

In Her Presence

The Plan

Plan not to Plan

Gordon put down his pen. He was weary. He had never felt this kind of tired before. Not only was his body exhausted, his mind was too tired to even wander and he felt nothing—nothing but a deep, dark impulse to disappear altogether. Tests had been done and he knew the results already, without hearing them from his specialist. He knew he was dying. He had known for a while now. He knew because he couldn't dream any further. He couldn't imagine a future. When he sat down to meditate, he felt nervous and anxious. He couldn't shake the exhaustion or the growing panic that his end was inevitable. He didn't dream anymore. He didn't want to. A force beyond his control was calling him. He called out to the one he called *The God of Death* and asked, "When?" Strange as it was, the God of Death answered him and told him.

"I will come for you on July 26th."

So that's the date of my death. "Why do I know the date of my death?" he asked The God of Death.

"You know because you asked me. No one ever does."

Could he believe it? Could he believe that his death was coming in three months?

"Could I ask you, God of Death, for one more thing?"

The God of Death studied the dying man and reported, "I don't give extensions, if that is what wanted ask for."

"Can I ask you, how am I to live, knowing I don't have much time left?"

Death chuckled. "I would say live it wisely by throwing all caution away." Death turned his back on him and disappeared like ashes blown in the wind.

Gordon skipped his appointment with the specialist. He waited for an impulse to come. His weariness caused him to fall into a deep, long nap. He dreamt that he was practicing his death, that he couldn't return to his body. He was swept away into the deeper realms of his mind, a mind full of ideas,

images, and scenes that bore no familiarity. He didn't know where he was or what his point of view was. Everything was different, unfamiliar. He felt panicked and wandered in his mind, not recognizing his own thoughts anymore. He woke up panicked, his heart was racing too fast and too hard. He lay there in a sweat. His first impulse came to him. He thought, I need to know where I am. His heart returned to its normal rhythm. He got up, washed his face and hands. Where am I? he asked himself. Where will I be going? he asked himself. He thought of his impending death. He could feel the panic and fear arise in his chest. He wasn't ready or capable of proceeding past the fear of his death, so he stopped his inquiry and thought about how he would live the final three months of his life. Was he a satisfied man? Had he lived up to his dreams? Was he a man of regrets? Did he blame others for his failure? He thought of his life and knew that whatever kind of life he had lived, he wouldn't be able to own it much longer. How is it that my life will no longer be my own? he asked himself. If I don't own my life, is there another place I can belong to? he wondered. He didn't know how to think about his life if it was not his own. If it were taken away, how can my identity, which is wrapped up in my life, be real? He felt small in the bigger picture of identity disappearing. The disappearance of all he knew, of himself as Gordon, could not be approached and faced through thinking about it. That only caused his mind to tremble and panic. He knew he could only approach the bigger picture of where he is located through surrender. But how does one surrender when the body is crashing and the mind is trembling? How can I surrender in such a frightening circumstance?

Everyone will die. My death is just one in the billions and billions of deaths that have already occurred. I know when my death is coming. I can prepare for it, he thought. Will that help me to be ready, to surrender willingly to it without panic and fear? Would he plan for his death in the usual ways—take care of all the practicalities of disposing of his belongings and his body? He remembered what The God of Death had told him: Live it wisely by throwing all caution to the wind. I will live without a plan, he thought. I will surrender to whatever comes. I will not plan, I will meet whatever comes as a friend, as a friend to my life. I will meet death as my friend. Could he learn to accept death as a friend to his life, not its enemy? Could he surrender to the loss and chaos that would be the loss of his life? Could he really be that brave? Is a plan not to plan—a plan? a plan after all?

He ate, he slept as needed. He waited to feel something. He waited and watched to be drawn into an experience, to be able to act. He wanted to know where to go and what to do. He watched his thoughts and saw that the terror of his extinction lay behind each thought. Usually, he didn't feel this terror, as his desires had propelled his life to take actions. But now, he waited for a desire, any desire, to move him into life. A week went by in this way—terror of his death was all he could feel. He wanted to medicate himself out of this terror, to successfully hide it beyond his thoughts and desires, well buried in

the background. He resisted drinking and smoking weed. He watched a lot of television as his medication. He paced and stumbled and often slept to escape himself. On the eighth day he grabbed his keys, got into his car and drove. He had no destination in mind. He sang to his favorite playlist of songs. He wasn't sure if he was ever coming back. I'm at the point of no return, he thought. Where can I go? He drove and sang the songs on his playlist for hours. He fell asleep at the rest area and woke up at sunset and drove all night. He was now in another state as well as another state of mind. He felt calm and he wondered if having no place he belonged helped him to steady his nerves and his fear. He drove for three more days and on the third day he knew he was driving to see her again.

He had heard of her death, an accidental one many years ago. He had always thought of the world as having her in it, and when she died in her early forties, and he was married to his second wife, he saw the news of her death on a social media site. He felt a piece of himself disappear—a possibility of their love being lived and shared, snuffed out. He shared his grief with no one. He had always felt they would eventually find their way back to each other and that would be the best times of their lives. When his marriage ended and he knew he could never be with her, he no longer tried to fill his desires in the arms of another. He had no one to take care of, as he had no children. He thought he liked it that way. He thought that being bound to someone ended up in a loss of freedom and at times, personal dignity. He hadn't thought about her in years. He recalled her as a vibrant woman in her early thirties. He would never know her as an aged woman. They would not age gracefully together, or even apart. She would not know and live the many years of the decline of the body. She would be forever fresh, a young and maturing woman in his mind. He sorely missed her and felt a longing and an ache for her that he could not understand, but he was grateful that this longing of unfulfilled love was a stronger sensation than his constant companion of terror, his death.

He turned off the freeway, heading for the small, wooded town where he had last seen her over thirty years ago. He got himself a room in a small hotel and lay on the bed feeling his longing for her consume him. It was becoming a force, so strong and potent, an ache and longing that could never be realized and united in life. And yet he wanted to surrender to it, and as he did, it met him and surrendered him even beyond the fear of his death, and even beyond his life. He was losing himself, his self-enclosed identity, his thoughts were not his own, his life was not his own. He allowed all of himself to be given to her and he passed out of his life united in her, without the terror of losing himself. The God of Death watched Gordon leave his life and lose himself in her.

“Ah, this one, this guy is meant for her,” and he tipped his cane and hat to the Goddess. He called out, “He is ahead of schedule, he had more time left.”

The Goddess laughed and said, “We are making up for lost time.”

Gordon didn’t know who he was. He knew where he was. He lived in Her, with or without a life. This was the plan all along. How could anyone plan for it?

A Minor Event: my death and my life

What was this strange sound? It was thunderous! I opened my eyes. I didn't know where I was or what I was. A sound rose up from my throat. It was a wailing, a cry of deliverance, a cry of terror and relief. From the room of bright light, I emerged into a space of tiny proportions. From a limitless radiance to a room entered through a dark tunnel, I felt confined. I cried out, "How can this be?" My words only sounded like a bleating noise. I was drawn close. I felt the warmth of skin on skin. I sensed a nurturing call and my head was moved towards it. I was helpless and my radiance began to be pushed into a body and I was dismayed. Why did I take birth?

The Goddess appeared as a reassurance in all her radiance. How I loved her radiance.

"It's time to take birth," she reminded me.

"Another one?" I asked. "Must I?"

She laughed, "You always do this, every time you enter embodiment."

"Every time?" I teased her back. She nodded. "What will I do in this life?" I asked.

"Oh, that reminds me, I must implant you with your work, and the events of your life." Swirling discs the size of tiny seeds flew into the air, landed on me, and merged into the deeper recesses of my body and mind.

"It's all there?" I asked.

"Yes, there is important work for you to do here."

"How will I find my way?"

She laughed a big hearty laugh and said, "You always do."

I reached towards my mother's nipple. "One last question, will you always be with me even when it feels like you aren't, even when I forget you and your existence as my very own heart and radiance?"

"Even then," she assured me.

"One more request, dear mother Goddess."

"Another?"

“Will you come for me, when it’s time? Will you tell me about everything that happened and everything that I did? Will you come for me when it’s over, when I die?”

“Yes, I always do. Live your life, show your heart to the world and enliven it with your love.”

“Dear mother Goddess, I can’t wait to see you again when it is time for me to die to this world and live in your limitless radiance.”

“I will see you in no time at all. This world that you have birthed into, I have birthed many of these worlds. You one of my dearest daughters and I have sent you here to show everyone that the dreams that are the deepest are the truest. Life is a dream ...”

I suckled and felt the warm, rich liquid slide down my throat. I felt the warmth of my mother’s body and her fluids moving into my body.

“My dear little one,” my mother cooed, “You are so beautiful. I will take good care of you, I promise.”

I opened my eyes and looked into my mother’s eyes. I saw the Goddess’s eyes in her eyes. I felt small, but I knew I would grow and unfold my life into her deepest dreaming. Death is only the doorway into birth. I was here in her deepest dreaming. I would begin to dream.

The Burden of Living

Living was so difficult. The times dragged on. Always waiting for a better day. How do I recognize it when it’s here? I’m never satisfied, thought Rani. When will this moment, this day, be the day I always wanted and waited for? She had searched for a meaningful purpose to her life. She had searched for it in relationships, jobs, travel, charities, and adventures. She did not find it in any of those avenues and she adjusted her ideal of living a meaningful life to living a life of frequent, pleasurable opportunities—an ice cream there, getting high, watching her favorite shows, dressing fashionably. It was a good enough life. Her health was good and she was favorably endowed, which won her admiration from others. She enjoyed that admiration and spent much time perfecting her looks. She dabbled in writing short stories and poetry, in crafting and cooking. It was a good life, a great life, a pleasurable life, so she didn’t understand why she hated living. Sometimes she would announce to herself, “I hate living. I hate my life.” She didn’t know why she had these thoughts. Where did they come from? she wondered.

One of her favorite subjects to read about was near-death experiences. She liked to read about people who were clinically dead and their reports of seeing their dead bodies when their awareness was hovering above them. She thought that it proved that your awareness and sense of self wasn't limited to your living body. She also couldn't read enough stories of people who, after dying, saw dead relatives, or bright, luminous beings who guided them into the light. She dreamed of having such an experience, but time just dragged on. Life was difficult, she thought, even though her life was a pleasurable one.

Rani wondered if there was a way to fake her death, trick herself into believing she was dead, so she could experience her awareness and sense of self apart from her body. She played around with the affirmation: I am dead. She repeated it over and over. Sometimes she spent a great deal of time imagining the life force leaving her body; first her toes, then her feet, her legs, etc. When she reached the top of her head, she always stopped and panicked. It always made her panic with fear. She imagined she couldn't breathe and held her breath. That only ended with her breathing again. She didn't really want to die; she was terrified of that. She only wanted a fake death, one that she came back from. She wanted to experience what it was like to be free from living, from her body. When she had the thoughts I hate living, I hate my life, she wondered why she never had the thought, I hate dying, for she knew she was afraid of it. She had a strange idea that what she was afraid of, she didn't hate. That idea attracted her to the idea of not faking her death, but experiencing her actual death. This idea, though, terrified her. She did not hate it, and became more and more attracted to it. She researched and studied different ways to die. Pills? Poison? Drowning? Intentional accidents? How could I do it? she wondered. She told no one of her thoughts. She reasoned that no one would understand and they would think she was depressed. She was not depressed. She wanted to experience herself free from life. Living was difficult and time dragged on. Could she be free from time?

Her plan began to evolve. She chose a method of death that would have the least bit of trauma to the body. She would slip away peacefully. She didn't want anyone to know of her plan. She picked her date, next Tuesday as the sun set—6:30.

She would be alone. She didn't want to cause any suspicion, so she went to work as usual, took her usual Saturday hike with her best friend. She didn't tidy up her house or her affairs. Everything needed to appear normal. She even went to work on the last day of her life. Fellow employees noticed her good mood and asked her, "Got a date tonight?"

She teased them back, tossed her hair and said, "Yes, a hot date tonight!"

She watched the sun move below the mountain ridge and took the pills. Instead of imagining the life force moving out of her body, she began to experience it. Her feet and legs felt cold and lifeless, and her breathing slowed down and got difficult. She tried to calm down the rising panic. She felt her attention moving through a window of bright light and images of her life appeared quickly, randomly, like a deck of cards being flicked in the air. None of the images or details of her life mattered. She tried to see her body lying on her bed in the grip of death. Her body felt to be very far away from her and she didn't know how to find it or get back to it even if she wanted to. Am I free from life? Am I free from embodiment? she asked herself. She asked no one. She waited for something to happen. She waited for her ideas of disembodiment to meet her experience. She waited some more. Time was strange here, she thought. Does time exist here? Is this state of watching and waiting, is this death? Is this the moment of my fulfillment? she asked.

A voice answered her, a feminine-sounding voice. "As in life, so in death," it (she) answered.

"Who are you?" she asked

"Who else can I be?" the voice asked.

"Are you God?"

"Who is God?" the voice asked.

"How is death different than life?"

The voice answered, "Is it?"

Rani called out, "If you are God, you no help!"

The voice laughed, "I am God, but I am not what you imagine me to be."

Rani cracked a joke, "Why is it that what I imagine never meets me in experience."

The voice laughed and laughed, "Perhaps it's because what you imagine never has to encounter any suffering."

"Why would I imagine suffering? And anyways, if you are God, why is there suffering? Why did you create suffering?"

"Did I?" the voice asked. "I have created nothing. You are the creator. You are the one who imagines. Why do you create suffering?"

Rani was perplexed. “I never intended to create suffering for myself. I was only looking for happiness, for a meaningful life.”

“Did you find a meaningful life? Did you imagine one?”

Rani thought it over, “I tried but I could never escape the feeling that it was really meaningless, that my life was meaningless and unfulfilling. The thoughts that I hated life and being alive started to grow within me.”

“Was that also your imagination?” the voice asked.

Rani was quiet. She thought about it some more. “It led me to planning (imagining) my death and dying.”

“Is the experience of your death meeting your imagination of your death—of being free of life and your body?”

Rani sighed, “No, I imagined I would feel ecstatic being free of the body and my life. I imagined I would be welcomed by beautiful, luminous beings and they would take me to a place beyond life and all I would imagine would always be ecstatic and beautiful.”

“Would that be meaningful to you?” the voice asked.

Rani wanted to say yes, but she didn’t know if it was true. Her death was not like she imagined. It was bewildering. “I still don’t know what I am doing.”

“Is being dissociated from life and your body—is that real freedom?”

“Why do we create suffering for each other? Why do I create any suffering?”

“Is there meaning in suffering?” the voice asked, “Why do you create it? How can a god like yourself create or imagine such a thing?”

Rani asked, “Why do you keep throwing it in my lap? How can I be responsible for imagining suffering? Who are you? Why don’t you show yourself?” she demanded.

“Do you want to see me as I am or as you imagine me to be?” the voice asked.

Rani thought it was the time—the time to get real. “Enough of my imagination, I want to see you as you are.”

“Come closer, Here I am.” the voice called.

Rani moved towards the voice. She saw the face of god and gasped. “It’s you!” she exclaimed, “It’s you.”

“Yes, you’ve always known me. I am wearing your face and living your life.”

Rani was shaken to her core and she broke up into deep gasping sighs. She woke up and vomited the mixture of pills she had taken. She gasped for more air. Life returned, she entered into it. “Why did I do that?” she asked herself out loud and added, “That was so dumb!” She knew she had created and imagined her own suffering. But now I know how meaningful my life is, she laughed out loud and danced around the room. She saw her face in the mirror and winked at herself and sang out loud, “I saw the face of God.” From then on, she never burdened her life with the imagined need of fulfillment. She never waited for a better day. She lived each day as it was given. It was beautiful, it was meaningful, and it came from the deepest depths of her heart, the home of all imagination.

The Beloved

In the beginning, when he made his appearance to her, she did not know who he was. All she knew was that she must and would give her heart and her whole life to him. She didn't call him Lord in the early days and years, she called him "Beloved" and he called her his heart. She never felt worthy of such an endearment. She only knew that their meetings filled her heart, and her longing for him only increased. When he was not with her, she said his name in her heart over and over.

"When can I stay with you always?" she asked.

"One day we will be forever united. Be patient, my heart."

How could she? She only wanted to be with him and when she wasn't, to contemplate him and contemplate being with him once again. He played games with her, calling her over and over, and then not appearing to her. This gave her so much anguish that she would neglect her duties and even the prayers she said to him for the benefit of others. She felt he was neglecting her, and their fewer meetings were spaced further and further apart. It frightened her. She was only living for him and the day they would be forever reunited. Her lighthearted moods gave way to days of anxiousness and moodiness. She called out to him, "Beloved, come for me. Why haven't you come? Have I angered you? Have I neglected you? I will do anything for you, Beloved, I must see you again!" Her anguish continued for months and finally her Beloved appeared.

"Beloved!" she called. She sat up in her bed and he reached out his arms to her. He grasped her hands and held them in his. Waves of bliss ran through her body and she could feel his heart beathing in hers.

"My heart, my dear," he spoke words of love to her. She felt exalted by his love.

"My love, my love, why have you not come to me? I only live for you."

"Yes, my heart, I know. A testing time is coming. You will have to give everything you have and more."

"I will give everything, always my beloved. Haven't I always?" she asked.

He smiled. She detected the sadness in his smile. "What is it, my beloved, what must I do?"

He stroked her hands. "The love we have, the love you have for me, you must give it away to all those in great need."

She was horrified, “What do you mean, Beloved?”

“Do my work, give my love to serving those who are in the worst condition. Give care to these people, give them my love. Serve the hopeless, give them my love. Love them, serve them as you love me.” He grasped her hands tighter and bent over and kissed her. She felt his lips on hers. She felt his love magnify hers. His form began to dissolve.

She called out, “Beloved, don’t leave me.” She cried tears of belonging and tears of separation. Her heart sighed; she knew the work was ahead of her. She must give his love to those in need. “What about my need for his love? Is it not the greatest? Doesn’t my own need of his love make me pitiable?” she cried and grieved for months. She began her great work. Her heart ached and, in that ache, she always remembered him. Those she cared for felt her ache, her love for the Beloved, the Lord, and they were given comfort in their dying days that the Lord loved them and that they were soon to be reunited with the Lord. The work continued for many years and occupied her. Many were humbled by her work and came to give aid as well. An order was established for her work and she became a living example of love of the Lord through service to others. All felt that the Love of the Lord was alive in the humble work they did alongside her.

As she aged and spent her entire life in the work, she came to feel that her heart had become dry. She kept this a secret and only spoke of her beloved as the Lord, now. It was whispered and common knowledge that she was a saint. She performed her prayers of humility every day and helped the dying to pray with her. She lived to serve them and she tried to love them as she loved him. She could not. This angered her and she asked him, “Lord, I have given everything you have asked. I have served the most wretched. Why is my love not worthy of you? When do I return to you? When will you come for me? Why have you kept away from me?” Her body was getting old, her vitality slipping away. She filled her days with the work.

Well into her advanced years, she got up each day, offered her prayers and did her work. Her heart did not beat strongly. More and more, she could not push through her dizzy spells and weakened state. She took to her bed more and more and dreamed of the work. It was always there. Those dying with no comfort, she offered them her comfort and assured them the Lord cared for them. She dreamed of the countless numbers that died in that way and wondered, “Is there no love for the Lord in their suffering?”

On her last day of the work, with almost no strength in her arms to hold the dying woman, she asked the woman, “Pray with me.” The woman opened her eyes and there was a beautiful smile on her lips. The woman spoke in a whisper, “Yes, my beloved is with me. Do you see him? The Beloved is here! His Love is my heart!” she exclaimed.

Her heart ached, “I do not see him,” she replied to the dying woman.

“How can that be? I am among the wretched, but he is here with me now! Is it not your love that brought him to me?” she asked.

“Yes, he is with us now,” she affirmed to herself.

“But you do not see him?” the woman asked again. “How is it that you show us his presence—I am among the wretched that held no conviction of him in my life, and you have lived only to serve him?” She stared into the nun’s eyes, “How is it that you are the most wretched among us? My beloved, my lord, forgive me for all my sins and the sin of denying your love.” The woman passed away in her arms.

After that day, she was unable to work and took to her bed. Have I become the most wretched of all? she wondered. She passed her remaining days in prayer. She prayed that her dry heart would open to his love again. She passed in and out of consciousness. Sometimes she felt a presence, perhaps a nun in her order, coaxing her to drink, and making her comfortable. She knew her time was short, but it did not come quickly. She became aware of the presence that came to serve her — a woman—but she was not one of the nuns, nor was she a nurse. She came, attended to her and told her strange stories and mad poems of ecstatic love. She didn’t like her and was dismissive of her.

“I do not need you; you can leave now.”

The woman would only smile and say, “See you tomorrow, my dear.”

The nun would only grunt in a dismissing attitude. There was a crisis growing in her. She did not know how to meet her death. She who attended to so many deaths did not know how to meet her own. The time was near and one night she felt all her life force receding and she felt the dissolution of herself. She felt a presence, the strange woman, the attendant, jump on top of her and forcibly hold her down and tell her, “You cannot die like this, in fear and panic.” The life force returned to her body and her heartbeat continued. After that episode, she felt her depression lift. When her attendant came into the room and attended to her, she saw her presence shimmering.

“Who are you?” she asked.

“Do you not recognize me?”

The nun answered, “I know you have been attending to me, but why? Who are you?”

The attendance smiled, “Surely you know me.”

The nun took another tack, “Do you know him? Do you know the Lord?”

The attendant smiled again, “You mean, the Beloved?”

The nun was surprised, “Have you accepted the Lord into your heart?”

The woman laughed, “The Beloved is my Heart!”

The dying nun became angry, “How can you say that?”

“Is the Beloved not also your Heart?”

The nun laid back and closed her eyes. Could she trust the woman with her confession? The woman came to her side and held her hands and asked her, “Is not the Beloved with you now?”

With her eyes still closed, she saw a luminous form appear. It was her Beloved. “Yes, he is here!” she exclaimed, “I can see him.”

“Tell him your confession,” the attendant urged her.

“My Lord, why did you leave me? Why couldn’t I stay with you? I did the work as you asked me to. Why did you not show yourself to me through all those years of the work?”

The Lord came closer. “I was always with you. You are very dear to me. I took on their sins, the sins of the denial of the Heart of the Sacred One through you. They did not know me except through your love and acceptance of them. Their hearts were closed and dry, you gave them your love.”

“But Lord, I became more and more dry, unable to feel your love.”

“That is the cost, the sacrifice of the work, but that is not the truth is it?” he asked with the most tender of expressions on his face.

The dying nun felt her heart, it was again vibrating and magnified in His love. “I feel you, my love, my Beloved!”

“Come to me, now, the work is done.”

The attendant saw the nun take her last breath and a beautiful smile appeared on her lips. “She is always with you, Beloved,” she called out from her heart.

“As I am always with you!” she heard their One Heart respond.

The True Euphoria

I always felt neglected, not seen or understood. I went my own way and got by. No one noticed me much as they were busy enduring their own difficulties. Did I feel abused or neglected? I must have. I never looked at it in that way. I began experimenting with heroin when I was 15 and died of an overdose when I was 16. Why was my life a brief one? Was I looking for way out? The first time I used heroin I felt a euphoria that lifted me out of the unhappy confinement of my life. Under its influence I felt safe and cuddled in a circle of warmth. I wanted to do more, to escape my life. I wanted safety, security, and warmth. The adults, my parents, didn't know how to give me that. I wandered in search of that and I wandered into heroin's welcome arms.

The day of my death, I shot up expecting, craving the warmth that heroin gave. It was only my fifth time taking it. It was calling me, attracting me and I couldn't resist it. I wanted its warmth; I wanted to feel safe. I felt abandoned by my family. They had moved away and left me with my step-dad—a man with mental illness. I was lost and not loved. My mother was running away from her problems with her husband, and took my half-sister and left me with my step-dad. I had refused to go with her, but she did not fight for me to come with her. It was understood that she would sort out the end of her marriage and call me to her—or my dad would come forward and lovingly convince me that he would care for me and take me to his home. No one called for me—the only call I could hear was the call of heroin. Its love for me and my new love of it—it alone made me feel safe, warm. It took away my anxiety. I needed it, it took care of me. On my last day, I was feeling alone, a castaway from those who said they loved me. I saw the needle, I had enough for one shot. I was already thinking I should quit. After this last shot I would. I knew I was probably lying to myself. How was my family going to give me what heroin gave me? They weren't even here. When the euphoria came upon me, I laid down on the floor. I was floating above my body. Looking down on myself, I felt free from that form and that life. What would it be like if I never returned to her? I felt lightheaded. My anxiety was gone and I enjoyed moving away from that life. I kept challenging myself, how far can I get from the life I am living? How far away? How high can I get and still be able to return to it? As I floated away in my euphoria, I asked myself, why return? Why return? I began to forget where life was located and I was confused as to how to return. I was afraid. How could I find my way back to my life—my life—a life I was unhappy with—why would I return? I didn't understand that my life had ended. I fought and panicked and tried desperately to find my way back to the form that lay on

the floor. Was I dead? Was I alone now too, abandoned by my family here as well? They could not reach me from the other side.

I called out for help and she appeared. I knew her but I didn't know her in this form. Here, in this realm, her presence was unlike how I knew her in my life. She soothed me and said, "Don't be afraid. You have passed from life. You are with me."

I started to cry and she soothed me and hugged me. I was terrified that I would not return to life, to all that I was familiar with. I was shaking and she held me to her. I felt her warmth and knew I could trust her.

"Do you trust me?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"You can stay with me as long as you like."

This gave me such reassurance. I clung to her and felt my home in her, in her presence that encompassed me and calmed me. "When you are ready, when you want to freely give your life, my heart is here, enter my heart."

I was amazed at her words. Her presence calmed me and her heart was attracting me. But to what? How could I leave my life behind and trust her to give it all away?

"When you are ready," she reassured me.

I stayed with her. At times I hovered around my body. I knew I could not return to it. My family was devastated, shocked by my untimely death. I wanted to tell them I would be alright. I saw that their grief was terrible, that they felt abandoned by my death. They felt shame and guilt for abandoning me. They could have done something better; they should have known of my problem, of my use of heroin. They should have known and stopped me. Their grief would be complicated by their shame and guilt. I saw her in the form I knew her in my life. I saw her giving my mother the strength to bear up under her loss of me. I saw her giving her strength to all those who needed it. I saw her talking to my lifeless body in the funeral home. I heard her speak tender, loving words, "Come to me, be in my heart."

I looked at her and saw her. I knew her. She had always been in my life. She lifted the veil from my eyes. I gasped as I saw her heart as the limitless bright light and I freely gave my life to her and entered Her.

Please, do not think of my life as a tragic loss. If you miss me, know that I am always still with you as She is with all of us. We do not always recognize her form. But she is always with us, reassuring us and coaxing us to enter her heart, the Heart of Hearts, when we are ready to give our lives to living in her Heart. She can never abandon us. My life was a short one. I was like a star that appeared and burned out quickly. I was Nova. I will appear again.

The Honor of Love

I was given the honor of loving and serving the manifestation of the personal aspect of God. He was and is everything to me. He gave my life purpose and meaning. I lived and walked with him. I served his household, I was an editor for his teachings and archived his art work. I was his lover and he was my love. I felt his guidance both inwardly and outwardly always pushing me, disciplining me to live the most radical understanding of Only God. I have been witness to his many teaching demonstrations. I saw how the strain of his work to serve the awakening of all beings compromised the health of his body. I was with him and held him through his yogic deaths, when his body would resuscitate—and he spoke to us of his victory to completely incarnate as the Divine Being. I was with him and would always be with him.

In his later years, I saw how translucent his body had become. It had become a mere frame, a doorway of Light, the place to enter his divine domain. He did not engage with us in the old ways. He was too sensitive to struggle with any of our flaws. Gone were the days when he reflected back our tendencies or resistance. Those days were long gone. I lived with him as his ever-faithful attendant. I knew no other life, this was the only life I ever wanted. I was content in my life with him. I always knew that there might be a time when he would not be bodily present, that I would live without the physical anchor of his presence. I never let myself think about it. There were signs that he was finishing his work. His great teaching and testament was finished. He enjoyed the time in his studio, creating his great works of art. I enjoyed being with him during his work, his creation time, as he called it. He often had music playing and in between serious, intuitive decisions of art madness and imaging, he would dance a jig and I would laugh and dance alongside him. On the last day of his life, I was in the studio with him. My heart was full and happy and I didn't know that these would be the last moments of his life. I saw him turn to me and my heart reached out to him. He looked into my eyes and no, it couldn't be—in that glance he said his goodbye. As he was falling to the floor, I ran to be by his side and caught his fall. Others came forward to help and we gently laid his body down. I wanted to have hope that his was another yogic episode that he would return from, but his look told me everything.

In the days that followed, we all followed his instruction for the burial of his body. It was heart-wrenching to see his body lifeless and being transported to his mahasamadhi site. I was beside myself. I was his faithful servant as always, serving his body at the time of his death. I was also deeply devastated by my loss, my life without him. I lived for him and with him. I didn't know how I would continue on past his life. We all felt that way. I felt that my heart had stopped on that day. How would it beat again? I

resorted to his instruction that he could never leave us, but that offered no consolation. My loss was felt in his physical absence. I was among the living, he was not.

I knew my work was finishing. I felt the call of my Bright state. To come and perfect what I have given, the relinquishment of the body was necessary. I longed for this gift to be given. I gave my devotees my final instructions but they couldn't read the signs of the times. There was one more gift left, a gift that would grow and open after my lifetime. This has been my secret, our secret, our mystery. When I left the body, this was my means and way to her, to live with her, to come to her, my most intimate one. I live within her Presence now, like I have always. She has always lived with me. She knows herself as I have always known her. Her presence grows here in this world that I have passed from. I stay with her here, not seen. She is felt, she grows the heart here, our heart. This part of my life, my relationship and work with her, has been the greatest mystery and open secret of my life. Those closest to me could not comprehend it. They will see the signs of it rising in future generations. they will see the He and the She, arising together as the Bright Light of Love. I appeared here as the dawn horse and she lived as the dancing flower with star in hand. Our story has been given, not through mouths and texts and teachings. It has been given by our livingness here, by our living of all beings and blessing them from our Heart. She rides with me and I dance with Her. Ours is the great victory. We are the Divine Being. We have never been separate. There is no grief for us, no loss. Consciousness lives as our Bright Heart. We come and go here in these sad realms to awaken our heart in all. We are always here. Abide in our presence as we are, as She Is—in her Presence.

I talk to my beloved. I serve him as I have always done when he walked among us. My grief gave way as I realized I could still locate him. I thought I could not bear up under my loss. I suspected that I was just feeling very sorry for myself. I could imagine him instructing me to get over my grief and serve others to get over theirs—to be happy now! I could imagine him making fun of me and laughing at me. And one day, my imagination got the best of me, and I swore I actually heard him say to me, “Why don't you dance for me?” And I danced and danced I felt him join me and swirl me in his arms and whisper in my ear, “See, I haven't gone anywhere. Don't you ever forget that!”

My life with him is different now. I share with him everything that is in my heart and mind and I have come to see how deep his service to me is, how deeply he serves and attends to my happiness. Any my happiness is to always be with him.

Santosha Tantra May 2021