**Shedding Karma**

Elanor seated herself in a comfortable armchair. She was a slim middle aged African woman, her hair still short from cancer treatments just a few months earlier. She had stopped dyeing it despite grey streaks - the regrowth over the past four weeks was luscious black. She had Luke to thank for that.

She had met him at the resort hotel in Switzerland just over four weeks earlier. She hadn’t told him about her cancer, but on their second conversation he had told her about her cancer and offered to perform a healing on her energies. The dying are desperate and gullible, she’d said yes immediately.

What had followed later that evening was probably the weirdest experience she’d ever had, but it had convinced her that he could do what he said. Her pains had vanished, and then her short grey hair had started growing back black.

Luke was seated in another armchair near by. He appeared to be in his late thirties, slim and wiry, dark haired, handsome in a Greek/Egyptian way. There was an intense personal magnetism about him and an air of command of someone accustomed to being in charge.

Tonight he would guide her through more energy work. “Cup your hands and start you energies flowing.”

Elanor did as she was bid, starting breathing exercises to assist. After a minute she felt warmth in her hands and a sense of flowing from right to left. Mentally she opened a switch to increase the flow. After another few minutes her fingers were tingling.

“Stretch your hands above your head, you want the region of the chakra above the crown chakra, the seat of the eagle’s perception.” Luke directed. “You should feel the chakra as a whirlpool.”

Elanor felt for it, then slowly moved her arms apart, palms facing each other, until she had lowered them beyond the arms of the chair. She could feel the sacred space opening around her. She breathed slowly and rhythmically - in for a count of seven, hold for a count of seven, out for a count of seven, hold for a count of seven. She began to see images on the periphery of her vision.

“Imagine a small pool of water, rocks and sand around.” Luke guided. “Then imagine a smooth black pebble. When you see it pick it up and hold it in the palm of your hand.”

Elanor closed her eyes and imagined a rock pool peeping from overhanging vegetation. Somewhere she could hear the sea. After a few minutes she noticed a round black pebble and picked it up.

She realised she was apprehensive, this represented a previous life in which she had suffered, lost everything and died in despair. She steeled herself and threw it into the pool. Ripples spread out, then a bubble arose and burst.

“Who are you? Where are you?” Luke’s voice came. “What is happening? What are you doing?”

There were bloody figures on the ground before her - a grey haired woman, a young woman and a small boy. She recognised the small boy as her dead husband Abe from her current life. The boy had a terrible gash to his neck and shoulder, and a moment later she realised he was dead. The young woman was also dead, with horrific injuries to her head, chest and arms. Someone had torn her skirts and exposed the woman’s pubic area. The older woman was barely alive, her arms, neck and head badly gashed.

This seemed to be some sort of farm yard, and the figures were wearing what she thought of as Roman clothes. It was only then that she took a look at herself.

Hairy masculine arms, a Roman soldier’s uniform, her right hand was holding a blood stained Roman short sword, and her arm was bloody to the elbow. “Holy mother! I’ve killed them!”

“No. Look again.”

Elanor was kneeling beside the older woman, cradling her head. With a shock she realised she was a retired Roman soldier, the grey haired woman was his/her wife, the younger woman her son’s wife, and the small boy her grandson. Barbarians had raided their farm, looting, raping, pillaging and killing. Her children and grandchildren were dead, her wife dying. The farm buildings were burning.

Tears were rolling down her cheeks in real life as she knelt and watched the woman die. Her previous self felt broken inside as he gazed at the death and destruction around him. When the woman died, he laid her head upon the ground and went to look for the others.

He rounded the corner of a building and almost bumped into two barbarians coming the other way. Years of Roman military training came to the fore, his short sword flicked out and both were groaning their lives out on the ground.

At this point screaming penetrated his ears, and he took off at a run. Along the way he passed what was left of his two sons. They had been hacked to pieces, but they had killed a number of barbarians in the process.

He went into the entrance part of the house and came upon his twelve year old grand daughter being raped by eight or ten barbarians. The fury took him, and he charged into the group. The raw emotion shocked her – it was like a steel clawed hand thrust into her guts, rending, tearing, clenching and twisting. She was sure she cried out.

A short and brutal fight ensued. At the end he counted nine raiders dead or dying. He was badly injured, fighting to stay on his feet. And grand daughter? Hot tears started from her own eyes, coursed down her cheeks while something clawed at her throat. The girl had been disembowelled by a sword slash, her guts spilling over her legs and onto the ground. The old soldier knew she would die slowly and painfully.

He sank to the ground, fought back to a sitting position by sheer will power, and cradled the girl’s head. “I’m here child.”

“They hurt me grand pa!”

“It will stop soon, and then you will sleep, and you will be with mama again.”

“Make it stop hurting!”

He drew a shuddering breath, steeling himself to deliver the mercy blow. Then, swiftly, he thrust the blade under her ribs and into her heart. The girl drew a gasping breath, then managed “Grandpa. I’m cold.”

“Mama will warm you soon.” The girl shivered, and then died in his arms. He screamed in anguish, cursing the gods. Elanor knew she was howling wordlessly with him.

“Elanor, he is reborn as you, his wife and children have been reborn, and some of them you recognise in this life. He died there in absolute despair, you can save him still.”

“How?” she sniffed back her tears, remembering where she was.

“The old soldier is now you, and all that he lost has reincarnated. That girl is your grand daughter again, and you recognised Abe. They continue. You must reach back now to him, tell him that it is not utter desolation. You can give him hope, and knowledge of the future.”

Not entirely sure what she was supposed to do, she sat with the old soldier’s despair. “I am you reborn. Grand daughter is reborn. Your children will live again, you will see them all again. Nothing is lost old man, because I am your future, and I know this.”

Somehow he sensed her words, looked around to see who was speaking. Then he stiffened, staring into the distance. “Grand daughter! Wife!”

“Go to them old man. They are here to guide you into death, and will be with you in life again.”

He breathed one slow shuddering gasp, then smiled. His spirit left him, and his body toppled forward. Elanor could sense several spirits around the scene, and then Luke called her “Let them go now Elanor, and return to the present. Close the sacred space.”

She swept her hands into the air until they reached above her head, then she stretched and flicked her fingers several times. She fidgeted her body around in the chair, and then opened her eyes.

“How do you feel Elanor?”

She drew a breath, examining her feelings. “Surprisingly good, given the emotional roller coaster I’ve been on. Did I cry out or anything?”

“You yelled your fury, you shed tears several times, you screamed your despair and anguish, and toward the end you were sobbing and howling.”

“Oh.” Elanor felt like she had just wakened from a dream, things were fading, but still confusing waking. She spoke slowly, remembering. “He was a retired Roman soldier. A centurion I think. He had a farm somewhere in Eastern Europe? They killed his family, raped and killed them, and he died in despair.”

“Retired Roman soldiers were granted a parcel of farmland at the extremities of the empire. He would have married a younger local woman, farmed and raised children.” Luke spoke slowly and quietly. “In those regions barbarians would have raided from time to time. He died in utter desolation, cursing the gods. That karma has followed you through rebirth after rebirth, down to the present. Think how you reacted when Abe died. Your death as that Roman soldier played a large part in your cancer. But tonight you reached back and healed his death, gave him hope, and shed that karma.”

“But how? He was fifteen hundred years ago, or more.”

“You have heard of clairvoyance?”

“Yes, foretelling the future.”

Luke chuckled. “Hmm, most fortune tellers make things up. Clairvoyance is when you have a premonition of the future, and either it comes true, or you take steps to avoid it. It happens when someone, often yourself, perceives the event and broadcasts a warning that spreads backwards in time. He received the premonition, you broadcast it. Instead of dying in despair, he died in hope, his wife and grand daughter came to collect his spirit. You gave him that hope, and you changed his death. You changed the past, and in the present you have shed that karma.”

“But how can I change the past? And if I really did, and that karma gave me cancer, then shouldn’t my past have changed so I didn’t get cancer?” Elanor had been an avid fan of Dr Who, along with her children, and she had also watched all the Back to the Future movies. She thought she understood some of the implications of time travel.

“Ah Elanor, time is not linear. But even in Back to the Future, Marty McFly discovers his parents never married, and the future he has returned to is one in which he was never born. But he still exists. His own past has not changed. If you could somehow reach back into the past and kill your mother before she gave birth to you, you would still exist, because in your past your mother lived. Subjectively what has happened stays happened. You cannot undo it.”

Elanor nodded, getting the sense of what Luke was explaining. “But if I changed the past so that somehow my mother died before I was born, what would the rest of the world be like? I mean, Marty McFly had to go back and arrange for his parents to marry.”

“We are getting deeper than I want to go. You do not have that power. No mortal does, and as far as I am aware, none of the gods have that power either. If you did have that power, and caused the past to change in such a way, you would fork off a parallel world or shadow in which your mother died before you were born. That is extremely complex, because your spirit is connected to one body. You would now exist in the shadow where you killed your mother before you were born, and for a while in the shadow where your mother gave birth to you. All other living things would exist in both worlds and would require their souls to be cloned. That is the province of the Dreamer, the Creator. Quite simply you would not succeed because your past has already happened. Circumstances would arise to prevent you from killing your mother when she was a child. You face the inertia of the entire universe resisting your efforts to fork off another shadow.”

“Then how could I change the past?”

“You did change the past, and in that past your previous self did not die in despair. Since your future up until you reached back has already happened, it does not change. But your karma is shed from that point forward, because you reached back.” He waved his left hand. “Here is the old soldier, in say five hundred AD.” He waved his right hand. “Here is you, at the point when you reached back to your previous self. Everything between these two has already happened, but from the point in time that my right hand represents things change. There is now a link between you and him going back, and another going forward.” He waved his right hand again. “From now on, you have changed the possible futures, making a different one more likely. You can do that because the future has not happened, and you have free will, and can choose what future you want. You have healed your past, shed its karma, and so healed your future.”

Elanor examined her thoughts and emotions for a few moments. “I do feel somehow lighter, more positive. It’s weird to think I really did change the past. So what are we going to do with the rest of the evening?”

Luke smiled his sunny smile, and cocked an eyebrow at her. “I’m sure we can think of something, maybe to do with energy sharing and balancing.”