



Seventeen Short Stories & Wordplays

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Change

Shift happens, things change.

What we can think is permanent is not. No structure is stable.

Our bodies change, our minds change, our careers change, our roles change.

Sometimes our attitude changes.

Watch how this can be so when we are tired, or when we don't get what we want – how we change when someone does the right thing by us, or when they do the wrong thing.

How we can become completely controlled by what people around us do and don't do.

Often we work hard to make the world around us the perfect shape, but such shape will not last forever, it will change.

The waves of change will keep coming, that is what is constant.

Attachment to things that change is a great source of pain.

Let it be, let yourself change and flow as trees bend and sway with the changing breeze.

Look after your body while respecting it will change.

Look after your family and friends, respecting these relationships will change, ebb and flow over time.

When we become balanced and centred around the reality of change, we become strong and soft, stable and flexible.

We become the balance of opposites.

Nothing mattered that much

To be honest, I was a bit over the interstate travel. It did have its glamour and appeal to begin with, but that had long washed away just like a kids smile washes away through too much adult expectation and not enough play.

But you have to do what you have to do.

Mouths to feed, mortgage to pay, a retirement to fund.

I walked through the security gates and then made my way to Gate 8. Ten minutes to boarding, perfect. I had this down to a fine art.



As I sat down, an Asian man who I had seen earlier sat beside me. He must have been about 80, well groomed, smiling gently.

An announcement came over the airport speaker. "There will be a delay in the boarding of flight JT348. We apologise for any inconvenience."

I sat with slight frustration. Others grumbled and mumbled. My Asian wingman continued to smile, unmoved.

Fifteen minutes later there was another announcement "There will be a further delay of 45 minutes before we can board flight JT348. Once again, we apologise for any inconvenience."

No reason, no explanation. My frustrated escalated. I asked the Asian man to look after my jacket and briefcase and walked to the counter. "Why has the plane been delayed?" I asked.

"Sir, we are unsure of the reason. We are just passing on the information we have received."

Such a response did nothing to appease me. A crowd of fellow passengers moved in like crows merging upon road kill. They all wanted answers, the flight attendant was stranded.

I didn't feel like having a debate to start my day. I turned and headed back to my seat. The Asian man continued to share his gentle smile. It added to my frustration. My body was literally heating up and beginning to sweat. I hate wearing these damn suits.

"Nothing matters that much" said the Asian man as I sat down.

"What do you mean nothing matters that much? Most people would rather be doing anything else than being stuck in an airport, waiting for a delayed flight." I wasn't usually this direct, not to strangers anyway.

"Most people would rather be at peace than stressed, regardless of where they are." He suggested and then paused.

I said nothing.

"The plane is delayed. That is all. It's up to each person to choose how they respond or react to this. It's like getting angry at the weather. What's the point? The weather is the weather, the plane will leave when the plane leaves."

I replied with more poise than I had a moment ago. "If I knew what was going on than that would make a difference."

"Why would the reason of the delay make a difference? What if the reason as well as the delay didn't matter that much?"

There it was again – "didn't matter that much."

He continued, with grace "What if being frustrated didn't matter that much either? What happens then?"

Silence. My mind settled.

Then my body twitched, kind of like when I'm about to fall asleep. The frustration was gone.

My shoulders dropped and I unplugged from the drama in front of me.

I started to smile. We smiled together.

Nothing mattered that much.

Sustainability

Slow down. There is much more to life than increasing its speed.

Paying this off sooner, getting there faster, wherever that may be.

Producing more stuff more quickly. What speed of production does one really need?

Can you be happy with your lot, and when other bits and pieces turn up then that's cream on top.

Slow down. It's not a race to the finish line. Cherish each moment.

Getting the next win quickly may please you, but pleasure will not last long. It will deliver an emotional hit, leaving you high for a moment and then in deeper neediness for another win, but bigger and quicker and faster. Patience dissolves.

Winning doesn't deliver sustained pleasure, sustained happiness or sustained peace, it delivers more pain through bondage and addiction than freedom and peace.

You need nothing more for sustained happiness, sustained peace.

You need less. You need less thinking, less worrying, less figuring out. Less planning, less forecasting.

You need less desire to fix things and make things right.

You need less attachment to being in control of all that plays out around you.

Let go, and be sustainably free. Discover what it means to be happy sustainably. That is, happiness without the need for things to happen in a certain way.

Find sustainability of joy and peace within, and as a result we will see sustainability of resources around.

Drop the need for more, and develop great appreciation for what you have.

Drop the anxiety, drop the stories of the past, drop the gossip of others, drop all nervous tension, drop everything and be here now.

Take a deep breath in, and then breathe out letting go of any thought and emotion that is requiring you to be more than you are, or wanting you to have more than you have, right now.

Rest. Smile.

The Elusive Friend

Not much was going his way. Money was tight, work was emotionless, life was a treadmill.

The dominant thought was “how did I end up here? Surely there is a more enjoyable way to make a living, and live a life.”

He was married with two beautiful children, living in a good house, in a great street, with a job most people would kill for. It didn't make sense. I should be happy, he thought.

But no amount of thinking would give a reason for his state of mind, for his state of being. He desperately tried to make sense, to make reason, but to no avail.

In fact, it was this attempted rationalisation, the thinking, the figuring out, which lead him to going nowhere fast, just like a frantic dog on a chain, tied to a pole.

Dizzy and exhausted, his mind threw in the towel, leaving him in a state of paralysis. His body offered nothing other than a rigid yet uncontrollable sway. Face expressionless.

It was 10am on Monday morning, he was in his lounge room, he should have been elsewhere.

The birds chirped chirpily outside his window, but he could not hear them. Kids played in the school playground, but he could not hear them either.

He was numb. No feeling, tranced out, checked out. No drugs required.

He was a shadow of his being. He was the shadow of his being.

As he discovered what it was like to go beyond desperation, the door opened. In walked someone he hadn't seen for a long time.

He had to squint as the sun shone through the door, camouflaging the facial expression of his visiting friend.

The visitor didn't say a word. He didn't ask "how are you?" or "is there anything I can do for you?" He just sat, looking in the same direction of the lost man.

Quietness, stillness, and patience began to pervade the previously thick and heavy air. Nothing to fix, nothing to solve, nothing to right, was whispered without sound.

The essence of the reacquainted friend began to seep into the soul of the paralysed man like water into a sponge. Patience, quietness, stillness. Nothing to fix, nothing to solve, nothing to right. Slow down. Stop.



The friend turned and looked the not so anguished man in the eye, saying nothing with his mouth but everything with his eyes. It's OK, you can breathe again now, you are safe.

The man breathed in. The man breathed out. A spark of life.

The man breathed in and out again, and again. A stream of life. His system was responding.

Thank God he thought, as his eyes closed, softly, gently.

Remaining tension of the mind and body began to drop away like leaves falling from the trees in autumn. But unlike leaves, they disappeared as soon as they touched the ground, back into the nothingness from which they came.

He was pleased the leaves disappeared and didn't pile up around him. This made him smile. A smile of relief, realising that the tide had turned, that he was coming out of his shadow and into his light.

Then, tilting his head, he could tune in to the songs of the birds outside the window. The dance of their whistles and chirps further softened him like a baby softens its grandfather's soul.

The sway of his body continued, but now with peace and grace.

This peace had been on the other side of the door. He was grateful his friend had brought it in for him.

Opening his eyes, he saw his friend had gone. The room was empty. It disturbed him for a moment, but not for long, there was ample peace and harmony in his system now.

His eyes closed again, without choice. Once more he could see his friend, his elusive friend.

The one that resides beyond the mind, where understanding and reason aren't that important. Where it is OK to just sit, patiently, quietly, and silently.

The place where the heart leads and the mind follows. The place where self-love reigns supreme.

He felt his heart expand. The appreciation was so overwhelming that he wept tears of love, tears of humility and tears of gratitude.

Life was good.... again.

Gentleness

In a world of push and shove, get it done, and not enough time, it's easy to forget the art of gentleness.

It's not so much that we forget the art; it's that we become unconscious of this art that continues to reside within.

It has been blacked out. It has a veil placed over it, which interestingly, can only be removed with the grace and delicacy of gentleness.

Children give us a great opportunity to practice gentleness, but how they are so capable at taking us into our adult minds becoming pushy and needy for things to be done straight away and the right way.

How the young are so capable at taking us away from being at ease through the moment of life.

But such a distortion and distraction has nothing to do with the young. It's all about one's forgetfulness of the gentle mind, the gentle heart.

To remember and nurture gentleness is life changing.

To offer gentleness to another creates a sphere of safety, where the other can take risks without judgment and correction. They are offered the safe space to truly share.

But to offer gentleness can be challenging, yet achieving so is one of the most loving things you can do for others, but more so for yourself.

Gently let go of unhealthy habits, and if you don't succeed at first, offer a gentle reminder to do so.

Gently let go of the need to have all the answers. Gently let go of the need to be in control.

Gently let go of anxiety. Gently let go of fear. Gently let go of thinking. Gently let go.

By increasing how gentle you are with yourself, you will discover you have a new found depth of gentleness you can offer to the world around you.

Stop. Offer yourself a gentle and loving smile. Relax. Breathe out.

Entrepreneur to enlightenment

Forty nine and dressed to impress. Busy day ahead. Breakfast with her Accountant come Business Adviser, then back to back meetings until dinner time, when she'll retreat home to see how hubby's day was.

She had always been a forward thinking entrepreneurial type, restless with today, pushing forward for tomorrow's achievements. Things simply didn't happen as fast as she wanted.

The cafe was quieter than normal this morning. Shaun, her Business Adviser was waiting for her typically late arrival. Not too late, but late enough to put the entrepreneur in a slight fluster. "Not the way to start the day" she thought.



Shaun seemed different. He seemed slower, more deliberate, something was going on. Over the first five minutes he picked up the financial reports and put them down three times, unable to bring himself to talk about them. It wasn't that the financial performance was poor, in fact it was outstanding.

But Shaun was worried. He was worried for his client. He was worried for the health of the thinking and feeling human being in front of him, who had turned into a productivity machine and had lost herself in material accumulation and entrepreneurial addiction.

Up until a couple of years ago Shaun was your typical accounting type until a rather nasty and bitter divorce sent him on a soul searching and life changing journey.

He didn't go to Peru or India, but he did read, listen and explore what it meant to be human, and perhaps more importantly, what it takes to live a life of joy, peace, happiness and all of the other wondrous emotions.

In some ways he was annoyed he hadn't learnt these insights some 20 odd years prior, but at the same time knew if it wasn't for those years, he may have never been introduced to this other way of thinking and being which has led him to be happier than he could have ever imagined.

Shaun hesitantly asked his client, "What else do you want and need to be happy?" He didn't know how his question would be received but knew he needed to ask it.

"Where do I start" was replied with a defiant grin. "I want more revenue and profit, less staffing hassles, better work-life balance. I want to lose some weight, be fitter, go on a holiday with my husband and see my kids get married."

The list could have easily gone on, but that was enough for today.

With the caring eyes of a saint and the gentlest of gentle voices, Shaun shared "Just imagine if you could be happy with what you've already got. Just imagine you didn't need anything else, or anything less, to be entirely happy."

The entrepreneur's facial expression changed immediately. It was a confronting idea, but one that couldn't be easily repelled. She had more than most. Yet for some reason was discontent and had been so for as long as she could remember. She hadn't had anyone suggest this before, especially not her business adviser whose job was to help her get more and reach higher heights.

She sat back and looked at Shaun in a way that she hadn't looked at him before. She was folding, she was letting go, and for a moment permitted herself to be vulnerable.

The grasp of her assured ego slipped. Not a lot, but just enough, for her shoulders to relax. Just enough for the business like expression to soften, and the warmth of her femininity to gleam through.

Her mind was able to see the fallacy of the promise that more means success, and success means happiness.

She needed to move. Standing up in the quieter than normal cafe, she walked around feeling the new found space within her body, within her mind and within her soul.

Shaun sat back and smiled a broad smile, "Your life can feel this spacious all the time. You don't need to always fill it to the brim with desires about the future and thoughts about what else you should have or should be doing. You don't need to delay your happiness based on some future event."

Silence fell upon them. The entrepreneur got it. Not in an intellectual way, much deeper than that.

With the most caring eyes, and the gentlest of gentle voices the not so hasty entrepreneur said "Thank you Shaun".

A demeanour Shaun had never seen from his client. She was slower, more deliberate, something had gone on.

In some ways she was annoyed she hadn't learnt this lesson some 20 odd years ago, but at the same time she knew that if it wasn't for those years, she may have never been introduced to a way of thinking and being which will lead her to be happier than she could ever imagine.

Connection

There are some things we feel a connection with and some things we do not.

This is the way things are. Fish feel a connection to the water, birds to the air.

Some people have a strong connection to water, like fish, some to the air, like birds.

Some people have a strong connection with fire, others with the earth.

People create groups of people that connect to similar things. These groups circle around hobbies and common interests. This is the way things are.

However, when the mind becomes involved one can judge one group as better than the other. One can use the mind to segregate and separate.

One can even attempt to segregate a person who once belonged to their group. Once was a connection, now a desired separation.

However, such separation does not work. There has been and always will be connection. Just as all fish are connected, and all birds are connected.

Separation from another is an illusion, and therefore a pointless pursuit of the ego, as you cannot separate from that which you are.

Different fish and different birds can disagree, even fight, but they are still connected.

All people, of all races, of all ages, of all beliefs, can disagree, even fight, but they are, always have been, and always will be, connected.

Recognising that we are one common people, living the same life, albeit with different flavours, is a deeply connecting and humbling realisation.

To get in touch with true connection, it is important to feel the connection.

You are connected beyond what the mind can figure, what the mind could possibly imagine.

Any connection based on mind is conditional, based in desire, fear and possession. Ignore the mind.

It is the heart that connects. Feel it in your heart. Connect now.

Comes around goes around

It wasn't easy getting older. The kids visited less and less.

I don't blame them. I wasn't as fun as I once was. I couldn't sit, chat and laugh like I used to. I couldn't play soccer or cricket with the grandkids anymore.

Over time, I struggled with the upkeep of the house, especially after Jenny passed on. How I loved her dearly. How I missed her dearly, still do.

I thought I may have remarried, or meet someone new to spend time with, but it didn't happen. Time just seemed to slip away in those latter years. Pretty lonely some would think but I actually didn't mind it.

I wasn't disappointed when I finally came to the end. I had a good life but did find the last few years really tough. My health went downhill just like the town I lived in.

The local teenagers played their practical jokes on me; eggs thrown at my car, rocks on my roof. But worst of all was when jimmy, the ringleader, put a burning paper bag full of faeces on my doorstep and laughed at me when I attempted to stamp it out.



Seeing a fire on the doorstep of the house I built with my own hands was a lot for my old and withered heart to handle. I didn't last much longer after that.

When I died I thought I'd just decompose into the ground and that was that.

Coming back as a dog is a classic. I have great owners, as they like to think of themselves, who let me roam around and do pretty much whatever I want. I love to pop over to the beach for a run and swim.

But better than that is how I love scaring the postie. I hide behind a different tree each day and then bark my head off when he's least expecting it. You'll have to see it one day.

It's funny how things work out. You won't believe this. I found where jimmy the ringleader lives and it's not far. He must be thirty or so now.

Once a week I go for a walk over to his house and relieve myself right on his front doorstep. It's a scream.

He tries to stop me through all sorts of ways. Drink bottles filled with water, sensor lights, sitting out until all hours.

But I'm patient. I just wait until the times right, and then let go.

I don't consider myself revengeful but do like the idea that what comes around goes around, and maybe one day Jimmy will get that.

Anyway, with that thought, it's probably about time I start being nice to the postie.

Stability

Nature teaches us that we must respect our base, our roots, our foundation.

In fact, nature dedicates significant time to developing what cannot be seen in preparation for growing what can be seen.

As nature does, it serves the individual, partnership and family well to rest from outward growth in order to stabilise and strengthen one's foundations.

Always dreaming of bigger and better will destabilise the foundation which enables you to realise dreams.

Discipline the mind to take rest from distant desires, needs and wants, and bring your attention to now, to today.

This isn't to say don't dream, by all means do so, but keep it in strict proportion with gratitude and servitude to what you already have.

Be grateful for the foundation you have, even if it feels thin. By doing so it will expand, for what you put your attention on grows.

This respect of your base becomes increasingly important as you grow. In fact without a strong and powerful base, your capacity to expand and grow is retarded, just as the largest trees need the largest and strongest roots.

Don't let the desire of external growth distract you from the work to be done below, to be done within.

It is this work that requires the greatest of wills as it is subtle and invisible. But it is so influential to the health and wellness of the whole system.

It is this work that challenges the will, calls upon greatest amounts of self-respect and self-love, as there is no benefit for others to see, for ego's to admire.

To stabilise, take time to stop thinking about the future – just look after today. Clean up what's around you, one piece at a time. Enjoy cleaning up. Enjoy tidying up.

Rest and remark in the brilliance of the Earth under your feet – the provider of so much strength and power.

Relax your hips and feet, feel the stabilising power of the Earth below you.

Breathe in the strength of the Earth up and into your belly. Repeat. Rest.

Potato in the backpack

“Take one of these pills a day for seven days. That should do the trick.” Dr Lee was rather candid about something Tony was really struggling with.

It was only about two hours earlier that Tony decided enough was enough and it was time to seek medical advice. He was pleasantly surprised when he found out he could get in to see his doctor so quickly. It had been a while since he had felt pleasant.

Tony had been really tired for about six months. Getting out of bed had become a struggle, driving his car to work had become a struggle; even playing with the kids had become a struggle.

“Your suffering from mild to mid-strength continuous stress” Dr Lee shared pulling Tony out of his recollections and reflections. Tony blinked. “What this means is you’re carrying a level of anxiousness and stress around with you continuously, probably without even knowing about it. It’s kind of like carrying a backpack and adding a potato to it once a month for 10 years. Early on you don’t notice it, but in time, the backpack gets really heavy and you end up being tired all the time. You don’t realise you’re carrying a backpack but you do notice that you’re really tired.”

“OK, so what’s this pill you’re prescribing to me?” Tony was tentative. He came to see Dr Lee because he thought he had glandular fever or something like that. Tony considered himself a bit of a purest and didn’t like taking pills, especially for make believe backpacks.

“It’s to treat delusion. It’s called an anti-delusion pill.”

“I don’t consider myself delusional though Doc. Make believe backpacks, maybe you could do with a few.” The last bit slipped out. Tony squirmed like a five year old who knew they just said the wrong thing. “Sorry.” He shared sheepishly.

Dr Lee didn't care, he thought it was funny.

"We've known each other for a long time; I've treated you since you were a baby. Your delusion is a simple one. You think you're immortal. You have not faced your own mortality. Once you do you will put your priorities in order. You will follow your heart. You will grow your wings metaphorically, and sell angel wings in reality. Remember your business plan all those years ago that you shelved because you were afraid it wouldn't work, you were afraid what others would say about the banker who resigned to sell adult fairy wings. Hey, I don't get it, but what's that got to do with it."



"Take one anti-delusion pill per day for seven days. You will stop taking each day of your life for granted. You will step into your destiny. You will let go of what you need to let go of and you will embrace what you need to embrace."

Tony couldn't believe Dr Lee remembered his dream about the adult fairy wing store. Tony shared this with Dr Lee because he wanted help to get out of fantasy land so he could grow up and be a real man.

Tony was uncommitted. The consult was over. "Thank you Dr Lee" was all he could verbalise.

Tablets in hand Tony headed back, mind, body and soul, to the real world of work and compromise, obligation and responsibility. Another potato in the backpack.

Patience

Patience is a virtue according to distant sayings.

So much wisdom is available to integrate into our very beings if our minds are spacious enough, and our bodies prepared enough to let it in.

But such wisdom cannot break through noisy and busy minds, full and overloaded bodies.

Sensory addiction and over thinking squashes the light of insight.

Slow down. Be here now. You don't need to fill all space, all time.

Trust when the time is right, the time will be right.

The fruits of the trees take time for the tree to mature and gather itself. When the time is right the tree will fruit, slowly to begin and then plentifully, if the tree is healthy.

The child walks when it is ready. It may make many attempts in preparation, but when the time is right it walks, shakily to begin and then with balance, if the person is healthy.

For whatever you want in life, do the preparation, and then accept that when you are ready, when the time is right, it will arrive, probably slowly to begin with and then abundantly, if you retain your balance and health.

Be patient. Let go of the need to rush. Do the groundwork. Let go of the need to know exactly what the future holds.

Let go of the need to over think, let go of the need to make it happen now. Such urgency delivers fleeting results and wears out your system, robbing it of nature's sustainability.

Surrender to patient groundwork. Focus on what you can do today, steadfast, focus, full attention.

Doing so is enough; in fact it's better than enough. It will deliver perfectly.

Stop. Breathe. Focus. Get on with it.

The invisible mirror

It was a rainy and windy day, unusual for this time of year. Not that cold, but cold enough to keep Annie inside.

Annie hated being inside during her summer holidays. It reminded her of when she was little and would go to the family's beach house, exposed on the coastline, suffering the winds more than what she was used to, feeling as though they rubbed directly against her tender soul.

Twenty three years later she still squirmed with the feeling of the memory. Beach house holidays were meant to be fun. If only she remembered them in this way.

Annie remembered how she was only allowed to take one toy to the beach house. It was always presented as a choice, but how she pained when deciding. The favourite toy would come but she felt sad, almost depressed, for the others who would be left behind again.

Annie had always been sensitive, maybe too sensitive she often thought.

Annie's favourite toy, Lisa, was a beautiful dolly, big eyes, with a big head. Annie didn't realise she had a big head until her brother made fun of it. Annie didn't care; she loved Lisa just the way she was.



The wind gusted, throwing a fistful of angry rain shards against the sunroom's window. It made Annie blink and baulk, taking her out of her mind, for a moment.

Over the years the other toys were passed onto younger relatives or donated to the op shop, but Lisa lived on.

Lisa didn't care that Annie wasn't as perky as she used to be. Annie didn't care that Lisa now had crooked eyes.

Annie didn't judge Lisa, nor Lisa Annie. They liked to sit, as they were today, sipping hot chocolate, one real, one make believe, looking through the sheet of water which hung on the sunroom window's exterior.

Annie's husband passed through, silently, eyebrows raised, insinuating that Annie was loopy for her continuing friendship with the aged crooked eyed doll.

But Annie didn't care. She didn't even notice the big head nor the crooked eyes. For that fact, she didn't even really see Lisa, she felt her, felt her companionship, felt her acceptance, felt her warmth. It was a feeling, not a seeing, not a thinking.

Annie wondered why her other relationships couldn't be as simple and nurturing as this rather unusual one.

The answer would elude her as she would never find the invisible mirror – that tiny little mirror deep inside Lisa which reflected Annie's love, and everything else, perfectly.

Maybe one day Annie would come to love her own age and crooked eyes just as she did Lisa's.

Love

Love is quiet, love is light

It waits patiently

Watching, listening, smiling

No push, no haste

Sitting, patiently

It is as loyal as loyal can be

It expects nothing, it cannot be disappointed

It permits you to run

To chase

To struggle

But when you decide to stop

To stop running, to stop chasing, to just stop

It is there waiting, smiling peacefully

Knowing you have just arrived home

The Bright Centre

Mark had spent thirty odd years in the outer recesses of his curious mind. Focus didn't come easily.

Everything he saw, or read, or felt, lead his curious mind off into new directions. Many would have thought this to be a sign of mental flexibility, or mental acrobatics. Many would have thought the most curious of curious minds was a good thing to possess.

But they wouldn't realise that such minds aren't possessed, they possess. They wouldn't have felt how nauseous one feels after endless mental somersaults.

Up until two weeks ago Mark didn't realise that he had become a complete slave to his mind. It didn't so much beat him, or whip him, but it didn't permit him to smell the roses. It kept him at arm's length from connecting with the priceless joys of life.

Mark's mind thought it was doing a good job when it always looked at how he could have done better. But such continuous correction began to fall heavily on Mark. He became a perfectionist, where nothing was quite good enough, and then he wasn't quite good enough. As he felt more inadequate within, he saw more inadequacy around.

Until that one day when he was unable to go on. The mind had swallowed Mark as a cancer swallows the body it inhabits. It killed it's very own source of life. Mark laid like a star on his lounge room floor, gazing at the ceiling.

It was a miraculous experience to watch the mind give up. It tried so hard to flex its muscle, but had so little force left in it. It became floppier and floppier, until that moment when it threw the towel in. "I surrender" it whispered.

Everything went quite. Mark watched from silence. No cogs turning, no gears clicking, no spirals spinning. He wasn't dead, he was every bit alive. But so quiet.

Mark's feet and hands began to tingle. He could feel something entering them. Eyes closed he could see streams of white light entering the palms of his hands and soles of his feet, so powerful, so gentle. It was overwhelming, humbling.

His mind had nothing compared to the attraction of this white light. It owned his focus. His mind was going nowhere. As his entire being filled with the light, Mark gravitated to his true centre. Spacious. Unable to be touched from the outside world. A whisper "this is what peace feels like".



From his peaceful centre he could watch the mind worry about money, relationships, and deadlines. He could watch his mind wander, but it didn't concern his centre. It didn't concern him.

So peaceful.

The light slowly stopped flowing in. Mark wanted it to keep going. But that was that for today.

Mark stood and walked outside for the first time in days. Shoeless, he walked down to the grassed area by the side of the pool under the trees.

He had been here many times, too many to remember. But today was like no other day.

The grass had never felt so crisp and alive under foot; the trees had never been so green. Directly above, the blues of the sky were more brilliant than his eyes had ever seen.

The beauty of an ant walking up the concrete retaining wall was more amazing than he had ever realised before.

The sun touched him deep inside, it touched his centre.

Mark had never felt so connected, so focused on the world around him. No thinking required.

Mark saw nothing but a glorious, light and bright world.

The switch had been flicked. Never again would he think a man is their mind.

For the rest of his days he would always look for that brilliant light, that bright centre, which resides in one and all, but is so often covered up with that thing we call life.

Rhythm

Rhythm gives noise its shape which turns it into music.

Life has rhythm. Businesses have rhythm. Communities have rhythm.

Sometimes this rhythm is like a song of tranquility, sometimes like a thrash of uncoordinated garbage cans.

The more the mind, the ego gets involved in pushing and pulling, the more the neediness and wantedness to have this or that now emerges, the harder it is to hear the rhythm.

When we can't hear the rhythm, we are unaware of it.

It's only once we hear it, can we sense the harmony of it.

Stop, breathe, feel your rhythm. What type of music is it playing?

Observe the impact of addictions, from the mind and the body. They unsettle the rhythm. They don't enable you to pause between notes. In essence, there is no space, no flow, no musical grace.

Close your eyes, breathe, slow down. Watch the rhythm settle. As it settles you can connect into the real rhythm of life, not the manufactured one.

The more you bring your attention to your rhythm, the more the rhythm evolves into a song of ease and grace, flow and motion, action and traction.

The more tranquil your rhythm, the greater the ease and grace your body and mind will experience as it moves through the experience of life.

Choose a tranquil rhythm.

When you're not, stop and settle. Let the rhythm that nature chooses for you come back.

Rest, smile and enjoy the fruits which come thereafter.

The Other Side

Squirt, ping, squirt, ping. There was something about the sound of fresh milk hitting the bottom of the near empty bucket.

Fly's were pretty bad this season, thought Bruce, dairy farmer, old school, hands like clamps, a forehead you could sharpen a chisel on. He'd been running the farm since he was a boy.

Bruce was the youngest of four sons. The others left the farm after school, pursuing the promised land of the big city where the lights were bright and work was air conditioned. Bruce was never that interested in going that way, he loved the open air, even if it did smell not so sweet most of the time.



Squirt, sloosh, squirt, sloosh. Bucket full. "Off you go Daisy" he mumbled, with a slightly affectionate slap on the rump.

Daisy waddled back to the paddock for those that had been milked.

"How'd you go ya old cow?" Sandra, Daisy's younger sister was always up for a stir.

"Lighter than a hot air balloon on a Sunday morning" Daisy replied with a smirk and wink.

"I'm over this, fill me up, suck me out, fill me up, suck me out lifestyle." Sandra mooaned. "I just feel like someone's bitch – where's the respect?"

"Calm your farm Sandra. I reckon we're on a good wicket."

"You're joking Daisy. I heard Betsy and Donna talking about a cow's life over in some joint called India. Not sure where that farm is, but they were saying the cow's there are worshipped – considered holy or something. I bet they're not sucked dry on Brucie's conveyer belt."

"Careful who you compare yourself to Daisy. It's not all roses. I've heard India's stinking hot in summer, and busy as hell. People, dogs, cats, cows, all creatures great and small everywhere. Population's off the charts apparently. At least we have space to roam around and plenty of trees to sit under on the occasional scorcher." Sandra arched her neck to chomp on a tuft of grass.

"Where'd you get your info from Sandra?" Daisy's ears were ringing with curiosity.

"I was talking to Benny through the boundary fence." Sandra twisted her head in that direction.

"The Angus?" Daisy asked.

"Yep, he's looking for a way out. He was telling me when the big truck comes in his mates just don't come back. He's not sure what happens but has heard rumours that they get chopped up and feed to the dogs. He reckons his time is coming and is trying to get out beforehand. He was wondering if there was anyway to get over here but I told him he didn't have enough teets. He'd been sussing out India too, but thought we were on a better wicket. He got his info from Wendy, the Wagyu from the next paddock over. Apparently they were originally from up that way."

Laying down for the first time since being emptied, Daisy concluded, "hmp, maybe the grass isn't always greener on the other side."

The Surprise Redundancy

Shaun didn't see it coming. He was good at what he did, had a close team of people he worked with.

He knew there had been a change in management at head office and that things had slowed down. His seniors suggested they make no changes and just wait to see what the new boss thought of it all.



Shaun was probably a bit naïve to think they would just all pull together to get things rolling along again.

"Tomorrow the new boss was coming up for a visit." Thomas, one of the company stalwarts, said with comfort.

Tomorrow came. Everything was nice. "Lovely to meet you; and you too."

Some general discussion and off to the computer to punch out some work. Shaun saw himself as a loyal and committed guy. Willing to do what it took to be of value to his employer, colleagues and clients.

Knock, knock. "Can you please come in for a meeting?" "Sure", Shaun replied, reactively anxious yet unaware.

The new boss and one of the local management kept it short and sweet. "Your position's redundant. Do you know what that means?"

"What sort of a question is that?" Shaun said silently. What it means is I'm going home to my wife to tell her I don't have a job. The room was void of any detectable traces of empathy.

Shaun signed the piece of paper, trying not to shake with the blow of ambushed emotion. He was then escorted the eight and a half metres back to his office, which he respectfully split to make space for the expansion over the past year or so. The significant risk of crying made it hard to know where to look.

An empty box sat pre-prepared on his desk waiting to be filled with his personal belongings. This wasn't a secret to everyone. The once colleague come chauffeur stood patiently waiting for the box to be filled. Immediate distrust 1, enduring loyalty and trust 0.

Box packed, driven home. That was it. Clinical.

Shaun realised a lot that day. Employment doesn't mean security and sometimes shift happens.

Clinical. The powers to be may feel it's a better way to do it. Minimise personal feelings coming into it and the risk of any inappropriate messages.

As much as it was a business decision, and nothing personal, it still hurt like hell.

As days passed Shaun managed to flirt under this level of pain and confusion and find gratitude for a decent payout and the offer to work with a consultant to get a new job. He also found gratitude in all he had learnt through the experience.

The consultant did a good job at getting Shaun another job. In a short time, he was back in his known industry and receiving a new paycheck. It was all good for 18 months or so.

But he never forgot the redundancy experience. He came to realise that working for the sake of working, with the perception of security, did not stack up as much as it once did.

If you could fail at having a safe and secure job, why not fail at doing something you really want to do.... similar thoughts became more prevalent.... are you really following your heart or are you doing time?

The weeks came and went. Time, the destroyer, was eating away at his false identity, the chameleon of wanting to live for love and life while working for the cash to fund it.

The value of the paycheck reduced, and the value of pursuing a career for the love of it grew.

The maths was simple. Work for say 40 hrs per week for 48 weeks a year, for about 40 years simply adds up to a mountain load of time. Many mountains in fact. Mountains of time Shaun wanted to enjoy as much as possible, not just so he could wrangle some cash together to go off somewhere else to enjoy himself.

The next step was obvious from this mathematical and logical viewpoint. But taking such a step was still beyond him. The pain had to dig in deeper. It had to go beyond making no sense, to hurting, to pulling at this heart so hard that he had no choice but to listen and act. This time around there was no redundancy coming to kick him out, to give him a chance of making a more heart felt choice, he had to do it all on his own.

Getting out of bed became harder and harder, until one day, the weight had become greater than his will. He was spent. A sick day or two, a letter written, call upon the last bit of strength he had, turned up at work, "do you have a minute?" to the boss, the boss dodged with something more important to attend to. Apparent empathy nil. Familiar ground. Got to be joking.

Calling on deeper reserves. "I need to talk with you?" the boss got it this time. Into the office, boss behind the big safe desk. "I'm out" Shaun declared, rather solemnly. "My heart's not in it, my head's not in it, it's not fair to you, to our clients or to me". Shaun handed letter of resignation. Not much for anyone to say.

That was that. Bags packed. Loose ends tied up. Home, jobless, identityless. Familiar ground.

Familiar, but different. This wasn't an "If only redundancy", this was a genuine move to let something go for pursuit of a richer and more engaging existence.

Ten years later Shaun doesn't really recognise the old game.

Today Shaun is clear as the sky in the perfect summers day. "The most powerful force is love. Find where you can put love into action, and repeat. If you can do that in career, friendships, family, community and pastimes, then your life will be light and your heart love, and vice versa."

May that become familiar ground.