror."

Compelled by curiosity, I obliged, beholding a vision of myself fleeing from an enigmatic figure astride a dark, relentless steed. The figure gained ground unrelentingly. Suddenly, amidst the vision, I halted abruptly and turned to confront the dark horseman, demanding that he desist from pursuit. To my astonishment, the horseman froze in his tracks.

With measured steps, I approached the enigmatic figure, whose visage remained concealed, save for piercing eyes. Moving closer, I cautiously reached for the long, gleaming spear he wielded, forcefully wresting it from his grip. "Reveal yourself now," I declared resolutely, "or I shall unmask your facade with my own hands."

The cloaked figure discarded the mantle, yet before complete revelation, the vision vanished into the ether, leaving me consumed by profound curiosity and trepidation.

Promptly, I emerged from the bathroom, refraining from mentioning a word to George, who remained engrossed in television.

"Are you well?" George queried moments later. "Since departing from the bathroom, you have been silent."

"I am fine," I replied hastily, even though George's perceptiveness was not easily swayed. He possessed an innate ability to fathom the depths of my thoughts.

And I was correct. "You have experienced another vision, haven't you?" George gently asserted.

I met his gaze, silently nodding, and proceeded to recount the intricacies of the encounter. To my surprise, George paused before succumbing to laughter. "Do you comprehend the significance of all this?" he asked cheerfully. "These experiences indicate that you draw near to the answers, poised to uncover why we embarked on this journey together.

"I eagerly anticipate the extraordinary moments that shall manifest in your life, my friend. I could not be happier for you," he affirmed earnestly. "However, sleep may evade us tonight!" We shared laughter and agreed, but as soon as George took his turn in the shower, exhaustion overcame me, plunging me into a deep slumber, venturing ever deeper into the domain of dreams. In these reveries, I encountered a book adorned with countless blank pages, accompanied by a pen. When I closed the book, my name shimmered with resplendent golden hues.

Further, I stood upon a grand stage, enveloped in the thunderous cheers of an expansive crowd. Before me, an extensive line of people stretched as far as the eye could see, eagerly awaiting as I bestowed upon each one a handwritten letter, received with heartfelt gratitude. I awoke, gasping for breath, scanning the room, and drawing solace from the glow of the television and the illuminated bathroom. I reminded myself that George was still showering, ensuring my safety.

Yet, I knew sleep would elude me for the remainder of the night, for I had encountered ample visions.

When George existed the bathroom, he was thinking we would still be on for dinner after a long drive. Once he saw my deep and uncertain face, he was aware that the things I had experienced would need to be addressed and so we never made it to dinner because after my intense vision explaining what I saw in the mirror.

George listened to me explain in detail and after listening to my story George had an epiphany of some sorts. With a great smile and laughter, he said the people standing in line meant that the work given to you would draw many people from all over the world and help change their lives. The people or audience represents a special gift or knowledge bestowed upon those looking to escape their own inner pain, trauma and darkness.

Next, he said the blank book with my name written in golden letters represents healing, and illumination, happiness, and achievement. and the pen meant some sort of communication that you will share with the masses.

Everything you saw Peter represents what lies ahead of you if you stay receptive to the dreams and follow your heart. These things represented a task and the gift only you can fulfill after you discover your purpose in life, George explained.

My eyes grew large with both excitement and in trepidation of what lies ahead of me. It seems my visions and dreams are growing stronger and in more detail along the way I said to George.

That is because you’re getting closer to understanding who you are and what you’ve come here on this planet to share with the world including myself, George replied.

# CHAPTER NINE

The next morning, I awakened with George reading a bible, one he found in the nightstand next to the bed and it seemed he was deep in thought with the book and the words which captured his attention. After a few minutes though, he placed the bible back into the drawer and asked me how I was doing and if I had slept okay.

I nodded saying I did sleep okay, and I also apologized for not having dinner after refreshing up after a long days drive across country. George accepted my apologies and as usual he smiled at me and encouraged me to get dressed so we could have breakfast before hitting the highway towards the west. I mustered the courage to approach George and engage in a conversation about the perplexing events that had been unfolding. Recognizing my need for guidance, I humbly acknowledged George as the one who would accompany me on this journey as my mentor.

As we approached Phoenix, the plot thickened, and my vibrant dreams held only fragments of hope. Though the answers may have been within reach, I struggled to grasp their significance.

"Peter," George comforted, "don't be too hard on yourself. Even for someone like me, deciphering the intricate messages conveyed in these dreams and visions is uncharted territory." His gaze shifted towards a bright yellow sign gleaming across the street, capturing his attention. "Shall we grab breakfast at the waffle house before continuing our journey? It might help us gather our thoughts."

Nodding in agreement, we crossed the street and found ourselves in a welcoming restaurant where we received a cheerful, "Good morning." The restaurant boasted a long counter in the front with round stools, while bright yellow seats lined the walls, drawing attention to the ample windows. The aroma of freshly cooked bacon, sizzling sausages, and rich coffee instantly lifted my spirits. Opting for a window seat, George and I settled in for our conversation.

"I find it challenging to comprehend it all," I admitted as we sat down. "The images and signs I receive seem elusive in their meaning, leaving me puzzled about their significance in my life."

"Perhaps, Peter," George calmly responded, "it's not meant for you to grasp everything at this moment. Maybe the pieces of the puzzle will align in due time."

"You might be right," I concurred. With that, we indulged in our breakfast—a comforting meal of waffles, eggs, bacon, and, naturally, plenty of coffee—reminiscent of our shared traditions back home. Our conversation drifted towards the weather and our plans upon arrival in Phoenix, occasionally reminiscing about our pasts.

We chose not to delve deeper into existential questions or the peculiar experiences I had recently encountered. Recognizing the need for respite from the demands of my consuming job, I resolved to set aside the quest for answers. If George's belief held true, and clarity awaited us in Phoenix, I decided to let it simmer for now.

"I have a few questions for you, George," I began, seeking his wisdom. He nodded attentively, ready to provide guidance. "When I observe those around me, I find no trace of fear, depression, or anxiety. This puzzles me greatly."

George took little time to respond. "Peter, perhaps your immersive world of fantasies shields you from recognizing these emotions. However, within your realm lies the transcendental beauty of love. Your heart possesses the capacity to experience emotions of profound depth—emotions that surpass the physical realm. When the time is right, a miracle will occur. It may not manifest in the manner you anticipate, but it will bestow a sentiment that eclipses all else."

He continued, "Countless souls seek solace in places like Phoenix, fleeing the torment of their realities. This extraordinary sanctuary provides refuge for those ensnared by their fears, traumas, and addictions. It becomes an oasis of tranquility and peace."

"These insights compel me to understand," I replied, absorbing his words. "But true perception of others can only be achieved through the hero's journey. It is a path that forces us to face our deepest fears, exposes our cherished dreams, and ultimately reveals our authentic essence. As we embark on this journey, we begin to comprehend the intricate nuances of human emotions, the shared struggles that unite us all, and the immense potential residing within each of us."

George emphasized, "This journey of self-discovery and self-mastery demands great dedication. Yet, it unlocks the door to genuine understanding of others. Only by traversing through the flames and emerging stronger can we truly fathom the depths of others' hearts and extend our empathy to them. This comprehension initiates a profound transformation within ourselves, allowing the 'Miracle' to manifest fully in our own lives.

“Until then, we will forever be confined within our own world, even in our pursuit of liberation, even when it seems we possess everything. The riches, admiration, and trappings of success are hollow triumphs if we remain oblivious to the struggles of others. It's like living in an echo chamber where our thoughts, experiences, and biases continuously reverberate, strengthening our isolation.

True liberation and fulfillment stem not from accumulating material wealth or social accolades, but from forging authentic connections with others—connections rooted in understanding and empathy. It is this profound connectivity, this shared comprehension, that dismantles the walls of our self-imposed prisons and introduces us to the realm of miracles.

“Every day, Peter, we bear witness to distressing events that unfold in the news: mass shootings, suicides, sexual abuse, and traumatic experiences. It is unbearably painful to witness such suffering in the world—a stark reminder of the daily battles faced by so many. These distressing events extend beyond mere news items, for they embody profound human experiences that echo deep fears, struggles, and pains. They serve as a call to action and a plea for empathy and understanding. It is crucial that we grasp the fact that each individual's ordeal is part of the collective human experience, and it is our shared responsibility to respond not merely with sympathy, but with genuine empathy rooted in self-understanding. Only then can we begin to heal the world, reverse the tide of pain, and manifest the miracle of shared human connection.

“We bear witness to the corrosive effects of negative thinking, manipulative actions, and ruined relationships resulting from lives ensnared in deception. These behaviors stem from a profound lack of self-understanding and a fundamental detachment from our authentic selves. Entrapped within webs of deceit and delusion, individuals become captives of their own making, trapped in self-destructive cycles. Such lives underscore the pressing need for liberation, for the miracle of self-discovery that unveils authentic empathy and human connection.

“Only through an honest exploration of our truths and a willingness to confront and comprehend our inner demons can we begin to unravel the entanglements of deceit, disrupt the patterns of negative thinking, and cultivate healthier relationships. The journey of self-understanding undoubtedly presents challenges, but it also opens the door to the miraculous. This voyage peels back the layers of deceit and delusion, unveiling our true selves and illuminating our vulnerabilities and strengths. This heightened self-awareness empowers us to establish deep connections with others, perceiving them not as separate entities but as extensions of ourselves, sharing experiences, emotions, and struggles.

“This shared understanding allows us to empathize profoundly, to partake in their struggles, and to offer genuine support. This connection and shared humanity form the foundation for personal and collective healing. By understanding ourselves, we can truly comprehend others, and by healing ourselves, we contribute to the healing of the world. It is within this profound interconnectedness that the true miracle unfolds.

“In our quest for understanding, we often find ourselves navigating intricate mysteries. From the magnificence of the cosmos to the enigmatic nature of our existence, we traverse a tapestry of illusions and undiscovered truths. The expressions of our personal madness manifest in the chaos surrounding us as we surrender to falsehoods and overlook the wisdom before us. Our lives become a theater of absurdity, an intricate dance of self-deception that distances us from our authentic selves.

“Amidst the confusion and conflict, we adopt roles and false identities that further alienate us from our core truths. This path of self-betrayal leads to personal discontent, strained relationships, and societal disarray. Yet, it is not an inescapable destiny. It is a reflection of our current state, one that can be transformed through genuine self-inquiry and the courage to confront our deceits.

“As we shed the illusions that bind us, we draw closer to the miracle of self-discovery and genuine human connection. We unlock the richness of our existence by embracing authenticity, aligning with our core values, and embracing the transformative power of love. Love is more than just an emotion; it is a state of being that acknowledges our interconnectedness and the shared humanity that unites us all. It serves as the antidote to the madness permeating our lives.

“To truly embrace the miracle within us, we must confront our realities, accept our flaws, and embark on a journey of growth. Through this process of self-reflection and healing, we can thrive and overcome the challenges we face. We must acknowledge our current state and seek to understand the reasons behind the increasing shame and madness in our world.

“In our pursuit of spiritual understanding, questions arise about the nature of our beliefs. The concept of God and the Holy Spirit may appear perplexing, and the intricacies of religious doctrine can be confounding. Nevertheless, with an open mind, we can find clarity and meaning.

“We are all connected to a universal source of energy, which some may call God, the universe, or another name. Regardless of labels, we spring from a common origin. Our differences are superficial, while our universal yearnings for equality, respect, love, fulfilling relationships, and the wonders of this world unite us.

“Throughout history, humanity has strived to define itself through external factors such as possessions, race, religion, origin, and language. Yet, if we strip away these labels, we uncover a profound truth: we are fundamentally equal. The illusion of separation blinds us to this inherent interconnectedness, preventing us from realizing our full potential.

“Man-made constructs and limitations attempt to confine us within predefined boundaries, dictating how we should exist as individuals and groups. But as we yearn for a more meaningful existence, our desire for growth and expansion requires us to seek fulfillment from within. Breaking free from the constraints of societal norms and expanding our perception of life is a courageous undertaking.

“Some individuals may opt to endure a protracted existence filled with anguish while longing for liberation. Their gaze fixated upon the vast expanse of boundless blue skies, hopeful for a catalyst that would grant them sought-after freedom. Conversely, there are those daring enough to seize their opportunity, venturing beyond the familiar confines, where a multitude of possibilities and true liberation await.

“Within the realm of human existence, numerous systems emerge and fade, yet it is only those who delve deep into the depths of their souls, unlocking the master key bestowed by our Creator, who can break free from the shackles of illusion. By embracing our authentic selves, releasing ourselves from the grip of fear, and venturing into the unknown, we can genuinely discover freedom and live life to its fullest.

“Let us take a moment to reflect upon the profound truths that bind us, and strive for a future where love, authenticity, and interconnectedness prevail. By shedding the illusions that imprison us, we can embrace the wondrous miracle that lies within ourselves and co-create a world filled with depth, meaning, and profound fulfillment.

"All things in this world are intricate systems. Some choose to follow the path they were born into, while others forge their own destiny. Regardless of our divergent paths, we are all beloved by God, who has bestowed upon us the extraordinary gift of choice. As for me, I do not fall into either of the aforementioned categories. Instead, I have heeded the beckoning call of freedom. I felt that freedom yearned for my presence, and in return, I solemnly vowed to utilize my talents and gifts to guide others away from bondage."

As we traversed closer to the state line, George and I found ourselves immersed in a profound sense of lightness. Eagerly, we pulled over and captured the iconic Arizona state sign through the lens of our camera, enlisting the help of fellow tourists for a few joint pictures. While venturing deeper into the heart of Arizona, we were utterly captivated by the awe-inspiring beauty of the smooth, crimson-hued clay rock, taking on magnificent forms. Against the backdrop of the Grand Canyon State's clear, pristine air and azure skies, the expansive scenery seemed to stretch infinitely before our eyes.

Every rolling hill and mountain peak radiated warmth, as if softly murmuring, "Welcome to our sacred land." In the midst of contemplating life's profound mysteries, George and I were awestruck by the immense grandeur and breathtaking beauty of the boundless expanse that stretched before us, seemingly sculpted by a power far beyond our comprehension. Sadly, an unforeseen interruption abruptly halted our deep immersion, depriving us of the chance to fully delve into the captivating allure of our surroundings.

Continuing our journey into the depths of the Grand Canyon State, childhood stories about the Native Americans echoed within us, leaving an indelible impression of God's covert workings. The captivating array of multi-hued rock formations enraptured us, each layer of the mountains unveiling a timeline and narrative of the people who once called this place home.

After a brief interlude, I turned to George and shared, "I find myself resonating with the sentiments you have expressed, regarding the hand and power of God. His presence seems to permeate everything, and although I cannot fully comprehend or articulate it at this moment, I sense an unfamiliarity and transformative stirring within." I paused before continuing, "It is as if I am being drawn and beckoned towards God's unwavering and eternal love for me."

George replied, a tender smile gracing his face, "That sensation signifies that you are being summoned by the Divine messenger, whose mighty hand has guided both of us to this precise moment in time."

"You speak the truth, George," I responded with heartfelt conviction. "This awe-inspiring view and the serene atmosphere feel as if God is finally reaching out to me—not through words, but through His very presence and the tranquility He instills within me." Overcome with emotion, I confessed, "This overwhelming sense of peace is something I haven't experienced since I was a mere child."

Tears welled up in George's eyes as I added, "I wish my mother, sister, and brother could witness and embrace everything I am witnessing and feeling in this very moment."

"One day, they will indeed experience all of this and more, and you will be the reason they discover it," George reassured me, his voice trembling while he battled his own emotions.

"Do you believe, George, that God has meticulously orchestrated this journey for you and me? That it was destined, even before we arrived on the scene?" I inquired, filled with a newfound sense of wonder.

"Yes, I genuinely believe so. Not only was it prearranged, but it was also written before you and I embarked on this adventure," George responded with unwavering conviction.

As the sun embarked upon its descent behind the majestic mountaintops, we made our way to Flagstaff, where we would spend the night. Pulling into the Hampton Inn, we located it on the map. To our astonishment, we were met with enthusiasm and warm greetings from the entire staff, as if they had eagerly anticipated our arrival. Our accommodation was swiftly arranged, further fueling our sense of awe and anticipation.

"Here are your keys," the receptionist warmly said, handing them over with a smile. "And the elevator is just over there. Your room is on the third floor." She gestured to the left and flashed yet another brilliant smile before attending to a new customer.

Before departing from the front desk, George inquired about good dining options in the vicinity. "There's this charming restaurant called Cracker Barrel," she suggested, "serving up all the beloved old-fashioned Southern cuisine, like delectable biscuits and flavorful gravy. You'll absolutely love it!"

George and I exchanged nods of agreement as we stepped into the elevator. The ascent was swift, delivering us directly in front of our room on the third floor. "Three-hundred seventy-eight," George noted, glancing at the key and then at the door. "I suppose this is our destination!"

Both of us chuckled, opening the door to reveal a magnificent room offering an even more breathtaking view. Satisfied, we placed our luggage on the beds and took a moment to savor the tranquility.

"Three-hundred seventy-eight," George murmured. "Those numbers seem to hold some special significance. I have a strong intuition that great things are destined to happen to us on this vacation."

As I contemplated the day's events, it struck me deeply. The journey through the Grand Canyon State had stirred something within me—a profound sense of goodness, power, and inspiration unlike anything I had ever known. Yet, amidst the awe-inspiring beauty, the boundaries between reality and fantasy seemed to blur, and the weight of the past lingered.

My emotions oscillated between excitement and fear, a testament to the transformative power of the trip. The serene surroundings lifted some of the burdens from my heart and mind, while my struggles with depression, shame, anger, and guilt persisted.

With keen insight, George refrained from intervening, understanding that correcting every nuance along the way could hinder the progress we had already made through self-acceptance, respect, and selflessness. He recognized that the journey of change requires time and effort, resisting the urge to push me to grasp the unfolding truth. For my mind remained entangled in the clutches of the past, yearning for a catalyst that would enable me to perceive the truth, acknowledge it, and embark on the healing process.

Drawing from his own experiences, George knew that whatever I needed to break free and truly experience the reality of God's presence would manifest itself. A similar revelation had transformed George on his own path towards understanding and knowing God, offering help and guidance to all who sought it. In Phoenix, Arizona, the specifics of those encounters remained uncertain, but George held unwavering faith in God's power and promises. It was this conviction that fueled his restless fire. And so, he endeavored to guide me in ways that encouraged open conversation, sensing the deep internal wounds that begged for acceptance and gentle guidance.

"I sincerely wish to have the unwavering belief in the God you speak of so fervently," I confessed, my voice tinged with both longing and frustration. "But without personal revelations or tangible evidence of His care for me, I find it challenging to believe in His attentive love. Despite the breathtaking beauty of this journey and encounters with extraordinary people, my prayers and requests seem unanswered."

George responded kindly, assuring me, "It is not true. The Creator communicates with each of His creations. Sometimes, when His presence eludes you and His workings go unnoticed, it signifies that He labors behind the scenes, carefully crafting a perfect plan for you." Before I could respond, George raised his hand, signaling me to pause.

"Now, what is it that you truly desire from God in this very moment? Speak it aloud, and observe as it unfolds before you."

I pondered his words, feeling the weight and significance. What did I truly yearn for? What did I hope to witness in that instant? The depth of the question surpassed my initial expectations, challenging me to provide an immediate answer.

Then, it struck me—while many would struggle to respond, this question lay at the heart of my journey. Without hesitation, I resolved to provide an answer, aware that it held no straightforward blueprint for my life's path: I longed to reunite with my father, to confront him about the reasons for his departure. It was a question that demanded resolution—the only certainty within my being—before I could move forward, seeking Divine guidance to discern my purpose. The vivid dreams, voices, and restless nights had altered the trajectory of my life.

Confessing, I said, "I yearn to reconnect with my father, to uncover the truth behind his abandonment. Furthermore, I seek Divine guidance to understand my purpose, for my path has been influenced by these profound experiences." George, recognizing the undeniable influence of a higher power in my life, maintained a tranquil silence, occasionally punctuated by an enigmatic smile reverberating through the air in Flagstaff.

Seeking George's approval, I yearned for confirmation. Had I chosen my response wisely, or had I veered astray? To my surprise, George continued to smile, wordlessly affirming, "What's done is done. Rest assured, God Himself will soon provide the answers you seek. Now, recline and savor the remaining moments of your vacation."

As I reclined, lost in a sea of bewilderment, an irresistible urge compelled me to seek solace in the embrace of a rejuvenating shower. Deep in thought, pondering the enigmatic unfolding of events, I had scarcely adjusted the water when a reverberating voice echoed within me. "Your plea has been granted, yet in due time, you shall face the poignant choice between the allure of the past and the enigmatic allure of the present."

Startled, I flung open the shower curtain, half-expecting an intruder to confront me. Instead, the mirror unveiled another ethereal vision. Darkness shrouded my father, rendering him powerless as he stumbled amidst concealed obstacles. In desperate need of support, an unseen force relentlessly tormented him, his feeble attempts to defend himself proving futile in the absence of light. Despite his poignant pleas for liberation, I sensed that his cries would go unanswered.

The vision faded, leaving me transfixed, my own reflection mirroring the harrowing truth I had witnessed. Shutting off the cascading water, I enveloped myself in a towel, concealing the turmoil etched upon my countenance. Mulling over the revelations, I resolved to postpone discussing them with George.

Thankfully, George slumbered peacefully as I emerged from the bathroom, oblivious to the tempest raging within my mind. Seeking solace, I nestled into my bed, my thoughts racing as I sought respite from the profound ponderings. Eventually, tranquility descended upon me, weaving its tender spell, and coaxing me into the realm of dreams.

# CHAPTER TEN

The morning arrived swiftly, beckoning me from slumber with the flickering sound of the television turning on. Already engaged in checking the news and weather report, George's warm remark painted a perfect day on our journey.

Responding with a grin, I stretched and yawned, playfully asking George, "Are you ready to regale me, my fatherly figure, with your wisdom and wit?"

George smiled and nodded as we began the task of packing our suitcases. Downstairs, a growing excitement accompanied the loading of our bags into the car.

"Even just loading our bags makes me realize that embracing ease is preferable to relying solely on brute strength and muscle as I once did," George mused.

To this, I replied, "Well, based on what I've witnessed, you seem to be faring well."

"Peter, age has tempered me, and these past few days have been a delightful blend of joy and adventure, reminding me that my body appreciates moments for rest along the way." He chuckled.

Sincerely, I conveyed to him, "I understand and hope to acquire your grace, wisdom, and demeanor one day."

"You will," George responded. "I have no doubt about it. Your potential for global impact and success in all spheres of life is palpable. I sense it in you. Granted, you have much ahead of you, but with guidance and understanding, you are poised to leave a lasting imprint and shape this world."

Feeling the weight of his words, I fought back tears. To hear such sentiment from George, a man I held in the highest esteem, genuinely touched my heart.

Before our journey resumed, we decided to indulge in a wholesome breakfast and aromatic coffee at the Cracker Barrel. Honing in on Highway seventeen South, the verdant landscapes and picturesque vistas paved the way to towering mountains adorned with striking red rocks. The anticipation for the grand adventure that lay ahead permeated my being. In the context of this odyssey, a question emerged.

"George, what truly constitutes a purpose and its discovery? Despite grappling with Joseph Stacks' choice to abandon a successful corporate career for photography and gleaning insights from various customers like Mr. and Mrs. Haskins, I yearn for a clearer understanding of recognizing that pivotal moment and unraveling the process of stumbling upon one's purpose. You have often spoken about purpose and a life mission—could you delve deeper into this for me?"

"Indeed," George commenced. "Purpose” springs forth from an inner knowing, an unyielding feeling that nudges one towards the notion that there is more to life, something of profound significance that beckons. It transcends fleeting whims or whimsical wishes; those are illusions of what we aspire to be or do. Purpose rests upon a foundation of unwavering faith—a deep-rooted conviction and sensation that remains constant and unwavering. Often, we evade our purpose, missing out on the opportunity to uncover our true passions, as we mistakenly believe that we may not excel in them. Yet, the capacity to achieve extraordinary feats resides within us."

"Why is that?"

"Because our purpose has been pursuing us in various guises, leaving us clues along the way, while we have been consumed by problems and pain. Sometimes, our passion and purpose emerge disguised as misery within our current professions. On other occasions, they manifest as dreams, visions, or even accidents, as in your case, Peter," George enlightened.

"What we may initially perceive as accidents or missteps are often the heralds of our purpose, passion, and innate creative instincts rearranging things to gain our attention and guide us towards enlightenment. These elements reside within us. Once they are discovered, they become an inseparable part of our lives."

George's words prompted a furrowed brow, and he asked me to share the reason behind my consternation.

"Well, you captured me with the notions of vision, purpose, and passion, but perhaps you overlooked, George, that God and I do not exactly converse. Hence, if my purpose hinges on Divine intervention, I fear I may languish indefinitely without discovering it."

"Do not let that trouble you, Peter. Rest assured, God will reveal Himself and His plans to you in due course, unveiling a connection that is uniquely tailored to you."

As we ventured deep into the Valley of the Sun, the encircling mountain ranges gave way to an expansive panorama, offering glimpses into a city replete with its own stories to tell. Advancing eastward on highway one-zero-one, then veering onto the fifty-one North, we finally reached our destination. A sense of awe washed over us as we ambled towards the Pointe Hilton Resort, observing in amazement the captivating water fountain at the entrance that seemed to hypnotize us, leaving us momentarily speechless.

When I pulled up to the front entrance, a valet greeted us and swiftly removed our luggage from the car. George's gaze fixated on the towering palm trees and the oasis-like ambiance that enveloped us, visibly moved by the sheer beauty that surrounded us.

Inside the grand lobby, a team of affable staff members warmly greeted us, their smiles radiating warmth and hospitality as they eagerly awaited our arrival at the front desk. Stepping forward with my credit card in hand, I was met with a resolute gesture from the staff member, signaling me to pause.

"Peter Smith, I presume. We have awaited your arrival with great anticipation, ensuring that your every desire and need are met during your stay at the Pointe Hilton."

With a smile, I replied, "Thank you. I aim to make this stay truly unforgettable, alongside my dearest friend, George."

Charles Banks, the staff member, nodded solemnly. "I am Charles Banks, and rest assured, should you require anything, I am merely a phone call away. I will ensure your stay is both serene and delightful."

I received the room key from Charles and followed the porter to our abode. We traversed the magnificent open terrace, passing mesmerizing waterfalls, both of us lost in wonderment. As we entered our sanctuary, the porter gracefully placed our luggage in the closet, while our gaze was drawn towards the window, captivated by the ethereal beauty outside.

The porter spoke of the amenities, yet my thoughts were consumed by the fact that we had stumbled upon a true paradise. Grateful for his assistance, I retrieved a twenty-dollar bill from my wallet and offered it to the porter. However, without uttering a word, he swiftly exited the room, closing the door behind him.

George joined me by the expansive windows, stretching across the entire wall, and together, we beheld the sprawling, lively playground before us. A radiant smile graced his face as he turned to gauge my reaction. Enchanted by the captivating beauty surrounding us, I murmured, "George, I never wish to depart from this place."

In that moment, a gentle knock resonated from the door. Still entranced by the allure and infinite merriment that awaited, George took it upon himself to answer. Standing before us was a staff member, carrying a bottle of chilled champagne and two complimentary tickets to explore various activities in the Phoenix area. George promptly placed the champagne in the refrigerator to keep it cool, while I reveled in the tranquility and warmth of our surroundings. "Before embarking on our grand adventure, I believe I shall indulge in some television and a brief nap," I finally declared.

"A splendid plan," George replied with gratitude. "By the way, I am incredibly grateful that you invited me on this extraordinary journey."

"You are more than a friend to me, George. I simply couldn't imagine embarking on this adventure without you," I replied, beaming.

As we switched on the television, we aimlessly surfed through numerous channels until stumbling upon one showcasing the notable attractions in the area. Jotting down our desired destinations, we unintentionally succumbed to slumber before reaching the third point.

Several hours later, we awakened to find the room remarkably warm. Concerned, I phoned the reception desk to inquire about the air conditioning. The receptionist assured me that someone would be promptly sent to our room and, as a gesture of goodwill, graciously offered two additional nights to compensate for the inconvenience. I accepted their offer with gratitude.

George and I proceeded to the lobby for dinner, only to discover that the valet had already retrieved our car, anticipating our rendezvous. Curiosity led us to inquire about nearby dining options from the porter, who responded with a warm smile.

"No need to venture far, Mr. Smith. We have a fine selection of dining establishments right here on the premises. The Hole-In-The-Wall offers a taste of the Old West, complete with a sunken bar overlooking our magnificent eight-acre water feature. Alternatively, Rico's American Grill boasts an outdoor setting with inviting fire pits. Should those options not suit your fancy, Slim Pickens offers a delectable variety, served just steps away from our pool."

I chuckled at the delightful options presented. "In that case, please return our car. We shall simply stroll to dinner!" We chose the Western-style restaurant, savoring the exquisite experience of Southwest cuisine and spirits. As we dined, lighthearted banter filled the air, centered around our forthcoming plans. Suddenly, a realization dawned upon me.

"George, ever since my arrival, an unexplainable sensation has enveloped me. It is as if a significant piece of my life's puzzle is on the verge of falling into place. This place feels poised to unveil a profound surprise, one that might finally alleviate the lingering questions I've harbored for so long. It is difficult to articulate, perhaps just my vivid imagination running wild."

"I highly doubt that, Peter," George reassured me earnestly. "There are no coincidences in life. You already know that truths reveal themselves when the time is right. What you have been seeking in secret may soon manifest. It seems you are on the brink of entering a new season of life, where everything seamlessly aligns and finally makes sense."

As we returned, the waitress kindly offered us a final glass of wine to mark the end of the evening.

In our absence, a dedicated repairman diligently fixed the air conditioning. With a longing to freshen up, I headed towards the bathroom. As I stood there, a hushed conversation between George and the repairman reached my ears.

"There's still a bit of time before we can enjoy a cool breeze again," I asked, catching a hint of a smile in the repairman's voice.

"Hopefully, not much longer. I'm almost finished," came his reply.

"I'm Peter, by the way. And you?"

"Rodney Smith, nice to meet you," Rodney responded, his gaze averted.

A sudden pause gripped me. Rodney's voice triggered a sense of familiarity. Where had I heard that voice before?

"Your accent gives away that you're not from around here," George observed.

Rodney chuckled. "Quite right. I'm from Atlanta."

A brief silence followed, before George inquired, "That's quite a distance you've traveled."

"It is indeed. I sought a fresh start in a new place."

"Well, you've certainly found the perfect location to embark on that journey. Do you have family back in Georgia?" George gently placed the newspaper back on the table, sensing that this man held a connection to my past—perhaps even the key to my puzzle, or better yet, my enigmatic father.

Rodney paused; his voice filled with emotion. "I once had a wonderful family, but I left them behind without any good reason when I decided to run away. I wanted to shield them from a life like mine, but in doing so, I failed both them and myself, Rodney explained."

"This is a personal matter, and feel free not to answer if you prefer, but how many children did you have?" George asked, trying to contain any overwhelming emotions. Meanwhile, I remained in the bathroom, uncertain if I caught their conversation.

Rodney exhaled deeply, tears tugging at his voice. "Three. A young girl, a boy, and an elder son, each destined for greatness," he confessed.

George recognized his struggle and restrained any further inquiries by biting his lip. As I emerged from the bathroom, I couldn't help but wonder if I had heard their entire conversation.

As the evening progressed, our discussion with Rodney slowly faded away. Lost in our own thoughts, we allowed room for introspection and contemplation.

While names danced on the tip of my tongue, Rodney's phone rang, demanding his attention. With a nod, he informed the caller that he had completed the repairs and hastily gathered his tools. Turning towards George, he apologized for the sudden interruption and suggested meeting us later, after his shift, to hear our stories.

In the midst of freshening up after the long journey, I remained in the bathroom, observing Rodney meticulously arranging his tools in his bag. Without waiting for further inquiries, he swiftly left the room, his back turned to George, who engaged in conversation with the repairman. As Rodney departed, my curiosity piqued, and I stepped out of the bathroom only to find George standing at the door, deeply engrossed in conversation with the intriguing Rodney, a man whom I had met only moments ago.

Unaware of the details exchanged between George and Rodney, I positioned myself behind George, craving insight. Unexpectedly, George suggested a 6 pm dinner at one of the on-site eateries. Rodney raised his hand in agreement, walking away while confirming his presence at the designated restaurant by the pool at the agreed-upon time. With a satisfied smile, George followed his friend back into the room, closing the door behind him, captivated by his thoughtful expression. "He seems like a delightful individual," George suddenly remarked, arousing my curiosity to learn more about this mysterious connection.

Agreeing with a chuckle, I took a stroll around the room, lost in contemplation. However, my attention shifted when I noticed George sitting silently, his gaze lost in space, his silence speaking volumes. Concerned, I asked, "Is everything alright, George? You seem as though you've received unsettling news." Unaware of the ongoing exchange between George and Rodney, I yearned to understand George's reflections as his mind churned with thoughts.

"The repairman, Rodney, and I had a captivating conversation during your absence in the bathroom," George revealed. "Remarkably, he hails from the very same place of your birth, shedding light on your father's disappearance. Furthermore, he shares an East Coast background and has a family consisting of two boys and a girl." George posed a question, seeking my thoughts on Rodney's decision to start anew in this place.

"Exquisite choice, I must say," I replied with a chuckle.

Subsequently, a serene atmosphere enveloped us for over thirty minutes as we immersed ourselves in the offerings of the television. Suddenly, a two-way radio left behind by Rodney let out an unexpected blurt: "Rodney Smith, Rodney Smith, can you please provide an estimated time frame for the air conditioning repair in room three-seventy-eight?" George and I exchanged perplexed glances, and seconds later, the voice echoed once more.

Upon receiving the message, I approached the table, took hold of the room key, and turned it over, revealing the number three-seventy-eight. An overwhelming sense of disbelief washed over me as I shook my head in astonishment. Just then, a knock on the door interrupted my thoughts, followed by a forceful voice claiming to be from maintenance. I made my way towards the door, ready to welcome the visitor. Opening it, I was met with the unexpected presence of Rodney, who had come to retrieve the forgotten radio. Our eyes briefly met before Rodney quickly looked away, offering a brief apology for the intrusion.

Handing him the radio, I tried to meet his gaze, but Rodney once again avoided eye contact. "I apologize for disturbing you, but it seems I left behind my two-way radio as I hurriedly left the room," he explained. As I handed him the radio, I couldn't help but ask with a hint of hope, "Are we still meeting tonight?" Confusion laced my voice.

Rodney's response shattered any expectations. "I'm afraid not, let's reschedule," he blurted out. "Perhaps tomorrow." With that, he swiftly disappeared around a bend in the hallway.

In that fleeting moment, a realization dawned upon me, one that Rodney and George may have deduced before me. Rodney and I shared the same last name and hailed from the same birthplace, our city of origin. Could Rodney be the missing piece of the puzzle I had desperately sought? Turning to George, I gathered the courage to seek answers. "George, do you think this man might hold information about my family or our relatives in Georgia?"

"Perhaps," George replied, his eyes meeting mine with a knowing smile, as if he anticipated a series of unforeseen events about to unfold— events that would surpass even my wildest expectations.

"What weighs on your mind, George? That peculiar, enigmatic expression again. It's as if you possess exclusive knowledge," I probed.

George simply shrugged, playfully suggesting, "What if he is a long-lost family member, or better yet, your father? How would you approach such a situation?"

Lost in thought, I lowered my gaze to the floor, preparing my response, when the ringing of the phone abruptly snapped me back to reality. Charles, the front desk attendant, inquired about the status of the air conditioning system.

"All is well," I assured Charles. "Your maintenance specialist, Rodney, did an exceptional job."

A heartfelt sentiment resonated through the phone as Charles praised Rodney. "Men like Rodney are rare gems," he shared admiringly. "We rarely encounter individuals as dedicated, hardworking, and committed to providing exceptional customer service as him. A few years ago, Rodney sought employment with us, and though we initially had reservations due to the absence of substantial references or a consistent work history, he pleaded with our district manager for a chance. Hiring him turned out to be the best decision we ever made. In my twenty years at this resort, I have never come across a more diligent and dedicated worker."

Curiosity piqued, I asked Charles, "What else do you know about Mr. Smith?"

"We have limited information about him," Charles replied. "He comes from a small town in Georgia but keeps his family and personal life to himself. Mr. Smith prefers to maintain his privacy. Why do you ask? Do you have a connection with him?" Charles inquired.

"Not particularly," I responded. "I merely noticed that Rodney is from the same area where I was born. Thank you for your assistance, Charles." With that, I ended the call.

Observing closely, George remarked, "You seem troubled, as if you've received some unsettling news."

I struggled to find the right words to respond. Charles had essentially confirmed what I had suspected all along: Rodney had appeared seemingly out of thin air, without any references, yet he proved himself to be a diligent worker, deserving of our attention.

The pieces of his past were slowly falling into place. What could Rodney have been involved in before arriving here?

"Peter, are you still with me?" George called out, bringing me back to the present.

"Oh, my apologies, George."

"It seems lately you've been lost in your thoughts. Is something bothering you that you wish to share?" George inquired.

"Nothing specific," I said, snapping back to reality and eager to continue our conversation. "What were we discussing again?"

George posed a thought-provoking question. "Suppose Rodney turns out to be a relative of yours. How would you react?"

"If he were to be revealed as a long-lost cousin, I would warmly embrace him into my life. However, if he were to turn out to be my father..." I paused, searching for the right words. "I would seek answers as to why he left me and our beloved family. I would express my genuine emotions and thoughts, while also establishing clear boundaries, considering the immense pain his actions have caused," I conveyed, my anger palpable.

"Are you absolutely certain about your decision? Remember, we cannot heal our wounds or move forward until we delve into the root cause. It seems to me, Peter, that your father may hold the key to resolution, rather than being the source of the problem," George replied.

"He is the cause of all the pain in my life and my family's," I argued. "As I mentioned earlier, George, I want no involvement with him," Peter retorted.

George empathetically looked at Peter, his eyes filled with understanding. "I can see the emotions swirling within you, as I too have faced a comparable situation before, as you may recall," he said softly, his voice carrying a sense of deep compassion. He knew all too well the tumultuous journey that awaited Peter, the search for truth and the longing for inner peace.

"However," George continued, his tone gentle yet unwavering, "I also know that if this man indeed carries the weight of being your father, you will never truly find the tranquil solace, the healing, or the profound purpose in your life unless you dare to delve into his perspective. It may be a path fraught with uncertainty and perhaps even pain, but it is through this exploration that you can unravel the intricacies of your own story, for better or worse."

Pausing for a moment, George's eyes locked with Peter's, radiating a sense of utmost respect for his friend's journey. "So, Peter," he said, his voice imbued with a mix of encouragement and solemnity, "is that what you truly desire? The decision, as always, lies in your hands. Trust your intuition and know that I will be here to support you every step of the way, regardless of the path you choose."

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

On that day, George and I embarked on a captivating adventure, delving into the heart of Phoenix. Immersed in the vibrant culture, we traversed countless shopping malls and visited historical monuments that brought the rich heritage of the city to life.

Each new discovery fueled our excitement, enveloping the sun-kissed valley in laughter and joy. As the day drew to a close, we sought solace in muscle therapy and upper body massages, easing the fatigue from the road trip and our shopping extravaganza.

In the Valley of the Sun, we decided to seize every moment. Our explorations led us to local specialty stores, where we embraced the allure of Native American clothing and carried home cherished mementos to commemorate our journey.

Venturing further, a myriad of strip malls and antique shops beckoned us with their imaginative treasures and unique charm. After countless steps and captivating sights in the mesmerizing southern desert, our expedition culminated in a downtown restaurant permeated with the mouthwatering aroma of barbecue. With a beaming smile, I turned to George and remarked, "This oasis surpasses even my wildest imagination. I am truly grateful for this experience."

Seated at a booth flaunting a splendid view of Phoenix's downtown skyline, we eagerly placed our orders as the waiter approached. Amidst a momentary silence, I turned to George, curious about his thoughts on the city thus far. He promptly declared it as nothing short of awe-inspiring and breathtaking. I wholeheartedly concurred, and our conversation was momentarily interrupted as the waiter returned with our drinks.

Opting for the house special, a tantalizing array of southwest barbecue ribs, cornbread, coleslaw, baked beans, and French fries awaited us. With enthusiasm, we indulged in the feast, exchanging smiles but gradually slowing our pace as our satisfied bellies reached their limit. Amidst a companionable silence, my thoughts wandered back to Rodney's peculiar behavior at the resort. What was he concealing? I silently pondered. Why was he so eager to avoid any interaction with George and me, only two individuals he had met a mere twenty-four hours ago?

Our splendid meal concluded, and we made our way back to the resort. The friendly valet greeted us once again, graciously taking my keys and expertly parking my car. Passing through the front desk and lobby, Charles welcomed us with a warm smile.

"Has your vacation been exceptional so far?" he inquired.

I gleefully responded, "It has been truly marvelous!" I then requested Charles to inform Rodney that George and I wished to speak with him in our room, as we sought his guidance to explore the city further. Concerned that Charles might perceive our curiosity about Rodney as intrusive, I quickly added, "If it's not too much trouble."

"Certainly, I'll let him know. He finishes work in about an hour," Charles obliged.

Thanking him, we proceeded to our room, aware that Rodney's eventual arrival would unveil the enigmatic character and his origin. Placing my electronic key into the slot, I turned the handle and stepped inside, only to be greeted by the surprising sight of Rodney Smith standing with his back turned, gazing out at the lush green lawn of the resort.

For a brief moment, silence enveloped us before Rodney initiated the conversation.

"I realize that opening your door to find me, practically a stranger, standing here without an invitation may seem odd and even unnerving. However, I implore you to take a seat and listen to what I have to say."

Both George and I promptly settled into the chairs, astonished, yet willing to lend our ears to Rodney's revelations.

"The past twenty-four hours have been both a blessing and a burden." Rodney's voice trembled with emotion. Tears began to cascade down his face, though he valiantly attempted to conceal them.

"Every day, as part of our maintenance duties, we receive a comprehensive list of arriving guests at the resort. It entails their names, addresses, and telephone numbers," Rodney explained, anticipating my interruption, which he swiftly curtailed.

"Please, allow me to share my story before you inquire further. My heart is heavy, burdened with a multitude of words that demand to be spoken." He continued, "When I saw your name, Peter, on the list, accompanied by all your information, I felt as if my world was about to shift. I initially hoped it was a mistake, a misprint on the guest sheet. In my haste, I rushed to customer relations to confirm, only to be met with confirmation of its accuracy.

“Upon your arrival at this specific resort, among endless alternatives, I sensed that a momentous shift was about to unfold in my life. My heart quickened, while my thoughts raced, pondering the limitless possibilities that lay ahead. Steeling myself for an imminent encounter that could reshape everything, I braced for the influx of inquiries that would undoubtedly command my attention.

"And as I pondered upon my past actions, I found myself lamenting the moments and opportunities that slipped away, like sand through my fingers." Rodney's voice quivered, and although he bravely concealed them, tears streaked down his face.

"I have committed numerous mistakes in my journey, attempting to rectify the consequences of my choices that plagued me for years. I left behind a trail of destruction, turmoil, and anguish. I exerted great effort to mend myself and resolve my ongoing struggles, yet it always seemed elusive." He paused briefly, then continued, "After grappling with my inner struggles and the inescapable clutches of the past for years, I came to the realization that it would not easily dissipate.

"It seemed the more I ran and fought these demons of my past, the deeper I sank into the abyss of depression, addiction, and anger toward myself and God. I felt my life was a mistake and wasn't worth living anymore. I felt that if I couldn't beat my past and these addictions, or ever have the opportunity to see my family again, I would end my life.

“However, despite having the freedom to choose, I found myself unable to shake off the weight of my past—the regrets and sorrows that incessantly haunted me. It was then that I made the arduous decision to relinquish everything and embark on a journey of self-discovery, yearning for a profound transformation in my life. Only after experiencing such a metamorphosis would, I be truly prepared to reunite with my family, dedicating not only my love but also all that is dear to me.” Rodney had expressed this sentiment with great eloquence.

As the Arizona skies dimmed and the sun gradually vanished, its departure cast elongated shadows through the room's wide window. A momentary hush enveloped us, prompting me to inquire softly, "Why didn't you reach out to let us know you were okay? We would have understood and supported you through your pain."

Rodney's reply came, laden with emotions, "I truly wanted to, believe me. To write to you, your brother, sister, and your mother. But my pride, guilt, and shame held me captive, preventing me from doing so.

“In an attempt to numb the pain, I sought solace in constant drinking, drugs, and reckless encounters with women. I felt like a failure, betraying my beautiful family. I understand your anger, Peter, and you are justified in feeling that way. I know the bitter taste of abandonment all too well, for I have tasted it myself. But let us not allow it to hinder us now." He gazed at me expectantly, awaiting my response.

Before George and I stood a man of deep sorrow and remorse, my father, time, and inner turmoil etching their marks upon him. His face bore the ravages of a battle against addiction, with cheeks and eyes lacking the vitality they once possessed.

Like a taut rubber band losing its elasticity, his features seemed distorted, as if reshaped by the passage of time. His eyes, once vibrant, now appeared sunken and tinged with darkness. I struggled to recognize the man standing before us, relying on his recollection of bygone days, places, children, and wife for affirmation.

"For years, we embarked on a relentless search for you, fearing the worst—kidnapped or worse," I confessed to him. "We desperately longed to reconnect with our father and my mother's beloved husband, to fill the void that consumed us when we thought we had lost you forever.

“We unjustly blamed ourselves, convinced we had pushed you away. My mother carried the burden alone, wracked with insecurity as a wife. The tears shed were not ours, but yours," I proclaimed, overcome with emotion.

"When you arrived at this enchanting resort, restlessness overcame me. I yearned for the slightest glimpse of you, to know that you were safe. I desired to observe you from a distance, witness the man you had become, without interfering or robbing you of the opportunity to succeed and love. I simply craved reassurance that you were indeed my son and that life had treated you kindly," Rodney responded.

"Countless nights, regardless of how far I roamed or toiled in this vast nation, the thoughts of you kids and your mother consumed me. I yearned to see you once more, even before drawing my final breath. Then, one night, a dream offered solace. In the darkness, we fervently searched for each other, armed with dim beams of light. Calling out our names, we hoped to discover love's beacon amidst the echoes. Miraculously, our paths converged in that dream, and it was extraordinary," he reflected, though tears welled up in his eyes once more.

"After that fateful night, I reached out to God, beseeching for a chance to be reunited with my family. I made a promise that if granted, I would amend my ways and return to Him, just as I did in my youth. I entrusted Him with every facet of my life. I yearned to intimately know each member of my family and be embraced by their presence once again." In that moment, I truly saw my father as a man, peering into his eyes and sensing compassion and love—something I had desperately sought my entire life. With that realization, I found solace within, concluding the chapter of my life as a son ceaselessly in search of his father.

"Peter, when I entered your room to address the air conditioning issue, I had no inkling of what awaited me. That is precisely why I couldn't meet your gaze—it pained me as a caring father to be confronted with what I had left behind. Making a feeble excuse, I hurriedly exited the room, evading the overwhelming surge of emotions within. I ran away, seeking solitude and grappling with my profound guilt.

“Running and evading have long been the patterns etched into the fabric of my existence, but now, I am weary, drained from this ceaseless game of hide-and-seek with my heart, mind, and conscience. Finally, I resolved to embrace honesty—a form of surrender—and approach you, beseeching your forgiveness. I hold on to hope that you may find it in your heart to grant me this absolution for my transgressions. If not, I can at least find solace in knowing that I wholeheartedly attempted to make amends. The time for running has reached its end.

“Peter, I find myself truly apologetic—for all the hardships endured by you, your sister, your brother, and your mother due to my actions. Causing harm was never my intention. Deep emotional wounds burdened me, and I resorted to distance and escape as means to prevent further pain, both for myself and others.”

"Rodney," Peter softly implored, "could you please give us some space? I need time to process, fearing that if you stay, things may become even more tumultuous."

George lifted his hands, signaling Rodney to depart. "Allow me to handle this. It may take time, but I assure you that you'll have the chance to share your perspective later."

Amid a whirlwind of emotions, I finally reunited with my father after all these years—uncertain whether to shed tears of joy or unleash screams of anger. Hastily, I tossed my suitcase onto the bed, barely giving its contents a glance before emptying the closet.

"I wish to leave immediately," I declared to George. "This trip was a mistake. I simply long to return home."

George placed a reassuring hand on my shoulder. "Please, Peter, find your calm," he gently urged. "Let's discuss what happened and strive to understand its significance. We must untangle the reasons behind these unfolding events."

Frustration compelled me to shake my head and collapse onto the bed, yearning to escape into slumber before facing the harsh realities before me. I desired no connection to the present situation, nor to the man I once revered as my father.

Though I heard his words, his explanations felt hollow. There was no solace amid the anguish, as vivid images of me assaulting my tearful father enveloped my mind. Desperately, he reached out in his attempts to stop the relentless barrage of my fists—an embodiment of my anger.

For years, my dreams had been haunted by such violent encounters, envisioning his demise. Each time, he futilely tried to elude, evading the brutality of my attacks. Inevitably, I would awaken, swinging, screaming, and kicking at him, only to find myself lying in bed, weeping with remorse and guilt for the harm I had caused.

Though I longed to see and hear from him, now that I had, forgiveness seemed to elude me. Pushing him away appeared to be my only option.

That night, however, as slumber overtook me, I experienced a different dream. I perceived its deeper meaning, and within it, I heard a voice.

"Peter, though this may seem insurmountable and almost unbearable, now is the time to seek understanding and truth. Soon, you will have to make a decision, and the course of your life hinges upon the clarity of your mind and heart. Otherwise, you may embark upon a path that does not align with your desires. Will you leave your current work unfinished and incomplete, or will you pursue the truth and liberate both yourself and your father from the sins of the past?"

After a sleepless night of tossing and turning, I eventually succumbed to slumber before the break of dawn. In this subsequent dream, I found myself immersed in a joyous reunion, laughing, listening, and conversing with my father. However, upon awakening, the realization struck: it was merely another enigmatic dream. Compelled, I felt the need to apologize to George for my startled reaction to my father's sudden reappearance.

George's response was understanding and kind. "Apologies are unnecessary, Peter," he reassured me. "I comprehend and share in your pain." He suggested, "How about we grab breakfast and embark on a leisurely drive to Tucson? We can explore some of the old western studios where those famous cowboy and Indian movies were once filmed." With those words, we closed the chapter on the discussions about the man who had unexpectedly reentered my life.

As we made our way to Tucson, I confided in George that I had not yet received any signs from his God regarding this perplexing sequence of events. "Peter," he comforted me, "He has been attentively listening all along. You have only just discovered your father, and if that isn't a clue from God, then I don't know what is."

"In these challenging and trying times," I lamented, "He seems to have forsaken me, much like my father did many years ago. Perhaps, George, your God has favorites. Or maybe I must endure further trials before He will lend me His ear."

George simply shrugged. "He is always listening and responding to us," he declared. "The question is, have you been attuned to His voice?"

Perplexed, I confessed, "I don't quite grasp what you mean."

"Listening to God requires a stillness of mind, body, and soul," George elucidated. "Where there is division, conflict, or any other discord, it disrupts the communication between the Creator and His creation—which means us. Peter, God speaks to a tranquil mind. His voice cannot penetrate an environment clouded with strife, for a mind consumed by internal conflict cannot recall His eternal gentleness, peace, and love. These are qualities you have yet to fully embrace while grappling with the notions of forgiveness toward your father.

"In our quest for peace," George reflected, "condemning our fathers for their misguided actions will not lead us there. Our anger can turn us into seekers of revenge, ready to harm even the innocent in our pursuit of justice. As we long for vengeance and harbor cold hearts, persistently seeking the destruction of those we deem unforgivable, we find ourselves at odds with the silent nature of God when we call upon Him. By continually seeking conflict instead of harmony and love, we remain entrenched in the role of warriors, unable to fully grasp the essence of serenity and love. Our refusal to forgive creates barriers in our minds, hindering the divine voice of God from reaching us—a voice eager to communicate."

Feeling apprehensive, I voiced my concerns. "If I were to forgive my father for his senseless act, I fear that God and I will never speak again. George, can you see and understand my perspective?"

With empathy, George replied, "Yes, Peter, I understand. The stakes are high based on our emotions and perspectives. Allow me to shed light on my point of view. The upcoming decision holds immense weight, capable of altering the course of our lives, our fathers' lives, our families' lives, and even the world."

"How much longer will we bear this burden?" George earnestly asked. "The weight of past regrets, the chains of addiction concealed from sight... If we were truly liberated, we wouldn't be sitting here in this car, having this conversation, would we?" He paused briefly, emphasizing, "We wouldn't have embarked on this journey if we were genuinely free and content. Yet, we remain trapped by self-imposed chains. How much longer will we allow ourselves to be confined? This journey provides an opportunity to untangle the threads of our lives and make a decision. Remember when we spoke about choosing the right path at the beginning of this expedition? Even our dreams and visions have been urging us to take a stand." George's words resonated deeply within me, leaving an indelible mark on my mind.

"Indeed, we sought solace and clarity concerning our pasts, our fathers, and our families," George continued. "All parties involved agreed that this journey would serve as a catalyst for guiding our paths. However, Peter, the final decision lies solely in our hands. The Divine will not intervene, as it respects our autonomy in exercising free will."

I reflected on our earlier discussions, where our talks focused on the pursuit of peace, freedom, and happiness. I delved into the depths of uncertainty, longing to uncover my true purpose in life through my dreams and visions. I confided in George that the passion for owning a shop, which once burned brightly within me, was slowly fading away, making room for a new sense of purpose aligned with whatever plan God might have in store for me.

"We discussed our lofty goals and dreams, how we aspired to change the world," George recollected. "I urged you to lead from your heart, Peter. Do you remember? Perhaps not, as your current preoccupation revolves around finding your father and condemning him, just as you are now.

"The predicament is clear: it is not solely about our fathers, but about us, Peter," George declared. "We have yet to forgive ourselves for the hardships we have endured. We continue to play mental games, unwilling to let go of the past, the memories of our childhoods, and to grow. It's time for us to learn how to truly become mature individuals capable of forgiving ourselves and, in turn, forgiving our fathers and others who have wronged us. I don't imply that this transformation will happen overnight, but we must embark on that path."

George advised further, "Start by forgiving yourself, even if it's only a small step, and along the way, strive to extend forgiveness to your father. Both you and he deserve better, a life filled with more goodness, just as our mothers, brothers, and sisters do. Don't you believe so, Peter?"

He continued, offering a profound explanation of the art of forgiveness. "Forgiveness isn't about our fathers and their actions or lack thereof, Peter. Forgiveness is for us. Once offered and released, it truly transforms our perception, enabling us to see the world with love that gently infiltrates the chaos. It dispels the illusions that distort our vision, hindering our ability to unearth our true selves and discover our destinies here.

“Forgiveness is a powerful act that liberates us from the burdens of the past and frees us from the grip of addiction and illusions. It is an internal transformation that ends the war we wage against ourselves and releases us from the contradictory tales we weave about our fathers.

“But sometimes, without even realizing it, we become prisoners of our own thoughts. We dwell on the wrongdoings of others and let them define our lives. We feel lost, hopeless, and unsure of where to find relief. Our attempts to escape the cycle of anger and revenge bring only temporary respite, and we find ourselves trapped again.

“Peter, if we can come to terms with this truth, surrender to it, and fully embrace it, we will rediscover our childhood dreams. Our purposes will become clear once more. Those who carry unforgiveness in their hearts wander through life like beggars and thieves, burdened by worthless memories that hinder their mundane existences.

“When we choose the road of unforgiveness, we are asleep to the beauty that surrounds us—the laughter, happiness, abundance, and joy that beckon us to awaken from our slumber. It is calling from deep within our hearts, but our anger, frustration, and thirst for revenge drown out its voice.

“Peter, you experienced a sense of betrayal and harbored a desire to unleash your anger upon everyone, including your own father. Even God faced resentment for not fulfilling your wish to exact revenge on those who wronged you. Such thinking led you to believe that you were entitled to wielding such power, but God denied your destructive desires and challenged your belief in favoritism.”

As George locked eyes with me, truth pierced through my defenses, and I came to realize that my faith was solely placed in myself, making me an adversary to others out of fear. The dominant emotion I carried was a deep-rooted belief that everyone despised me, stemming from a misguided entitlement born from childhood loss. It left me feeling owed by the world.

“But this kind of thinking keeps us hidden, detached from the abundance, love, and meaning life offers. While others heal and move forward, we remain stagnant, fixated on the past, unable to let go. We fail to recognize that setbacks and disappointments are an integral part of everyone's journey. While we cling to yesterday, the world continues its progress without us.

“In the tiniest leaf and the humblest blade of grass, we can find wonder and witness the perfection of God's creation. Forgiveness acts as a lens, revealing this beauty, while unforgiveness distorts the truth and ensnares us in a web of lies. It perpetuates the status quo, preventing us from challenging our perspectives and embracing reality.

“True peace, clarity, and love cannot thrive in the grip of unforgiving thoughts. They become a disease that consumes the mind and constricts the heart, obscuring our innate desire for authentic love, harmony, and abundance. We become entangled in negativity, deceiving ourselves.

“On the other hand, forgiveness acknowledges that the perceived wrongs inflicted upon us by others may not have truly transpired. Imagine standing beside me, Peter, and being commanded to strike an innocent person for no apparent reason. Did we act out of free will, or were we swayed by external forces that bypassed our moral compass? You answered correctly; it originated from an external source.

“Unforgiveness governs our actions, disguising itself as forgotten memories, feelings of being unloved, worthless, and disconnected from others. By holding onto the belief that we have been wronged, we perpetuate harm and hinder our own progress with guilt, anger, and self-sabotage. To move forward, we must reassess our perspectives and break free from this cycle.

“Let forgiveness guide us along a path of healing and growth, releasing us from the weight of the past. Only then can we truly discover the immense joy and fulfillment that awaits us.”

George explained to Peter, "The seed of attack takes root when we allow it into our minds and act upon it. It grows silently, choking out common sense as it separates us through guilt, reflections of the past, and persistent memories."

He continued, "Here's the revelation, Peter. When we hate or withhold forgiveness from others, we rely on external solutions to fix what we perceive as wrong. But nothing, and I mean nothing, from the outside can truly mend our wounds. True resolution can only come from a change of heart and mind.

"Peter, you stand at a pivotal moment in your journey. Being reunited with your father, who approaches with an open heart, seeking forgiveness and love, it is time to release old patterns of thinking. Embracing forgiveness for yourself and him will grant you a clear and harmonious state of mind, enabling you to fulfill your true purpose on this earthly plane."

George highlighted, "Choosing to offer forgiveness enables us to forge unbreakable bonds that unite us not only with our loved ones but with everyone. Illusions of sin and unforgiveness no longer possess the power to divide. In their absence, oneness fills the void, resonating with joy, peace, love, and abundance.

"But, Peter, if you hold on to unforgiveness, your negative visions and dreams will persist. And what about your father? Can he truly be free without granting himself forgiveness for his past mistakes, no matter how grave? Are you willing to let him remain burdened by shame and guilt?

"You might be relinquishing a Divine gift if you deny your father the chance to elucidate himself and unveil his emotions. This gift encompasses forgiveness, tranquility, liberation, joy, affection, and the revelation of your true purpose. Ponder upon your aspirations, Peter. Why embark on a profound journey of self-discovery, truth-seeking, and personal growth if you're unwilling to embrace the winds of change?"

With some reluctance, Peter confessed, "I don't believe I could ever undertake such an act. Granting him forgiveness would mean absolving Rodney of all accountability for his actions."

George gently replied, "Contemplate, Peter. How can he truly find liberation without self-forgiveness? Regardless of the specific transgressions, his mistakes burden him. And now, his long-lost son emerges with further unforgiveness and condemnation. Are you allowing him to evade the solemn consequences?

"You may deny yourself a Divine gift if you fail to extend your father the opportunity to elucidate himself and lay bare his emotions. This gift holds within it forgiveness, tranquility, liberation, joy, affection, and the revelation of your true life's purpose. Reflect, Peter, upon what truly resides in your heart. Why embark on a journey of profound self-discovery, truth-seeking, and personal growth if you resist the transformative power of change?"

George continued, "It is time for a new chapter, Peter—a fresh beginning that commences with reconciling with your father, honoring him, and inviting him into your existence. He needs you as much as you need him. May this extraordinary expedition and respite pave the way for a life of fulfillment."

Peter hesitated but eventually acquiesced, "Okay, George, I will rendezvous with him once again if you insist. However, it does not mean automatic absolution on my part."

"That is all I ask of you," George replied.

As Peter came back from his protracted journey from Tucson, he discerned that many of his erroneous conclusions were rooted in his own flawed ruminations, as George had illuminated. Though reluctant to admit it immediately, he acknowledged the absolute veracity of George's words. Therefore, the following morning, Peter resolved to ring Charles at the front desk, requesting him to have Rodney come to their room.

# CHAPTER TWELVE

The following morning, I dialed the front desk, kindly requesting Charles to notify Rodney of our desire for a brief visit. After ending the call, I settled back into the comfort of my bed, on the verge of drifting back to sleep. Suddenly, a gentle tapping on the door roused me from my drowsiness. Time seemed to slowly pass as minutes turned into discreet knocks.

Curiosity ignited, I cautiously approached the entrance, pondering who could be calling at such an early hour. With no room service expected and my father's arrival still scheduled for later, it remained an intriguing mystery. To my astonishment, as I opened the door, there stood my father, a truly surprising sight.

Perplexed, I glanced back at George, catching a glimpse of his mischievous smile, as though he had orchestrated an artful prank. It didn't take long to realize that he had orchestrated this unexpected encounter even before my conversation with Charles at the front desk. Brushing off the surprise, I graciously welcomed my father inside, making my intentions clear, "Before we depart, I believe it is only fair to offer you an opportunity to provide an explanation."

With a sincere nod, my father responded, "I understand. It is all I have ever yearned for."

For a few reflective minutes, an undisturbed silence filled the room. Rodney, filled with a blend of apprehension and guilt, directed his gaze towards me, then George, before finally lowering his eyes towards the floor. Absentmindedly, he wiped his hands on his denim-clad jeans. "I am at a loss for where to begin. You see, not a single day has passed without me thinking about you, your brother, sister, and your mother. From the depths of my heart, I love all of you with an intensity that words cannot encapsulate. I have always aspired to be a loving father and devoted husband, but…"

Pausing briefly, Rodney glanced upwards towards the ceiling, searching for answers that seemed to elude him. "When I was young, I held dreams of a blissful life, adorned with a loving spouse and cherished children. This dream became the essence of my existence. When fate brought your mother into my life, it felt as if I had ascended to the gates of heaven. She became my savior, the lifelong partner I had yearned for. We embarked on a journey together, swiftly relocating to the enchanting southern side of Atlanta, where we began to build a new life. Everything fell seamlessly into place—I secured a fulfilling job at the Coca-Cola bottling plant, prosperity followed suit, and soon after, you were born. Holding you in my arms, gazing into your innocent, brown eyes, a tranquility and love washed over me, a sensation rarely experienced before, save for the affection I held for your mother.

"All I longed for was to be near you, cradling you tenderly, singing soothing lullabies to lull you into serene slumber. Your mother considered my behavior irrational; it was unlike anything she had witnessed before. And truthfully, it was unlike anything I had ever displayed, for until that moment, I had lacked the profound joy that you and your mother bestowed upon me. Soon, your siblings joined our small family. Overjoyed by each new addition, I watched with sheer delight as you interacted with one another, engaged in playful antics on the floor.

“And so, the story continued... In that moment, life felt complete. Everything was going smoothly until that one day, while your mother was out shopping. I found myself alone with you and your siblings, and something inside me shifted. I began feeling unworthy of you all, plagued by doubts about my father, husband, and provider capabilities. It was as if a heavy burden weighed me down, pulling me away from my family. Instead of cherishing our time together, I resorted to drinking and smoking in bars, using those vices as an escape from the pain, shame, and guilt that haunted me.

“I realized I could never measure up. I would come home late, reeking of alcohol, often venting my frustrations at your mother for no reason. Restless, angry, and clueless about how to cope with my emotions as a young man, the absence of guidance only worsened my struggles. I had experienced so much in my life, and the only way I knew how to deal with it all was through a careless and self-destructive lifestyle. Sometimes, in the dead of night, I would sneak into your rooms, silently watching you sleep peacefully, carefree. Yet, a voice inside me reminded me of my failures and how disappointed you would be if you discovered the truth about my past. Despite everything appearing to be going well, deep down, I always felt like a failure and a loser.

“Though your mother loved me deeply and supported everything I did, she couldn't understand why I suddenly began acting in such destructive ways. I had concealed my pain and secrets from her for so long.”

"Why did you hide them, Dad?" I pondered, my voice barely a whisper.

"Because I harbored the intense fear that if she discovered the truth, her love would cease," Rodney confessed, his eyes brimming with tears. "I was consumed by the terror of losing you and your siblings."

"What was it that you couldn't tell her, Dad, I asked?"

"Before I answer, my son," he paused, his voice filled with introspection, "I often pondered whether my departure would spare you, your mother, and your siblings from further pain.” In that fleeting moment, memories of my own father's silent exit flooded my mind, sparked by George's words. As our gazes met, unspoken truths passed between us. I knew then that George spoke the truth. These thoughts raced through my mind, but I refocused on my father, hanging on to every word he spoke. "As a father, I believed you deserved better. So, one morning, without warning or explanation, I made the choice to leave. I told your mother I would be working late, got in my car, and never looked back."

As tears streamed down his face, he looked at me and then at George. "I realize this doesn't justify my actions, but it was the only path I knew at the time. My inner anguish was leading me down a dark road of self-destruction."

Despite my anger, tears welled in my eyes. "What hidden secrets could drive you to such actions?" I asked, my voice filled with a mixture of curiosity and pain.

"Listen, Peter, please understand that whatever I disclose to you and George does not change my deep love for you, your sister, your brother, and your mother," Rodney said, his tone grave and direct.

Meanwhile, George appeared as eager as a first-day school student, recognizing the eerie similarities between Rodney's story and his own. These forthcoming revelations were bound to bring forth distress, suffering, and anger. I dreaded the moment when I would have to confront it all. Rodney took a deep breath before continuing. "What I am about to reveal took years of soul-searching, painful self-reflection, and seeking help from unlikely sources. As I grew older, I observed the world around me, connecting the dots of my experiences. What once felt normal was merely a consequence of conformity, acceptance, and avoidance of abandonment. Even with all that I have done, shame and guilt still haunt me.

If only youth, naivety, and a desperate need for attention, acceptance, and love had not defined my past, I wouldn't be standing here today, sharing this with you and George. Many years have passed, and others in our community have sought the truth, desiring comprehension and resolution. Research continues, as we strive to unveil the darkness that has plagued our community and severed the bonds of love that unite us.

“These concealed secrets have fractured our community, leaving us burdened by shame and guilt. Inner peace, freedom, and happiness remain elusive. Authenticity and prosperity feel beyond reach. The puzzle remains incomplete, missing numerous crucial pieces.

“However, we silently agree to work together, unearthing the truth, so that you, Peter, and future generations need not endure the horrors of life with secrets and an encroaching cloud of darkness.

“Our purpose is not to pass judgment on others, for judgment merely invites judgment upon ourselves. Rather, our underlying aspiration is to support community members in discovering and embracing the truth, fostering healing and growth in the process.

“Furthermore, embracing these truths empowers individuals to embark on a transformative journey towards healing and ultimately flourishing. Once again, my dear son, the forthcoming revelations will illuminate the motives behind my actions. I express deep regret for the pain inflicted upon you and our family. However, it was imperative to initiate the indispensable transformation and personal growth, paving the way for abundant prospects and a more joyous life, not only for your children but also for countless others,” Rodney conveyed his heartfelt remorse.

My father took a deep breath. "A childhood cousin raped my mother, which was how I was conceived. She made efforts to conceal it, attributing the blame to someone outside our family's realm. Though she never confided in me, I eventually discovered the truth through perceptive relatives who could grasp the turmoil within my inner world.

“Weighed down by an untold secret for countless years, my mother silently endured, until succumbing to alcoholism when I turned twelve, sealing her own fate. Now, I can fathom the depth of her embarrassment and shame, which at times made me feel abandoned, as she grappled with her own guilt and anger.

“In this struggle, she unintentionally neglected me—mentally, emotionally, and physically—during my childhood. Despite knowing her love and care as a mother, seeing myself as a product of injustice became a burden she couldn't bear.

“She expressed affection and love through material things, because she didn’t know what true love meant, or how to receive it herself, instead she used all that she knew how to shares with her offspring as she tried to compensate for her lack of mental and physical nurturing as every mother instinctively knows to do, unless they're internal instinct and knowing is highjacked by traumas.

Then the mother finds it almost impossible to love, and nurture her child or children in healthy ways. When a mother don’t know how to connect to her child or children, she can’t love them properly because there is no bond between her and the offspring. Anger, shame, and guilt places a wall between her and the offspring. Her inner anger and hatred of herself turns towards her child or children. She then often turns against her children and abuses and abandons them just as she was abused and abandoned as a child.

Father’s do the same thing, but in a different way, they tend to verbally, physically, and mentally abuse their children, and if things become too unbearable to the father, they tend to abandon the wife, and the children, as I too have done to you, Peter.

The father or mother find it too difficult to take care of the needs of their children when even their own needs weren’t met, and nurtured as a child. The child or children can’t bring them happiness, peace, or heal the wounds of the parents as most parents believe true.

Instead, the child demands are so great and of need what the parents can’t give them, the mother and father can’t cope with the cry of help from the child or children, so when the wounded parents discover this reality, they tend to pass the children of to their parents, the grandparents, or they simply give them away in foster care, because the parents aren’t ready for such a great responsibility as they presumed would be possible.

Peter, thank goodness your mother didn’t abandon you and your brother and sister although she was unequipped to handle children alone, she managed and I am grateful she became what I could never be, which is a nurturing, caring, and loving father. With regrets, I’m so sorry I missed out on so much of you and your siblings growing up Rodney responded as tears rolled down his cheeks.

In most cases these things, although hidden, provokes profound contemplation on the intricate influence of concealed burdens in forging our destinies.

“I spent many years being verbally, physically, and one time sexually abused by another family member, while all along being rejected by everyone. I was often beaten or whipped because I disobeyed the constraints and demands others placed upon me as a child.

“I was like a child thrust prematurely into the depths of adulthood, my journey shaped by the dysfunction and immaturity of those around me. My memories of childhood are but a hazy blur, fragments of untold, painful experiences clinging to my identity as a man. In the familial landscape, I unwittingly assumed the role of the scapegoat, burdened with the weight of everyone's troubles, frustrations, and anger. They saw me as a source of entertainment, exploiting me for laughter, exacerbating my feelings of shame, guilt, insecurity, and abandonment.

“To protect myself from further torment, I withdrew into solitude, convinced of my own insignificance and unattractiveness. I became a servant, a slave to others, striving to avoid their ridicule and the internal turmoil it ignited. In a realm where I felt uninvited and unloved, I carried the weight of being an unexpected anomaly in this small town, haunted by the hidden secrets that seemingly revolved around my existence.

“During that period, I was confronted with a deep dilemma—the unseen force of fear obstructed my pursuit of new sparks of inspiration and the embrace of fresh ideas. The thought of unveiling my true self to the world felt overwhelming, and I was consumed by apprehension about the potential consequences of success. In this state, I chose to tread the path of safety, denying myself the opportunities to truly flourish. Despite my strong desire for success, I persistently undermined any positive chances that came my way, ensuring the concealment of my true potential. I settled for ordinary roles, constantly underestimating my own worth, seeking respect, acceptance, and love from all the wrong places, only to have my heart broken time and time again. As a result, I became guarded and cautious, constructing a fortress around my heart to shield it from further pain.

“The battles and difficulties that tormented my inner self were not confined to my interactions with your mother and children alone. There was also the daunting challenge of confronting the talents and inspirations within me. How does one suppress the Divine gifts and abilities bestowed upon them when their deepest yearning is to dwell in obscurity and seek a peaceful existence? Peter, it is an immense endeavor to conceal the light and talents that reside within us, and it exacts a profound toll.

“In life, there are pivotal moments when we are entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing our hidden talents and unique gifts. It is during these moments, as we acknowledge the Divine source of these abilities, that we are faced with a delicate balancing act. Feelings of shame and uncertainty may weigh heavily on us, creating an internal struggle that leaves us hesitant to display our remarkable talents, fearing that it may unravel the beautiful mysteries that lie within us. In the midst of these intricate and complex emotions, we navigate the tapestry of our existence, yearning to express our true potential while preserving the enigmatic essence of our being.

“Dealing with profound feelings of being unwanted and unloved can be a challenging and arduous journey. These emotions give rise to a sense of emptiness and helplessness that pervades every facet of life, leaving one feeling adrift and lost. Each morning, I am greeted by a suffocating numbness that intertwines with bitterness, anger, and an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. It feels as though I am trapped in a claustrophobic world, a mere captive of my reality, longing desperately for liberation. Amidst this turmoil, I find myself caught in a cycle of doubt, constantly questioning my worthiness and ability to become the person I aspire to be—a soul seemingly past the point of repair, confined by the outside world's expectations.

“The accumulation of neglect, mental, and physical abuse leaves indelible scars upon the mind, body, and soul. I have traversed this firsthand, silently burying the truth within, yearning for forgetfulness. Yet, denial proves a fleeting escape, as concealed truths demand increasing effort to remain hidden from ourselves and the world.

“I found myself confronted not only with one, but with three significant hurdles that cast a shadow over my life, forever imprinting their mark: shame, guilt, and neglect. These manifestations alone do not allow for a smooth navigation through life, hindering progress and thriving. To truly thrive, one must possess a healthy sense of self-worth and inner completeness. Those who possess this robust sense of self and worthiness have the strength to confront and overcome life's struggles, discovering their purpose along the way. As for me, during those solitary hours, I sought tirelessly for reasons and answers to the hardships I faced. I would plea with the Divine, posing the question, ‘Why me? Why me?’ Yet, no response ever reached my ears.

“Amidst the ceaseless sea of inquiries, numbering in the thousands, my mind became ensnared day after day. Then, in a single moment, it struck me as I bore witness to you and your siblings. The revelation of having to explicate to you, Peter, and your brothers, sisters, and mother, the tangled web of our interconnected history and intricate family dynamics overwhelmed me entirely. How does one even embark upon the arduous task of unraveling the complexities of our kinship, ensuring that love and comprehension prevail?

“How does one articulate the notion that your father is also your cousin? Or that your great aunt, who dons the role of your grandmother, is a vital thread within this intricate tapestry of kin? The involvement of countless family members, their inextricable links, and the offspring they have begotten have left numerous children, including yourself and George, in a state of bewilderment regarding their origins.

“How does one commence the unraveling of enigmas, the scars etched into flesh, and the secrets tightly interwoven within a community consumed by deceit, dread, wrath, and discord? How does one grapple with the truths that emerge, laying bare the foundations of lineage and ancestry as fabricated illusions, fueled by ambition and yearning?

“Time and time again, I have encountered impasses in my pursuit of comprehending my heritage, roots, and forebears—longing for a sense of pride, only to unearth unsettling revelations that would shake the resolve of celestial beings and frighten malevolent forces.

“From an outsider's viewpoint, as I observe it all, the pandemonium and perplexity feel overwhelming, too great a burden for anyone to bear or attempt to elucidate. I could not bear the immeasurable sorrow and lingering memories, nor did I wish for my children, your mother, or yourselves to carry the weight of anguish, shame, and guilt throughout your lives. I was determined not to allow my own struggles to tarnish your futures. When you were mere toddlers, all I saw in your eyes was pure love, acceptance, and innocence. And even now, whenever my gaze falls upon you, I witness unwavering love and immeasurable potential. I desired nothing more than to secure a brighter tomorrow for you, and perhaps the only way I deemed suitable was to embark on a journey of escape.

“Trapped inside by an overwhelming burden, I found solace in the depths of alcohol, chains of smoke, and wandering the streets with kindred souls. Engaging in unthinkable pursuits only reinforced the belief of my insignificance, a notion other had expressed countless times, including my stepfather. My worst fears materialized, transforming me into my own adversary.

“In the end, I escaped as far as my legs would take me, fleeing from one town to the next, grasping at any odd job to sustain my living and find temporary refuge. My reliance on drinking and smoking mounted, transitioning from beer to liquor, from cigarettes to marijuana, and eventually resorting to cocaine and prescription drugs in a futile attempt to numb the ceaseless inner anguish. I had escaped many times, Peter, even before I met your mother, but the weight of my internal torment and addictive tendencies always led me back to where it all began, and I couldn't fathom why.

“My sole motivation was to escape the anguish and internal shame that enveloped my existence. I longed to reach out to you, your mother, brother, and sister through written words or a phone call, but the secret within me frightened me to my core. I carry profound shame as a father and husband, contemplating how you could love a man who has unraveled his own life and that of his family. I am undeserving of your affection, your brother's, your sister's, or your mother's. I had always aspired to be a father and husband who would elicit pride from his family. In my pursuit to overcome the past, I now comprehend that I may have inadvertently caused you even greater pain. I was powerless.”

For the first time, I truly grasped why my father had forsaken us. The meaning of those dreams also came to light, and my heart softened. After more than two decades, my mind cleared, and a heavy burden unexpectedly lifted from my weary shoulders. It was then that I recognized the dawn of a new path in my life.

I extended my hand towards my father's, embracing him tightly as we both shared tears of forgiveness and love.

"Dad, I apologize deeply for the battles you have endured throughout your life. I'm sorry that you carried and concealed those haunting thoughts and images within your mind and heart. But I am here now, and all of it belongs to the past. We still hold love for you and yearn for your return to our home. We have missed you immensely. My life has been a nightmare, for I worried about your whereabouts all these years and questioned why you abandoned us. You have been that immense void in my heart, and regardless of my attempts to forget or suppress the longing to find you, my yearning always persisted. I will call Mom. She wishes to hear your voice."

Without waiting for an answer, I instinctively reached for the phone and dialed. The distinct ring echoed several times before Becky's voice broke through, "Hello, who is this?"

"Becky, I found him! I finally found Dad, here in the heart of Phoenix, of all places."

"Who is this?" she inquired once again.

"This is Peter, your brother. It's Dad. We discovered him nestled in Phoenix, Arizona. On our cross-country adventure, my friend and I unearthed him. He's finally making his way back home to be reunited with his family. There's so much I want to share with you, but call Mom and John as soon as you can," I expressed eagerly.

Lost in exhilaration, I accidentally hung up the phone on my sister. Hastily, I dialed her number once more, longing for her to sense my elation.

"Hello, Becky? Becky, are you there?"

"Yes, yes, I'm here," Becky responded. "Tell me, where did you find him?"

"He's working as one of the maintenance staff at the Hilton at Squaw Peak Resort in Phoenix! Notify Mom and everyone else. We're staying in room three-seventy-eight if you want to reach us. I'll speak with you soon." After hanging up, I pivoted my attention back to my father.

"Son, it's simply extraordinary to see you. Words can hardly capture the depth of my emotions. I am eager to reunite with the rest of my family—it has been far too long since I was apart from those I cherish. This day, one I never thought would come, is now upon us. I shall forever treasure, embrace, and dwell in this moment."

He paused, deep in thought. "Before we depart, I must inform my boss about my impending leave. There's also packing to be done."

Curiosity bloomed within me as I inquired, "Dad, how did you find yourself working here?"

"Well, upon arriving in Phoenix, I engaged in odd jobs across the city. It was during that time that one of my employers mentioned a friend of theirs who happened to be working at this very place. There were nights I spent in my car or sought refuge in local shelters. One day, while servicing that particular customer, she shared her friend's contact information. I dialed the number, met the person, and management swiftly offered me a position. I commenced work the very next day."

George inquired, "And where is your place of residence?"

"A small studio on-site, and the rent is waived," Rodney replied.

"Rest assured, we will assist you with packing," George and I declared simultaneously.

"Very well, son…if it's appropriate to address you that way," Rodney responded.

"That's absolutely fine, for I have finally found a father—a dad of my own," I affirmed, a wide grin illuminating my face.

"I'll rejoin you later, as I have countless loose ends to tie before departing Phoenix," Rodney declared. He rose from his seat and exited the room discreetly, leaving us behind with the quiet closing of the door.

Filled with euphoria and anticipation, I turned to George.

"It seems that one of your prayers has been answered," George remarked.

"Yes, indeed," I concurred.

"I know you possess a multitude of questions for him, and I am confident that the journey back home will provide the perfect opportunity to have them answered," George reassured.

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

During our extended three-day expedition, we were fortunate enough to venture through vibrant cities: Las Vegas, San Diego, and Los Angeles. Just as we were gearing up to return to North Carolina, an intriguing request came from my father. Intrigued, I asked, "Pray, what might that be?"

"I yearn for a visit to the majestic Grand Canyon," he exclaimed, captivated by the enthralling tales and breathtaking imagery he had encountered.

"Ironically, my dear…" I chuckled. "George and I had it right at the top of our Arizona bucket list."

Without hesitation, we swiftly made our way to the waiting vehicle, seeking guidance from the valet as we embarked on our pilgrimage. As we drew nearer to the awe-inspiring Grand Canyon, an indescribable sense of wonder permeated the air, intertwining with our excitement and curiosity. The bustling traffic and the continuous flow of individuals converging on this same destination affirmed our arrival.

Finding a suitable parking spot within the vast national park proved effortless. Filled with anticipation, we eagerly disembarked and paid the requisite fee. Joining the throng of people queuing for the shuttle, our eagerness for this once-in-a-lifetime experience was palpable. Yet, I couldn't help but notice my father lost in deep contemplation, his enthusiasm akin to a child blissfully exploring a candy store. Evidently, the myriad encounters and experiences we had experienced throughout our visit to the park overwhelmed him. As we strolled along the southern rim of this magnificent natural wonder, I felt a profound sense of closure in my father's journey. Our final stop before returning to the visitors’ entrance and parking left us all in awe. However, my father discreetly disengaged from the group and stood alone, fully immersed in profound contemplation.

Concerned for his well-being, I began to follow closely behind him, but George reached out and halted my advance.

"Peter, please allow your father a moment to reflect and absorb the magnificence of this place. He is well. Let him process his thoughts and emotions in his own time."

We turned away from Rodney, creating more space, and together, we immersed ourselves in the magnificent vista of the canyon.

After approximately thirty minutes, we heard our names being called, but remained silent. Soon, the voice echoed again, and this time, we spotted Rodney waving his hand, urging us to join him.

With exchanged smiles, we made our way toward him.

"You have bestowed upon me one of the greatest gifts a father could ever ask for in his lifetime," he whispered.

Inquisitively, I asked, "What do you mean?"

Rodney paused, immersing himself in the canyon's depths and expansive stretch before us. Lost in contemplation, he shared with heartfelt sincerity, "Leaving behind Phoenix, Arizona, embarking on a journey towards a new life—it all felt elusive, like a figment of my imagination. A dream from which I wished to awaken, only to return to the monotony of my days, yearning for a reunion with my beloved family. When you agreed to accompany me back to North Carolina, a whirlwind of emotions surged within me—shock, fear, and the resurgence of old insecurities. I questioned my worthiness of your company, the love of my family, and the friendship of my confidant, George. In the stillness and depths of our journey, we immersed ourselves in silence and introspection—an exploration for solace, a yearning to validate the profound reality that will forever reverberate within my being.

"In this awe-inspiring expanse, as I beheld the beauty before me, the voice of the Creator whispered softly. It spoke of leaving the past behind, washing away distant echoes, and unveiled that the Divine cherishes us, our souls entwined. The gentle touch of His embrace, tears streaming down His face, infused me with profound emotion. I embraced Him in return, our tears mingling, experiencing an inner serenity and harmony with the world around me."

On the drive back, laughter filled the air as my father and I shared moments, and he answered my queries, affirming what George had already conveyed. Everything seemed renewed and vibrant, as if viewed with fresh eyes. New sounds filled my ears, while my heart overflowed with love and tranquillity. Never before had such profound emotions swept over me. My father exuded a radiant aura, illuminating the car even in the brightness of daylight. I could feel his serenity seep into my being; he had found his rightful place again, and I rejoiced in the long journey back to North Carolina.

"What was your childhood dream?" I curiously inquired.

My father smiled; his gaze fixed on the passing mountaintops. "I always yearned to be a counsellor or teacher in some capacity. Deep within me, I have felt the innate desire to guide others towards purpose and the grand tapestry of life's intricacies. I believe I would pursue it now, but as an old man, time has slipped away. Instead, I have besought God to pass this gift to my eldest son."

My jaw dropped, and my eyes nearly popped out upon hearing those words. It validated that my own dream was the missing piece in my existence. As a child, I would immerse myself in drawing and writing on any surface I could find, often getting reprimanded for marking the wrong things.

Standing before the television, my wild imagination conjured an audience, eagerly awaiting my words. The art of captivating others fascinated me, and I attempted to teach my younger siblings. However, their interests lay elsewhere, so I would venture outside, seeking solace under a tree, and continue my teachings to an invisible gathering.

"So, Son, what is your calling in life?" he inquired.

"I run a modest repair shop in the historic district of town, and perhaps you could lend me your wisdom in managing it."

"Sounds wonderful. As a young child, you were always drawn to things that others overlooked, and now I understand why," my dad responded. "Deep down, I always knew you were destined for something extraordinary. Although you excel as a skilled mechanic, my intuition tells me there's more to you than auto repair. I firmly believe that the answers you seek will reveal themselves in due time."

"I've already discovered them," I replied. "Dad, you've just affirmed my true calling in life, and I am committed to pursuing it. I had somehow forgotten that I taught my cousin Jason as a child. We pretended to be standing before a vast audience, delivering a magnificent message, while the crowd went wild."

I glanced at George with a wide smile, knowing something greater was unfolding before us.

"It seems like your prayers have been answered, Peter. God has granted you your second wish," George remarked.

"Dad, George has bestowed upon me wisdom regarding God, religion, love, and forgiveness. What are your thoughts on these matters?" I inquired.

“Each element holds a profound place in the human heart, quietly shaping one's character with every step. Regardless of the names we choose, God remains an unwavering and constant force. Conversely, religion represents the diverse ways we worship and comprehend the Divine. Love serves as the bridge connecting our Creator and ourselves, infusing life into all, even that which appears lifeless and insignificant. Love awakens the soul, uplifts the spirit, and unites even unfamiliar strangers and former enemies. It restores lost harmony and ignites love that may have lain dormant for years.

“Forgiveness, the path that erases the past, acknowledges faults and betrayals. Those who embark on this path first learn to forgive themselves, before extending forgiveness to others over time. It was forgiveness that brought George and me together. When individuals discard the weapons of hatred, countless lives are saved and liberated indefinitely. Without forgiveness, humanity remains trapped in self-inflicted suffering and madness. This is why each individual, regardless of gender or age, possesses the inherent freedom and autonomy to shape their destiny.

“Forgiveness serves as the gateway to the power God bestows upon us. Every remarkable human being in our history has learned the art of forgiveness, letting go, never looking back, and forging ahead.”

"Well expressed," George acknowledged.

As I embarked on the journey to unravel the mysteries of my life and find closure to the enigmatic dreams and haunting voices that plagued me, George almost slipped my mind with the laughter, jokes, and wisdom shared between my dad and I. Amidst my conversation with my father, I realized the profound influence of a significant presence that brought us together and revealed my life's purpose. At that moment, I paused and apologized to George for unintentionally omitting him from our discussion. George, understanding the significance of this joyous occasion and knowing the trials I had overcome, smiled and reassured me that there was no need for apologies. "I'm right here," he said, "and I share in your joy." Reflecting on his words, I realized that in similar circumstances, he, too, had discovered his own truths, encompassing Emma, Nicole, and now Betty.

George, my father, and I appeared boundless. During our journey back east to North Carolina, late nights spent in hotel rooms unveiled an indomitable bond and connection. Each state we traversed ignited our dialogues, filled with captivating inquiries that stirred our souls.

It seemed like time had reversed, breathing fresh life into my heart and mind. The heavy burdens I once bore began to fade away, replaced by a profound sense of purpose. Through this transformative journey, I delved deeper into my father, and it is all thanks to George, the true force that brought our long-awaited reunion to fruition. My prayers were answered, materializing when I released biases, anger, and resentment.

Upon returning to North Carolina, I invited George to stay the night with me and my father, fostering the bonds of our joyous reunion. Thankfully, George accepted. As night fell, I arranged my father's belongings in the spare bedroom and prepared a comfortable place for George on the couch, adorned with plush pillows. Before long, both peacefully fell into a deep sleep. With profound humility, I kneeled beside my bed, whispering to the Divine presence, "I offer my deepest gratitude for George, a guiding light that brought my father back to where he truly belongs. Thank you for safely guiding him home and making our family whole again."

Pausing briefly, I grappled with my words, as I felt compelled to offer a heartfelt apology to God for my previous doubts and disregard.

"With solemn determination, I vow never to question or turn away from You again," I tenderly uttered, easing myself into bed.

Soon, sleep enveloped me, and I found myself standing before God, who wore a gentle smile. God looked at me and spoke with profound wisdom.

“Peter, you have brought me great pride as your creator. there exists within me a profound affection for you, my dear child.”

curious, I asked, *"What purpose has brought me here?"*

*"You're here because I have chosen you to deliver a message to the world."*

"Why me? neither my family nor my small town have given birth to any remarkable accomplishments. I find myself inadequately prepared to counsel and support others. I have made my fair share of missteps, spoken untruths, and inflicted pain in countless manners. alas, betrayal is neither quick to forgive nor swift to fade from memory."

God's smile remained, and he replied, *“That is precisely why I am entrusting you with the task of delivering my message. for even the smallest among us has the potential to become the greatest. You once were the smallest in the town where I placed you, unaware of the immeasurable gifts I had bestowed upon you since the beginning.*

“Your existence was filled with hardship, as these gifts were meant to prepare you for your role as a teacher and messenger to the masses. despite spending most of your life torn apart by anger, abuse, and fear, my plans and purpose for you remained unchanged. I understood what you needed to fulfill this great task, Peter.”

“Your father abandoned you, and the untimely death of your cousin, Jason, disrupted your ambitions of becoming someone significant, someone admired in the world.

“All these experiences were part of my design, and even though your life seemed confusing, and you couldn't shake the inner knowing that you were destined for more, I, God, was tirelessly working behind the scenes. I orchestrated every moment, event, and encounter to awaken the dormant potential within you.

“There are no mistakes, peter, for I, God, don't make mistakes or create worthless beings like you believed yourself to be. take heart in knowing that my presence and love have always been with you, even during your darkest moments. everything led to this moment, when I knew we would meet like this, and now you know. I’m aware that within you still lies many unanswered questions. I’m aware that you are still wounded by all the things that you’ve endured.

I also know Peter, that within you still are things that may still tend to make you not believe in me, like you say you would moments before you entered your bed, and yet, even these things hasn’t stop my plans and desires for you to learn, grow, heal and thrive my child.

I knew these things even before I created you and all the billions of people before and after you. it’ wasn’t my plan to choose you because you failed and held anger against yourself, your father and me. what caused me to choose you peter from the very foundation of this earth was simply your thirst for learning and knowing the truth, my truth, my child. your faith in believing things even though you couldn’t see them yet.

Although your hardships and pain caused you to forget the promises you made to yourself and with your cousin Jason, I your creator never forgot them because it is I who placed them inside you.

For this reason, I sent you weird, confusing, and oftentimes dark and frightening dreams in which you couldn’t understand at the beginning of your change. it seemed like madness to you, yet, from this despair and uncertainty brought forth more of what I had placed within you.

You are broken just like millions of my other children, your brothers and sisters peter, yet my mercy is now extended to you just as it always had even to those who don’t yet know me.

And for those who have turned their backs on me, they are doing this because they don’t know who I am. they don’t know my ways, my love, nor my purpose for them. like you peter, deception, abuse, shame, and guilt holds them captive in mind, body, and soul.

I will work out of you peter, the hidden things which still controls your life both past and present through using you to help heal others by giving them the truth.

You see my child, I can only heal you through selfless giving and as you heal, you will also offer that same healing and freedom to others because we’re all connected regardless of if you believe it or not. You couldn’t heal others before this journey because your inner secrets, shame, guilt, and anger made you focus only on yourself. I know why you did these things to protect yourself from further harm, and pain, but in doing so you kept peace, freedom, happiness, and love far away from yourself.

Ignorant of knowing the truth tends to do this to my beloved creations such as yourself, but know even still my mercy and love always abides within and around you.

Peter, your inner child wounds kept you from seeing and experiencing the beauty, simple and enjoyable small things that life has to offer one who still feels unworthy and useless as a human-being, but that’s not what I put inside you at the moment of your conception and my work to detail in brining you forth as a fine piece of rare art, beauty, and love.

What I’m wanting to bring forth within you are the beauty, love, peace, and happiness in which are the foundation of your presence and the storehouse in which all of those things can bring into your life if you will allow me to help you see beyond your own worthless thoughts and behaviors.

What I’m offering you here peter is another doorway to discover the things I’ve placed inside you, but you could never experience and love them because you were a slave to the pain and the addictions it brought forth in your life.

Again, I’m simply offering you and the billions of my other children a better way to live, however, the choice is up to you.

I know there’s a lot to unpack here peter, as your creator reveals these things to you, but know that everything I do through and for you is because of my unwavering, and un relentless unconditional love for you and every human being that walks this planet.

Why do I tell you these things? because now that you know the truth, yet the decision to help me in your hands. I have created you to have free-will and in doing so I will not force you to choose, because I already know what and why you will choose what is right because that is what you are anyway. A miracle destined to help change the world because you now understand the bigger picture of why you’re here.

“The power to choose lies solely in your hands. it's up to you whether you accept my offer and help the world overcome its challenges by delivering the message of hope, peace, freedom, and happiness. but if you decide not to embrace this profound responsibility, I’ve entrusted you with, I fear humanity will continue to struggle with illusions.

“reflect upon these thoughts, peter, for the path I have set out for you awaits your decision. they persist in perpetuating conflict, violence, theft, and deceit in pursuing hollow treasures called success.

“I’m sending you, peter, out into the world as a result of the trials and painful experiences I’ve subjected you to. now, you are equipped to understand others not merely from a superficial standpoint, but through their inner concerns of the heart and mind, for that is what truly matters to humanity.

“My people, your human brothers and sisters, suffer in many ways, and those lacking knowledge and wisdom fail to connect emotionally and spiritually with others because they don't know the truth about themselves. The journey I’ve placed within you allows you to heal from within and in doing so you will know thyself, thus your inner light and energy will rise and become a beacon of home and change for others to follow.

“They don't yet know who they really are, nor the gifts I’ve placed within each of them. They miss numerous opportunities to support and uplift one another, because their minds are dark, eyes cloudy, and heart cold because the sting of both abuse and trauma won’t allow them to rest and find safety within.

“You had to experience these things Peter, so you can see the pain, suffering, emptiness, shame, guilt, and unworthiness through the eyes of those you will serve along the way.”

“I share this with you, peter, because when I gaze upon the earth, I witness many of my children losing their way. their inner light dims as fear, worry, doubt, uncertainty, and hidden traumas smother their peace, freedom, and joy. they lack guidance and hope, and turn towards each other in hatred, anger, attack, and abuse, perpetuating these cycles from generation to generation until true change arrives to end their temporary insanity and set them free.

“Peter, I chose you among others to spread the good news and truth, so my captive and enslaved can be set free,” god replied. “among humanity, I have granted you the most significant task of helping me save the world, one lost soul at a time, so they can each sense and feel my mercy, grace, and everlasting love for them, as I’ve always done.

“This is a great task I’ve assigned to you, peter. it won't be easy, but know I’ve given you the knowledge and power to overcome and reach great achievements. know that I, God, will always be by your side, peter.” god paused, smiling as our eyes met. “Your greatest reward is the opportunity to help bring humanity back to its senses, and restore it with justice, freedom, and peace. I’m counting on you, Peter.”

I humbly asked, *“May I request the privilege of embracing your gift as a teacher and guide for those suffering and wandering?”*

God smiled at me and said, “Yes. together, we will embark on a journey to touch the hearts of those who perceive life as purposeless and hopeless.”

“Just as you Peter, once did? Can we rekindle the flame within individuals, regardless of age or gender, who contemplate the desperate act of ending their lives to solve their perceived struggles? Let us illuminate a world dimmed by the misguided supremacy of knowledge confined to books, rediscovering the enduring truths rooted in common sense.”

"If that is your wish," God replied. "I shall bestow upon you a message, delicately enclosed within a scroll, for you to deliver through your book."

I gazed at him in sheer astonishment and exclaimed*, "I never anticipated my journey would lead me to write a book,"* I replied.

"You have made a profound choice by extending forgiveness to your father, inviting him back into your life, and embarking on a journey of renewal together after years of separation. I have always seen you and humanity as a whole—with boundless love and forgiveness. therefore, I shall grant you inner serenity, self-love, love for others, and abundant blessings in all aspects of life.

“Wisdom and understanding shall flow to you, surpassing all that you have previously known, and your endeavors shall flourish, illuminating a world that deeply yearns for the message I am entrusting you with. It is a message of tranquility, love, and the immense power of forgiveness—a message sought after by all, yet often eluding their grasp.

"But now, my child, you understand clearly. I have never forgotten your gifts and childhood dreams while growing up in Georgia. I have been waiting for this moment to reignite them within your heart and return them to you as a platform to help restore harmony to my confused and frightened children on earth."

Finally, I looked at God, and asked*, “What shall I call this book I’m supposed to write?”* Before the last words left my lips, *The Messenger's Gift* entered my mind. I smiled, knowing that I had indeed passed the test, and made the correct choice in choosing to forgive rather than hate another.

God handed me a golden scroll, elegantly wrapped in white linen, adorned with the initials P.S.

"Yes, Peter, it bears your name, for you have been given the gift and anointment as my messenger, teacher, and writer to share my truths with the rest of the world. with this scroll and the message inscribed within, handwritten by me, you shall bring immense peace, forgiveness, love, and abundance to those ignorant of the truth inside them, fearful, doubtful, enveloped in shame, guilt, pain, and loneliness.

“The words within this scroll shall soothe their weary souls, enlighten their minds, and liberate them from the curse of ignorance, reuniting them with their trues selves through my wisdom and its profound truths. Write these words at the end of your book, and never forget the message I have bestowed upon you, for if you don’t, you may again fall into the arms of the lost and downtrodden."

When I awoke, a golden scroll lay beside me on my bed, enrobed in white linen. I rubbed my eyes in disbelief, for I thought it was merely another obscure dream. I rose from my bed and walked into the bedroom, where my father rested after a long journey from Arizona. In the living room, George slumbered peacefully. It was evident that both he and my father had found solace, freedom, and happiness.

And so, I began to write. after a few months, I had completed a significant portion of the book, but I had not yet opened and read the words that God had entrusted me to inscribe at the end. therefore, I entered my closet, retrieved the golden scroll wrapped in white linen, blew away the dust that had settled upon it, and unraveled its sacred contents, reading them to myself.

# CHAPTER FOURTEEN

To all who are currently reading this message, and to those whose heart is weary and searching eyes yearn for purpose in their lives, I offer my thoughts, to those pondering the existence of a higher power, allow me to address you directly. And to those who have devoted years to exploring books, teachings, philosophy, and religion in search of truth, happiness, freedom, love, and peace, I recognize your remarkable dedication.

Your journey is one marked by curiosity, wonder, and an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Through this unwavering pursuit of wisdom, you embark on a path of self-discovery and illumination.

May your insatiable desire for truth and exploration of the human spirit guide you on a profound and transformative quest. May you find solace and enlightenment in your relentless pursuit of meaning, leading to the fulfillment you seek.

To those who find themselves weary, discouraged, and burdened with a fading hope within their souls, let it be known that I hold love for you. The echoes of uncertainty and anxiety reverberate within your hearts, causing unrest in realms unseen. Now, the time has come for you to awaken and embrace my voice and the acknowledgment of my existence.

Before I reveal my true identity, let me acknowledge something that you may believe I am oblivious to within your life. I am well aware of the inner pain, shame, guilt, and fears within you. I know of the abuse, trauma, abandonment, and physical torment that you have endured or continue to face. I possess knowledge of your deepest secrets, addictions, and the reasons behind your chosen coping mechanisms for your inner sufferings. I understand the root causes of your tendencies to hide, run, freeze, or fight when confronted with these secrets.

Your lack of self-trust and trust in others is comprehensible to me. I am fully aware of the rebellion within you and the disdain you hold for yourself. I’m aware of your inner hatred and bitterness towards me, your creator.

You wonder why I allowed such things to happen, and why I remained silent throughout your past, and now present moments. I will discuss your fear, anger, mistrust and insecurities as we begin to spend more time together, my child. I know why sleep eludes you and why physical pain torments you during the nights. I understand why things seem to unravel through self-sabotage, be it your job, relationships, or the pursuit of peace and happiness. You have nurtured a contempt for yourself, believing you are unworthy. However, let it be known that these are all symptoms of your brokenness. I have come to guide you in facing and resolving these afflictions through the truth that I radiate and your self-awareness. I am aware, however, that you currently do not possess the knowledge of how to overcome them, as you are attempting to navigate this journey solely on your own. Understandably, because you don’t want to ever be wounded again. However, those unwanted and unhealed wounds are keeping peace, happiness, and love from you, and it’s driving a wedge between us, your creator. I miss you, and love you so much which is why I’m here to help you know who I am and help you live a better life my child.”

Furthermore, I acknowledge that your trust and belief in my existence have been shaken. Even for those who acknowledge my presence, there remains a lack of faith in my ability to provide help, support, and inner peace. Instead, you perceive me as an incapable divine being, incapable of aiding in your healing.

How could you have faith in me when those who have preached my existence present me as a wrathful and judgmental entity, punishing all who fail to adhere to my commands? This portrayal is false.

I understand your anger has blinded you to the true nature of my being. countless questions haunt your mind, and you yearn to comprehend where I was during the moments of abuse, trauma, and abandonment. You question my allowance of such suffering when I could have intervened. in response to the mounting pressure and stress, you chose to deny my existence, a logical response considering the lack of evidence for our divine connection. Instead, you abandoned one deity, myself, in favor of another—worldly forms of safety, love, and peace. you denied my existence and began to believe in negative beliefs regarding your own worth and purpose. Therefore, you embraced gods centered around lust, greed, anger, manipulation, drugs, alcohol, and other fleeting comforts that momentarily alleviated your stress and torment, despite their ultimately transient nature. With an unquenchable thirst for solace, you scoured the world in search of answers that could relieve the gaping wounds of your heart and mind.

Your continued efforts in shaping a better life, without my assistance, stem from your current perception of a severance between yourself and me. How can this be reconciled? fear of me has enclosed you due to the deceptive words conveyed by those whom you once trusted. those individuals who claim to believe in me exhibit disarray in their own lives.

Why? Because they have yet to wholeheartedly surrender to their inner truths. Their hearts are as cold as ice, and their intentions for your wellbeing or they’re aren’t clothed with the best intentions. In fact, they are needing your help through manipulation to help ease their inner agony.

Furthermore, many who identify as followers of my teachings remain oblivious to the true essence of my message, their own truth, and their inherent divine nature. Why do they persist in inflicting torment upon themselves and those whom they profess to love? like you, countless others yearn simply for peace, happiness, and love. However, these individuals are not ready or willing to confront the truths that lie dormant within themselves. they are aware that internal transformation is necessary, a transformation that can only be achieved by delving into the depths of their own beings.

They understand that the pain, uncertainty, and memories they choose to evade must be faced head-on and resolved. Simultaneously, they grasp that embracing truth will ultimately reveal inner peace and freedom. Regrettably, most people prefer to disregard the grim reality that something is out of alignment and instead elect to cope and self-medicate through various addictions.

If only they comprehended that by confronting their inner darkness, the darkness that has given birth to guilt, shame, anger, low self-esteem, numbness, confusion, and torment, and by acknowledging its presence, they could also uncover their own divinity and discover their purpose in life.

However, discovering the truth requires each person go through the darkness which will undoubtedly trigger many painful and unwanted memories, shame, and guilt, but they must go through the darkness so they, including yourself can see what’s behind your sadness, depression, anxiety, restlessness and struggles with so many ideas tied to the unwanted wounds endured earlier in life.

The wounds are the things which are constantly triggering your now be it through another person’s words, actions, intentions or simply the fears of the future. All constant hypervigilance and uncertainty are the fruit of a much deeper issue that everyone knows that something is wrong, yet their fears and the knowing that pain will be met keeps everyone pretending they’re okay and just one more prescription pill, one more piece of crack cocaine, one more bottle of alcohol, one more night of careless and reckless sex adventures will make them feel better and everything will be okay afterwards.

These individuals, deeply wounded themselves, have caused you great harm. consequently, you have concluded that you desire no part in a higher power nor in those who claim allegiance to it.

Today, I am here to share a heartfelt plea and reveal my true self to you. It may sound unbelievable, yet it is genuinely sincere. the truth lies in our interconnectedness—the undeniable bond that intertwines us all. Within this web of existence, I hold an unwavering love for you. As time unravels, my presence will become evident, enabling you to fathom the authenticity of my being and your purpose.

Why do I approach you now? Because it is time for a transformative shift in your life. Leave behind the years of inner turmoil and the ceaseless search for solace. your pursuit of inner peace, both within yourself and on this earth, has led you further away from me and ultimately the truth.

It is time to unveil the truth and experience the lasting peace you have yearned for but failed to find. your quest for answers has only compounded your troubles, with your heart silently crying out for assistance. while other deities have left you unfulfilled in your mental, physical, and spiritual needs, that’s if you still believe in me, your creator and comforter. I am here to demonstrate a better path to living. Can any social media fill your emptiness long term? Can a lover provide and protect you like no other? Can any other form of distractions to numb the pain bring you an inner knowing that you are special, cared for, adored, and love like my love for you endures? Countless unanswered questions reside within you, and in due course, I shall provide the answers you seek.

My child, as the timing aligns, your understanding will unfold. However, presently, your wounded soul hinders your complete embrace of who I am and the destined path for you. amidst adulthood's burdens, deep-rooted fears and childhood scars impede your emotional, spiritual, and mental growth.

Consequently, you navigate from a place of numbness, abandonment, and trustless interactions, even with yourself. Every thought and action revolves around safeguarding and nurturing your inner child. Unaware of your mental, physical, and spiritual ailments, you pursue endeavors that fail to uphold your well-being in the short or long term.

Like a wounded creature, you strive for safety, healing, acceptance, and love, yet those you turn to offer more of the same or worse. Much of your life has been immersed in escapism, seeking fulfillment amidst recurring torment and agony. Your heart has grown cold, frozen like the arctic, leaving you uncertain of where to turn or whom to confide in, that your heart may thaw and rediscover healing and trust.

Countless avenues have been explored in your quest for rest, relief, and peace, yet even the warmest sunrays fail to penetrate the protective shell guarding your heart.

Ensnared by internal wounds, you seek ways to block, ignore, or numb their presence. external symbols of happiness become attempts to heal these wounds. Even more, through carrying around the inner wounded child, you’ve become prey to all the other unhealed people searching for quick fun and excitement at the cost of causing you more inner pain. Like a wounded animal, the enemy can see and smell you a mile away seeking and searching for ways to be noticed, adored, and loved but what you receive are lies, usury, and later discarded for another more exciting catch of the day or another person more wounded than yourself.

Your inner brokenness has made you a sitting target for others to lead you astray through mental and physical manipulations. Promises, promises, they all say they will give you the life you’ve only dreamt about if you will yield to them and give them what they want in return which is more of your soul.

You accepted these empty promises in hope this time things would be better, at least that’s what your mind believes as fantasy thinking takes you away temporarily into a world of make believe where everything is perfect, your family is loving, caring, supportive and respects you and makes you and your life; s desires a center of conversation at family gathers.

However, when your mind, and body awakes your quickly reminded of the realities of the real world, and the illusions and fantasy land was just another way to escape the truth, something you do often to keep the memories of the horrific experiences you faced while you were a kid and enduring so many unspeakable things inside your dysfunctional home from happening again. However, things continue to happen to you by different people, different situations or circumstances yet, the outcome is always letdowns, hurt, and the lingering residue of the realities are more triggers which leads to more anger, angry outburst and often physical alterations between you and another. As you can see my child, I God watches everything. I watch you and I never sleep because my eyes, ears, and heart is always on my beloved, you and the other eight bill people roaming this planet.

I love you, and always will, but keep in mind, I’m not here to judge you my love for love doesn’t judge, it corrects the problem so those separated by the pain of the wounds within can heal and thus you and I, your creator can rebuild our relationship and I can show you a new world and provide a way for you to experience peace instead of pain, love instead of abandonment, wholeness, instead of emptiness. Clarity, instead of confusion.

I can replace your tears with joy and reignite the small spark within you, however, to accomplish this I need your help. This involves allowing me to walk you through the darkness even when you cant see me. As we deal with any upcoming events and shadows of death, I will become your safe place or shelter in the storm as you traverse the darkness and enter into a new and shining light, me.

You, like so many of my other children you’ve rebelled against me and everything I stand for in life. Those meant to help you have turned against you, and wounded you and took your trust for granted and yet, I’m the one who is to blame.

We must look at who wounded you, and why. Once you know the truth that I will begin pouring within you, your mind will enlighten, your fears will subside and slowly you will regain your trust in me, and our relationship can begin again on solid and fertile ground, I know you will like that very much my beloved. These things are just many of the endless gifts I have in store for you along the way.

Now that you’ve matured, and able to make your own decisions, those old memories and wounds still guide your every thought and action often causing inner divide and conflicting beliefs which leads to more depression and ways to escape the memories of yesterday.

But now, my child, it is time for you to embark on a journey guided by me. gradually, I shall lead you toward spiritual maturity and true comprehension of my power. As our relationship deepens, I shall unveil more about myself, and the essence of my being known as god.

To some, I may appear vengeful or neglectful, but rest assured, there is purpose behind what may seem like absence or silence. Let me elucidate the intention behind our meeting and its profound significance.

The moment has arrived for us to engage in conversation. I have witnessed your aimless wanderings upon the earth—burdened by confusion and shame. Like a vagabond without a home, your heart yearns for safety, love, and peace.

The creator wishes to convey that your pain and suffering have come to an end. No longer shall you be shackled by the disappointments that have kept you tethered to the chains of the past.

Today, Peter, your messenger, bring forth a special gift from God to you. Today, you, magnificent kings and queens of existence, must rise and attune your ears to my voice. be still and recognize that I am God. Know that I am the God your forefathers spoke of in ancient times.

I reside within the very walls that comprise your physical being—the flesh and blood that I have meticulously crafted. Today, I address you directly, revealing myself to you. I am here to impart upon you the extraordinary message of your inherent divinity and the untapped power residing within your being. I am the power you seek—the abundance, the health, the happiness, and the peace.

I present you with my living word, as I have done with all aspects of life, be it through books, masters, or teachers. I do this to teach you that I alone am your one true redeemer. I have come to share my boundless love for you and with you. it is your birthright, and it is what you need at this moment. the path to healing lies before you, for only through healing can you escape the shadows you have cast upon yourself.

My child, progression becomes impossible when your mind, thoughts, scars, and inner conflicts persist in dragging you backwards, instilling fear in every aspect of life.

Who dares to move beyond their perceived demons that seemingly conspire to annihilate them? I implore you to reveal to me and confront the entity that restrains you. is it before you, behind you, or stealthily awaiting your vulnerability? now, your adversary, tormentor, and nemesis reside within you, preying upon your very essence.

Show the depths of your heart. is it the allure of wealth, the company of a lover, a satisfying career, or perhaps improved health? enlighten me, who causes you harm? Is it God, the entity you have been taught to fear and despise?

Why do you hold animosity towards me, yet remain complacent in your captivity? you are a captive both mentally and physically, entangled in shackles you cannot sever without my intervention. You claim to possess the strength to conquer anything on your own, believing that relentless effort will lead to liberation. But where is the proof of your freedom—your sound mental and spiritual well-being? Can you halt self-destructive behaviors at will? Can you declare to your addictions, "I am liberated and no longer need you"? Can you annihilate the longing for peace, freedom, and happiness without resorting to external substances or dependencies? What or who governs your existence, and for what purpose? It is challenging to assert control when you are held captive by the dark memories you consistently deny happened or is happening now. It is difficult to convey the truth to others when you persistently deceive yourself.

Please present your case and demonstrate that you are in control of your life. Share your plan for finding peace, happiness, and abundance in all aspects of your life. Where are your blueprints for a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle? Who created them for you, and what steps will you take to achieve them? Show me how you will overcome the obstacles that keep your mind, body, and soul captive. Do you possess the knowledge to discover true love and happiness? if so, please explain your reasoning and intentions. Clarify why you engage in secret activities to seek inner salvation and rest when your soul and body are fatigued from ongoing inner battles.

If you can provide undeniable proof that you genuinely control your life and do not require my assistance, I will respectfully step back and acknowledge you as a true creator, a remarkable miracle attaining everything you desire independently.

However, as I observe your actions and surroundings, I cannot identify any evidence, accomplishments, or progress at this stage, my dear. Therefore, I will persist in pursuing you. I will never abandon you, leave you alone, or avert my gaze, for you, along with the other eight billion soles on earth, belong to me. you are my child, a peerless creation of exquisite beauty, lovingly crafted, cared for by my mercy, and endowed with my power.

Hence, my love for you remains unwavering, even in the face of your current disdain. I trust that you will change your perspective in due course, for you have no alternative. we are inseparable, and nothing and no one can sever our eternal bond, as we are both radiant and enduring beings of light and love. I have arrived to facilitate your experience of heightened peace, joy, love, and abundance in your life.

However, this transformation can only transpire once you are prepared to receive the truth. Only then can you become what you ardently aspire to be, have, and achieve, as such is your birthright and heritage.

You do not need additional instructional programs to comprehend your life and purpose. While many of these programs are effective, they are solely beneficial to individuals who possess self-worth, self-belief, and are unencumbered by devastating experiences causing despair and hopelessness.

These endless programs aren’t designed for those who are still trapped mentally because their minds will not allow for such instructions and actions to proceed and continuously until the hopes, dreams, and visions of the heart is fulfilled my dear beloved. You have already tried and failed at these things too numerous to count, and your aware of these truths that I, your God speaks to you now.

Therefore, your journey involves confronting and addressing the truths within you, as this is where the majority of your challenges and rewards will manifest. what do I mean by this?

Numerous programs offer enticing yet delusive promises, which you may attempt to embrace or cling to. however, when confronted with the uncertainties of the world, these illusions eventually dissipate do to fear brought forth through triggers from the wounds of the past.

You eagerly consume countless books, magazines, and movies, yearning for fleeting glimpses of happiness, only to cast them aside when confronted by the weight of your past. These are what we refer to as triggers, and they prevent you from experiencing a better way of life.

My child, it is arduous to progress and achieve anything when you are unaware of your true identity and traversing through darkness, stumbling and falling, unable to rise. It is impossible to manifest your aspirations when you feel undeserving.

Nothing you pursue can materialize when the scars and wounds of your inner child are afraid to think and act on its own due to past negative beliefs and the outcome of such experiences. It is crucial to understand, heal, and love that inner child through acceptance, self-forgiveness, and time.

Until your inner wounded child is healed first nothing you attempt or try will yield lasting and rewarding results because your divided within and as you already know a divided house cannot stand on sand because it’s foundation and the structure itself is weak. within its walls are chaos and not peace.

Inner peace is needed for any instructions taken within its walls can be taken inside itself, and allowed to grow from within, thus it’s nurtured and can grow without the interference of negative or traumatic experiences form the past which will often choke out the new vision, goals and dreams due to uncertainty within. It’s abandoned because there’s no room for it inside a house or mind held captive by the past. Presently, fear and anxiety mercilessly govern your being, serving as relentless masters. negative thoughts and worries compel you to bow before them, desperate to obtain even the slightest semblance of peace, happiness, and love.

However, these fragments of solace evade you as your distorted self-perception leads you to discard them. how did this come to pass? I understand that it is the weight of unworthiness that impels you to reject goodness, love, and peace, and embrace pain, sorrow, chaos, and drama, as they are familiar to you.

You have persistently sought escape from pain and suffering. yet, how can you transcend these afflictions when you are unaware of the truth? understanding the truth is the initial prerequisite for comprehending your identity and purpose.

Today, you stand on the brink of embarking on the first step towards recognizing your divinity and power. the answers to healing your wounds, discovering peace, freedom, and love lie within you, as that is where your true power resides—an unconditional gift from me, an expression of my love and my promise to never abandon you.

while temporary relief may have allowed you to momentarily forget your troubles, you still require a fresh message that originates from my heart to yours. You solely require my truthful word—the word of love—and my acceptance and approval, which grants everyone an opportunity for a renewed existence. It extends forgiveness for the gravest transgressions committed by humanity, and it is freely accessible.

What more can god bestow upon his creation that is eternal and perpetually available to all who embrace it? I have now reached your soul consciousness, which I have ignited in preparation for receiving my message. If you can simply quiet your mind, setting aside personal preconceptions, beliefs, and opinions that amount to nothing more than clutter accumulated from others' discards... If you possess the strength to do so, my words shall serve as a boundless source of joy and blessings to you.

I am here now to illuminate my presence within you, rather than outside, as you may have been misinformed. my purpose is to guide you on the path of self-discovery and enable you to experience my eternal love.

For a while, you have been disconnected from my thoughts and ways.

You have professed to know me and claimed that I am your everything. However, when it comes to proving your loyalty, you stumble and withdraw. when doubt is sown by those who are lost and ignorant, you forsake the gifts and talents I have bestowed upon you.

Unknowingly, you overlook that I have already provided you with gifts, concealed only by your doubts and fears. deep within you, I dwell, hearing your thoughts and witnessing your innermost desires. I am able to answer and meet your every need, bringing joy and peace in the process.

If you truly knew me, you would be able to discern my presence from the fear that resides in your mind. unfortunately, you don't, and as a result, fear becomes your constant companion. I repeatedly assure you, "be still and know that I am God." however, you observe and hear things that do not align with your desires, causing your mind to race out of control.

In this chaos, pain multiplies. yet, if you remain tranquil and silent in the face of challenges, you will realize my serene and peaceful guidance towards the truth.

Still, when I knock on the door of your heart, igniting inner urges for you to embark on this self-discovery journey, you become fearful and retreat or simply ignore me until I fall silent once again. Nevertheless, know that I will persistently knock on the door of your heart until you respond to my call.

I am demonstrating that you and I cannot be separated, regardless of what or who convinces you otherwise. Believe this, my child. who governs the beat of your heart? who heals your wounds when you are hurt? Who allows your hair and nails to grow? No external power can fathom your thoughts and desires, leading you to places where they can be fulfilled, even amidst your apprehensions. alone, you could never achieve this.

I reside within you because we are one. My love, mercy, and grace will forever dwell within you and the vessel you call your body.

When you were young, you were aware of this connection, but darkness invaded your trust and instinct, severing the bond that once intimately united us.

You endured unimaginable experiences inflicted upon you by those from whom you sought help, guidance, and love. What I, God, can impart to you, no one else can. I am not a mere false God; I perceive your intentions and what you strive to achieve even without my assistance. Without my guidance, it will be a challenging and arduous journey, but you will always retain the freedom to choose your own path.

All that unfolds is a result of my love. I am the beginning and the end, and so are you, although it may be difficult for you to believe as you have mistakenly worshipped your body, intellect, and other external entities, perceiving them as yourself. Yet, they are not you. like me, you are a bundle of love residing within a temporary body, which you currently call home on this earth I created for your enjoyment.

However, this earth is not your permanent abode. in truth, your true self, or your human mind, has been so preoccupied with fulfilling the desires of the intellect and body that it has neglected to acquaint itself with me, the God residing within you. I love you, and I yearn for our communion. that is why I am speaking to you now.

It is time to cease your pursuit of external pleasures, for they cannot provide what you truly seek. You will only discover it, whatever it may be, by turning inward, towards your inner self, where you will find the understanding, wisdom, and knowledge needed to fulfill your initial quest. this can only be achieved by embracing the truth, reclaiming right-mindedness and free will with a purpose.

At present, you possess neither free will nor purpose. your mind and body have been hijacked by illusions and fantasies that serve solely to entertain yourself. shame, guilt, and unworthiness may have temporarily separated us, but all is not lost, for I know precisely where I have placed these treasures within you, even when you have lost sight of them.

I possess the answers to your deepest desires, and only I can help you bring to life those long-suppressed yearnings within your heart. release them and set them free, so that the world may witness the authentic you, united with me as one. Did I not grant them to you? is it not what you have endeavored to express since your arrival on earth?

These treasures were bestowed upon you specifically. if you have not yet discerned your gifts, remain steadfast, for you shall uncover them when you finally acknowledge your need for me.

Who put those longings, desires, and needs in your heart? How did they come to reside within you? The truth is, my love and companionship are the only avenues to accomplish these aspirations. you cannot achieve them in solitude.

Consider what doing it all alone has cost you. How much time, money, friendships, and love have you forsaken due to the enduring aftermath of trauma and its chaos? Allow me, your creator, to alleviate your burden and liberate you from the anguish of attempting to figure it all out by yourself. it is not your responsibility—it is mine.

Your human mind has been deeply programmed with trivial information, making it reluctant to accept anything that deviates from past experiences. You resist change because it signifies detachment from what you hold to be true. Like many others, you guard your beliefs, even though they consistently work against you.

This mindset is a feeble foundation built on shifting sands, always leading you astray. Embracing change and being receptive to it is arduous, as it entails breaking away from the familiar notion of solid ground. It instills fear of acting in new ways and embracing unfamiliarity. However, this novelty brings forth newfound life.

Each day I grant you is fresh and demands you to think and act differently. it propels you, as well as those who engage in it, to manifest remarkable achievements for themselves and others.

You perceive yourself to be solely comprised of your mind and body, yet your physical form progresses, grows, contracts, and ultimately withers, irrespective of your consent. It adheres to a predetermined timeline from birth to death, while you persist in another realm.

You are not your intellect or your body. you are a potent existence that has lost the ability to govern its thoughts and mind. consequently, you have been engendering misconceptions and grappling with significant issues in your life, completely unaware.

The root of your primary predicament lies in your thinking. you have been generating what you deem as negative outcomes and attributing them to external circumstances, instead of looking inward to me, seeking correction of those thoughts or their eradication from your mind. This will enable you to regain wisdom in your thinking and create in the manner with which I, your creator, have endowed you. have you ever questioned your existence?

You are here to manifest extraordinary things, but previous conditioning and training have derailed most of your endeavors, leaving you in a state of repeated failure.

Consequently, you have grown disheartened with yourself and with me. listen to me and allow me to guide you onto the right path for a change. I do not demand your sacrifice or renunciation of who you are. As your creator, I will gradually unveil the truth to you, lifting the curtains one by one so that you can discern reality from falsehood.

Then, you will stand on solid ground, possessing profound awareness that you hold meaning and guidance within. It is solely my love that I offer you, nothing more. you can persist in following your ego's way, but rest assured that its guidance has only brought you thus far in your life. After your descent from grace, you drew closer to the ego and succumbed to its influence when it enticed you away from your truths by attacking your mind, body, and soul through abuse and trauma.

Regardless of the manner in which it assailed you, you became one with it, concealing those secrets out of shame and guilt from the outside world. You have become enslaved to these negative thoughts and negative self-perceptions. I am here to liberate you by imparting the truth and revealing your true identity.

For you are my creation and child, and I am immensely pleased with you, even as I speak these words to you. My heart is overflowing with immense love for you, which is why I can never let you go. I will fight for you until the end of time, for you are considerably more precious than gold and silver. Every single one of my children are more precious than gold, silver, and precious jewels.

You are worthy, and I intend to illuminate these truths to you if you allow me into your heart and mind. building a relationship may take time, but I promise to patiently await your call and listen attentively. And when you do call my name, I will drop everything and move heaven and earth to aid you, for I love you. did you hear that? I love you for all eternity.

Attempt to comprehend who I am, the "I" within you, which possesses unlimited knowledge and remains perpetually vigilant. listen intently to what I have to impart. I created you, your brethren, and your sisters as an extension of myself. When I initially fashioned you in your mother's womb, you were passive, merely taking shape within the grand design that I envisioned for you. You performed just one action—you surrendered to my creative power. I uttered the word and infused life into your tiny lungs and lifeless form, and you became alive—a living, breathing human being.

In bestowing life upon you, I granted the keys and authority to earth's kingdom, endowing you with my own essence as a creator. Nurtured and overseen for nine months, you transformed into a masterpiece the world would behold. With limitless potential, you made your grand entrance into this newfound realm.

Crafted intricately by my hands, your being reveals the profound connection between your existence and your creator. Delighting in your flawless nature, I recognized you before you took form. throughout the ages, my love for you remains steadfast. it is this boundless love that impelled the creation of the heavens and the earth.

As time flowed, you grew from crawling to walking, and ultimately running, unveiling unimaginable horizons, and manifesting your creativity in every endeavor. Triumph attended your every step, and you conquered all you desired.

Yet, the world introduced falsehoods, leading you astray and causing you to forget the eternal guide within. A division emerged, and I, God, faded into the background, Ignored and forgotten. you prioritized everything over my message, once followed diligently. You ventured into the unfamiliar, acquiring knowledge in pursuit of power and success. but your inner tranquility waned.

Doubt seeped into your faith, and your decisions crumbled under the weight of falsehoods. Your worth diminished, and confusion enveloped you. Escape from self-made chaos seemed impossible. Life's race became challenging as your fractured mind and despairing heart held you back.

My love for you urged you to return to your innermost self, where true power resides. whispers and inklings attempted to guide you, but you persisted with your plans. Failure and disappointment followed. Searching for a genuine solution, you wept and pleaded.

Confusion and frustration consumed you. As the creator, I resolved to reveal a different path. I implanted grand dreams and desires within you as evidence of my love. With the power to contemplate and conceive, you possess the ability to manifest them into existence. I hoped you would rediscover me and the depth of my affection.

But unknowingly, you embraced evil, the counterpoint to the good I intended. Your thoughts gravitated towards malevolence and division, waging wars against one another and against me, God. Driven by a poverty mindset, you exploited each other, oblivious to the abundant world I created for all.

In the labyrinth of erroneous information and false guides, you descended into poverty and vulnerability. marriages and relationships devolved into scripted agreements born out of scarcity, lack, and diminished self-esteem. Fixated solely on carnal desires and needs, you squandered the power bestowed upon you for creation by engendering evil. Through misguided thoughts and a wayward mind, you endeavored to transform heaven on earth into a living hell.

Amidst confusion and the absence of guidance, you forfeited your creative power and the gifts bestowed upon you at birth. I have come to rekindle our relationship, revive your hearts and minds, and return your life—the life teeming with peace, comprehension, and love. a mind devoid of fear, worry, and doubt—elements that contravene every genuine word bestowed upon you.

Now, do you perceive why I have come to you, my child? It was meant to illuminate the broader panorama, to reveal authentic love, and illuminate the path to unlimited treasures through forgiveness of yourself, others, and myself. I emerged out of love to demonstrate how to harness these clandestine powers—a lesson for those who still seek understanding.

For you have squandered my bestowed power entrusted to you and allowed the ego, or false self, to deploy it against you.

Thus, you now perceive yourself as insignificant and powerless to govern your fate and purpose. By misusing my power, you have fostered division, unforgiveness, and been beguiled by the deceitful knowledge you embrace, which has brought ruin upon the earth.

Contained within is akin to bottled pain—a sought-after elixir that billions have eagerly purchased. My love for you is boundless, as evident in my desire for the sun to rise upon you and the moon to guide your steps in darkness. I summon the rains to nourish your crops and replenish your thirst. It is my purpose to mobilize others to aid you in times of need when self-reliance eludes you. Your needs shall forever be met, for I created you out of love and through love.

Should you heed the innermost cry of my voice, you will realize the abundance of wisdom and dominion over the earth bestowed upon you. there is plenty for all, as I have so designed. be still and attune your senses, and witness the revelation of truths that surpass conventional understanding.

Why engage in animosity and conflict over mere fragments when my storehouses overflow with boundless abundance and infinite variety to quench your every thirst?

What kind of creator would fashion an immense world, placing beloved children upon it to endure poverty, strife, and madness? Which creator would choose to punish its creations, while they were meant to flourish as kings and queens? Who deceived you into believing that I am wrathful and devoid of love? what deceit and falsehood have you embraced? come, test my words firsthand, and I shall unveil a loving and eternal presence, ever-watchful over its creation and children.

Indeed, I am consumed by fury when one of my beloved suffers at the hands of evil forces—when you are targeted, abused, beaten, and bereaved. For those who inflict pain and suffering upon my cherished ones, I spare no measure of retribution.

I have granted you the key to unlock the kingdom of heaven and earth. be still, allow my essence to permeate your mind, and discover the solutions to your apparent afflictions. understand that your present and past dilemmas stem from an inability to think independently. I created you to live in true and lasting abundance out of the abundance of wisdom and divine knowledge of your mind, however, because your mind is highjacked by all sorts of things which fight against you the doors to your infinite storehouse of possibilities and abundance which includes, peace, freedom, happiness, love, great health, and of course material wealth. For none of the wisdom you were born with can be accessed while your mind and thoughts are under attack by lies and fears. What you consider thinking is a mundane pursuit devoid of purpose, mere busyness that squanders the essence of life. embrace stillness, invite my guidance into your thoughts, and witness your aspirations manifest into reality, as you learn to create alongside the first and true creator.

Should you fail to connect with me, you shall incessantly wander, expending precious time and energy, eternally searching for an elusive pot of gold, oblivious to the fact that the map leading to it lies within you. I comprehend the root of your quandary—it is your ego, incessantly chattering within your mind, guiding you towards ceaseless defeats, withholding self-revelation, and preventing you from realizing that I reside within you.

It is for these reasons that I shall eternally love and forgive you as your creator, knowing that any misstep emanated from sources beyond your control, where external influencers shaped the narrative of your being, Instead of you perceiving your eternal truth. I love you, and I am satisfied with you. I eagerly await the moment, you approach me wholeheartedly, seeking your heart's desire.

Never again shall you be dominated or controlled. as you surrender to my presence, the creator within you, every facet of your existence shall be illuminated, and your world shall be irrevocably transformed.

Now before my messenger concludes this proclamation, let me share a few more invaluable insights. Know that we are inseparable, as I permeate throughout all existence.

I cannot be detached from anything, for I am the architect of everything. you are both a human persona and divine essence, inherently flawless. While you readily embrace the former, the latter eludes your acceptance. Yet both truths coexist, mysterious in their unity. Your definition of self-hinges upon your choice—are you one or the other? or are you both?

Only when you merge mentally with me, allowing my thoughts to intertwine with yours, shall you surpass the limitations of education, science, and faith. Weak and fear-ridden thoughts and actions shall no longer hinder your progress.

The ceaseless search without fruition shall end, loneliness shall dissolve in the embrace of love, and sleep shall evade poverty's grasp as wealth finds its home both in your heart and mind through allowing my truth inside you to come forth. Then you will begin to heal as these new revelations come forth to wash your mind clean from the debris of lies which keeps you chained with many sorrows.

Allow me to explain again who and what your enemies are. You think it’s me for it seems I don’t care, and I allow these things to happen to you, but think again. Your enemy isn’t your mother, father, brother, or sister although they may have wounded you, the real enemy is the hidden shame, guilt, abandonment, abuse, trauma, and a host of so many other things which are hidden inside you.

Because those close to you and around you, wounded you, as you begin to awaken for the sleep of ignorance concerning the truth, you will come to realize that they too have the same enemies inside them, however, they allowed their own inner wounds to be triggered and because you were the closest one around them, they chose to attack you to feel better about themselves. Most of those around you are asleep to these truths therefore, as they go about their day hiding their wounds, along the way certain things and situations constantly causes these open and sore wounds to be exposed to the truth and thus a trigger happens and these people become vengeful, attacking others, using manipulation and other numerous things to keep others from touch their inner wounds.

However, the outer triggers continue to happen to them through different people and circumstances, an ongoing problem until they awake one day and decide to face or deal with such problems so they can finally live freely.

It seems you and millions of others are constantly judging them and others because of their actions against you, however, it’s true that they did cause you harm, but to become free yourself you must be able to step back and see the bigger picture of life.

That picture says that generation after generation have all been wounded and because they didn’t know how or wouldn’t deal with these underlining issues, they began to attacked each other and the cycle will not stop until you become the first maybe in a long line of generational abuse or curses brought forth by the hidden enemies within to stop this cycle from happening and begin repairing the damage done by you,

So that maybe you won’t continue to hurt and be hurt even more by others. If you have children, you can be the first in your family to show your offspring a better way to live so they can have a better and healthier life.

Again, the problem or enemies are the wounds which still exist after the abuse or offense has ended. These triggers are remnants of pain forgotten, pushed away, or simply ignored in hopes it will al go away someday, but it never does and now you know why. I, God aren’t your enemy, I’m the light of truth and wisdom shining a light on who and where the enemies lives. So, you see, that until we can begin to go back and deal with the darkness inside you, I, or any of my messengers, like Peter, can’t really help you in the way that will serve your best interest at heart short or long term.

Let’s fix the within and then you will begin to know me, your God and my undying love for you and others. Then you will begin to see and experience love from an inner knowing and because you will know my truths, these joys and happiness inside can be shared with others who want to see, feel, and experience the same for themselves.

As your creator this message serves as a reminder that I know you, I hear what’s inside you. I hear your thoughts. I know your intentions, fear, and your worries. I know why you choose chaos over peace, and abuse and abandonment over peace, acceptance and love.

I know you inside out because I created you, yet we’re distant from each other because of your hidden wounds and I who give life abundantly have come to restore your soul, mind, and heart so that our relationship can grow, and you can begin thriving again.

Yet, they arise every so often when something or someone triggers them and then they come forth like a thief to steal your temporary peace and rob you of the presence of peace, freedom, happiness, love for yourself, relationships, and money by using the truth that you seem to think you can continue to hide or ignore.

These things are your enemies because until your ready to deal with them with my help they will continue to steal your dreams, goals, aspirations, and happiness. So many of my children believe if they just believe in me, go to worship I will fix all their problems which are lies. I know where both your pain and trouble lies, but even I, God will not intercede on your free will. You must allow me to help you fix your underlining issues brought forth by trauma, something I will show you where to go.

I will walk with you through the darkness and the pain and once you know the truth you will heal, and our union will be restored again. You pray to me when in danger, and I being a loving God come to your rescue to help you escape these dangers, and your grateful for this for a while until those same memories and traumas entice you again through different avenues and again your lured back into another trap that I must go a free you from repeatedly.

Don’t you now see that the enemies and the one enemy lies within you but you don’t want to deal with them, and so your life never gets better, and while you ask for so many things, I’m limited to what I can give you because if I give you everything you want now, those hidden enemies like shame, guilt, trauma, abandonment wounds, anger and addictions will a only be used against you help take you further down the dark hole of despair where you want to end your life or you may squander away both the mental and physical wealth I pour out to you through trying to buy things or friendships or love to feel better temporarily and lose it all.

However, if you allow me to help you deal with the scars of the past and help you heal from them over time, your mind will be ready and open to receive the wealth wisdom and abundance that’s already inside you and thus you will move forward and grow abundantly in all areas of your life. However, the first step is the removal of the anger, self-sabotaging ways because you feel useless, hopeless, helpless, and unworthy of both love and abundance which are the root cause or the growth stemming from months and years of torment caused by others. All abundance starts within a clear mind devoid of things which attacks it.

Right now, your attacking others and yourself at the same time because your self-image and self-worth is so low due to many painful and unwanted experiences both then and now. Every negative or deceitful thought you entertain is against yourself and others because each thoughts carries with it power and it becomes powerful when it’s uttered from your lips.

These words which flow out of the wounded hearts becomes a curse or sorrow turning back on yourself for believing and against others because it cast illusions of the truth which breaks the bond of a really healthy relationship between you and them if they are genuinely wanting to help you.

Mistrust is a seed that grew from being wounded repeatedly over time, and because of this there’s a thin line between trusting ourselves and others, both or connected. When your broken, your mind doesn’t see or aware of the red flags coming your way from a certain person or situation.

Pain has blocked out all common sense and inner awareness is thrown out the window because the need to be heard, loved, adored and wanted takes top priority and because your so wounded inside any morsel of acceptance or kind words coming from another is held onto even if the price for believing and trusting in the outer enemies will cause you dearly short and long -term. An empty soul wants to be filled in any way possible. The need to be loved is a human designed I placed inside you, however, if your wounded like yourself, you will accept any form of the illusions of love. For this reason, your inner enemies waves a red flag to the world that says pick me, I’m wounded but I’m worthy of love and being loving. I will do anything just to hear the words I love you or your special from anyone who passes my way.

Can you now see who the real enemy is and what’s happening to you? Are you aware that what you are like within is what you will attract to yourself in the outer world. Wounded people attract other wounded people. Angry and bitter people do more of the same.

You may be thinking this isn’t true, and may offer many excuses or defend your actions with reasoning you believe are true, however, the evidence doesn’t lie, and there’s a trail of proof that reality always wins.

Growing up in a dysfunctional environment has so many problems of it’s own because over times it starts to bend the truth to it’s liking and because everyone inside this dysfunctional environment are in denial. What is truth is made to be a lie, or bad or wrong and what is a lie, bad or wrong is made to be the truth.

Here is where the sting and the repeated whips disappointment, deception, manipulation turns normal into chaos because the seeds of denial are never challenges and so it grows into a monster destroying everyone involved long term especially in losing one’s identity, and also losing healthy and important relationships.

Again, the wounds of the soul tend to keep one in denial and living in illusions long term until the pain of the truth becomes too unbearable to deal with then there’s a secret longing to find relief and a escape from this world, yet know one can escape this old world until they begin to deal with the old painful wounds inside them, the wounded child within cries out for help and nurturing yet, the allure of fantasy world becomes a top choice for those still stuck mentally and spiritually.

Are you ready to abandon the old world to begin the hero’s journey so you can awake from the sleep of deception and pain? If so, admit that your wrong, and everything you believe about yourself, others and the world is an illusion.

In me, everyone finds rest, and inner peace and the same repose rests within you, for I exist within your being. Cease the pursuit of hollow vessels and edifices that fail to serve you. Why seek in external shells when the answers reside within your own existence? No longer shall you bow to lofty figureheads, believing them to hold the key to life's revelations. dissolve the desire for companionship and relationships as an answer to perceived lack.

Be still, listen intently, and I shall furnish you with the answers and understanding that shall resolve every quandary and fulfill your external desires. know that I love you, and I only seek the best for you.

Traversing the realm of trust brings me to ponder its delicate nature. as the creator who knows every strand of your hair and every thought in your mind, I empathize with your doubts. Yet, rest assured, my dear friend, that you can confide in me, just as I rely on you. As we seek trust, we may question who else is deserving of our confidence. Allow me to assure you that when you place your trust in me, clarity will unveil, and the grand picture will unravel.

Once trust is restored, a cascade of new emotions will accompany our journey. They will be unfamiliar yet comforting, serving as tangible signs of my presence. I have always been here, albeit veiled from your awareness. through this revelation, my unwavering love and support will illuminate your path, bringing tranquility as we tread on firm ground.

Henceforth, I shall be the guiding light in all our endeavors. the transformation may not manifest instantaneously, but as you attune yourself to my inner voice and heed the nudges and peculiar sensations I offer, success and fulfillment will be our companions.

By aligning with my guidance, serenity, freedom, and joy shall be unearthed. However, be mindful that any deviation or resistance to the path I reveal will result in inner restlessness, confusion, division, fear, and ultimately, failure in our aspirations.

With the passage of time and a deeper awareness of my abiding presence and affection for you, your confidence and clarity will grow. gradually, you will grasp the intricate tapestry of my plan, and your life will undergo extraordinary progress and transformation.

Yet, remember that whenever my counsel is dismissed or the signs, I provide are disregarded, it leads to failure or disastrous outcomes, it is because you have strayed from our path together, surrendering to repetitive and unconscious thinking. over time, as you learn and mature within me, such outdated notions shall fade, and once again, I shall reign in your thoughts. my dwelling rests solely where peace and tranquility abide.

What lies ahead when you willingly open your heart and mind, ushering me in? this query may arise, and my wisdom and thoughts will flow into your consciousness, fostering perfect communion between us. nothing will remain beyond your reach.

But the choice to welcome me into your being rests with you, even as I stand at the door of your heart, knocking. it only necessitates a decision to embrace freedom, happiness, and abundance once more and allow me to illuminate the correct path. only my answer is the true answer, and you will discern its veracity through the unspoken language of your soul. this message articulates my solemn commitment to you, encapsulating my love and my desire to build an unshakeable relationship. my heart yearns to spend time with you, for I know the plans I have for you—plans of a promising future and prosperity in every aspect of your life. Understand that my instruction commands obedience, not as an act of subjugation, but as a clarion call to awaken from your self-determined path, which has led to disappointment. can you perceive the trail of failed relationships, shattered marriages, and faltering careers? This is the fallout from following your fractured thinking. I do not condemn you; instead, I seek to shed light on the root cause of your setbacks.

Therein lies the answer—most of your struggles originate from deep-seated, unhealed wounds. these wounds have precipitated chaos and disarray, wreaking havoc in your life and the lives of those around you. Please understand, my child, that I do not pass judgment upon you. Rather, I illuminate the path to resolution, unveiling the hidden secrets, troubles, and tumultuous behaviors born from traumatic and fearful thoughts, which undermine your peace, freedom, and happiness. consequently, you have been unable to taste the essence of enduring love and form lasting relationships. I must teach you to love yourself and discover your innate greatness by removing the blinders and false beliefs that cloud your perception. None of your past experiences are your fault; they have left deep scars, making it arduous to find happiness or enjoy a better quality of life. Yet, I can no longer bear to witness your inner anguish, suffering, shame, and guilt devouring your existence and sowing destruction in the lives of others.

To transcend these challenges, we must embark on this journey together. I shall teach you, my ways. once you are healed and free from the shackles of your past, your mind will be unburdened, enabling pure and lucid thinking. This liberated state will empower you to create positivity in your life, believe in yourself, and embrace the essence of who you truly are. It is the natural and healthy way of being.

When you stand firm, unstayed by fear, anxiety, worry, guilt, shame, and depression, you will reclaim your autonomy and stride forward without my constant guidance, for you will possess the inherent understanding that we are alike—both creators. You will no longer torment yourself for making mistakes, nor will you attack others when they stumble. The cycle of self-inflicted harm, perpetuated by hidden anger, shall cease.

Your thinking and behavior will emanate from a place of clarity, not from the wounds of your inner child trapped in the past. as a result, your temper tantrums, anger, and unhealthy patterns will lose their grip on your right-mindedness. you yearn for change and happiness, and by relinquishing the shackles of external or internal anger, you will find redemption.

let us embark on this journey together, for I am inside and beside you always, offering love, grace, and transformation. remember, healing is a process, and as we traverse this path hand in hand, I promise that joy and fulfillment await you.

I embrace you with love, acknowledging your desire for affirmation. however, remember that seeking validation should never come at the cost of your dignity. as your creator, my deepest longing is for you to truly comprehend the depth of my adoration. you are a cherished masterpiece, a miraculous creation beyond compare. the universe and all its wonders were crafted as an ode to your inherent splendor.

as I once said before, if you want me to help you, I will knowing we’re alike. but if you don’t want my help, I will simply wait until you change your mind.

until we meet again, remember my undying love you. yours truly, your creator.

# About the Author

Rodney Hill's life took a different turn in the eleventh grade when he had to leave high school because of a distressing home environment. Trapped in poverty, with an abusive stepfather and a mother who never gave up hope, despite living in an unhealthy marriage, and unloving spouse. Rodney battled mental, physical, and emotional challenges that made it nearly impossible to concentrate on his studies or imagine a better future.

The constant bombardment of negativity, and toxicity set him on a path to fail at almost everything he attempted to do, be, or have. From these concurring events grew what he would later know as CPTSD, or Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Which set in motion to understand it from a personal standpoint, and also how to begin working on himself through self-discovery to begin reversing this affliction to find inner peace, freedom, happiness, and self-love for himself.

Nonetheless, Rodney persevered, summoning strength from within to break free and forge a better life through repeated setbacks. While success didn't come from material wealth, he discovered solace, freedom, and happiness from an unlikely place, the within.

He always loved learning about the mysteries in life, and even still how things worked in the real world.

Reading books was never something he enjoyed earlier in life except when he was trying to fix an issue or repairing vehicles. What turned into a waste of time in just reading books also became his safe-haven a place to escape when his home, or community environment became too much to bear.

In an unexpected twist he gained more and more inner peace through writing which surprised him, because English was something he hated, and never understood. However, later in his life it became a form of therapy or self-help in which he embraced.

The more he wrote the better he felt and the words which flowed from him gave him a sense of freedom, and a new outlook on life. It was if everything inside of him was flowing from him with ease, and without force, just a gentle outpouring of words that seemed to soothe his inner agony and gave him inner peace.

Rodney's journey is far from over; he believes it has just begun. Armed with newfound wisdom and gifts, he's learned to turn life's lemons into lemonade. Rodney is determined to inspire and guide others in pursuing seemingly impossible goals, defying the aftermath of traumatic experiences.

He yearns to demonstrate that the right mindset and unwavering dedication can bring change. Drawing from his own struggles, Rodney possesses profound insight into the transformation and liberation sought by those yearning for a brighter future.

Presently, Rodney dedicates himself to self-help and personal development. He assists those grappling with mental health issues through recovery coaching, empowering them to conquer life's obstacles, not through external things, but through self-awareness, because this is the only way one can become free from their own internal madness and stop defeating thoughts and actions. Through his private membership, like-minded individuals uncover serenity, hope, freedom, happiness, and redemption through self-discovery.

Moreover, Rodney shares his narrative through writing, speaking engagements, and personal coaching, offering solace to those in despair and reminding them that a brighter tomorrow is attainable despite life's challenges. His pursuit of greatness continues, accompanied by the unwavering mission to inspire others.

To connect with Rodney Hill, explore these avenues:

Email: rodney@rodneyhill.com

Website: https://rodneyhill.com

Embark on your Hero's Journey through the path of self-discovery! Remember, unveiling the truth frees your spirit, if you dare to take that crucial first step, join me for a new adventure.

www.rodneyhill.com

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# Acknowledgments

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Thanks and good luck!

Derek Murphy