

DEATH etc.

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JERUSALEM

It was 1979 and I was back living in Jerusalem after an absence of some six years. Now with Dina, who had become my most dear companion in London, at her apartment in the German Colony district of Jerusalem.

This period entailed one of the most people intensive times of my life. Like the proverbial ants in the woodwork they came from all directions to my most receptive pot of honey. I welcomed one and all, still curious and concerned as I was to advance on the road of pragmatic understanding with whomever showed prospects of compatible potential.

Occasionally when I felt in danger of overdosing on so much love and attention, and usually in a state of quite real fatigue, I would check into the Tel Aviv Hilton Hotel, overlooking the sea, totally cut off from the world, and absorb a week or so of total rest supported by some of the finest room service and a cool ocean breeze. That usually put me firmly back on my feet for another go at mankind, still, as ever, hopeful.

Mankind, seemingly more than a little enamored with the habitual, tends to corner a person in any number of their routine attitudes, should one remain stationary for too long. Two months can sometimes do it. Enervating, to say the least.

Once, it seems, I was far more drained than I realized. This time I checked into the new Hilton on the extreme western edge of Jerusalem – a towering building offering a quite unique panoramic, though hardly exquisite, view of all of the city, both western and eastern sections. After three days or so, some twenty floors above the city, I stepped out onto the small balcony of my room, still with a great deal of fatigue in my bones, and surveyed the surroundings.

A personal history going back twenty-four years arose from the detailed and, as if, living view below and in front of my eyes. There was Beit Hakerem and the Teachers' Seminary where I had stayed in 1955 on my first visit; there, Abraham Lincoln St. and there, the dorms of the Hebrew University, places that had accommodated me in 1957.

Rehavia, Yemin Moshe, Nachlaot, Mount of Olives and the German Colony, all places where I had lived for shorter or longer periods.

In every location there had been a particular circle of friends and acquaintances, each with a unique and differing social dynamic of its own time. The neighborhoods had remained, but where were the friends now? They had moved on, no longer there. The past dynamic of each location was so clear to me, but it was now dead. Each period as a lifetime, all spread out in a line before my eyes. It was a devastating experience. I was weak and everything in front of me was dead, gone, finished. Only the buildings remained. The people? God knows where and what they were involved in now. I checked out of the hotel in a complete daze.

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I drove to the Nachlaot district and the house of an old and trusted friend from the Galilee. He was not at home. I went directly to the house of another close friend, a film editor and ex-seaman from Haifa, then living in Jerusalem. Later he told me that I looked grey and quite weak when I entered.

Within a few minutes he asked me to join him in a visit to another friend of his in the area. It was a Saturday and they used to meet regularly on Saturdays. I went along.

A surprise awaited me. They assumed a rare pleasure. Hard working and serious professionals that they were during the week, Saturdays they quietly and discretely relaxed smoking hash with the luxury of a large Arab 'bubbly-bubbly' otherwise known as a water pipe. I was invited to join them and half consciously, through a dazed fog, I readily agreed.

The water pipe allowed in, with very little sensation, a large volume of cool smoke. I inhaled and held the smoke, as if compulsively, inside. They told me not to hold it so long. I paid no attention. I hardly gave it, or for that matter anything else, a thought.

I guess I was drawing-in in the expectation of energy. I was most short of energy. Somehow the view from the Hilton and the overwhelming sense of all my pasts in Jerusalem and everything in between, the living and now the dead, had knocked me for a loop. I was hardly there. I kept smoking and holding my lungs full, against all current

advice.

I started to get dizzy. I stood up to regain control of myself. I leaned on the foot piece of a bed and it collapsed under my weight. I returned slightly more steady to my chair. Then it started to happen again. Dizziness, inner turmoil, a sinking inner disorder. I followed it with a total attention. I had to, to keep from passing out. I followed it deeper and deeper and it got more and more intense.

Then the moment of horror. The speed increased – there was no coming back. It was all instantaneous – an irresistible rush and pull into the depths of being! My lungs had collapsed, every cell in my body LIT-UP in an agonizing cry for oxygen. No time for fear, only instantaneous terror. It was all over, there was no coming back.

I had gotten to my feet, then I was down on my knees. They tell me that I then collapsed with my head hitting the floor. I missed that part.

Like a thousand year old olive tree, with a vast network of massive roots deep into the earth, and about to be violently jerked out of the ground by some giant crane, tearing and ripping all the roots, causing incredible pain, incredible agony, ripping and tearing, like fingers pulled out of the hand, limbs from the body.

This was about to happen to me. That was the moment of terror as I collapsed. And what happened? The tree popped out as clean as a whistle. Nothing tore, the tree popped out clean. ALL THE ROOTS HAD BEEN DUG AROUND, THE EARTH LOOSENEED.

We then understood exactly what WORK had been all about, what it had been for.

Not to be torn apart.

To go out consciously, without resistance.

Terror maybe – but never to lose attention.

*

I was flying through space, through the galaxies, at millions of miles an hour. Beyond the speed of light, beyond time. Going far, very far. Not knowing where, but

knowing that it was good, to a good place, VERY GOOD.

Like a drop of water, I the drop of water, I seeing the drop of water, flying through space. GOING HOME!

As all this was in progress, I was also aware of all that was going on in the room. They had me in a chair, they were in panic. Later I was told that they saw clearly that I was dead. They had seen the dead before in the wars. No doubt. Skin gone grey, eyes turned up. Dead, dead, no question about it!

Alan, Alan, was the cry as my dear and close friend was working me over in the chair. Alan, Alan, he kept yelling, imploring, as he worked over my back and head with his hands in a furiously determined manner, as if possessed.

He would not let go. No way. Alan, Alan, I could hear him yell, as I was flying millions of miles an hour through the universe, happy to go, going to GOOD, going home. Alan, Alan, he yelled as his hands worked me over. Water, WATER, he yelled to his friend. His friend rushed out to the kitchen and returned with a glass of water. No, NO, he screamed at him, a bucket of water, a BUCKET. The friend returned with a bucket and a towel. They used it on me. Alan, Alan, Alan, he yelled and yelled and yelled at me. I did not want to know from him, I was more than happy with my journey, but he would not let go, not a hair's worth, no give, no give at all. ALAN, ALAN, ALAN.

I RETURNED – I don't know how. He INSISTED.

I had been conscious of everything in the room, I saw it all. They never told me anything. Years later and they still refuse to talk about it. Still scared. Won't even say how long I was out. My guess is, less than ten minutes. I saw it all. This side and that side. The living and the so-called dead.

The soul returned, more or less. It's true, the Angel of Death just taps you on the left shoulder, I felt it. Then you are gone. No time to object, no time for good-bye.

The holy books write about it, it's true. Very nice to be ready. No one would want to be torn apart, NO ONE.

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The psychological consequences of the death experience were immense, although most difficult to identify within the variety of factors that go to make up any particular state. The soul was unquestionably separated from the body and although the play of imagination can place any perception or conclusion in legitimate doubt there were certain aspects of the experience that left an indelible mark. Most impressively, when they confirmed or elaborated facts that had been read about in various serious texts anywhere from the Bible to the Teachings of Osiris.

My first reaction was to question whether this experience could or should ever be talked about. Living with Dina and knowing that things could never again be the same for me, in all fairness I had to tell her something. I returned to the apartment and told her the following day that: 'I had an experience the other day that was EQUAL TO ALL THE EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE TAKEN TOGETHER, MULTIPLIED BY ONE THOUSAND.' That much was certain, I would never again be the same. I had passed through the barrier of Death, survived the shock, seen the other side, although in dimensions inexplicable in 'wordly' (worldly) terms, and RETURNED. In the death experience EVERYTHING OF LIFE HAD BEEN SHED. Then what exactly had returned?

*

The eighties found me living mainly in Jerusalem. Every year or two some trip outside of Israel materialized that took me to such far flung places as Japan, South Africa, Haiti, Tennessee, Colorado, California, Florida, Toronto and repeated stays in New York and London.

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

I had known Avi since the early seventies when we met, the day before his marriage to American Judy, in my house in Yemin Moshe, Jerusalem. Avi had been 'separated' for some years and among other things wanted to visit his daughter who was living with Judy in Los Angeles, and also to see Sharona, the married and divorced daughter of Rosy and Abi Nathan, who was living close to her mother in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. In particular, I wanted to check out Nashville, the capital of country music where I might do some recording at a future date.

Our first stop was London where we visited with our mutual friend Liza, and attired ourselves with suitable western clothing. From there we flew off to San Francisco and a short visit with Joni, alias Satarah, alias Sarah and her ex-husband Jonathan, alias Ikbal and the community that resulted from the inspiration of their teachers, then deceased, Sufi Sam and Hazrat Inayat Khan.

My inner organs, severely disorganized from the death experience, were slowly strengthening and balancing out but my heart and lungs remained particularly vulnerable. Each flight across the Atlantic put me to bed for a week in complete exhaustion. I was most sensitive to the lack of normal atmospheric pressure in the jet aircraft and the straining of the biological clock to readjust itself.

I had not managed to get a rest in San Francisco before we hit the road in the direction of Los Angeles in order to get Avi to a rendez-vous with his daughter. Rented the most comfortable car available, a huge white Cadillac convertible, for the long trip south, and roughly half way down found myself slumped over the wheel, smack in front of a lovely rustic hotel in the Big Sur area on the coast, half dead. Avi went into the hotel and rented a lovely large room and I spent a week in there resting, as Avi gallivanted with the local fun lovers.

The room that we were given had been previously occupied by a member of the hotel staff, a black man, obviously highly respected as they had kept everything in the

room exactly as it was left, by the now deceased. On the side table next to the bed was a book titled 'LIFE AFTER LIFE', written by an M.D. from his records of patients that had suffered clinical death, and were somehow revived in hospital.

The book was right beside me. I read it. Only two interesting facts remain in memory – two facts that corresponded to my personal experience. One, that each individual that had returned, had been totally aware of all the activity around his body, saw it all, as the doctors were attempting to resuscitate them. And secondly, each had 'agreed' to come back as a result of somebody close to them pleading and imploring them to do so with deep emotion. All had been clinically dead, all were happily gone, and all were aware of the circumstances transpiring in the vicinity of the dead body.

Although these were curious facts, they were small compared to more significant confirmations that were personally experienced. It's difficult, if at all possible, to describe multiple experiences and insights that were not received sequentially but rather instantaneously. A few examples: The Tibetan Book of the Dead proved to be magic, and even somewhat explicable. Published in English, with an introduction by the psychiatrist Carl Jung, it is hardly written in a form in which a western intellectual could rationally determine its aims, or methods. I had read it more than once and what remained was the fact that in the throes of death the person is addressed as he passes through various stages, called 'Bardos'. In each Bardo various enticing or frightening illusions confront the dying man. There, 'temptations' are described in some detail, with the dead man being implored not to get drawn in, to let them pass and most importantly, to FOLLOW THE LIGHT. That might appear rational enough, except that in death there is NO TIME – the movement is faster than time, faster than the speed of light. No time for any determined yes or no.

And here enters the Magic. The book strikes the reader, and is, repetitious to what almost seems the point of the ridiculous. All the wording is as cycles, as repetition and repetition and repetition and repetition, on and on and on and on! As a caterpillar spins his cocoon, a'round and a'round and a'round and a'round and a'round and a'round! Now for the inexplicable. At death there is NO TIME – everything is ALL AT ONCE. The repetitive cycles, as is the style of the book, created an artificial 'time body', a WHOLE. I came out of this death experience 'knowing' that this Tibetan Book of the Dead had formed a kind of cocoon, a safe enclosed vehicle for the protected passage from one

world to another. It was not a thought-out conclusion, it was a fact, unexpected and beautiful.

One more example: This image of the one-thousand year old olive tree with deep roots being torn from the ground with the resulting tearing and ripping of the roots. A particular stage, a Bardo, if you like. The terror of the impending separation at death, being torn away from everything, EVERYTHING, the very GROUND of our identity, what we have valued, like fingers gripping the earth. What a perfect analogy. The 'tree' popped out, the 'roots' had been dug around, the earth was loose, NOTHING TORE. 'Working for life and working for death are the same thing'. So be it. The energy of resistance was freed and converted to a powerful explosion/thrust towards a distant world, out of our solar system, out of our galaxy, into the distant starry world. One is either ready, or not. There is no more time. I had been released from earthly attachments without fully realizing it. ALLAH HU'AKBAR.

So, in Work, we progressively let go of attachments in life. Some elements drift away, some remain, but we insist on holding nothing. We know the limits of life and its temporariness. What difference does it make what we manage to have and to hold? As St. Paul says, 'If it were ONLY for this life that we work and suffer, we of all men are most to be pitied.'

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I took Avi for a visit to the grounds of Esalen Institute without official sanctioning and got thrown out by a heavy-handed security guard, 'just doing his job,' I presume. So we hit the road again for Los Angeles and a visit to ex-wife Judy and little daughter.

Approaching Los Angeles, cruising along in a magnificent white Cadillac, at a distance of some forty miles, we could see on the horizon of this clear sunny day the 'City of the Stars', its buildings towering into the sky. It appeared in the distance as an oasis, and from the top of the cluster of high buildings what seemed like a giant funnel of light/energy connecting the city with the heavens. An optical illusion? Maybe. On the other hand, what a concentration of energy and talent confined to this particular spot on the surface of the earth. The energy flow appeared to be going up rather than down. Could so much frustrated vanity be feeding the moon? In fact? I know, probably 'just'

heat.

I spent some ten days in L.A. before leaving Avi to complete his business and flying off in a large jet to Denver, Colorado and then hopping a small two engine prop for a short flight, high up in the Rockies, to Aspin.

Carol, ex-college teacher, ex-wife to Marty who was previously Assistant District Attorney in charge of narcotics, Brooklyn, and more recently Chief of Police in Aspin, was running her own long dreamed for toy shop there. I loved Carol but had no designs on her nor her body. I did however find myself collapsed on her bed for a week, after making the mistake of flying in an unpressurized aircraft to such a height in the Rocky Mountains. Carol had a male friend who was a heart specialist and I decided to let him have a look. Maybe I wasn't getting stronger. He took an electro-cardiograph and advised me that I was basically alright but did have an occasional irregular heartbeat. He should only have known!

When I recovered my strength I rented a car and took a slow and careful drive down to Denver and a return flight to L. A. to join up with Avi. We flew off together to Nashville for a week of checking out studio conditions and the scene in general, drove south through a few states to some airport and caught a flight to Miami and an immediate connection to Port-Au-Prince, Haiti.

Surprise of surprises. I had not been to Haiti in over twenty-five years. I had taken more than one winter vacation there during my days in business. Now we stepped into an exceptional scene.

HAITI

In Haiti we dropped directly onto the main stage of the multi-media-movie of Katherine Dunham, into what is called 'her life'. I experienced her in 'my life'. Just who is she? Read on and you might find that she will take a minor role in YOUR sense of reality/life.

The setting was on the upper and outer ridge of the capital city of Port-Au-Prince. This part of Haiti is lush green with a blanket of tropical vegetation that, with no more than a touch of paranoia, would not be difficult to imagine was just poised to embrace you in a warm, sweet smelling, salivating, over friendly death hug. Beautiful, overwhelmingly green.

Avi and I were looking for the address of Sharona, and arrived at the gates of Katherine Dunham's small hotel that was being administered by Rosy, Sharona's mother. We entered directly into a swimming pool area and one of the most beautiful and gentle settings I have ever seen. The pool was the center piece, moderately large, whose far side was tucked in below a sharply angled hill, its top ending in the sky with the suggestion of vast empty spaces beyond. Across the pool from the hillside were four or five connected Spanish style apartment/cabanas with another two or three on the short end of the pool. There was an open space on the other end of the pool and then an impressive flight of deep rising stairs some six meters long, with the simple, powerful and elegant personal residence of Katherine Dunham at the top. The house gave the impression of a Greek temple overlooking its gardens, pool and guest facilities.

We had come to get an address but immediately on entering this unique hotel I was convinced that we must spend at least a few days there. At one hundred and fifty dollars a day and with little cash in the bank I might have given this a second thought, but this was obviously not an experience to pass up in good conscience. Avi and I were given a spacious enough cabana apartment, with authentic French cuisine meals served by an elegantly trained Haitian staff, poolside, just outside our front door. Fine

wine and delicate Caribbean grass manifested in our presence.

One day passed into the next in this paradise, reading and relaxing. It seemed that neither boredom nor guilt could invade this gift of goodness.

Avi's inner vibrations were experiencing some super-excited readjustments that I did not wish to be distracted by, so we shifted him into the cabana apartment next door. Now three-hundred dollars a day and running rapidly dry, but what the hell.

Avi came into my room one evening glowing with the excited satisfaction of a cat that had just caught the mouse. Having carried Ouspensky's 'The Fourth Way' since leaving Jerusalem, but for the first time looking into it, he entered sprouting incredulous appreciation for the clarity with which the immense issue of LIES was dealt with in the book. He saw something so clearly that his whole face was alight. The following day a statuesque eighteen year old black beauty, who was back home on vacation from her studies at the University of Chicago, made her appearance and Avi was off to the beaches with her and with some questionable American jet-setters and 'businessmen.' Ouspensky was short-lived.

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Peeking out of my door one day I spotted, on the far side of the pool, someone who I was sure was the patron of this estate. Katherine Dunham, now in her eighties, was taking a stroll, supported on one side by a woman servant and on the other by a woman friend. Each step was painful, that was clear. Katherine had arrived back in the country just the day before. I knew nothing about her other than the hushed tones in which her name was mentioned with obvious respect and more than a little awe. The following day I asked our friend Rosy, the manager, to inquire whether Katherine would agree to a body treatment. I was sure that I could relieve her of some of the physical agony that was so clearly evident. Following a slightly nervous swallow, Rosy said, yes, she would ask.

A partial biography of Katherine Dunham, gleamed from a published autobiography, hearsay and some super-sensual data, adds up to something like this: Black American by birth, she was raised in a poor though respectable house in the

Chicago ghetto district. Her father had a tailor shop or a small dry cleaning establishment. The sequence of the following events are not clear but it goes something like this: World renowned dancer and choreographer with her own extremely large company that frequently toured America and Europe. Honored by United States Government with her picture on a Postage Stamp commemorating dance in the United States. Personal friend of the ruling Peron family of Argentina and the President of Senegal, where she also maintained a residence. Owner of Habitation LeClerc, a large estate on a magic mountain that adjoined the hotel we were staying at. Habitation LeClerc was the estate Napoleon bestowed on his sister during the period that France controlled the island. Katherine had also been a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, reputed to be the best in the world. As part of her studies she was investigating the phenomenon of Voodoo in the Caribbean, and although warned at some point not to get drawn-in, she did. Subsequently she attained to the title of Second Degree Voodoo Priestess.

Katherine Dunham had been a very busy lady. Now, I was informed, she had considerable pain in her knees, resulting from her many years in dance. I was told the following day that my visit would be welcomed.

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I didn't look around very much as I entered her house but was left with the impression of an environment with simple functional items, much stone and light and wide open space. It was clear, all around, what I had come for and we got directly down to work. Light chocolate color, medium height, full body, and the strangest being that I have ever laid my hands on. What appeared to be her maid/companion, a serious and mature Haitian woman, kept a steel eye on me as if ready to jump to her mistress' rescue should I exhibit the least uncaredful or aggressive move. What was happening was obviously not a common occurrence. Katherine looked heavy but felt as light, and in a way empty, as a blown-up balloon. The work went well, she smelled lovely and responded simply. There was a minimum of talk centered exclusively on the question of just which couch would prove most practical to work on. It turned out to be something medium high, of stone, with a thin nicely upholstered mattress. I worked, she relaxed

and the maid stood guard at a respectful distance. By the time we had finished everyone was at ease.

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The next week developed into a gentle tug-of-war within a subtle new age communication network. It became clear that Katherine wanted me to return to her home and continue with what we had started. I was at least equally sure that she must make the next move in my direction 'Come,' she was saying, 'ask,' I was replying. I wanted nothing from her; it had to be clear who was buying and who was selling. I knew little of the details of her life at the time but that she was a powerful and determined woman was obvious.

A couple of days passed in this 'let's get things straight' disputation, when finally Rosy delivered a handful of folio papers from Katherine to my door. They contained verbal and diagrammatical descriptions of what I took to be an original method of notations for dance postures and movements. A kind of new written language for rapid and detailed choreography. Not my field but it did give me a sense of her, her mind and her interests, at least in that area. She was, in any case, responding/acknowledging. Still no 'request'. After a few days Rosy brought in an autobiography written by Katherine of the early years of her life.

Then Hurricane David arrived in the area to test the nerves of the island population.

HURRICANE DAVID

Nature threatened like I had never imagined possible. Hurricane David struck a devastating blow to the upper part of the island whose terra-firma is nationalistically identified as The Dominican Republic. Many killed, much destruction. Most people on the Island lived in Shantytowns, housed in extremely fragile primitive structures. The Hurricane struck a vicious blow and then moved out to sea and along the coast towards the other end of the Island where we were located. The local radio was blasting away in the Creole language warning the inhabitants in frantic tones how to protect themselves from an imminent hit.

The storm would approach the coast with killing speed, and suddenly veer away. These probing and threatening gestures went on for days as the atmospheric pressure mounted to a skull shrinking intensity, intermixed with the constant booming radio warnings with real time hurricane data. It was always 'about to hit' within the next few hours. At night the drums coming from the local village, loud and clear, and from the distance like endless echoing, were sensed in one's total being as a real force holding off and pushing back this twisting monster of a hurricane.

The native staff of the hotel, who were by now treating me with close to reverence due to my 'hands on' relationship with their most revered mistress, were in a controlled panic, and with an obvious dilemma. The hotel was more or less safe, it was constructed of cement. If the storm hit directly, safety could most probably be found on the floor in the corner, and the building was most unlikely to collapse. The staff however would have family members in the surrounding areas. What of them? And their most loved Katherine, how could they leave her at such a time? What immense control they had to exert not to run away. Waiting for some word, some reaction from Katherine, they held on. They were given no special instructions, an added pressure.

The drumming went on incessantly, pushing, holding the storm at bay. The psychic and atmospheric pressure bordered the intolerable. It got to Avi one evening. Bolting from the hotel, mumbling to himself in an inner irritable protest, I followed him

down a side road as he was practically running to the lower village, drums getting louder the closer we got. I could not convince him to return with me so I turned back myself. He followed within half an hour. We went to rest awaiting whatever tomorrow was to bring.

The next day the danger seemed to have abated somewhat. Hurricane David took a new move further off the coast. The day was slightly overcast, the air still and heavy. Around dusk I found myself standing on the far edge of the pool looking across and up the stairs of Katherine Dunham's house. Suddenly I saw a figure standing at the top of the stairs. The light was poor but it was obviously Katherine standing there. We set our eyes on each other with a connection as clear as holding hands. No attempt at inner communication, only each of us sinking deeper and deeper into the quiet, a quiet of immense depth, in some way fueled by the buildup of tension caused by all surrounding elements connected with Hurricane David. Deeper and deeper into the calm we went, eyes riveted on each other through the fading light.

Suddenly, the miraculous. As if the inner skeleton of Katherine became pure vibrating electricity. Katherine's body no longer visible, only a high voltage simmering spirit. Was it still Katherine? Had she been possessed, completely taken over by an entity from the spirit world? Evil possibly? Not my business, for sure, I concluded on the spot. I dropped my eyes. Voodoo shmu-do, higher or lower, it was not my way. Thanks, but no thanks.

When I looked up, not Katherine nor anything else was there.

MIAMI

The storm had passed on. The next day we were on a flight back to Miami. On the way out of the hotel we passed Katherine and a friend sitting by a pool side table. I offered a rather sheepish good-bye, the two girls broke into light giggle. Haiti, the land of the intense, the VERY INTENSE.

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We landed in Miami in what began to look like a city preparing for war, and checked into a beachside motel. Store windows taped up and with few people on the streets in this off season, as Hurricane David started to pursue us, leaving Haiti and moving towards the Florida coast. The build up of pressure in the air could already be sensed, and Miami Beach looked more like a semi-deserted mining town than America's most famous southern resort playground.

I had known Miami going back over thirty-five years when one winter my parents took me out of school, at the age of eight or nine, along with my sister and grandmother, and drove the eighteen hundred miles from freezing Montreal to semi-tropic southern Florida. New York City with Broadway, Times Square, Rockefeller Center and the Bowery; Washington with visits to Capitol Hill, the Supreme Court, the Smithsonian Museum; through the Carolinas and Georgia and into Florida with its orange groves and cotton fields. Memorable. In more recent years my parents owned a small condominium apartment on Miami's Bay Harbor Island. Now, with Avi, it all looked like the deserted set of last year's movie.

So much had been going on during this trip that it was almost impossible to separate the pieces. By the second night in Miami, however, the inner tension became intolerable. I started to feel an intense pressure in my chest. It spoke as much of an undefined emotional pain being reflected from Avi as it did of the growing presence of Hurricane David. By four o'clock in the morning I knew that if I did not disengage myself

from both these forces I would literally not survive – my heart was about to burst.

I had to make a move now, right now. I slipped out of our beach side motel, paid the bill, entered the rented car and started driving north in the dead of the night. I knew Avi would survive and my condition was so critical and there was no question but that I had to disengage immediately. I would not have lasted the night.

UNCLE JACK G.

I reached Fort Lauderdale as the sun rose and went into a Howard Johnson's restaurant for some breakfast. I was already feeling better. From there I headed inland towards Orlando from where I knew I could catch a flight to New York. I needed to be away, far away, from Hurricane David.

I had never before been to Orlando and found myself cruising along the wide open flatlands, moving west in totally unfamiliar terrain.

Suddenly I experienced a most strange, though surprisingly unshocking, sensation, realization. Beside me in the front passenger seat was a 'presence'. Most difficult to describe, but with a reality so strong that it left no doubt. It was Uncle Jack! Uncle Jack, I then remembered, had died some two years before. No doubt, it was Uncle Jack. Later, I recalled that he had occupied a small retirement apartment somewhere in that general area. I might have even visited it once many years back. Now, there was Uncle Jack riding along with me in this rented car. No shock, this kind of thing was almost beginning to seem natural. Dead in Jerusalem, close to dead in Big Sur and Aspin, Katherine Dunham's 'possession' in Haiti, and now this. I had no doubt. This was completely new. I just, so to speak, went along for the ride. Some months later, in the Galilee, and then again in Jerusalem, Uncle Jack and I would meet up again and complete our business.

NEW YORK CITY

As I drifted into the Orlando area I spotted signs leading to Disney world. Oh, thought I, let's go take a look. I made it into a vast parking lot that appeared to have no end, empty as it was, turned around and headed for the airport. Some few hours later I landed in New York City, pleased to be still alive.

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New York City for the millionth time. I checked into a small hotel off Fifth Avenue in the upper fifties and was immediately struck by an immense toothache. As was already my custom, I looked for the means to get it extracted. It had been years since I had stopped allowing anyone to mess around in my mouth.

The pain was severe. I remembered an old friend, a dentist, whom I had met in Vermont some years before during a period that he was investigating the possibility of securing a teaching position at the University of Vermont in Burlington, in an effort to extract himself from the money madhouse of New York City. He had a most successful practice in cosmetic dentistry, serving mainly Broadway actors and the city's upper crust, with his offices on Fifth Avenue merely two blocks away from my hotel.

I landed in his chair weak and helpless. 'Out,' I said, 'fix,' he insisted! I had no energy to resist. I told him I was about to leave the city but he overpowered me and got his operation into high gear.

First a two hour cleaning by a special girl assistant, scraping and sandpapering with gusto. At one point this sadist looked down at me and said: 'I'd never let anyone do this to me!' What could I say, they had me. Then a root canal job by a young specialist in an upper floor office of the same building. He only did the hole, my friend the rest. First time and never again. Built up a whole new tooth that lasted, I think, two years. Then a gold cap on a back tooth; that came out lovely and held for maybe five years.

There was no stopping him once he got started. He also appeared to be going

through a psychological crisis, shaky and dropping instruments on occasion. It was all mad. I had no intention of paying him a penny – he imposed himself, not giving a hell for my 'no'. I survived, just about.

I located Avi, through his sister, under the blankets of a new girlfriend on the Upper West Side. A month in New York, then off I was to Montreal.

TONY AMOR

Back in Montreal we had a rendez-vous with old friends and family, the first in a very long time. Much could be related but we will continue to limit ourselves to the exceptional.

Tony Amor had been my most beloved 'big brother'. He had been my sister's boyfriend when she was seventeen, he probably nineteen, and I then fourteen. The period was the forties, the years of World War Two, and Tony, along with his mother, had been evacuated from London to Canada and lived at the corner of our street. A most accomplished musician, playing the sax, clarinet and flute, he, by his early twenties, was the leader of the biggest and best orchestra in Montreal.

Without recalling anything extraordinary in his behavior, it is clear that I loved Tony very much. My sister broke up with him in her nineteenth year and married someone else and I lost contact for a few years. Then, after high school, while working at my first job, selling thread and ribbon to the needle trade, we met up again.

Tony had married the pretty daughter of a well to do clothing manufacturer and was then working as a junior executive in the company that had its offices in one of the buildings that I was servicing. With great pleasure, as always, I would come in to say hello every time I was in their building. How I loved him. At that age I never really reflected on the oddity and incongruity of this fine musician working as a clothing executive. Today it feels criminal, though in its way understandable.

In 1957, at the age of twenty-three, just before I was about to return to Israel for my second visit and a six month stay, I got word that Tony was ill. I visited him at the modest apartment that he shared with his wife and then three or four year old son. Tony had contracted leukemia and did not appear to have much longer to live. He must have been twenty-seven. My feelings for him were so strong that my joy at seeing him was hardly affected by his withered condition. What struck me as most sad, was the sight of stacks of music records piled up in the corner of the living room, and the fact that he had no record player to play them on. How this could be, I did not, again, really reflect on but after taking him and his family for a short drive, him in obvious pain but happy to be out, I returned home and made arrangements to get him my record player before leaving the next week for Israel. I never saw him again. He died before I got back to Canada.

Tony Amor of most most most blessed memory!

*

Now back in Montreal, over thirty years later, feeling good but more than a little weak after only a year from my own death experience, plus the multi-faceted trip that was nearing its end, I 'encountered' Tony, again. Resting in a one room apartment which had been loaned to me by a friend, I had a similar experience to the one I had on the road to Orlando some few months previously.

Tony's presence was being felt!

I had already a little experience in such matters. Quietly, within myself, I asked him, 'what is it that you want?' It seemed clear that he did want something from me.

'Talk to my boy, he is angry,' came the reply.

Was I still happy to speak to Tony? I can ask myself that now. At the time I 'merely' had to deal with it. What should I answer to such a request? 'I'll do what I can,' said I to him, 'but just because you are coming from such a strange place, and god knows I loved you, your request is not necessarily higher on the list than other obligations that I must respond to. I'll do my best.'

In short, that is what was communicated.

My sister had maintained periodic contact with Tony's mother throughout the years. She gave her a ring and I was subsequently informed that Tony's son had just left on a trip to Europe. Some two years after, on another visit to Montreal, I again tried to reach the boy through his grandmother, but when she heard that I wished to talk to him about his father she advised against it. She said, the boy, who was then running a restaurant in Ottawa, was 'too sensitive'. I considered overriding her veto but in the end decided to respect it. Any contact with him would require a most delicate touch and this objection was just enough to effect the balance. Again, I decided, it would have to wait.

I had known more than one young boy who had lost his father, and I had witnessed similarly consistent reactions of confused anger directed towards God or the father himself. The ultimate injustice: 'How could you leave me?' or 'Why should this happen to me?' would burst out from an as yet undeveloped mind, leaving a residue of acute bitterness. It was almost inevitable that this would be the case here as well.

Why was I chosen to speak to the boy? Obvious. There was no one likely to be around who knew Tony as well, or loved him as much as I had. Musicians have a most delicate connection when playing together but generally have little time, or inclination for that matter, to relate to the personal social subtleties of their fellow musicians. Such considerations appear gross compared with the magic of musical communion. And, the family was unlikely to have any connection with Tony's ex-musicians in any case. Then, they got him into the 'business', a clear indication that they never really saw him. So, who knew him well and loved him deeply? And who would have the capacity to communicate with this young man, now in his thirties? And just who could have heard Tony's request? The boy/man obviously knew nothing real about his father. It all made perfect sense. It would, nevertheless, have to wait.

RETURN TO JERUSALEM

Shortly afterwards I returned to Israel and my house in the Galilee. One day while resting in bed I remembered Uncle Jack again, and was shocked to realize that I had completely forgotten the contact in Florida. I must set aside a time and concentrate, thought I – I must not totally forget this!

Immediately I took out a felt pen and wrote his name on the wall. After a day or two we moved back to Dina's apartment in Jerusalem and immediately on entering I wrote uncle Jack's name on the wall in the living room. This would be sure to require a most delicate effort on my part to reach a very right and exact place in myself and not merely the right scheduling.

It happened not long afterwards. I brought Jack back into focus. Just who instigated the move is not perfectly clear but his presence was again with me. Strongly.

'What do you want?' I asked him.

'What should I do?!' he responded.

Jack had always been a modest and simple man – a bachelor all his life who lived with and cared for his widowed mother, I believe until her death. He operated a small typewriter repair shop in the same building as my office for many years, and always exhibited, as I now see it in retrospect, a quiet respect and confidence in me. Love, in his own way, I suspect. Each and every birthday, through to the time I left Montreal in my thirties, he would without fail send me a birthday card. Now dead, but caught and restricted to this world's 'atmosphere' and obviously 'lost', he had turned to me for advice.

I reflected on his question for some time before our next contact. I had had the experience, and also the confirmation of more than one holy text.

'Follow the light – you have no more business down here,' I told him. FOLLOW THE LIGHT.

I never heard from him again. I have no doubt that he 'moved on'. May God have mercy on his soul.

END *etc.*