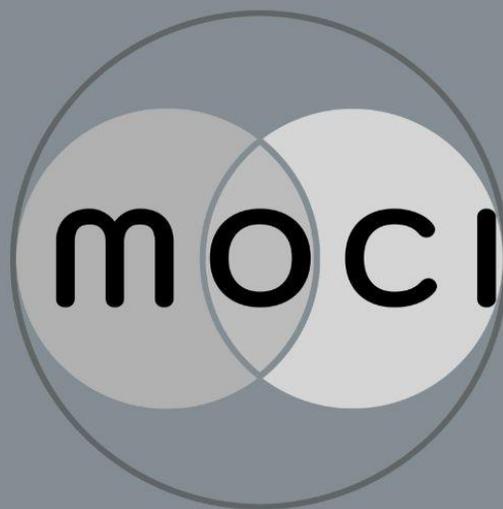
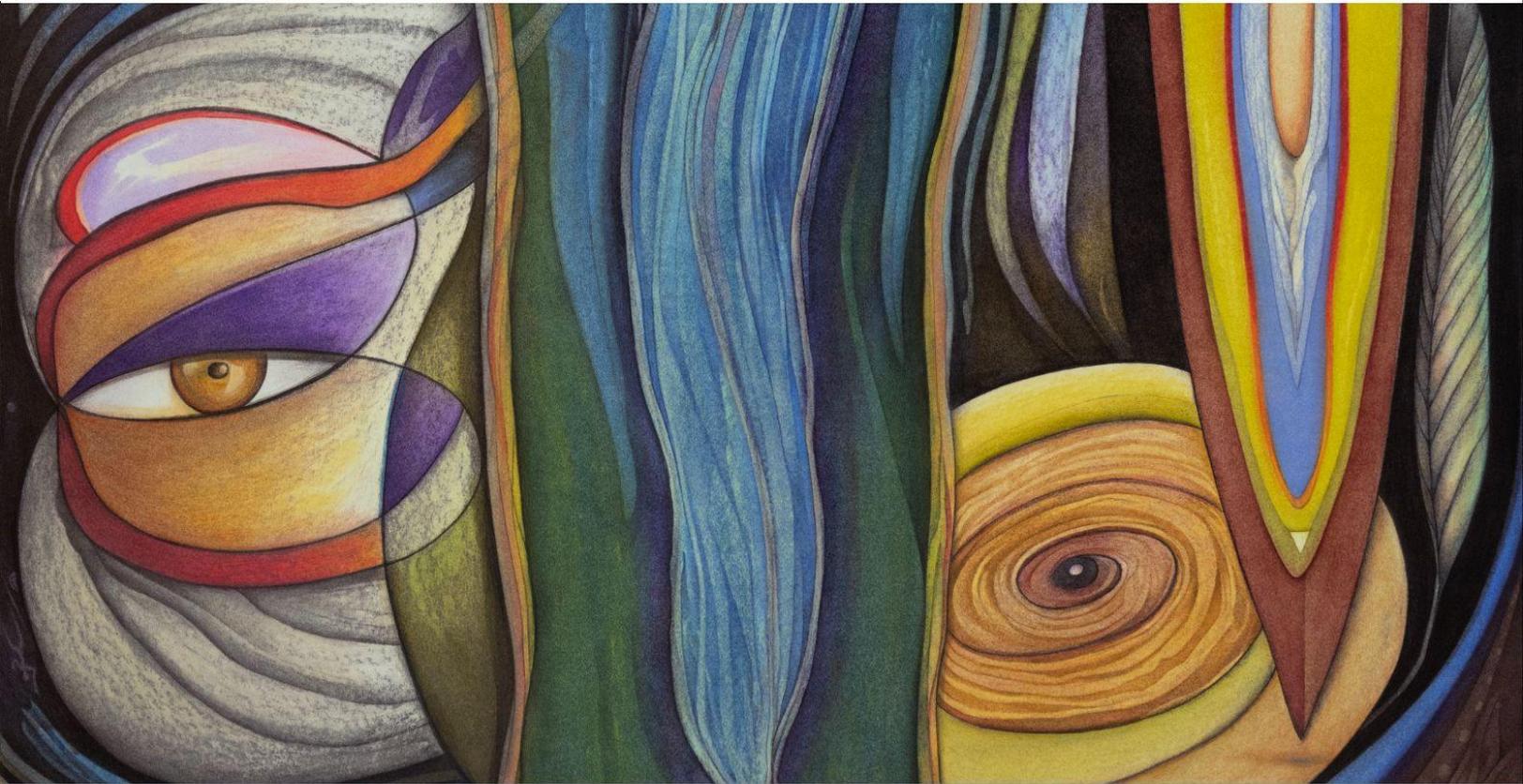


Underneath the Tree



By James Mahu | E3 : S1

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Underneath the Tree

E3 : S1

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English Version: 1.0

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Underneath the Tree

E3 : S1

The woman motioned to a large tree a short distance away. "Let's walk over there. I've sat beneath that tree before. It practically knows me." Despite the lack of light, the man could hear her smile.

The man nodded, and the two friends walked the short distance together in silence. Once they arrived the woman sat down, leaning against the trunk of the tree, while the man sat facing her. The water jug was between them.

"The core deepens," she began. "It moves forever in the direction of the unknown. And this is as true for the sovereign as it is the field of unity upon which the sovereign depends. The one, many and all consciousness is not a static thing. It evolves through spacetime, and this evolution we are a part of. We are evolving too, and even those who are caught in the most powerful duality of mortal peril, they are evolving and giving the field of unity an evolutionary insight for some future time."

The man sighed in a not-so-subtle display of frustration. "But history repeats itself over and over. Just look at wars if you need proof. Are we to just accept humanity's stupidity?"

"We are to draw our personal wisdom to the surface, and through our embodiments — our creations — we demonstrate interconnectedness. We make no exceptions. We are impeccable in our commitment to align as a particle within the one, many and all consciousness. This can be done in as many ways as there are stars in the universe.

"We are not here to change the world, we are here to express the one, many and all consciousness. The changing of the world, that is Allness, and within a single lifetime it would seem the changes are so gradual, as to be nonexistent. If we have aligned our humanness and our consciousness, our surface and our core, our mind and heart, then we have only to live as the wild creature that we are."

"It sounds selfish..." the man said.

She shook her head. "When one lives interconnected, there is no selfishness. We simply live as an expression of interconnectedness. How that gets expressed, well, that's an infinite act that is unbounded by words or numbers or definitions of any kind. I didn't invent the words I use. I didn't order them in a specific way without knowing the words of millions of other hearts and minds. Every word I use is issued from each of us. It is everyone speaking. It is Allness. It is not me."

“So, you’re saying that you have lost ownership of your words and actions, perhaps even your thoughts?” he observed. “If you’ve lost ownership then how do you enjoy life?”

“Again, the instinct is to polarize and choose one side of the duality. We can do both. We can feel the sovereign side in our experience and expression, and we can simultaneously understand, and I mean really understand, that we are interconnected all the way back to our source and all the way forward to our destiny. We can understand that both of these perspectives can cohabitate as partners.”

“And does it make you a better person if you do?”

“Even the word *better*, implies separation.”

“Then you’re saying *no*, or...it doesn’t matter? I’m confused.”

“We are sovereigns, not for one lifetime, but always. We are the amalgamation of lifetimes. Just as the Integral is the amalgamation of sovereigns. One facet of a beautiful diamond is not the diamond, yet it carries a window into the diamond’s core. We must begin there. Once you orient yourself in this way, then you can see that ownership is impossible to pin down. It would be like trying to pin down the wind that is always flowing. Where did this idea, creation or expression arise originally? How was it explained in that spacetime? Is that spacetime happening before or after, or perhaps simultaneously, with our spacetime?”

“With that foundation, we can then orient ourselves to the individual lifetime and its reality. In that reality, we are human with a body, mind, heart, ego and subconscious. In that reality we can experience and express our interconnectedness — that feeling of being unified, each life valuable to the whole and to the individual, quite independent of human judgment. In other words, we can do both, and that is the point.”

The man leaned back, propping himself up with his arms. “When you said sovereign earlier I thought you meant...me. I’m the sovereign, but just there, I saw a new definition arise. The sovereign that is me, is the amalgamation of all of my “me’s” in spacetime duality. And in some ways, I have lived from the very first nanosecond of spacetime to right now, and when spacetime folds into non-spacetime, and our destiny as the one, many and all consciousness lives in all, I will be there, too. Do I understand you correctly?”

“Yes, and I would add that the Destiny of All is the Destiny of One, in the same way that the creation of One is the creation of All. And this flow and movement is fractal. It operates on all levels of spacetime duality. The scope cannot be imagined by a mind and heart that are not partners for interconnectedness. However, once the scope is clearly imagined, it is like a guidance system that gradually flows into your life. You begin to see its care and handling of all things in your reality.”

The man looked down at his hands, murmuring something inaudible. "Again, we are back to the partnership between our heart and mind. Why? Why does that keep coming up?"

The woman touched the temple on the side of her head. "Our scientists have told us that our brains have about 86 billion neurons, our gut has about 500 million, our stomachs about 100 million, and our hearts about 40 thousand. Our brain has 2.1 million times the number of neurons than our heart. Our brain is dominant in our humanness. Yet, our feeling center, consisting of our heart, gut, and stomach area, this feeling center communicates with our brain, neurologically and energetically.

"Our communication between our consciousness and mind, and our mind and brain, and our brain and heart, and our heart and consciousness; these are like symphonic movements that can flow in harmony, disharmony or both and in all directions. When we are in harmony with these movements we transmit interconnectedness. It is as simple as that."

"And if we understand that," the man said, "why would we want to ever return to transmitting separation and disharmony?"

"Because Allness, the integral that we all are, moves at the pace of balance in spacetime duality. It is drawn out like the bellows of an accordion. And there we possess free will. We decide. Maybe our connection to Allness is urging us to play a role of separation to keep us from moving too quickly towards our destiny. We desire to avert a fall. We sense these things subconsciously, from our highest heart and mind. And we listen.

"This is part of understanding interconnectedness. It is not just a social construct or a New Age concept tossed around for its surface appeal. It is the fundamental concept, and because it is, its depth and breadth are expansive. You can spend an entire life plumbing its depths and never find its floor...or ceiling or even a wall."

"But that takes time," the man said. "No one seems to have enough time, and probably inclination to think about this."

"And that is precisely why some incarnate to codify these ideas into words or images or sounds. To make it possible, in a short period of time, for any of us to experience interconnectedness within separation. Not to try and leave separation in favor of interconnectedness, but to integrate it. To see it as part of our Allness in the one, many and all consciousness."

The man offered her another drink of water. He could hear her voice straining.

After she finished drinking, she stared up at the sky so full of stars and a crescent moon. "We have transitioned to looking at the night sky to remind ourselves of our vastness and the vastness in which we live, to the screen of technology to remind ourselves

of how small our world is. This difference is notable. And technology will only become more pervasive and invasive.

"For us to live with technology, we will need to respect it. Technology can guide us to interconnectedness, as easily as it can create worlds of separation, gathering us into cohorts of data, and cultivating our interests to feed economies. In spacetime duality, it is both and it is both because we collectively decree it."

The man took a sip of water, his eyes darting around the woman.

"Where is your water jug?" he suddenly asked.

"I didn't bring one."

"How will you take water with you?"

"I carry it inside me," she smiled.

He held out his own. "Here, have mine. I'll get another one in the village."

"No, thank you. I'm fine."

He set the jug down and looked in her eyes. "If I'm a sovereign, the core, the creature that lives through all experience and expression, if I am that and a human individual of one lifetime, how can I...how can I understand this?"

Her arms spread out, as if she was pulling wide a piece of thread. "That is the sovereign," she explained, and then she began to chop her right hand across the imaginary line she had just made. "And each of these is a lifetime."

Then she reached into the imaginary line and pulled an imaginary person holding it above the line with her forefinger and thumb. "You are one lifetime. The sovereign is not one lifetime, it is the amalgamation of all lifetimes. It is the thread of unity between lifetimes. And that is the Allness of the sovereign. And because each thing is this, there is an Allness that enables us to live interconnectedly, whether we know it or not."

She leaned in with a whisper. "But if we know it, we see the interconnection in our life down to the details of every single moment. We see it. We marvel at it. We laugh at it. We love it with all of our hearts. It is the singular recognition that Allness exists. Some call this coincidence or synchronicity or magical or cosmic or the universe smiling or an event string or destiny. In whatever way you think about it, you came upon these words and you are considering their value to your one lifetime.

"And what I am saying is that they are not for one lifetime, they are for the sovereign. And everything we make, every embodiment that comes through us, is for the sovereign that flows through us, honoring that whole of us. We embody a lifetime, but we also embody the infinite, and this is precisely what most people have forgotten. The infinite has a partnership with the finite, as if it is leasing a body, mind, heart, ego and subconscious to live in this spacetime and experience and express either interconnectedness or separation, or, and this is important, *both in partnership.*"

"Partnership?" the man asked. "How do you bring these opposing elements, as fundamental as they are, into a partnership?"

She could sense his skepticism in his tone, and she remembered the same tone in her own voice at one time, and chose to smile at her recognition. "The same way we do with any duality, we do not judge. If we do not judge, we form a partnership, and if we form a partnership we do not judge. Instead of judging, we look for the signals of interconnectedness. We look for the ways that our sovereign is communicating with us — the human self."

"So, you're saying," the man said, "that there is this invisible consciousness that lives in many, many lifetimes and it is who we really are, and everyone else also has this same invisible consciousness, and it's at that point that we are all interconnected? And it's that consciousness that you call the one, many and all. Is that right?"

"Yes, that is what I'm saying. We are given the choice to experiment how we bring the understanding of interconnectedness to this world, or how we live from a perspective of separation. That we are a consciousness of one, finite lifetime with a body, mind, heart, ego and subconscious, or we embody a particle of the infinite that is ours. A part of the whole that we have created.

"However, if we see ourselves as a sovereign — that thread of unity that weaves itself through all lifetimes, and yet maintains a sense of oneness, we can live as a Sovereign Integral who embodies the one, many and all consciousness in spacetime duality. Imperfectly, yet aligned and aware of our fundamental unity."

"Why imperfectly?" he asked.

"Because duality creates judgment, and judgment creates duality. They are self-reinforcing, and evolve rapidly as a result. On earth, we are in the soup of spacetime duality, so we will judge ourselves and our embodiments, the things we create. We will be imperfect in our expressions. There is no judgment within interconnectedness. It is the only way to form a partnership between our core and surface; our sovereign and human self. We must drop judgment, yet retain our ability to read our reality through the lens of this partnership without judgment."

"So, what does the partnership require?"

"A willingness, no, more like a courage to live as a separate human being of one lifetime and experience that. To be okay in the realization that you are both. That you are not confined by the words of another person or another spacetime. Even this realization and its embodiments can be seen as polarizing values by some who may see them as a relinquishment of what they hold onto as vital. It would be like a soldier who flings their shield away.

“That is the role they accepted. One role is not better or worse, it is vital, or it would not exist. It is part of the balance that moves our species in the direction of interconnectedness, even when it seems to be slipping into greater separation.

“The fact that these words are found within our mind and heart is a demonstration that we are moving in that direction. This is merely an embodiment from those who understand that we are interconnected within ourselves and all others. And, yes, before you ask the question, this translates into action, into behavior. Behavior is only a reflection of perception. How we perceive our reality influences our behavior, and that directly influences our reality.

“Thus, if we perceive interconnectedness within our reality, our behavior and embodiments will reflect this. The one, many and all consciousness emanates, not to change anything, not to convert anyone, not to divert anyone. It simply demonstrates Allness, the integral, and the interconnectedness that we all share. And in doing so, it understands that separation will widen to provide a balance, and this is all part of unity and Allness.”

The man began tapping with his fingers on the water jug he was holding. His fidgeting was the language of his body. Something was bothering him. “Then I have to live a double life. I have to be interconnected and separate at the same time. And somehow, I have to keep myself sane in all of this. How? I understand why, and it does make sense to me, but *how* do I do it? That part, as hard as I try to see it, I just don’t...”

His fingers stopped and the silence returned to their space beneath the tree. In the far distance they could hear other travelers at the well, finding their water. Relief resounding in their voices.

“When you learn anything, what is the fundamental premise?” she asked.

“That it takes time and practice.”

“And if you give a new thing time and practice, do you learn how to do it?”

“...Yes, usually.”

“To the extent of your talents, you learn, and what is a talent?” she inquired.

“It is a gift...um, I don’t know. I was always told that it was a gift from God that one person had a talent in this or that.”

“Talent, as we are taught, is perception that merges with belief, and then, under the lens of time and practice, its results begin to unfold. They beckon for more time and practice. They can even pull you into the unknown, where no one else has ventured. A place where only you can go. *That is talent!* You venture into the unknown and you expand the reality of a given discipline like acting or painting or performing or writing or loving or singing or simply living. You expand these through talent. No one in this entire universe

understands exactly where your talent will lead or how it emerges. It is yours to understand and expand the discipline of interconnectedness in your reality and spacetime.”

She paused for a moment, studying her hands that had almost disappeared in the growing darkness. “How you do this...keeping your sanity as you move between the experience and expression of interconnectedness and separation, *is* your unique talent. Your talent is the art of doing this. This one thing that we are all doing, every insect, every plant, every animal, every human, every life everywhere within spacetime duality.

“Everything else, every skill, achievement, accomplishment, superiority that you wield in this world, those are resonances you have with a discipline, which could come from your physicality, your mind, your heart, a parallel lifetime. Who knows? And these develop your passion. Where you have passion you will allocate time and practice.

“However, do not confuse resonance with talent. They are two different things. Our talent is to know how to balance this fundamental duality — interconnectedness and separation — in our reality. Not someone else's. *Our* reality.”

The man started his drumming again with his fingers. “Where does this talent come from?”

“You already have it. You’re already doing it. A talent is personal. It cannot be judged. Everyone and everything has a talent that allows them to find a balance between separation and interconnectedness. Where this balance is found and how it expresses itself is what makes us unique and our contribution valuable to the whole.”

“So...so, you’re saying,” the man said, “that all of us have one talent, and that talent is how to flow between these two states of being — separation and interconnectedness — as we choose in the spacetime of our reality. Each of us can find a balance, and that is our talent. Do I have it right?”

“At one level, yes.”

“Then you’re saying that our talent is how we live. That’s all. That’s our talent? A homeless war veteran, begging on the streets, has a talent to live?”

“There you are talking about the win-lose survival game of separation,” she said. “Not talent. All embodiments, whether they are sentient or not, have one thing in common: They have a talent to find a balance between the fundamental duality of separation and interconnectedness for its species, and once it is held, then it will be easier for it to be held everywhere within all species. This balance is infinitely unique. It has never been struck in the same way before.

“Literally, in each moment, this balance is shifting. It is forever unique for one, many and all. This is partly the meaning of the one, many and all consciousness. We are in this together at all levels in all places and all times. If you can imagine this, you can understand a part of this, and therefore, you can find your balance with greater ease.

"You see," she continued, "this is the talent we can recognize in each one of us. In this recognition we can create gratitude and compassion and understanding for all by simply observing how they play a role in keeping our individual and collective balance. It is not that those who have ratios of high separation and low interconnectedness are blocking our progress to become a world of peace and harmony, they provide a talent to balance our forward progress.

"Of course, this perspective is only accessible when we are mindful of how we are all part of Allness. When we remember that we are each a thread of unity, not simply flesh and bones competing in the singular game of survival."

The woman became completely still, closing her eyes. She seemed to go into a deep embrace of the surrounding silence, stillness and deep darkness. Only the dim light of a billion stars and the half moon shone upon her face.

The man closed his eyes, too, and took a deep breath.

"There is only one talent and it is the talent of the one to become the all in their own unique way over an infinite spacetime while maintaining their balance. A tightrope walker can become so good at their craft that they can almost run across a wire. Yet, if they go too fast, no matter how skilled they are, they will fall. So it is with us. All of the other dualities like happiness and sadness, or success and failure, they only serve to entertain and inform us as we make our journey across spacetime duality."

The man scoffed a bit. "It seems like you can take this idea and you can use it to justify terrible acts. You could always say: 'It was all done to provide balance to our lovely species, you're very welcome.'" The man added a touch of sarcasm to his tone.

The woman nodded knowingly. "There are times when the ratio of separation becomes so strong in a group or individual that they imbalance themselves, and can then do things that are unthinkable. These are not talents, these are imbalances, the opposite of talent. And they require understanding and compassion. They require a societal culture that actually understands how an extreme ratio of separation can induce behavior that is needlessly destructive.

"Nevertheless, in the broadest arc of oneness, it remains part of a whole. The balance of the whole is never in question. Only the balance of one or a group can be in question, and this balance becomes increasingly precarious the further one separates from other expressions of life.

"Ease is found in the feeling and mindfulness of interconnectedness. Ease is the sense of flow, a feeling of connection to a larger intelligence and an expanding understanding. Ease, of the kind I speak of, is related to consciousness. It is not a biological ease. They are two different things. For example, I am old. My body aches nearly every second of its conscious existence. It is simply a matter of degree, one moment to the next.

However, my consciousness can flow like a breeze over a meadow of vibrant flora and fauna. I can be that my entire life. All I need to do is understand this, and that understanding will faithfully find its way into our thoughts, feelings and ultimately our behaviors — our reality.”

“Ah, it’s the action that counts, isn’t it?” the man observed, his tone distant, as if he was deep in thought. “Yet, we struggle with that more than anything else. Why?”

“Because we do not understand, and often, because we do not *want* to understand.”

“Why is that?” the man asked. “It doesn’t make sense to me.”

“We each have our balance to maintain. Our talent, remember?”

The man nodded. “I do...”

“What if everyone, every human being, suddenly shifted to a ratio of 99 percent interconnectedness, and 1 percent separation? What do you think would happen?”

“Our world would change...?”

“Our world would fall into chaos,” she quickly corrected.

She chuckled to herself. “I will tell you a story. There was a man I knew, somewhat like you, who asked once to prove that action is stronger than a thought. I thought he was kidding. How is this not obvious? So I told him to think that he was punching me, and I would do the same to him, but in action. Then we could decide which is more powerful.” She smiled to herself at the recollection.

“To my utter surprise he agreed to my proposition. So, as our challenge began, he closed his eyes and asked for 10 seconds before I would strike him. I felt it was a reasonable request, so I waited. After about 10 seconds he raised his hand as if to say... *go ahead, hit me*. But I had no interest in hitting him. I couldn’t hit him. I wouldn’t hit him. It was impossible for me to hit him.

“Afterwards, I asked him what he had been thinking about for those 10 seconds, and he smiled at me, and asked me the same question. And then I understood. His mental sphere of thought and feeling had engulfed me and I had listened to it, because he was my revered teacher at that moment. I had no choice. And he knew that I saw life in that way and that I would listen to his thoughts and feelings, even though they were silent and invisible.

She paused, and looked directly at the man with her index finger pointing at him. “Never believe that our thoughts and feelings are less powerful than action or that you can think and feel one thing, and then act another. They are two legs of the same creature and they always walk together. They are one thing, even when they appear not to be. To the sovereign, they are one thing. And because thought and feeling usually happen first, and action follows, thought and feeling are the catalysts. They are powerful partners. *If they* are focused on interconnectedness, then the actions they catalyze are of interconnectedness.”

The woman struggled to stand, and with a little help from the tree trunk, she managed. The man stood with her. The first branch of the pine tree was about 7 feet from the ground, and it was hovering above them like a huge hand from the heavens. "I can only sit so long, and it is late, my friend. I hope we will cross paths again, but under circumstances where water is not the reason." She smiled, turned, and walked away.

"Wait!" the man almost shouted. "Don't you want some water? You can take mine. I'll go into town and get another jug."

She turned and shook her head. "I am fine. Water will find me."

The man ran to her. "Here, please, I insist, take this jug. It's easier for me to get another than it is for you."

"That may be true, but I know where there is more water when I need it," she said. She touched the cheek of the man tenderly. "But thank you for your kindness."

Once again, she walked away. The man watched her disappear into the night air like one who wears a black robe slips between worlds of darkness.

He began to walk away after she had disappeared into the night. The jug was already getting heavy in his hands.

A stranger came up to him with their arms outstretched. "If it's too heavy, I can lighten your load." He grinned in a friendly way.

The man offered him a drink, and the stranger drank the water for several seconds and then, respectfully, handed the jug back.

"Thank you," the stranger said, wiping his mouth with his sleeve. "Who was the woman you were talking with?"

The man hadn't realized they had been watched, and was taken back by the question. "Who are you?"

"I am a stranger."

"What is your name, stranger?"

"That name will do."

"You want me to call you Stranger... hmm...For how long were you watching and hearing our conversation?"

"I was just on the other side of the trunk of that tree." He pointed to the same tree where they had been talking. "I could hear everything. Couldn't see a thing, but every time you took a drink, I became thirstier, I can tell you that." He bobbed his head like an exclamation mark.

"It was a private conversation, you should have said something."

"Like what?"

"Well...tell us that you were there. Identify yourself."

"I just did. I didn't want to interrupt. I found it the most...a most unusual conversation. Who is she?"

"I only met her once before. I have never asked her name."

"And yet, with me, you asked right away. Why?" the stranger asked.

"I'm not sure."

"Someone like that, you don't want to lose track of. She's an oracle."

"An oracle?" the man repeated in surprise. "How is she an oracle?"

"She seems to know the future," the stranger said.

"I don't think anyone knows the future?"

"Maybe not what will happen tomorrow, but what will ultimately happen...she does."

"Humm..."

"Anyway," the stranger said, "thank you for the water. I have to be moving on. There's a long walk ahead of me."

"Forgive the question," the man said, "but I'm curious, did our conversation make sense to you?"

"Everything you asked was going through my mind, too. Her answers made sense, and yet, I cannot say how or why they make sense. It's like...it's like something very simple that is so simple it is complex to understand, not so much because *it* is complex, but because I carry this complexity within me. It is so simple that it reminds me of that."

"Yes! That is exactly true, and it's what I've been trying to understand. How do I drop the complexity that I have learned?"

"Unlearning is hard," the stranger said, shaking his head. "We have to be willing to make room for the new by letting go of the old, and we're not talking about things like tying our shoes, we're talking about fundamental understanding of who we are. All of us."

"And did you do that?" the man asked.

"Not yet."

"Why? You don't see the value?"

The stranger began to speak and then stopped. He let out a long sigh. "I think she's right about that balance thing. I'm not entirely ready to give up the old complexities that circulate in my mind and heart. I still have to play the game of survival. I still need to live in some variation of social convention. I can't give that all up in one magic moment." The stranger snapped his fingers, making a loud staccato sound.

The man set his jug down on the ground, signaling his intent to stay for a while. "But it made sense to you?"

The stranger paused, and crossed his arms, as if he were giving the question a thorough deliberation. "Let's just say that I'm open to it, and the parts I'm not open to, will

have to wait. Besides, according to her, I already know this. It's just a memory I need to remember. When I'm ready, it'll still be there."

With that said, the stranger pointed to the water jug. "One more swig before I go?"

The man nodded. "Sure."

The stranger took a long drink and put the jug back on the ground. "As promised, I have lightened your load. Thank you for letting me do so."

"Happy to share," the man said.

"And I'm sorry I eavesdropped on your conversation. If it's any consolation, I was under the tree before either of you. I had fallen asleep, and your voices woke me up, and once I was awake, I just listened. I just listened. You were my voice, actually. The questions you asked were the very ones I wanted to ask. So thank you for that."

The man nodded. "You must be very open minded," he observed.

"Not really," he quipped. "No more than the next."

"I don't think you're the average person," the man said..

The stranger leaned toward the man, turning his voice to a mere whisper.

"There are so many open to this. So many."

He turned and walked away. Leaving his whispered words hovering in the air like bright clouds in a dark sky.



Janice Mehe
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