

ACCIDENTAL TRUTH

A VORTEX THROUGH TIME



NIKOOL MCINDOE

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Accidental Truth

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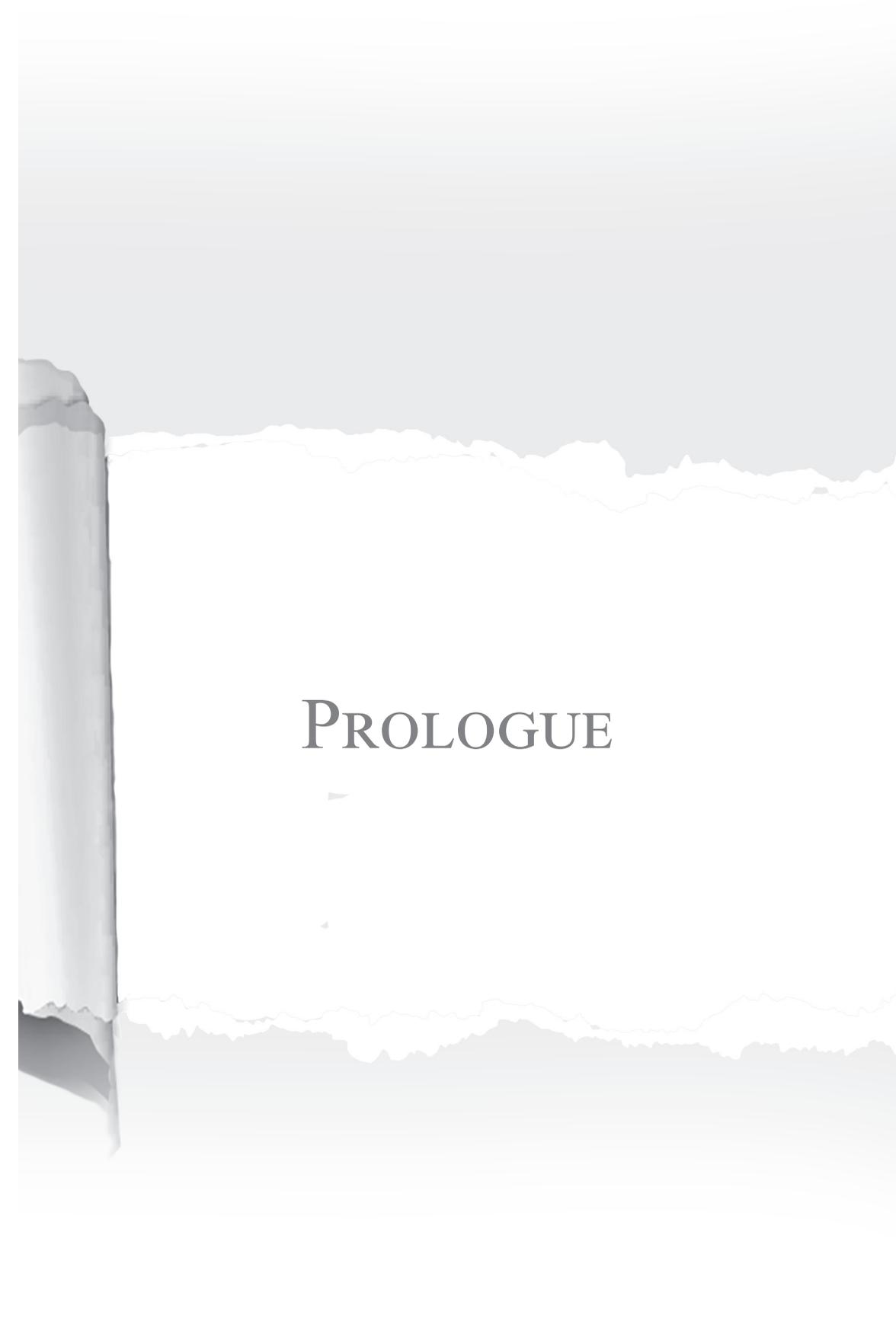
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PROLOGUE

NEW YORK CITY, 1943

Two agents from the United States Government's Office of Alien Property enter Nikola Tesla's New Yorker Hotel room. Windows are closed. Curtains are drawn. The place reeks of decay and death. It's been three days since Nikola was found in his bed, his body stiff with rigor mortis, and the hotel staff had been specifically told not to enter the room.

Frank and Declan had a job to do, one that usually a hotel maid would be doing. They were given their instructions and far be it for them to question authority: strip the room and empty it of all of Tesla's possessions, then take every single item back to FBI Headquarters in Washington DC.

They bundled up Nikola's clothes and shoes and placed them in a sturdy leather suitcase with reinforced corners, then locked it.

"I can't believe we are in the same room where Nikola Tesla died." Declan glances at Frank, who is sitting on the bed, viewing the emptied room.

"Yeah, it's a tough gig. What a truly brilliant man. I wonder what they want with all his stuff. I mean, old clothes and personal effects? It doesn't make any sense."

"Well, have we got it all? Did you clear out the bathroom?"

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“Yes. Everything he owned is in this one case.” Frank taps the suitcase with his knuckle. “His whole life, and this is what is left.”

Declan is quiet for a moment, then steps toward the door. “Right, well, let’s get out of here. This place gives me the creeps. He only died a few days ago, and in that bed apparently.” Declan chuckles as he watches Frank jump from the bed and dash toward the door, nearly falling over the folded boxes stacked in its entrance.

“You bastard! You didn’t tell me that!” Frank dusts off his pants in disgust, hoping he hasn’t caught the death bug. “What the hell are these boxes for? Did the director say?”

“No, he just said to make sure we got everything, and to not leave one file behind.”

“File? There are no files here.” Declan looks at the set of hotel room keys he’d placed on the dresser upon entering. He notices two keys. “Hey, wait a minute.” He picks up the keys. “There’s another key.”

He flips through the bunch and reads out the room number: “3327.” He opens the door and sees 3327 in brass numbers at eye level, then looks at the other key. “This other key says 3328. Damn, there’s another room—next door!”

Frank and Declan exit the room, leaving the lone suitcase containing Tesla’s sole possessions, and open the door to room 3328.

“Oh, no. Are you serious?” Frank is dumbfounded.

The room is filled to the hilt with papers stacked high, nearly touching the ceiling in some places. Every inch of the floor is covered. Somewhere in there is a bed, but they can’t see it beneath all the papers. Piles of scientific journals and magazines echo the New York skyline outside the window. Declan picks up a yellowed, stained publication of *The Century Magazine* circa 1900 featuring Tesla on the cover with an article title in bold font written underneath his picture: “Experiments with Alternate Currents of High Potential and High Frequency.”

“High Frequency? What the hell does this mean?” Declan stares bewildered, acknowledging his lack of scientific terminology.

“Stuffed if I know. Where do we even start?” Frank kicks a box, sending it into the leg of a chair. “We need more manpower. Ring the office and tell them to get some more hands-on-deck down here and tell them we’re going to need another stack of boxes,” he grumbles, “and a truck. This is going to take us forever.”

Frank takes out his pack of Camel cigarettes and gold Zippo lighter and sparks one up, taking a long drag before exhaling it onto the dusty pile of magazines to his left. The door slams shut behind Declan as he heads down to the hotel foyer to use the public telephone.



A total of 347 boxes practically filled one of the FBI’s main conference rooms. The National Defense Research Committee enlisted John G. Trump, Professor of M.I.T.’s Engineering Department, to examine Tesla’s possessions and all of his documents seized under the *Trading with the Enemy Act 1917*.

The United States was in the middle of a world war, and Tesla’s experiments documented in several scientific journals about his powerful particle beam weapon termed the “Death Ray” could prove catastrophic if they landed in the wrong hands. This could not be allowed to happen.

The professor had been given strict instructions to examine in detail every single piece of what was now termed *Evidence* in the illustrious life of Nikola Tesla. It took John eleven grueling days and nights to sift through the mammoth amount of paperwork and to report his analysis, finding Tesla’s efforts to be “primarily of a speculative, philosophical, and promotional character.”

An additional note said the papers “did not include new sound, workable principles or methods for realizing such results.” John was satisfied that any

PROLOGUE

notion Tesla may have had of inventing any such weaponry that could cause massive destruction was the mere musings of a senile old man.

He did, however, find some unusual writings in a file titled “My discussions with Ravi and the Universal Energy Collective,” and decided that this particular file would be shown to the President of the United States himself, Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt. Placing the file into a red folder, John secured it in a yellow envelope marked *Top Secret*.

Nikola Tesla’s last journal entry into that file was made the night before he died on 6 January 1943. It was brought to the attention of the FBI Director by their undercover agent who doubled as a baggage handler at the New Yorker Hotel. The entry read:

Ravi informed me last night the Galactic Federation of Light were initiating “first contact” and that a landing was being planned to take place somewhere near the border of the United States of America and Mexico, in a central location, possibly New Mexico or Arizona, sometime within the next few years.

If this turned out to be true, John feared not only for his country’s future, but also the future of the world as he knew it.

The image depicts a single sheet of white paper that has been torn at the top and bottom edges, and partially on the left side. The paper is set against a light gray background. The title 'THE CONSPIRACY' is printed in a dark, serif, all-caps font, centered horizontally on the white surface of the paper. The overall aesthetic is that of a vintage document or a page from an old book.

THE CONSPIRACY

THE CRASH

Smiling, I pull my coat collar up around my ears and set a brisk pace to my car. There's crispness and anticipation in the air as I play through scenarios for my morning meeting. Tomorrow is a momentous day for me, maybe one of the most important in my life. I have a meeting with a gallery owner, Lucinda, who'd seen one of my paintings at a mutual friend's house and suggested I come by her gallery and show my portfolio.

Lucinda owns a small but well-established boutique gallery on New York City's lower east side. She'd felt my artwork and her gallery were a match made in heaven. I paint within the realm of Contemporary Abstract Expressionism and Lucinda had likened my work to the Cubist period and the Dada movement, and specifically to surrealist artist Joan Miró, which I found extremely flattering. She also mentioned something about geometry, which has always intrigued me, so I'm interested to hear more of what she has to say.

As it happens, I had visited Lucinda's gallery a few times since my arrival in the Big Apple from Australia only a few short years ago now. The talent and sheer genius of the works that graced the pristine zinc-white walls humbled me; to be considered worthy of being hung alongside these artists fueled my ambition to become the queen of NYC's art scene.

THE CONSPIRACY

Tonight, was a celebration of sorts and what a beautiful evening it was. A sumptuous meal indeed. Walking through the perfectly still night to my car, I replay each moment of my celebratory dinner with my fiancé Ron. Leaving him to finish his dessert was the right move. I have to get up early to fight the morning rush hour as my meeting with Lucinda is at nine. A wide smile adorns my face as I embrace the feeling of a flawless evening and the excited anticipation of tomorrow. Gazing skyward, I gasp aloud at the performance being put on by the stars. Dashing across the sky in a hurry to nowhere is a shooting star, it catches my breath for a moment, then exits the stage almost as quickly as it entered. What a magnificent sign. Wow! I haven't seen a shooting star for years and on the eve of my meeting with Lucinda. I let out a mini *woohoo!* and dance over some cracks in the pavement.

Suddenly, a wave of uneasiness washes over me. The magnificent dinner turns to lead in my stomach and I instinctively feel my step quicken as I hear the telltale sound of footsteps echoing my own. *Am I being followed?*

Just ahead is a twenty-four-hour convenience store. Dashing across the street and ducking in as casually as I can, I walk to the back of the store and pretend to browse. My heartbeat is hammering in my chest so hard I'm sure the sleepy shop attendant can hear it. All the while I keep an eye on the street through the glass storefront.

A group of suspicious-looking men pauses on the sidewalk. Peering through the shelves, I can see them look into the shop and then continue walking. They are wearing sunglasses. It's nighttime, for Pete's sake! Why are they wearing sunglasses? As they move out of sight, I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding.

Gosh, tomorrow is such an important day for me. And now somebody is trying to kidnap or murder me!

Chill out, Aurora, I scold myself. *Quit being such a drama queen.* I'm just being paranoid. No one is following me. It's all in my head. It seems the men

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have gone as I inch toward the door. I sneakily poke my head out and glance in the direction I saw the men walk. I can't see anyone.

"See? Nothing to worry about," I say out loud.

I look up the street and can just make out the entrance to the outside parking lot on the next block. A blue neon sign highlights my destination. Having pepped myself up a little, I have an extra skip in my step. It's getting late and all the retail shops have closed. There's not a soul around.

"There she is!" a man's voice yells from across the street.

Panic sets in as I see the very same men, I thought were following me now running up the street directly towards me. They're at least a hundred yards away. I knew it! I *am* being followed! Who are they? What do they want? They're all wearing long, black trench coats and as one of the men's coat flies open, I spot what looks like the handle of a gun poking out of a holster! I scream and run away as fast as I can in my high heels but they're gaining on me.

"You're not going to get away with this!" one of the men shouts. "You haven't before, and you won't now!"

Without thought or slowing down, I scream over my shoulder, "You can't kill *everyone*! There are too many of us. The world *will* know the truth. It's what I'm here for. It's what we're *all* here for!"

As I run, I frantically reach into my bag to find my keys. I have a few seconds to try and catch my breath and calm myself to press the right button to open the door. The door lock springs open. I jump in, lock and start the car. A loud thud behind me reverberates throughout the interior. It's one of the men's fists banging on the trunk.

I speed out of the parking lot, wheels screeching as I make a sharp right onto the dimly lit street. My heart is pounding out of my chest. Muffled yells echo in the distance. Suddenly I hear gunshots ringing out around me as I slam the pedal to the floor. Shaking uncontrollably, I try and take command of the vehicle, hanging onto the steering wheel for dear life. My little black dress is

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soaked with sweat. What the hell is happening? Who are those men and why are they shooting at me? It all feels very surreal, like something out of a movie!

My words play repeatedly in my head. *The world will know the truth. It's what I'm here for.* What did I mean? I've never used those words before. I have no idea why I shouted that. I shudder to think about what could have happened. The whole panic-stricken episode is a blur.

What was I *not going to get away with*? Those men have the wrong woman. I've never done anything dishonest in my life. I'm an artist, for God's sake. I lead a quiet, respectable existence and I'm about to get married to a respectable businessman. *You haven't before, and you won't now!* These men have it all wrong. I have never seen them before, or given them—or anyone else, for that matter—any cause to be chasing me, yelling those accusations, let alone shoot at me. They have mistaken me for someone else.

I'm streets away now and safe. *You can't kill everyone! There are too many of us.* What was I saying! It must have been sheer adrenaline. Plus, I was in protective mode. Defensive. Yes, that's it. I saw a gun and panicked. I try to calm myself down with some deep breathing exercises I've fine-tuned in meditation class.

"Everything is going to be alright. I'm safe now," I chant to myself over and over.

Thank God, the men don't appear to be pursuing me. I'm nearly on the freeway that leads directly home, and they have no idea where I live, I hope. The freeway ramp is in view, so I accelerate to gain the speed required for the traffic flow ahead.

"Deep breaths, Aurora," I say aloud, soothing myself to composure.

Suddenly an imposing, shiny black beast of a car with darkly tinted windows lurches off a side street and barrels straight towards me like a freight train. I have no time to do anything but brace myself.

SMASH! My car hurtles through the guardrail and flies off the side of the ramp, twirling in midair. My head is spinning and being shaken from side to

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side. Glass flies tornado-like throughout my car's interior as it crashes onto the busy freeway below, landing on its roof. The screech of metal on concrete is deafening. A shower of sparks lights up the darkness. After spinning a few times like a breakdancer on their back, my car finally comes to a standstill.

I'm dangling upside down, held in place by my seatbelt. In my peripheral vision, I can just make out the hint of bright lights getting brighter by the second. I can barely turn my head to look out of my shattered driver's side window. I'm horrified to see what is now barreling down on me. It's a truck! All I can do is stare, paralyzed by fear, all too aware of what is about to happen.

The truck brakes hard but is unable to stop in time. It swerves and hammers my rear door. BANG! My car soars a few hundred yards before finally slamming into a freeway pylon. Intense pain from the seatbelt's stranglehold on my chest is the only thing I can feel. The stuck horn repeats the same urgent, ear-splitting note. Steam explodes from the hood. Trickle of warmth begin exploring my face. As I reach up to find the source, the smell of blood becomes the last lingering impression before it's all too much information for my brain to handle. In a flash, all pain and sensations cease. I feel nothing.

I become one with the blackness. Weightless, dreamlike, unable to process thought. My only awareness is that a major trauma has occurred and that I will never be the same again.

THE VORTEX

I'm floating freely, as if under the ocean on a pitch-black night with no moon to highlight the water. I feel like an astronaut in space hovering without gravity, my arms and legs forming a star-shaped pattern.

What happened? Where am I? Am I dead? I have just been involved in an extremely serious car accident, yet I don't feel any pain. The opposite, in fact. I feel alive. Energized. Filled with infinite possibilities, like I can do anything. I struggle to get my bearings, make sense of my situation. With the absence of any light, I have a definite feeling of barrenness. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a small glowing light, minuscule in relation to the vastness and emptiness of the black void.

I zoom in on the light source and squint to obtain a more focused view. The more I concentrate, the more the light expands. It appears to be coming toward me. It's circular, like the light projected from a torch. It's moving closer now and at high speed, with definite colors appearing. It's a circular rainbow, floating, swirling in a clockwise motion, suspended amidst the black nothingness.

What is this? It's divine. It looks like a whirlpool of sorts, spinning vertically and moving towards me. The word "vortex" echoes throughout my mind. The whole structure has maneuvered itself right in front of me, occupying my whole

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field of view. An enormous swirling rainbow—a vortex containing every color within the spectrum. Violet is the outside layer, then indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and a red center, all twirling in unison. Colors so vivid and real and dense, yet somehow translucent, with each color blending seamlessly into the next. When I focus on one color, it appears to have a depth that goes on forever.

It's difficult to put into words. It's such a magical scene in front of me—one you might see in a science fiction movie or an image from the Hubble Space Telescope. Such beauty I have never witnessed before! It's magnificent and takes my breath away. I have a very strange feeling, a sense that all the secrets of the universe are contained within this place.

I wonder what it would be like to touch. With that thought, I find myself drifting at high speed towards the vortex. I'm up against the violet perimeter. How magical! What a rush. Raising my hand and placing it slowly into the violet, I'm reminded of my girlhood, playfully placing my hand into the light of an old movie projector. I watch my hand enter and notice it appears in full flesh tint and not tinged at all with any violet hue. The energy emanating from this gloriously powerful structure is palpable, and my hand is tingling with pins and needles. I'm aware of every cell being ionized.

My heart is racing. The vortex is mesmerizing, sending me into an almost trancelike state. A euphoric smile blossoms upon my face. Desperately wishing to see more, I'm overwhelmed by a strange sensation of being pulled—no, *willed*—forward. It's magnetic. Something is luring me towards the center.

I look and see the next color is indigo. I release my hand from the violet and wonder what indigo feels like. Again, with just that thought, my body glides sideways through the ether and I'm in front of the indigo. Fascinating! What fun! Without hesitating, I slowly ease my fingertips inside. The energy shift is subtle but noticeable. The pins and needles sensation is slightly amped up. As I embed my hand further into the indigo mass, I stare in disbelief as the outline and shape of my hand begins to transform. My once feminine hand, with slender fingers and manicured nails, becomes masculine—thick, strong,

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tanned, and covered in curly, blond hair, the digits terminating in short, square-cut fingernails!

In shock, I snap my hand out from the indigo and watch as it instantly changes back to my own feminine hand. I examine it once again in detail and pay close attention as I plunge it back into the indigo. I gasp in wonder. My goodness, it changes like a chameleon in front of my very eyes! No doubt it: I am indeed looking at a man's hand. Even though this is not my hand, it seems familiar to me. The more I focus on the structure and shape, the more I feel I have seen this hand before. Whose hand is this? What is happening? What is this place? This can't be real, but I feel only insatiable curiosity within its presence, not fear. A spark has been ignited.

In seeming slow motion, I pull my hand out of the indigo and gaze toward the next color in the rainbow vortex. It's blue. I wonder what will happen if I put my hand inside? Will I be male? Female? As before, with that thought alone, and without moving a single muscle, my whole body shifts, placing me directly in front of the blue. I take a deep breath and slowly ease my fingertips into the blue and immediately feel a definite shift in energy. This time it's more electrifying. My fingertips are buzzing; I can hear the sound, as if a bee were present within this structure. My fingers are irresistibly dragged inside, followed immediately by the rest of my hand.

I'm stunned as once again it takes on the shape of yet another male hand but different in size and skin color to that in the indigo. This time my skin is pale and not as hairy; this hair is much finer and quite dark. Amazing. The same feeling washes over me that I felt in the indigo—that eerie sensation I've seen this hand before. Definite *déjà-vu* happening.

The insides of my body are now swirling in harmony with the vortex. A million butterflies are dancing in a clockwise motion throughout my whole being, mirroring the swirling rainbow in front of me. I examine in detail the finer points of this male hand. Delicate, long, thin fingers. Not only does my whole hand now feel like it's shaking, but there's also a definite warmth, as if I'm

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warming it in front of a fire. I am so excited now. The energy radiating from this majestic vortex is electric. The atmosphere scintillated with that feeling you get when you sense something amazing is going to happen, but you don't know what. Anticipation on steroids is the only way to describe it.

I feel a stronger pull toward the center of the vortex, as if my hand has its own desires. It's like a drug, and I have no control over it. It has total power over my whole being, over every sense. The most powerful magnet in existence is begging me to discover more, and willing me to its core.

Before I know it, my hand is making its way from the blue and is teetering on the edge of the green. The allure is too much for my willpower to resist. There I am, rendered speechless; my hand, fully entrenched in the green, takes on the appearance of an aged woman's gnarled paw, the fingers skeletal, the dirt-ridden fingernails yellowed and pointed, like claws. The hands of a woman who has lived a life of hard labor.

I cannot comprehend what is happening. The swirling inside me accelerates. Millions more butterflies flutter throughout my body. The heat and the pressure within my hand is becoming unbearable. With all my might I yank my hand free from the clutches of the green.

My heart is jackhammering in my chest and sweat gushes from every pore of my body. I'm overcome with the power and magnitude of the energy field in front of me. Just as I'm about to faint, as swiftly as it had shown itself to me, it vanishes, and I'm once again left floating amidst the black. Mouth agape, devoid of all thought and feeling, I meld with nothingness.

THE COMING TO

I open my eyes with a start and gasp. I sit bolt upright and proclaim passionately, “HOW CAN ONE BE SHOWN THE LIGHT IF THEY HAVE ONLY EVER KNOWN THE LIGHT? IT IS ONLY WHEN THE LIGHT IS SWITCHED OFF THAT DARKNESS ABOUNDS. IT CAN TAKE MANY YEARS, LIFETIMES EVEN, TO RECLAIM ONE’S PLACE BACK AMONGST THE LAND OF THE AWAKENED.”

I raise my hands and bring them together in front of my face, fingertips touching, thumbs overlapping each other to form an X. I then place them against my forehead and bow.

“NAMASTE.”

A nurse monitoring my vitals reacts to my outburst by calling for the doctor, who is standing nearby with another patient.

“Doctor! She’s awake!”

Dr. Maclean Curran rushes over and gently places his hand underneath the back of my head, guiding it back to the pillow.

“Shhh, it’s okay now, Aurora. I’m Dr. Curran. You’re in the Intensive Care Unit at Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx. You’ve been in a car accident and suffered severe head trauma. You were brought here a few weeks ago and

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placed in an induced coma until your brain swelling receded. Do you know your full name?”

He waits for a reply, but I can't quite remember and stare at him blankly.

“That's okay. There's no hurry. Just relax. It'll take a little while to come around.”

Dr. Curran is a giant of a man, like my Ron, well over six feet tall, with very broad shoulders. He speaks with a subtle Scottish accent. Red hair so thick you wonder how he would ever get a comb through it, and dark, brooding eyes that echo on forever.

Judging from the hustle and bustle I glimpse in the hallway, Dr. Curran and his staff run what might be the busiest ICU in New York City. He holds up a small flashlight and states he is going to peek into my eyes; he asks me to look at his finger that he holds out a few centimeters away from my nose.

My mouth feels like it's full of cotton. My tongue, heavy as an anvil, has a mind of its own. When I speak, I'm aware my speech is profoundly slurred, which embarrasses me.

“Men chas-hing my car—tuh-ribble crash!”

The visions of the accident come flooding back and envelop all my senses. The sharp screech of the brakes and the deafening reverberation of metal crumbling all around me replaying throughout my head. I have never heard anything like it in all my life.

What the hell is happening to me? Why am I saying all this stuff that means nothing to me? Screaming back at the men shooting at me. Waking up from a deep sleep where that incredible vortex swirls and sprouting prose that makes no sense at all?

Attempting to disappear, I hold my hands up and mask my eyes, burying my face in the darkness of my palms. There is no escape. No answers.

“Help me! Shum-body help me! What's go-hing on?”

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I begin crying uncontrollably. Dr. Curran moves to the other side of my bed and is tending to the tubes in my wrist, which my thrashing about has threatened to dislodge. In a flash, I shift into nothingness.

THE LOVER

Ron rushes into the room and the nurse quickly cuts him off. “I ran into Dr. Curran in the hallway,” I hear him say. “He said she’d regained consciousness. How is she?”

“She’s been mostly sleeping but is waking here and there so you may be able to speak with her, but quietly, and be very gentle. And please, no questions about the accident. Do I make myself clear?” Ron nods his understanding. “She was pretty rattled when she came to, shouting something about a light and the land of something or other. She’s doing better now and seems to be stabilizing.”

Ron has been anxiously waiting for me to wake up and has hardly left my bedside, the nurse relayed to me a little earlier, and Dr. Curran has filled him in on all the details of my brain injury and recovery. But, as with all brain injuries, they are never quite sure what damage has been done, and I’ve yet to hear the reassuring words “she’ll be back to normal in no time” spoken.

I’d know Ron’s cologne—Paco Rabanne—from a mile away. As it’s my favorite, it’s all he’s ever worn since we’ve been together.

I’ve been under heavy sedation since waking earlier that morning and I’m feeling a lot more relaxed now. The cottony feeling in my mouth has gone away; my tongue no longer feels like an anvil. In conversing with the nurse, I’ve

THE CONSPIRACY

discovered by sheer force of will—and if I enunciate my words deliberately—I can control my slurred speech to the point it sounds almost normal. A halting quality remains, however, as I sometimes find it necessary to gulp between phrases.

“Hi, darling. How . . . are you?”

“Hello, sweetheart. You had me so worried and scared.” He kisses me gently on the cheek, lingering slightly, and avoiding the tubes coming in and out of practically everywhere. “I’m so happy to see you awake. My goodness, what would I ever do without you!”

He sits down on the chair next to my bed and takes hold of my hand, gently caressing it. Ron is so loving and thoughtful. He is always very attentive and caring, asking me how my day was, and if there’s anything he could do to make it better and happier. It’s so wonderful to see his face. However, he looks tired. Gaunt. Dark circles are visible under his eyes, which is to be expected after what he’s been through. It must have been very distressing for him, not knowing whether I was going to pull through.

Ron is the classic businessman—very ambitious—at the office well before everyone else and still there when the cleaners arrive. He’s a commodity trader, upper management level; he talks in numbers, and how they’re acquiring this company and doing this unreal expansion with it or selling it off for profit. One could confuse him with being European from the way he converses, waving his hands around expressively. This enthusiasm, combined with the passion in his eyes and the inflection in his voice, never fails to draw me into his world. Many times, he has commented that even though he knows I don’t quite understand the complexities of his work, he loves me for listening and at least pretending I do.

We met at our local coffee house. He, being a workaholic, and me, an artist, coffee is extremely important to both of us. One would almost say a necessity. We work all hours and regular caffeine hits turn night into day and day into night. I’d seen him in there quite a few times, dressed to the nines in an array

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of three-piece suits and polished lace-up shoes, and sporting outrageously ostentatious ties.

He's rather tall—at six feet four, nearly a foot taller than me. Thick, dark hair like George Clooney. Bit of salt starting to encroach on the pepper. Very sexy.

I think it was his selection of ties that first caught my attention. Hard not to notice them really, but color is my thing, being an artist and all, and if a suit is what a man must wear, I like that he chooses for his personality to shine through by his choice of ties. I don't think I've ever seen him wear the same one twice. Plus, I like people with personality—a bit of spunk.

I, on the other hand, always wear paint-stained jeans and T-shirts, and I seldom wear shoes, except in winter when I wear Converse in all colors and styles—hardly the outfit one would wish to be wearing when meeting the man of your dreams.

One morning when I was lining up for my usual cappuccino, he was on his way out—coffee in one hand, briefcase in the other—and shot a purposeful look in my direction. Once I caught a glimpse of his sparkling green eyes, I was gone. Lost forever in his gaze.

It got to the point where I'd daydream while painting of how we would meet, playing out different scenarios of our first interaction. Little did I know he was doing the same, finally taking the plunge to speak to me one day when we were next to each other in line to order our coffee. He had a plan—if he was ever directly in front of me in line—he would pay for my coffee, hoping it would lead to an introduction, or at least a smile and a thank you.

Well, he got his smile and his thank you—and my phone number. Six months later we are engaged, the wedding planned for a year away.

Now, looking at him in this sterile hospital room, slumped over and barely meeting my gaze, his thoughts seem to be elsewhere.

“How's work going? Are you ... managing to get some sleep?” I'm searching for some surety that he's okay and looking after himself.

THE CONSPIRACY

Ron raises his head and manages a wan smile. “Oh, work’s fine. Yes, darling, I am getting some sleep. I don’t want you to worry about me. After all, I’m not the one in the hospital. I hate seeing you in here, all bandaged up and unable to move. And speaking of work, I’ve arranged for some time off...whenever you need me. I just need to let the top brass know when you’re released and it’s all set. They said I can have as much time as I need to get you on your feet again. I’m very keen to get you home and take care of you.”

Ron loves doting on me. The thought of him looking after me full-time sounds heavenly. He reaches out and touches my head daintily as if I am a china doll on the verge of breaking. With his touch I become self-conscious of my appearance. I vaguely remember a nurse telling me earlier I’ve had “quite a haircut,” as they needed access to the deep gashes I sustained when my head had bounced around the car like a ball inside a pinball machine. In fact, my hair was shaved to the skin and, after several weeks, is still short and spiky. I recall being told I’m extremely lucky to be alive.

Ron’s voice interrupts my reverie.

“How are you feeling? Are you in any pain?”

“No, no pain. It’s ... all a blur.” Controlling the slurring requires all my concentration, but I must put on a brave face for Ron’s benefit. “I was having these visions earlier. I don’t know why. The doctor put me back to sleep. I’m so confused! I don’t understand ... what happened.”

My blood pressure starts to rise and my heart pounds with a pagan rhythm. Panic rises within me as, once again, the footage of the accident loops within my memory.

“There were these men, and—”

Ron stops me, remembering the nurse’s admonishment. “Now, now, we can talk about that later. You need to focus on resting. You’ve had a very nasty accident, darling, and we need you to relax. No more thinking. Just concentrate on breathing, like you do when meditating. Heal. Then we can work out later what happened. The police will need to speak to you at some point, anyway.”

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“The police!” I bolt upright, get lightheaded, and drift back down to my pillow slowly, putting my hand on the side of my head. Dizziness overcomes me.

“Shhhh. It’s okay. Just standard procedure for all accidents. You know, for insurance purposes. To see who was at fault.”

In trying to allay my fears, he manages to do the exact opposite.

“I wasn’t at fault! Those men ... chased me and hunted me down in their big black car. I don’t know what they were doing ... or what they were saying to me. I had done nothing wrong. They could’ve killed me. Ron, they had guns! They ... shot at me! Bring the police to me. I want them found and charged!”

I’m exhausted from the effort required to enunciate clearly. The agitation I felt earlier resurfaces and I begin shaking uncontrollably. I start uttering senseless words; Ron panics and calls the nurse over. Before I know it, I’m entering that hazy blackness again.

THE PULL

Darkness envelops me once more like a blanket over my entire body. I remember this place. This is where I saw the swirling rainbow—the vortex. And with that thought, it again reveals itself to me. It startles me and almost takes my breath away. I smile broadly as pure bliss replaces any anxious feelings. I have immediate recall of what happened last time and feel at home here. There's an abounding peacefulness, as if the vortex and I are friends, meeting again after a long separation. Basking in its magnificent presence, I have full control of my senses and feel no pain whatsoever.

I'm on the outskirts of the rainbow, so I raise my hand up and place it into the violet once more. I see my hand as I know it to be. The pins and needles return. Okay, here we go again! Sliding it into the indigo, my hand changes, as it did before, to a man's tanned, brawny hand, covered in curly blond hair, with distinctive square-cut fingernails. I extract my hand, marvel for a moment at its reversion to feminine form, and then slide it into the blue. Just as before, it transmogrifies into the other male hand—smaller, with paler skin and fine, dark hair.

The magnetic pull toward the center of the vortex is increasing, as are the vibrations and warmth. Without warning, my hand is being led to the green,

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and I remember now what happened last time. As my hand enters, I see the change occurring as it reveals an old lady's hand— gnarled and timeworn, with dirty, claw-like fingernails. It was at this point last time that I withdrew my hand altogether and the vortex disappeared.

I summon the courage to continue this time. As I slowly move my hand towards the yellow, the magnetic pull is so strong that it takes hold of my hand and drags it smack into the middle of the yellow. My jaw almost hits the ground. My hand is twice the size of a normal hand—male again, and much stronger—like the hand of Thor. It is huge. Each finger well defined and muscular, heavily veined. I can't see any hair, although surely there are some; they must be extremely fine and fair. The heat has intensified yet again. The vibrations are making the hand throb. I can see the blood clearly pumping through the veins.

This is unbelievable! What is happening to me? What is this place? My heart has leapt to my throat, where it beats a furious tattoo. Sweat drenches my top lip and the internal swirls have once again made themselves known to me.

As I study this mammoth hand of mine, turning it over and seeing the heavily lined palm, I get distracted and accidentally move my hand slightly toward the center of the vortex, which takes hold, dragging it further into its maw. My hand now firmly entrenched in the orange's vice-like grip. I stand frozen in utter disbelief. The vortex has total control over my hand now, and I'm unable to withdraw it. All I can do is stare in bewilderment.

What I'm looking at is not human in any way, shape, or form. My skin is glowing in the most spectacular blue I have ever seen. My fingers are slim and elongated but have no nails or hair. There are hardly any markings or indication of bone structure or veins whatsoever. One could easily mistake it for a blue glove. Its sheer beauty mesmerizes me. Blue has always been my favorite color, but this blue doesn't exist in the range of colors I have in my paint box. It's slightly iridescent and translucent. I turn my hand over to look at the palm; it sparkles like diamonds in the sunlight.

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I become aware of my breathing slowing down and my heartbeat settling back into its normal rhythm. Even though the heat in my hand is far beyond what I could bear in human form, I'm able to handle it somehow, and I feel no pain. My sweating has also subsided.

I keep my hand very still, lest it be dragged into the center of the vortex, into the red. I have no idea what would happen if I entered the center. Strangely, though, I feel exhilarated and renewed. This is enough for now.

Then a thought comes to me. I have no idea why, but I hear myself saying, "I'll be back home again soon."

THE ASSESSMENT

I'm awakened by a gentle tap on the arm. My sleep-encrusted eyelids slowly open like heavy coffin lids. I see the outline of an imposing figure blocking the sunlight streaming through the window. It's morning. I've slept the whole night through. I blink a few times and my focus returns.

"Aurora, are you awake?"

"Oh, good morning, Doctor. What a night! I have been having the most ... amazing dreams."

I try to string words together, but part of me still feels left in the rainbow vortex. I need time to think about what I'd experienced there.

"How are you feeling? Are you in any pain?" His tone is one of complete and utter compassion.

"No, not much."

"Good. Now, I understand you are experiencing a bit of trauma and anxiety. That is to be expected after such a horrific event. I want you to know you are in the best of hands here and are being monitored around the clock. Do you feel well enough to talk about your condition?" He is very soft and gentle in his asking.

THE CONSPIRACY

“Yes.” I manage to sit up a bit. I grimace a little at the tenderness around my chest and neck area and take it very slowly. Dr. Curran carefully arranges a few pillows behind my head so that I’m not lying flat on my back, and more at his eye level. He hands me a glass of water that I gratefully accept with a painful smile. I take a small sip through a straw.

“Where’s Ron?” I ask, suddenly aware he isn’t at my bedside.

“Hmm, I’m not sure; I’ll check with the nurse. He may have gone home to get a good night’s sleep, knowing you’re out of your coma finally.”

Dr. Curran takes my chart from the holder at the foot of the bed. He then settles his tall frame into the clunky bedside chair and does his best to get comfortable. Steepling his long fingers, he addresses me in a voice at once professional and empathetic.

“Now, when you came in, you presented with a number of injuries. Most notably, you were unconscious. You suffered multiple scalp wounds due to broken glass and sustained some severe deep gashes in both of your legs. We did an MRI that shows a cross-section of your brain, and we did an EEG that measures electrical activity. We also did a full-body X-ray to accurately determine the location and extent of any other injuries. Fortunately, there were no breaks or fractures present. When you sat up you experienced discomfort from the severe bruising across your chest and neck area from your seatbelt. It’s a fairly common condition resulting from motor vehicle accidents, and you’ll be quite tender in that region for a while.

“You’ve suffered what is termed a diffuse axonal injury or DAI, which is caused by the shaking or strong rotation of the head. Most severe automobile accidents, such as the one you were in, are often the cause of this type of brain injury. When the head is thrown about, the unmoving brain lags behind the movement of the skull, causing brain structures to tear. This tearing of the nerve fibers results in the dying of cells and swelling in the brain, which caused you to be unconscious, and can lead to a disruption in nerve communications,

affecting a person's physical and cognitive abilities. We placed you in an induced coma until the swelling receded, which it has."

Pausing, he smiles and touches my arm. "Are you following me so far?"

Dr. Curran has a pleasant bedside manner. I feel very safe in his obviously capable hands.

"Yes, Doctor. Please ... continue."

"It appears the part of your brain that was affected the most is the occipital lobe. This is located at the back of the head, above the cerebellum. There was no need for any surgery, although it was necessary to shave your head, to gain access to the open wounds on your scalp. You received sixty-nine self-dissolving stitches that are healing nicely, and around the same number in your legs. In fact, your legs suffered the worst I'm afraid. Some of the wounds were very deep, particularly in your thighs, and will take quite some time to heal.

"With your particular brain injury, more than 90 percent of patients remain in a persistent vegetative state, so we were all anxiously awaiting any kind of sign you were still with us. I must say, to hear you speaking quite clearly is a positive sign."

"That's good news," I reply, keeping to myself the tremendous effort it requires to control this impediment. He smiles and continues.

"Some patients who suffer an injury to the occipital lobe experience severe vision loss or total blindness. You may have some defects in vision, difficulty with locating objects in the environment, or difficulty with identifying colors. Production of hallucinations and visual illusions are also very common, as is the difficulty in recognizing drawn objects, and reading and writing. This could explain the visions or dreams you say you're having.

"Now, I understand you're an artist, Aurora. Let's hope that you haven't suffered any permanent damage to your vision. We would hate for you to lose your precious gift for bringing beauty into the world. Do you understand this information? I know it's a lot to take in."

"Yes, I ... I think so."

THE CONSPIRACY

My gaze strays to the IV I'm hooked up to. Dr. Curran sees this and remarks, "You're on a morphine drip, Aurora. It's currently set at four-hour intervals. This makes it easy to administer medication for your pain, and to ease your anxiety. The best thing for you right now is to remain calm and rest. The more you sleep, the faster you'll heal."

He notices my deep breaths and tries to allay my fears.

"The main thing is you're alive and the physical traumas you've suffered will just take time to heal. Now that you've totally regained consciousness, I'll arrange to move you to the recovery wing. You appear to be out of the danger zone, and I'm pretty confident in your full recovery."

Dr. Curran rises and replaces my chart at the foot of the bed. My eyes dart all over the place. I want to ask a question but am a bit hesitant. He senses I have something else to say.

"Do you have any questions?" he asks.

I nod and try to think of how to put it. I have so many questions. Will I be okay? Will I return to normal? Why were those men following me? Has he spoken to the police? Do they have any leads? Am I safe in this hospital? What if those men try to find me? Why do I suddenly start ranting about weird things like "light" and "darkness" and "the land of the awakened"—whatever that means! What are the long-term effects of the type of brain injury I have suffered? What drugs are you giving me—beyond the morphine—that take me to that magical place with the rainbow vortex?

Finally, I come up with: "I have the feeling there is ... something I'm forgetting. Do you think I suffered any kind of ... memory loss in the accident?"

"I'm not sure, Aurora. How about we give you some time to fully wake up and regain your senses? Take it slowly, of course. Baby steps. But from what I'm seeing here today, you're showing some remarkable signs of recovery. You must be very resilient and have a strong will to live." A broad smile on his kind face reveals obvious relief I'm doing so well.

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I smile back, his words having given me hope. I'm positive I'm going to make a full recovery. Time is all I need.

"Now, it's been quite a while since you've had anything to eat. Do you think you could stomach some food?"

"Yes, food! Sounds ... good."

"Great. I'll have the nurse order you a tray. Then I'll see if I can track Ron down, too. Now promise me you'll rest."

A smile flickers upon my face. "I will, Doctor."

"That's a good girl. I'll check on you later, Aurora."

As Dr. Curran leaves the room, I sink back into my pillow. Absorbing all that information has sapped the energy out of me. At the same time, I'm aware of the pain in my legs, head, and chest subsiding rapidly. I look at the drip running from my arm to a clear plastic bag connected to a silver pole. I notice tiny droplets running through the thin, see-through tubes. It must be dosage time.

I close my eyes, my smile fading along with the relaxation of my face, and with a few deep breaths, I'm back in the black.

THE RELATIONSHIP

When I finally wake, dusk is falling. I've been out for hours, and during that time I've been moved out of the ICU. They must have been very gentle with me, as I don't remember a thing. So, this must be the recovery wing, and I'm blessed to have a private room all to myself. I also have a window with a view to the outside world. How marvelous! It's just light enough outside so I can see another wing of the hospital opposite mine. A few stars are beginning to twinkle, and I see a glimmer of the moon rising on the distant horizon.

I hear trolleys being wheeled around but I'm still a tad groggy and hazy in my thought process, and drifting in and out that now very familiar morphine-induced fog. As I begin slipping back into that serene dream state, a uniformed lady enters my room holding a tray of food.

“THE MOON. IT WAXES AND WANES. LOSES ITSELF IN LIGHT ONLY TO SHINE AT FULL STRENGTH AGAIN AMIDST THE DARKNESS. INFLUENCING EVERYTHING IN ITS WAKE. THE TIDES. ALL BEINGS. MOTHER GAIA. DARKNESS COMES AND GOES BUT THE MOON ALWAYS REMEMBERS TO SHINE. NAMASTE.”

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Once again, I find myself posing as before, head bowed and hands together, touching my forehead. I proclaim this free verse out of nowhere. The words flow effortlessly, in sharp contrast to the effort my standard speech now requires. The dinner lady stands in front of me, betraying no emotion. She's probably seen all kinds of weird things in this hospital and makes no comment about my "performance."

"Feel like eating a little something, honey?" she asks pleasantly.

Famished, I snap out of my daze. "Oh! Yes, please," I say to the lovely lady.

She smiles, her wide mouth displaying perfect white teeth. Her blue eyes sparkle. She places the tray of food down on my tray table and slides it across my lap, gently helping me sit up with some pillows behind my back for support.

"Easy does it," she says as she pushes the table further in.

What a nice lady. I'm sure this goes way beyond her duties as the dinner lady, and I'm very thankful. "You are too kind."

Another glowing smile surfaces. "My pleasure, honey. Enjoy your meal!" Then, as quickly as she appeared, she's gone.

Totally forgetting what I had just prattled on about the moon, I long for the taste of something scrumptious, even if it is hospital food. Mmm, now what do we have here! There's a bowl of fruit salad, a cup of vanilla yogurt, and some orange juice. Okay, a nice start. I take a deep breath, pick up the spoon and start on the yogurt. I take small mouthfuls, swirling the deliciousness very slowly around my tongue and swallowing gently.

"Not bad," I murmur to myself.

How long has it been since food has graced my lips! The last meal I remember having was with Ron, right before the accident. We'd gotten together to celebrate ... *my meeting!* Oh, no, I can't believe this! If this accident has ruined my chances of an exhibition, I will be so angry.

My mind drifts back to my decision to leave Australia after completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the most prestigious selective art college in

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Paddington, Sydney, and taking the leap of faith to move to the Big Apple in order to make art my fulltime career.

I'll never forget the first time I opened the doors to my studio space in the East Village. I'd shelled out almost every cent I'd saved to pay the rent well in advance, which was just doable if I could secure a menial part-time job in the evenings, which I was lucky enough to get shortly after arriving.

Harking back to those heady days, I can just about make out the smell of fresh paint as I examined my new workspace, a little over a year ago now. I relive in sheer joy and exhilaration that moment all over again as I take in the dimensions of the typical loft warehouse—not too big, not too small. Golden sunlight streams through the oversized casement windows, hitting the wide plank floorboards in checkerboard fashion, shadowing pipelines that jut out along the industrial style roofline. Remnants of a previous tenant—another artist, in fact—are still present in some areas of the flooring. I imagined they had moved into larger premises after several successful exhibitions, and I heartily endeavored to follow in their footsteps. Such excitement filled the air! The countless hours of hoping and wishing, coupled with the work required that lay ahead of me, filled me with breathless anticipation. Oh, the marvelous pieces I would create! The art world would soon sing the praises of Aurora Knightley! Many wannabes had this fantastical dream, of course, but I was going to make it come true.

Painting totally captivated me. Pushing paint around various sizes of canvas in order to convey a certain emotion consumed my every waking thought. Color is intoxicating and breathtaking, and nothing gave me greater pleasure than mixing any number of color combinations on my grainy wooden palette bequeathed to me by my great aunty, a relatively successful artist in her own right. Holding the stiff utensil gently in my lap, my thumb protruding through the palette's hole, I'd fall into a trance until satisfied I had mixed the color my soul craved to represent my affection of the moment.

ACCIDENTAL TRUTH: A VORTEX THROUGH TIME

Whether it be expressions of delight and joy, complexity and balance, or zest and audaciousness, sensually curvaceous strokes were ushered onto the canvas like patrons into theatre seats. Lines caressed into place with the tender care of a lover's touch on a cheek. Such was the desire that had long held me a faithful companion to the king of all mediums in my humble opinion—painting.

Sinking back into my pillow, I relished the memories of the past year, as I delved into each day from sunup to moonlight glow to my soul's delight to bring my fantasies into fruition, reveling in the time I had to nurture the relationship with whatever subject that had entranced me and driven me to distraction.

The relationship with my canvases took full priority, even above my yearnings and longing for a male suitor—a companion that held the same esteem for my passion as did I, so we could dance to the rhythm together in our studio.

Periodically during brief moments of restlessness, and usually coinciding with whatever holiday was being celebrated in the outside world, I wondered whether I would ever find such a companion. One who matched me completely in all the ways that matter. Not in the ways of the common folk, but according to my wants and desires. Ways I had lately come to think of more in terms of needs. Needs buried so deep that I traveled through many manic states of highs and depressive states of lows to find my way out—and the only way I knew how to do that was to paint. Feverishly, endlessly, tirelessly, with the devotion one has in the very early stages of seduction.

I had always considered myself completely satisfied—whole, one would say. A fiercely independent character who's totally free to indulge in one's passion, such that it was most unwelcome to receive persistent nudges seemingly coming from nowhere, forcing me to entertain the notion that, indeed, I was not completely satisfied after all.

I put it down to the usual biological clock-ticking notion that most women adhere to, but after many, many months of searching within my heart and soul,

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determined to discover what I was seeking, I came to the only conclusion I could. Much to my disbelief, it was something painting—the king of my world—could not provide. No matter how realistic my brush strokes, the image on the canvas could never reach out, like a flesh and blood human, and touch me.

Little did I know, it was by entertaining this scenario that I had subconsciously broadcast to the universe the energetic signals of desiring a partner. It was not long after reaching that conclusion that Ron had asked for my phone number. The fact Ron was a businessman and didn't fit my initial requirements for a suitor never entered my mind. When people commented that he and I were from two different worlds—the artist from Oz and the button-down businessman—we would quote the usual cliché, “opposites attract,” in defending our compatibility.

I came late to the art college party, and at twenty-eight, was considered a mature age, especially at an art college where daily nude performance art pieces during lunchtime were considered the norm. I did feel oddly out of place, although my solitary existence didn't hinder my creative performance—fully clothed though I was—and three years later I graduated with honors.

I never regretted one minute having made the decision to study, and the day I left my former life as a desktop publisher in the corporate world behind, and went out on my own, was the happiest day of my life. I'm so happy to finally be doing what I love and am good at and being solely responsible for the results I achieve.

Many nights Ron and I would lie in bed talking about our future and our hopes and dreams for ourselves and as a couple.

I recall with crystal clarity the night he proclaimed: “I absolutely want you to stay at home and look after our children and be able to paint and create, without any stress. It will be my honor.” He beamed with pride at being able to do this for me.

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I'm not a materialistic person and having traveled clear across the globe chasing a will-o'-the-wisp, I haven't weighed myself down with too many possessions. Pretty much everything I own is in my studio. I've let go of all the baggage of the past and am looking forward to my future with Ron. He loves that I'm finally able to make a go of life and give it my all, submerged in my passion.

"It takes real guts to go after what you want in life," Ron affirms to the naysayers who hassle me after I reveal what I do for a living. So many people are quick to put in their unwanted opinion and tell me why it isn't going to work—that art is a career for the chosen few. Ron always defends me by saying, "Working a nine-to-five job for the Man is easy. Taking that leap of faith and putting your heart and soul into your own business, doing what you love to do, involves tremendous courage and sacrifice." He finds it all very exciting and wishes he had "the balls"—as he calls it—to do it himself, but he is happy being the provider in our relationship until I'm able to support myself, a reality hopefully not that far off.

Ron has brought so much pleasure into my life; one moment not too long ago flashes before me for my viewing pleasure. I was painting away, oblivious to the fact day had faded to night, my studio's fluorescent lighting fooling me into thinking it was still light out. I was singing along to the radio when Ron surprised me by swinging past my studio on his way home from work. He'd brought Chinese food.

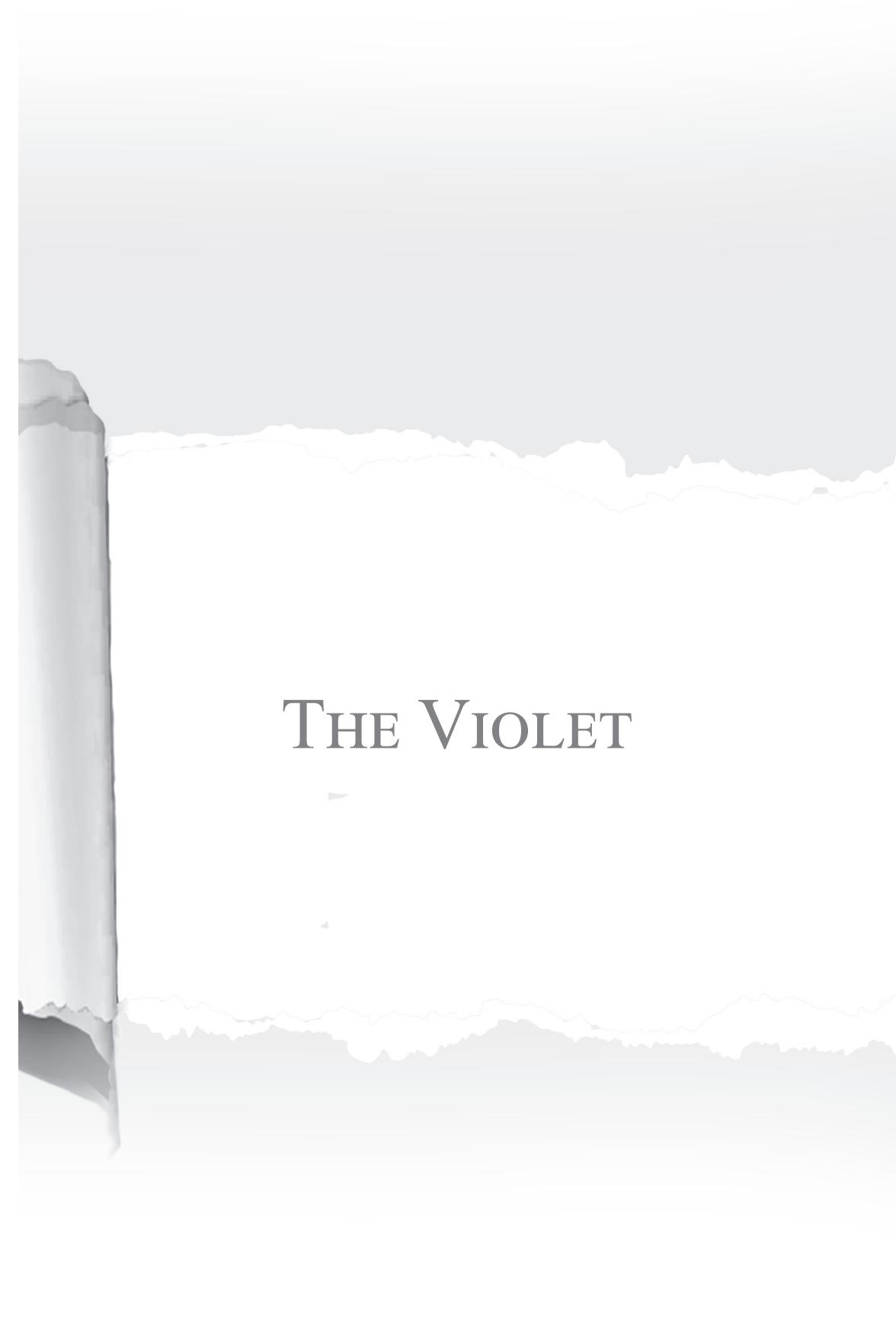
He knew how busy I was, concentrating on getting the current series of paintings finished, in the hopes of getting an exhibition, and knew I would often forget to eat. I didn't see or hear him enter the studio; the radio was blaring such that I could hardly hear myself singing above it. I don't know how long he was standing there, but when I finally noticed him, he had the biggest grin on his face. Having finally caught my attention, he walked over to me and took me in his arms, and we danced for the rest of the song, whereupon the delicious aroma of Chinese food wafting throughout the space reminded us both we

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were starving. We sat cross-legged on the floor, eating, laughing, and talking of our respective day's highlights. It was such a pure and simple pleasure, one of sharing a meal together and enjoying each other's company. We've crammed many beautiful memories into such a short amount of time.

But now my focus needs to be on getting strong and healthy. All I can do is take it one day at a time, and I will be fine. Better than fine, in fact. Dr. Curran is confident in my full recovery, and so am I. This accident will not ruin any of my plans. It's just a small delay, that's all. I'm determined to stay positive and get back on track. I can do this.

As I sink further into the pillow, another dose of morphine begins to trickle through the IV drip, and I float back into the black.

The image features a white, rectangular piece of paper with a torn, ragged edge, set against a light gray background. The paper is positioned slightly to the right of the center, with a vertical strip of the gray background visible on the left side. The title "THE VIOLET" is printed in a dark, serif font, centered horizontally on the white paper. The text is arranged in two lines: "THE" on the top line and "VIOLET" on the bottom line. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and evocative, suggesting a vintage or historical document.

THE VIOLET

THE ARTIST

I find myself back in that familiar place, one that is becoming all so real and feels like home. I feel a certain connection within the presence of this supreme universal structure; I can only liken it to the same feeling I have when immersed in a painting. It's a place where I feel most myself—totally free of all judgments and thoughts as I bury myself in the colors and patterns and textures I create within the paint. Painting is my therapy. It relaxes me. It's a state of being where only happiness and joy dwells. Those feelings are amplified as I stare longingly into this romantic rainbow vision.

I'm not prepared just yet to go into the center of the vortex, into the red. I cannot fathom what might be in there, after the disturbing preview provided in the orange, so I start again at the beginning. This time, though, I'm keen to do more than just put my hand in; I'm wondering how far I can take it and what it has to show me. Standing in front of the illuminant violet, my body trembles with excitement at the prospect of what I'm about to experience. This magnificent, awe-inspiring vortex has me totally intrigued.

I edge my hand in slowly, then my arm, my shoulder, and my left leg. Finally, closing my eyes, I enter the violet and my whole body is engulfed with

THE VIOLET

the same vibrations—a warm buzzing sensation—I had previously only felt in my hand. I feel so alive!

Opening my eyes slowly, it's as though I'm watching a TV program depicting me in my studio sitting on the floor on an oversized embroidered cushion, cross-legged like in meditation class, with my hands on my knees, palms turned upwards, eyes closed. I'm chanting but the words aren't recognizable to me. They're more like sounds than words. Watching myself is enthralling; it's as if I've entered an astral plane affording an eerily detailed view of my everyday life. After a few minutes of meditating, I rise from the cushion and stretch – catlike – raising my arms into a V skyward; my head arched back gazing along my arms towards my fingertips.

It's a stunning blue-sky day. Not one cloud is visible through the expanse of windows across the length of warehouse space. A more glorious day I cannot remember as the sun streams through, putting on quite a performance, and saturating my studio with a divine golden light as I bask in the glory of God's marvelous creation.

Captivated, I look on as I approach my latest painting perched up on an easel. I'm flabbergasted to see myself working on my latest painting, as if the accident didn't happen. Is this the future? Is this what I would have painted if I had continued the next day?

Like watching a time-lapse video in fast-forward, I observe with great curiosity as the canvas comes to life. Daylight shifts into nighttime through the rectangular windows and then shifts back into daylight once more as color after color is added, until all trace of white has vanished.

Did I pull an all-nighter? At no point did I leave the canvas during this time. No stopping to eat. No bathroom breaks. One fluid motion from beginning to end. Minute details were labored intensely upon and the blending of gorgeous blues, crimsons, cerises, and purples echo those of a nebula constellation.

Yes, there have been times when I worked long into the night, but never all night and into the following day! I seem very methodical in my placement of

the final layers of paint. At one point, I select a long ruler—at three feet, more of a yardstick—from a bench alongside my easel housing all kinds of tools I don't regularly use. This is most peculiar. I recognize some of the tools—set squares and protractors, for instance—as the kind of equipment used by a math student. I proceed to draw lines in gold ink, connecting certain points dotted throughout, then use a large metallic protractor to form circles of various sizes.

I must admit this new work is in a similar style to what I have produced of late but it's far more mathematically precise. The word “geometry” comes to mind. How far into the future is this? My hair looks a little longer, pulled back into a ponytail with a few stragglers caressing my face.

Then, as if pushing the play button to resume the video at normal speed, I watch myself in real time take a few steps back, admiring my newly completed painting with great pride. Satisfied with what I've created, I proceed to load up my brush with black paint and inscribe my name on the bottom right-hand corner of the canvas. Out loud I proclaim, “There! Another angel has its wings!” as if there were witnesses to this divine undertaking. Such is my dedication and devotion to the king of the arts that I liken completing an artistic work to some spiritual undertaking from the heavens above.

Still viewing from within the violet, I glance around the studio and see canvases of various sizes leaning up against the milky-white warehouse walls. I'm taken aback at the amount of work I've produced; the composition of the paintings is way beyond anything I have created thus far in my career in terms of complexity and balance.

Like flicking through a photo album, I focus in on painting after painting until one singular specimen makes me weak in the knees. Upon an oversized easel is an equally massive canvas depicting none other than the swirling rainbow vortex from which I'm viewing this tableau.

My legs collapse underneath me; I fall to the floor and I begin shaking uncontrollably. My breath hastens as I try to wrap my mind around what is

THE VIOLET

occurring. The scene in front of me is blurring in and out of focus when, out of nowhere, a voice speaks to me: *“Exit the vortex now, Aurora!”*

I rise, take a step back out of the violet, and am jolted back to reality by a pain smack bang in the middle of my forehead. I yell out in pain, sitting up and nursing my head with my hand. The nurse stationed at the ward’s reception area right outside my door hears me and rushes to my bedside.

“Are you okay, Aurora?”

The nurse notices me cupping my forehead in obvious pain and proceeds to give me a hit of morphine. Within a few minutes, the pain begins to subside somewhat.

“Frequent headaches are to be expected,” the nurse remarks. “Let me know if it continues. I’ll let the doctor of the ward know and no doubt he’ll be in to see you shortly.”

“Thank you,” I manage to squeak out. Speaking clearly still requires a massive effort.

This isn’t a normal headache, though. I’m not familiar with this feeling at all. It’s pressure from inside my skull like it’s forcing its way through my skin, right between my eyes. The pain is disappearing with each passing second, and my ability to grasp what I had just experienced within the vortex has me in a state of utter confusion.

What is that vortex? Is it real or imaginary? Is it all a dream? A fabrication of all the medication I’m on? Or, as Dr. Curran suggested, merely some form of hallucination as a result of my brain injury?

A voice once again penetrates the deep interior space of my mind. The same voice I’d heard in the vortex, informing me to exit.

“It’s a wormhole. A pathway that connects two points in the space-time continuum.”

“What? Who ... said that?” I say aloud. Luckily for me, the nurse had left the room.

ACCIDENTAL TRUTH: A VORTEX THROUGH TIME

A wormhole? A pathway connecting points in space-time what? Where did that information come from? I'm going crazy. I asked a question and an answer came. Oh, my goodness! These drugs are really messing with me. Now I'm hallucinating and hearing things while I'm awake!

"Don't be scared!" The voice is very soft and calming.

"Don't be scared! Are you kidding? I'm going crazy and you tell me not to be scared," I say to myself in my head.

How is it I was able to paint a picture of the rainbow vortex while I was inside the damn thing? I must be going crazy. I can't decipher this at all. And the paintings I had produced—they were far more geometrical and detailed than my previous works. And what was with all those mathematical devices I was using?

Why is this happening to me? What the heck is going on? This isn't real. It has to be the morphine!

I start laughing out loud. It's all too much for me. It's hilarious, actually. First, I'm being shot at and involved in a serious accident that could've killed me, then I go to a magical place that brings me such bliss, excitement, and renewed vigor for life, and now I'm hearing voices. My God, what's next?

I need to sleep. I need to heal. I need to be home with Ron taking care of me. His love for me is heartfelt; his support is unwavering, and his pride in my work spurs me on to great heights. I need him desperately. Where is he?

I have cabin fever from being in this hospital. That's it! I need to talk to people, be outside in the fresh air, feel the warmth of the sun on my face, and start getting my life back to normal.

Yes, that's what I need to do. The next time I see the doctor, I'm going to demand I be discharged!

I lie back, close my eyes, and sleep.

THE DARKNESS

A black-suited man hastily enters the CIA Director's spacious, oval-shaped office quickly followed by two others. The Star-Spangled Banner sits proudly in a pole jutting out of the wall next to the large window. Ornately framed photographs of past and present leaders of the free world decorate the room. The director is sitting behind a large mahogany desk.

"Sir, she's awake!" Agent Chris Love proclaims.

"The artist?" the director questions.

"Yes, sir. Aurora Knightley. She awakened from her coma a few days ago now. I just got the word," agent Chris Love proclaims.

"Damn it, Agent Love!" The director purposefully rises from his chair. He is an imposing man, standing tall behind his desk, hands placed on the edge, leaning forward. His wrinkled face twists into a grimace at the incompetence of the agents under his command. "This is the last thing we need."

Agent Chris Love is the field agent in charge of Operation Art Attack, as it's known, a most unusual black ops mission on behalf of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, Treasury Department in Washington, D.C. None of the agents, nor the director himself know of the particulars of the operation, only the objective. The orders came from the top. Aurora Knightley is to be eliminated.

ACCIDENTAL TRUTH: A VORTEX THROUGH TIME

It's very rare for the CIA not to be given full disclosure on an operation, but this fact isn't questioned. They have their orders. This operation is top secret.

"Agent Gregory! Agent Crosby! Assist Agent Love!" the director snarls. "You three have some serious mistakes to correct, seeing as how you're the ones who let her escape in the first place. Need I remind you of the protocol in place for agents who are unable to complete their objectives?"

"No, sir," all three reply in unison.

"This is the first time there's ever been a complication on any operation under my command, and I'm not about to let some artist—and a woman at that—destroy my reputation, my career, and my life! All our jobs are on the line here! Have you three imbeciles got that?"

"Yes, sir." Again, all agents answer as one.

"Well? What are you waiting for! Go!" the director barks.

The three agents slink out of the office with their proverbial tails between their legs, like beaten dogs.

"Damn!" The director takes a deep breath, dreading what he has to do next. He raises a glass of water to his parched lips and drinks it in one gulp. Lifting the phone receiver, he hits Speed Dial #3. It rings. Inhaling another deep breath, the director rubs his eyes with his thumb and forefinger, deeply back and forth, as if wishing to wash away this whole scenario.

"Good evening, sir. Sorry to disturb you. We just got the word: the artist has awakened from the coma."

The director moves the receiver away from his ear as the yelling on the other end of the line can be heard yards away, and ends the call with, "Yes, sir. I understand."

With that statement, he puts the receiver down and slumps deep into his plush black leather chair.

THE UNICORN HORN

The constant flow of morphine eases the pain between my eyes somewhat, although it's still vaguely present, even after the long night's sleep. I feel an expansion in that area as if my forehead is growing, extending out, aligning with my nose. Gee, these drugs are good! I wouldn't be surprised if I start to grow a unicorn's horn. I laugh heartily at the mental image.

Hearing footsteps approaching, my laughter turns to a beaming smile as Ron strolls towards me. In his hands he holds the biggest bouquet of yellow roses I have ever seen.

"Oh, Ronnie, my favorite. They're gorgeous." I'm grinning from ear to ear, showing my dimpled cheeks. After my refreshing sleep, I find that, while speaking clearly still requires a concerted effort, it isn't as painful and fatiguing now.

"Well, this is a lovely sight. Look at you! My girl, all smiling and happy."

"Yeah, it's the drugs." I let out a laugh. "Thank you for the flowers, darling."

The nurse appears and takes the gorgeous bouquet from Ron to put them in a vase. Ron leans down and gives me a kiss right where my unicorn horn is growing, and I give a little giggle.

“Hey, watch my horn!”

“Your horn? Boy, those must be some drugs!” Ron laughs along with me.

“Were you in pain?”

“Yes. In my head, right where you kissed me. Feels like I’m growing a unicorn horn.”

“A unicorn horn, huh? That’s pretty weird—even for you. The doc mentioned you’d experience some headaches for a while. Do you feel okay now?” Ron already knows the answer, given the smile on my face and my laughing fit.

“Wonderful baby. I feel marvelous. I got the pain last night, but I had the best sleep. Where have you been? I’ve missed you!”

“I’m sorry, darling, I know. I needed some rest, too. Have you seen Dr. Curran yet? Have they mentioned how long you might be here? It’s such a nice surprise to see you out of the ICU.”

“I’m not too sure yet, darling. I’ll ask the doctor later.” I sink my head into my pillow. “I’ve been having the most amazing dreams, baby. Totally far out, man!” I laugh again, enjoying this disconnected, lightheaded feeling.

The nurse walks in, totally camouflaged by yellow roses.

“Here you go. So beautiful.” She pauses to take a whiff. “And they smell divine. What a lucky woman you are, Aurora! I’ll be back in shortly to take your vitals. It’s nearly dinner time, too. You must be starving, having missed breakfast and lunch.”

Turning on her heels, the nurse leaves us to chat. I had no idea I’d slept the whole day away. The days seem to drift into one another here.

“Now, don’t worry about your meeting with Lucina, the gallery owner,” Ron comments. “I called her and told her what happened, and she said not to worry about anything. She still wants to meet with you and just hopes you get better soon. So, there you go. That’s good news, isn’t it?”

I’m smiling in my heart now. “Oh, thank you, darling. I was so worried about that.”

THE VIOLET

Phew! That's a relief—everything is going to be fine. I will do what is needed to heal, and I'll be back doing what I love most of all—painting—before I know it. With that thought, flashes of the visions I had in the rainbow vortex come flooding back to me.

“Ron!” I yell, startling him.

“Yes, what is it darling?”

“I had a dream of me painting. Finishing the painting I'm working on now. You know the one? With the blue lines and the gold circles. I saw what it will look like. And then I heard a voice talking to me. Do you know what a wormhole is, Ron?”

I'm sure Ron thinks my ranting is due to the morphine, as he smiles patronizingly. “A voice? That's nice, darling. Sorry, I don't know what a wormhole is; you can explain it to me some other time. For now, how about you just lie back and rest? I need to go back to work for a little while and finish some things. It looks like you will be getting out of here sooner than expected.” He leans over to kiss me again and playfully avoids my forehead. “Whoops, mustn't get the horn!”

We laugh. He kisses me on the lips, lingering just a minute, staring deep into my eyes. A sudden look of concern clouds his face.

“What's wrong, darling?”

“Nothing. It's just...I'm so sorry this happened to you. If I could take your place, I would. I want you to know that.”

“It's not your fault. I'll be fine. Good as new in no time.”

He leans in and kisses me again. “Just be sure and stay safe in the future, okay? Night, angel. I'll be back tomorrow. Sweet dreams.”

“Night, Ronnie. Love you.” I blow him a kiss as he turns back and looks at me from the corridor window.

The nurse returns and takes my vitals.

“You're coming along nicely, dear,” she says, smiling. “Ron was so dedicated the whole time you were in a coma. I spoke with the nurses in ICU; apparently,

he barely left your side the whole time and would fall asleep in the chair, holding your hand. He would talk to you and kiss your forehead. And he brought fresh flowers practically every day. They all commented on how your part of the room looked like a florist's shop." The nurse is almost gushing.

"I'm so lucky to have him. He means everything to me."

"That's lovely, dear." She's very sincere in her tone, evidence of her being a totally devoted and caring nurse. She writes my stats on the chart and places it over the railing at the end of the bed. "All good here. I'll come back and check on you later." She gives me a wink and leaves, passing the dinner lady on her way out.

"How are we tonight?" the dinner lady inquires in a caring voice. I recognize her, by her perfect teeth, as the same lady who served me in the ICU. I'm tempted to tell her all the good news, about hopefully being able to leave here real soon and Ron taking care of me, but I think better of it.

"Getting better, thank you." I smile at her and she mirrors it. I bet she is happy not to be on the end of some Looney Toons speech. I'm happy about that, too. Must have been the drugs, after all.

Dinner is edible. Chicken and pasta with a bread roll. I manage to eat most of it this time. Chocolate mousse for dessert. I love chocolate mousse and savor every mouthful, licking the inside of the container. Must ask for another one of those tomorrow.

Feeling sufficiently full, I push the tray table to the side and lie back to get some sleep. The food and the constant morphine hits have made me drowsy. I'm serene and at peace. Drifting off quite quickly into that twilight state just before you fall asleep, I see the figure of a man dressed in a dark suit pass my doorway, pause for a moment, then continue on, past the corridor window where I had blown Ron a kiss just an hour before.

Too far gone to awaken, I'm back amidst the black. Back home.

The image shows a piece of white paper with a jagged, torn edge, set against a light gray background. The paper is oriented vertically and has a vertical crease on the left side. The title 'THE INDIGO' is printed in a dark, serif font, centered on the paper. The text is arranged in two lines: 'THE' on the top line and 'INDIGO' on the bottom line. The overall appearance is that of a vintage or antique book cover or endpaper.

THE INDIGO

THE PROFESSOR

The beauty of what floats in front of me cannot be put into words. Swirling luminescent colors of the spectrum blend effortlessly into one another. The energy feels weightless and light. There isn't a care in the world in this place. Such love and beauty emanate from this hypnotic vortex, it's as if I'm being given a warm hug from an angel.

I stare in awe for a minute, taking it all in. I examine each layer of color in detail. It's utterly breathtaking. I'm keen to get back in and see what other marvels it holds. I know what the violet hue contains: me, in my life now as Aurora Knightley—the artist.

Without warning, the voice I'd heard before starts speaking.

"This is a wormhole. It joins two points in the space-time continuum."

I'm able to think very clearly and concisely within this space, as a spectator of this stunning vision before me; the effects of the morphine and my gradually improving slur are not evident here. The clarity I have is first-rate. So, I'm seeing myself as Aurora in another time in space.

The voice speaks again.

"There is no time in space. Both of you are living at the same time, in different dimensions. This wormhole is a portal to other dimensions. Dimensions are levels

THE INDIGO

of consciousness that vibrate at varying resonance of frequency. The higher you vibrate, the more dimensions you can experience consciously, enabling you to access the information coming from those higher planes.”

This is unbelievable. Other dimensions? Levels of consciousness? The higher I vibrate? What does that even mean? This seems like science fiction stuff—a storyline from *Star Trek*.

“Consciousness is the awareness or perception of something. The more connected one is to Prime Creator, the higher the level of consciousness and awareness to the truth and in alignment with the seven elements of Divine Consciousness—which are joy, happiness, creativity, abundance, freedom, peace, and, of course, love.”

Wow, this is a lot of information to take in. “I think I understand. This terminology is all very new to me.”

“I understand, dear one. Believe me when I say you will understand everything when the time is right. Go back into the vortex. Everything will make sense to you. Go into the indigo now.”

The voice doesn't freak me out or scare me like it did when I was awake in the hospital. Within the presence of the vortex, I trust it somehow. A knowing deep within me resonates with the voice and all it is saying, like reconnecting with an old friend after years of not speaking.

Having already had a glimpse of the change in my hand in the other colors, I'm prepared for anything. Using my mind, I float over and hover directly in front of the indigo. I'm aware it's a male hand that was previously revealed to me.

“Here I go, then,” I say to myself, and to the voice, as if we're having a real conversation. I'm ready to watch what is going to be shown on today's television screen as I slowly ease myself into the full mass of the indigo.

I'm humbled by what appears. It's a desert setting. The Pyramids at Giza are in the distance. I feel the sun beating down on my skin, and the air is thick and humid. The sky is as blue as the sunniest of summer days. Hundreds of people

ACCIDENTAL TRUTH: A VORTEX THROUGH TIME

are walking around, exploring the pyramids and the Sphinx, which is off to my right. Men wearing headdresses and varying tones of browns and beige loose cotton clothing are leading camels across the ochre rich landscape.

In the foreground is a man down on his knees, digging in the dirt. Various tools lie strewn around him, along with a brown leather satchel. He appears to be an archaeologist. I squint my eyes to focus on him. I wish I could get a better look at what he is doing, and with that thought, the scene enlarges as if by automatic zoom.

Now he's right in front of me. A young man, possibly in his late teens, early twenties. Short, curly blond hair. Strong, tanned body. Sweat-stained and covered in ochre-colored sand. From his kneeling posture, I can't get a good look at his face.

I think, "zoom in closer", and the scene instantly magnifies until he is close up. I can see every detail. Most of the background scenery disappears as if cropped from a photo. Something about his attire screams vintage—early 1960s. Dark brown shorts cinched with a narrow black belt, white cotton button-up shirt tucked into the shorts, sleeves rolled up to the elbows, white socks, and brown lace-up boots.

He raises his hand to wipe the sweat from his brow, exposing the back of his hand, and then I see it. The same hand I had seen earlier when placing my hand into the indigo—strong with short, square-cut fingernails, curly blond hair on the back of his hand and fingers. The hand, *my* hand changes into in the vortex belongs to this young man.

My heart feels like it's thumping out of my chest, and I can literally hear it, too. Who is he? What is he doing in Egypt, and why is he in the same vortex as me? Why did my hand change into this man's hand, and why am I seeing him now? Why is the vortex showing me this vision?

The answer to all those questions was quickly and succinctly supplied.

"This is you in another space-time continuum. A past life, shown through the wormhole."

THE INDIGO

“A past life? This is me?” I ask the voice via my thoughts. There is no reply. Thoughts come and go through my mind, too many to single out and none that make sense to me. I try to understand what the voice is saying. Am I imagining it all?

I take a slow, deep breath, in through the nose, out through the mouth. I take one last look at the scene before me, and with a step back I’m out of the vortex, back into the black. All I can think of is *wow*. There are no other words that truly express this new information. I have no idea how to process what has been said to me or what I just witnessed.

The violet showed me in my current life, continuing with a painting I’m working on, as well as other paintings including one of the vortex; the indigo showed me in the life of a young man digging in the Egyptian desert—me in a past life, or so claims the disembodied voice!

I try to do the math to work out the ages and dates of birth, but I need paper and a pen to write it down. This is mind-blowing stuff. I feel my whole body buzzing with excitement as if bolts of electricity have shocked me. I must remember all of this when I wake up in the hospital.

Then it hits me. I remember the other hands I have seen. One more male hand, dark, with finer hair, then an old lady with gnarled hands and yellow pointed fingernails, then one that looks like Thor’s hand. I freeze.

“Arrrrghhh!”

Could this really be? Oh, my goodness. The blue one! The non-human hand!

I start to panic, and right in front of the very structure that reveals all this to me, I pass out cold.



“ON THE PRECIPICE. STARING BLANKLY. LONGINGLY. INTO THE ABYSS. INTO THE DARKNESS. SQUINTING FOR LIGHT. SEARCHING

ACCIDENTAL TRUTH: A VORTEX THROUGH TIME

FOR LIFE. HELLOOO. IS THERE ANYBODY IN THERE? A KNOWING IN MY HEART SPACE. A YEARNING TO BE FILLED. ONLY THE ABYSS KNOWS. TRUE LOVE WILL YIELD. NAMASTE.”

I’m sitting upright, head bowed, hands raised to my forehead.

The nurse hears my words and has come to my side. “Aurora, are you okay?”

Immense pain suddenly shoots through every fiber of my being. “My legs! Can’t stand ... the pain.” I grab hold of my legs but instantly release them, so great is my agony.

“Okay, let me see where the doctor is, and I’ll be back in a minute.”

The nurse hastily exits and disappears behind the windowed corridor where the ward’s reception desk is situated. I hear a page for the doctor ring out over the intercom and before I know it, he’s entering my room.

“Hello, Aurora. I’m Dr. Hutton. I was just on my way to see you. You are experiencing some pain in your legs?”

Dr. Hutton is the exact opposite of Dr. Curran in appearance. Dark greyish hair, thinning, almost balding. Thick, black-rimmed glasses. American through and through. Not much character in his voice—very even-toned and betraying a serious demeanor. In his late fifties I would guess, and a tad overweight.

He gently uncovers the bedsheet exposing my boney, pale legs. “Which leg? Both legs or just one?”

“Both!” I yell. The pain is becoming excruciating.

“I see some redness and swelling surrounding the wounds. I’m just going to feel now, okay, Aurora? Very softly.”

I feel his hands on my left leg first. “Feels warm to the touch.” Very slowly he raises the edge of some of the bandages to peek at the wounds. Then he places his hands on my right leg. “Okay, feels warm, too. Where is the pain, Aurora? Is it just where I’m touching you, near the wounds, or is it your whole legs?”

“Everywhere!” I writhe in pain. Even his light touch is too much pressure.

THE INDIGO

“It looks like you have an infection. There are some wounds that aren’t quite healed yet. I see on your chart you previously had some antibiotics but sometimes this can happen. You may just need some stronger ones. I will order some blood tests now. In the meantime, I’ll give you an extra dose of morphine. Everything is going to be alright, Aurora. We’ve caught it early by the looks of it. Just relax now.”

He places the sheet back over my legs up to my waist and reaches for the tubes in my wrist. I look on eagerly as he administers the dose. “You’ll feel better in a few minutes. I’ll be back to see you a bit later.” He jots down some notes on my chart and exits.

A few minutes pass and the nurse returns with the trolley to take blood, after receiving instructions from the doctor.

“We’ll have this done in no time,” she says, going about her task with expert precision. “Are you feeling a bit better? Is the pain easing?” She is very friendly and kind.

“Yes, thank you so much!” The morphine is working its magic. My eyelids weigh a ton.

“You can go to sleep if you feel drowsy.” She finishes taking my blood, puts the vial in a small yellow tray, and looks at my notes. “I see the doctor has given you a nice, big dose, so you should be out for a few hours.”

I just catch the end of the sentence when everything fades to nothing.

THE STARS

I wake and press the red button for the nurse. She rushes in.

“Oh, Aurora. How lovely to see you awake. You’ve been out for two days!”

I motion for the water and the nurse pours me a fresh glass. Slurping the whole glass in a matter of seconds, I extend it for a refill. It disappears just as quickly. I feel drunk and a bit nauseous. I try to focus and take a few deep breaths.

“Two days?” I was lost. No memory of anything. “The last thing I remember is the pain in my legs.”

“Yes, we were a bit worried about you. We have to keep reminding ourselves of what you have been through, and that there is no right or wrong way to recover from an accident such as yours. Your body will heal the way it feels is best for you. Anyway, the stronger antibiotics seem to have been doing their job while you were asleep. I’ve been checking your legs every four hours and I took some more blood this morning. We should have the results back at any time. I expect to see more improvement. The swelling and redness have diminished significantly, and we’ve removed all the bandages. You’re healing well. And I must say, your speech has shown remarkable improvement.”

THE INDIGO

Relief is evident in the deep breath she exhales. I think she was a bit scared I might not have woken up at all, after what she just said about right or wrong way to recover. She begins rearranging my pillows to prop me up.

“How are you feeling? Are you in any pain?”

“No, actually I feel pretty good. A bit woozy though. And I’m starving.”

As if on cue, my stomach growls ferociously. I look up embarrassedly at the nurse. We both laugh.

“I’ll see what I can get for you. Dinner time was a few hours ago.”

“Thank you.”

The lights in the corridor are dim, indicating its past visiting hours. I gaze out the window at the gorgeous night, with the stars taking center stage. I’ve always had an affinity with the stars. I’ve spent hundreds of nights throughout my life stargazing, mesmerized by their sparkle and observing their different sizes, colors, and magnitudes. Some shine proudly in their brightness at full strength. Others flicker like Christmas lights. I watch on in amazement as, one by one, they reveal themselves to me. As darkness encompasses the sky, more and more stars come out to play.

I wonder at the patterns the constellations make, filling the night sky with glitter, performing just for me. The Big Dipper and Orion’s Belt are familiar marker points in the sky enabling me to always get my bearings. I’ve made wishes on too many shooting stars to count. I have my favorite stars, ones I greet every viewing. One star in particular is very special to me. I made it my personal wishing star when I was a teenager. Randomly one night I decided it was the one, the one I would turn to whenever I needed to make a connection with the higher realm, I dreamed existed. I would talk to this star as I would an old friend, asking it questions, telling it silly things that happened during the day, or just pondering a situation and seeking clarity on what to do about it. I never expected answers. I’m not crazy! I just wanted to be heard. I feel at peace under the blanket of lights. It’s one of my favorite places to be.

ACCIDENTAL TRUTH: A VORTEX THROUGH TIME

The nurse returns carrying a tray. “Just something to tide you over till breakfast.” She places it on the tray table and pushes it in towards me. “Dr. Hutton will be so pleased you’re awake. I’ll phone him and let him know. Also, your fiancé has been in and telephoned several times. I’ll give him a call, too. He’s been terribly worried.”

I try to say “thank you” through a mouthful of bread. A small container of apple juice and a chocolate mousse awaits. Yum! I’m looking forward to diving into that. Mouth still full of bread, I ask, “What time is it?”

She glances at her watch. “About ten past nine. I’d best get on and make those phone calls before it gets too late. Anything you need, just buzz.”

“Thank you.” I gulp down the last bit of bread and can’t suppress a little burp. Cackling, the nurse departs.

Alone again, I settle back to reflect. Out for two days! That is amazing. My legs do feel a bit better. I raise the sheet to inspect the damage. I was in too much pain before to focus, barely noticing the array of maroon-colored gashes. With the bandages now removed, I can clearly see the damage caused by the glass. My legs could be likened to one of the canvases I’ve prepared for my hopefully upcoming exhibition, as if I had randomly drawn lines in a crisscrossing fashion across certain sections of white. Some gashes heavily painted, some lightly. Most look like they will heal. Some will remain on display long after the exhibition has closed.

I wiggle my toes and flex my feet. My legs, immobile for so long, feel as stiff as stilts. Gingerly I bend my knees to a forty-five-degree angle, marveling at the popping the joints make. I can literally feel blood rushing to the muscles from my hips all the way down to my toes. Lengthening my legs back to their resting position, only having pushed them a little, I vow to bend my knees a little further every day.

Okay, baby steps. I’ve had a slight delay with the infection, but I appear to be healing. I’m alive. I’m awake. I’m good. I smile to myself as I peel open

the lid of the mousse. Mmm, hello, friend! How are you today? Ready to be devoured? I giggle to myself.

I have always had a positive, happy disposition and a great—some friends would say wicked—sense of humor, but it helps me through the tough times in life, and sometimes as a defense mechanism. So, I will focus on my future—my art and beginning my new life with Ron. I have a wedding to prepare for.

The future! My future. Not the past. *My past!* Oh my gosh! The voice! The wormhole! The young, blond man digging in the dirt in Egypt! My past life, as seen through the wormhole. The portal to other dimensions.

I need a pen and some paper. I look on the bedside table. Nothing. How long ago was it when the nurse was here? I have no sense of time these days. It could be ten minutes. It could be half an hour. I decide to ring the buzzer and see.

The nurse comes in running. “Everything okay? Are you in pain again?”

“Oh, no. Thank you so much for the snack. The mousse was yummy.”

“No problem at all sweetie. From the sound your stomach was making, you might not have made it till breakfast.” We share a little chuckle.

“Is there any chance of me getting some paper and a pen? I want to write something down.”

“Sure thing.” She disappears and promptly returns with a spiral-bound notepad and pen. “Here’s an old notepad of mine; I tore out the pages I’d scribbled on. This okay?”

“Yes, that’s great. I really appreciate it.”

“My pleasure. I suppose you won’t need any sleep for a while then.” She laughs. “Dr. Hutton will be in first thing tomorrow morning to see you, and Ron is stopping by after work. Buzz me if you need me. I’m here till six in the morning.”

“Thank you.”

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I take the notepad and rest it on the tray table. On the left-hand side of the page, I write “Me—Aurora.” Next to that I write “16 December 1985. 34.” Then without realizing what I’m doing, I write “violet.”

Then on the next line down, I write “Young blond man.” For the year of birth, I put “???” And for the age, I write “In 1960s Age 19-22ish.” Then I write “indigo.”

While I’m in the vortex, I don’t doubt what I see, but when I’m lying in this hospital bed—which would seem to be my indisputable reality—it’s a bit hard to believe.

“You’d better not say anything to anyone, Aurora,” I whisper aloud. “They might put you in the psychiatric ward.” I laugh nervously. “Better stop talking to yourself too!”

THE GUIDE

“I AM THE MOUNTAIN. MY HIGHER SELF IS THE SUN. STANDING OVERHEAD. EVER WATCHING. MY GUIDE IS THE MOON, NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE BUT ALWAYS PRESENT. MY FAMILY ARE THE TREES AND FLOWERS THAT SURROUND ME AND PROTECT ME AND SMOTHER ME WITH THE NOURISHING LOVE I REQUIRE TO THRIVE. MY FRIENDS ARE THE WINDS THAT COME AND GO AS THEY SO DESIRE. BUT UNDERNEATH I AM ROCK. STRONG. STEADFAST AND TRUE. UNCHANGING AND UNTOUCHED BY ALL ELSE. I AM THE TRUTH. THE WAY. THE LIGHT PROTRUDING HIGH INTO THE HEAVENS ABOVE, UNDENIABLE YET NOT IMPOSING, JUST BEING. THERE FOR ALL TO SEE, CLIMB, LAY ON, OR SHIELD FROM THE BRIGHT SUN OR STORMY SKIES. I AM LOVE. NAMASTE.”

Once again, I'd sat bolt upright from a deep sleep to recite this verse. Hands held up to my forehead and bowing. A voice startles me. I turn to see Dr. Hutton, sitting in the bedside chair. His gaze is intense.

“Aurora, are you alright?” he asks with equal parts curiosity and concern.

“Oh, good morning, Dr. Hutton. I thought I was alone.” I pretend to be unaware of the prose I just recited, but he zeroes in on the topic.

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“Aurora, you just made some, shall we say, cryptic remarks, highly spiritual in nature. The nursing staff informs me this has happened several times since your accident; now I’ve seen it for myself. I have to say, it’s most peculiar . . . and somewhat troubling.”

There’s no dodging his pointed observations. “I don’t know what I’m doing, Doctor. I have no control.” I’m embarrassed. I avoid eye contact with him by looking out the window and settling back into my pillow.

“I see.” Dr. Hutton seems worried. “I’ve never seen anything like that in all my years of medicine. Let me look at your eyes.” He takes his medical penlight out and looks directly into my eyes, one at a time. “Are you experiencing any headaches?”

“No, not anymore.”

“Okay. Let me know if this keeps happening, or if you have any concerns. It could just be from the medication. Everyone reacts differently.”

“Okay,” I reply, somewhat comforted.

“Now, let me take a look at your legs.” He uncovers the sheet and sees they are healing nicely. “Good. No sign of infection. The redness and swelling have gone. It appears to have been a simple case of infection and the stronger antibiotics have done the trick.”

The breakfast trolley appears at the entrance of my room. Upon seeing me sitting up in bed, the meal lady proceeds to bring me a tray of food and puts it on the table. “Tea or coffee?”

“Coffee, thank you.”

She turns to the trolley and pours me a cup. “Have a lovely day. Both of you.”

Dr. Hutton returns her smile as he rises from the chair. “Seeing that you’re coming along so well, Aurora,” he says, scanning my chart, “I think we might see about moving you to the rehabilitation ward. Just to help get you back up on your feet before you transition back to normal home life. I’ll arrange for you to see our occupational and speech therapists. I think the sooner you get out of

this hospital, the better. Enjoy your breakfast. I'll be back later to see you." He scrawls some notes and abruptly leaves.

"Thank you!" I call loudly as he breezes down the corridor, my eyes fully fixated on breakfast. There's certainly nothing wrong with my appetite, that's for sure.

"It's all the astral traveling you are doing, dear Aurora."

Mouth full of toast, I immediately stop chewing. There's that disembodied voice again! Gee, I had almost forgotten about that. I'm taken aback by its sudden return.

"The what?" I'm familiar with the term "astral" but eager to hear the seemingly all-knowing voice's explanation.

"The astral traveling. Entering the vortex takes a lot of energy and has resulted in an increase in your hunger. The wormhole is present on the astral plane, which is in a different dimension to your third-dimensional reality. You can access the astral plane and view the wormhole easily because of the influence of the heavy pain medication you are taking. It is making it easier for you to totally relax and surrender all thought. Your brain enters the theta brainwave state required to access that dimension, the state right before you go to sleep and right before you wake up. You nearly enter this state when you are meditating. I see how close you get. When you meditate, you vibrate at a higher frequency. You need to practice and clear your mind of all thought in order to relax and enter the vortex without medication."

This new understanding floors me. Who is this eloquent entity talking to me, as if they were right in front of me? I search for a place in the room to rest my eyes on and focus, as my meditation teacher has taught me, in order to take in what is being said.

"I would remind you," says the voice, "that we can communicate telepathically. You need only think, and I can 'hear' you, just as you are 'hearing' my thoughts."

"That's good to know," I reply. "Cause if the doctors and nurses heard me talking to myself, they'd haul me off to the loony bin for sure."

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“Loony bin? Oh, I think I understand. A quaint human colloquialism for a madhouse.”

I giggle. “Yeah, that’s right. Now, let me see if I have this straight. I can enter that astral plane and the vortex whenever I wish, then?”

“Yes, you can. All you have to do is act purposefully with your thoughts, concentrate on your breathing, and through constant practice, you will be able to enter the theta brainwave state required whenever you wish, through meditation alone.

“The purpose of one’s life is to evolve as a spirit, as well as to further the evolution of the human Collective Consciousness; one can only achieve this through proper examination, reflection, and learning. You are here to observe and experience all that life has to offer. You accomplish this through lessons learned with the same community of people. Your role will vary; you may be the mother, brother, lover, or friend. You all take turns to help each other gain different perspectives of the same situations, in order to learn compassion and empathy. There are two sides to every story. These people are part of your soul family.

“Everyone has been every race, creed, sex, religion, master and slave, boss and employee, for thousands of lifetimes in order to experience the feeling of that chosen life, which all formulates the uniqueness of you—your personality traits, your perceptions, your beliefs, the embodiment of you; in other words, your essence. Lessons either heal or show the path of one’s highest joy, in order to experience compassion for self, compassion for others, and compassion for Earth.

“When you meet someone and you instantly feel like you have known them forever, it is highly probable you have. Their purpose is to teach and heal you through playing their part and fulfilling their contract agreed upon when writing the lessons. That is why if someone does something you perceive as negative; you need to remember they are fulfilling their role. You must thank them and be grateful that they are showing you what it is you need to learn. Most of the time it is a very simple lesson—to learn to love yourself. Only in forgiving others and

forgiving yourself are you able to understand why that scenario occurred, so you can learn from that lesson and heal.

“Our greatest adversary is always our greatest teacher. There is a reason for everything that happens to you, no matter how inconsequential it may seem. Every person and situation are specifically contracted to teach you something, either about yourself or about humans in general, all to further each soul’s advancement to the ultimate goal: inner peace; hence, outer peace; hence, world peace. No matter how different you are, you are all learning to love yourselves and remember you are one. All connected.”

“Oh, my goodness, are you serious? Do you mean that if I don’t learn from any negative situation, I will encounter the same scenario again and again until I learn my lesson?”

“Precisely, dear Aurora.”

This is amazing! It all makes sense now. I think back to the crappy boyfriends I’ve had. All my relationships ended the same way: I was either betrayed or abandoned. They didn’t respect me, or my opinions and they cheated on me, telling me I deserved it, and if I didn’t behave a certain way, they would leave me. Time and time again emotional blackmail was their weapon of choice, the selfish cowards. I was always there for them but when I needed them, they were never around.

I had a boyfriend a few years ago; Mark was his name. He was the drummer in an up-and-coming indie rock band, and they were becoming all the rage on Sydney’s music scene. I remember this one day when I was suffering from a terrible migraine, and all I wanted was for him to stay with me and care for me.

“Since you’re not playing tonight,” I’d whispered. The throbbing in my head was excruciating; I couldn’t abide bright light, and my stomach was turning somersaults. “I’d love for you to just be here with me, and we could just chill and watch a movie, and maybe you could rub my back and my neck.” I always felt like I had to *persuade* him to be with me, which sucked.

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The look on his face was priceless. “The guys were going to check out that new pub tonight on King Street and see if we can line up a gig there. Meet the manager. You don’t need me hanging around here. You’re probably only going to sleep anyway.”

Being in a serious relationship, one would think your partner would be there to take care of you and just want to be with you and comfort you, but not Mark. He took my being sick as a “get out of jail free card.” He did end up going to the pub with his mates, and when I was sad at his decision, he snarked at me as he was leaving, “You aren’t going to be any fun tonight, and I can’t deal with you this way.”

I was devastated. We didn’t last long after that. If he wasn’t going to be around for me when I was ill, what would it be like if we had children!

The band did make it to the top of the charts, and I was happy for him. He got married and had a baby. I later heard through the grapevine that he cheated on his wife and she took him for all he was worth. Karma got him in the end.

It was a similar scenario with friends. Everyone always expected me to do what they wanted to do, but no one ever wanted to do anything I wanted to do. I would go to watch their performances in plays, go to their birthday parties, and watch them in their sporting events, but when it was something for me, even my own parents’ funerals, no one showed up to support me. They skipped my graduation from art school, citing lame “prior commitments” that seemed so much more important to them than something I worked so hard for three years to achieve.

People, I discovered, were unreliable, and I got sick and tired of giving everyone 100 percent of myself and getting very little in return. I also began to see a pattern, in that people were always hell-bent on doing what they really wanted to do, and if it wasn’t with you, it showed how they really felt about you. I quickly learned it was best if I did my own thing, which was mostly my art. This was my escape. Art didn’t care that I was having a bad day. It never failed

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me and was always there, allowing me to express myself. When I paint, I always feel myself tapping into a magical place. *Getting in the zone*, I call it.

So, if there is a reason why I have been encountering the same types of people but in different masks—the same themes of betrayal and being lied to and abused in all its forms—I need to work out why. This is a fantastic reason to continue going back to the vortex, regardless of what it reveals to me.

At the same time, I feel somewhat victimized, as if I'm a pawn in a game I didn't know I was playing and lash out at the omniscient voice.

“Are you telling me there's a reason for my accident? A purpose to being slashed to pieces and having suffered a brain injury?” I realize my tone is brash and apologize. “Sorry, but you know what I mean! It's difficult to understand that the memories and scars I will be left with for the rest of my life happened for my own benefit!”

“I understand your anger. There is a reason, and in fact, you created this scenario for your own benefit. Sometimes one is not privy to that information for a very long time. It depends on how long one decides to live in denial or sweep things under the carpet, or indeed to blame others for the situation. If the lesson is of huge proportion to one's life and evolution of spirit, the bigger the impact it must have to make one stop and assess the damage, so to speak.

“Your job now, dear Aurora, is self-reflection—to go over what has happened and examine it in detail until you come up with a reason that resonates with you. A reason that will send swirls through your whole body—that is an indication of truth. When you accept the reason that resonates with you, only then are you able to comprehend why this could possibly benefit your evolution. If you cannot find any reason whatsoever, simply forgive yourself. Forgive everyone involved, as well, and send them unconditional love, for they are here for their own lessons. Perhaps the situation wasn't for your purpose of evolution, but for theirs. In this instance, it is a time for being grateful and blessed for being able to help another's soul advance, for you are all part of the greater evolution of the human race.

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“All beings are part of Prime Creator. Thus, you need to treat every person as if it is you and treat others as you would like to be treated, as you are really only encountering another part of yourself. That is why there can also be no judgment. You are all here on an odyssey of enlightenment, to remember your own divinity and to hold the light amidst the darkness; to ignite the spark of our Creator within and let it shine for all to see; to live as the compassionate beings humans truly are, and in doing so, change the world.”

After a long, reflective pause, I reply: “I heard this saying once. I think it’s exactly what you’re trying to explain to me. First, God will whisper in your ear. If you don’t learn the lesson, God will drop a brick on your foot. If you still don’t learn the lesson, God will throw the brick in your face, and if you don’t learn the lesson even then, the whole wall will come crashing down on top of you. Is this what you’re saying?” I giggle self-consciously, painfully aware I’m nowhere near as articulate as my unseen guru.

“Yes, that is correct, relatively speaking—although the word ‘God’ is often misused in your religious discourse, for all humans are gods and goddesses. All hold within unbelievable gifts and powers. The goal is to discover one’s gift and share it with humanity and live one’s life as Prime Creator intended, in remembrance of your oneness with all.”

Everything the voice says rings true to me. The wealth of cosmic knowledge is overwhelming but very reassuring at the same time. A sense of calm washes over me like a healing balm. I feel myself transported to a place where no fear exists, no anxiety, no worries or doubts, just peace.

After an indeterminate period—it might be seconds, it might be years—I hear myself asking: “Uh, by the way, if you don’t mind my asking ... who are you?”

“I am Ravi. I am your spirit guide. You spoke about me earlier, in your speech upon waking. You said I was the moon. I believe you were trying to say that even in darkness, I shine a light for you. Everyone has a guide. I have been with you since your inception as a spirit being. You have a beautiful energy signature,

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Aurora. I can see your energy; you have no idea how powerful and influential your thoughts and feelings of love are.”

“Gosh, Ravi. What a lovely thing to say. Thank you! But what’s an energy signature?”

“Your spiritual DNA—the divine essence of you as a light being. Think of your energy signature as a mosaic of divine colors uniquely expressing all your experiences here on Earth and within the vast cosmos. You feel your own energy signature when your hand is in the vortex; you experience pins and needles and sometimes feel the sensation of heat swirling inside your body. This occurs when you are feeling your energy signature.”

“What a great description, Ravi. I can see what you’re talking about with the mosaic colors. So, if I’m seeing myself in the vortex, why am I sensing different sensations, or energy signatures, as you put it, within the different colors?”

“Excellent question, Aurora. Your inquisitiveness is matched only by your innate cleverness; I admire that about you. You never accept what someone says to you out of blind faith; you are always searching for the deeper meaning of life. To answer your question, you are sensing different energy signatures due to your evolution of spirit. Every time you evolve as spirit, your energy shifts. Every time you come back into human form, your signature changes. It evolves and adjusts to a new frequency and vibration.”

I get the feeling Ravi is lovingly disclosing this information and is very happy to have made a connection with me after all this time watching and waiting. I also sense that Ravi is male. The authoritative tone used to converse with me carries a deep reverence and knowing within that I associate with the masculine way. Ravi reminds me of my father in many respects.

With that thought, Ravi interjects, *“I am neither male nor female. I am energy. We have all been a part of everything during the evolution of Earth—from the stars to the wind and the ocean; from rocks to plants to animals; and most definitely both male and female human forms. In the universe, planet Earth is known as Mother Gaia. You mentioned Her in one of your speeches a few days*

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ago. Your body is a vessel; the holder of the light that is you—light expressing itself as energy. Mother Gaia is a living, breathing, multi-dimensional being and you and She are independent of and dependent on each other, yet relying on the same truth.”

“This is unbelievable, Ravi. Amazing.”

I pause and take a breath while I absorb Ravi’s cosmological sermon, for lack of a better word—all silently of course, in my mind. It’s all a bit surreal, but all of Ravi’s explanations resonate strongly with me. Our connection has a sublime sacredness. I can’t quite put my finger on it, but I don’t doubt any of Ravi’s teachings whatsoever.

“You mention my speeches. Are you responsible for them when I wake up out of the vortex? I have no control at all over what I’m saying or doing. I don’t usually speak so ... cryptically, as Dr. Hutton put it!”

“Ah, yes! Well, you could say I am providing the pathway for those thoughts and words to come through you. I am opening a clear channel for you to express what you already know deep within your higher consciousness. All humans hold within them every piece of information in the history of the universe because we—and I include myself in this category—are all vestiges of Prime Creator’s original spark when it decided to experience itself in many forms. We split off and became individual spirit beings of light. All the information from the original source light became locked deep within us all and held within the DNA; it is why you have chosen to come to Earth: to uncover these hidden secrets, or truths as you know them, locked within your DNA—and expose them to the world.

“Remembering ‘all are one’ and dissolving the illusion of separation is part of the mass awakening and the ascension of the Collective Consciousness of humanity. Part of awakening involves vibrating at a higher frequency and ascending to a state of pure, unconditional love. It is a journey to uncover your unlimited potential. Humans are powerful beings of knowledge and intelligence; all are worthy of the truth. It is your birthright. Claim it! The keys to the kingdom of heaven lie within all of us—and you are here to discover how to access them.”

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A profound silence descends upon the hospital room, broken only by the intermittent pinging of the medical equipment. Ravi's strong spiritual presence lingers, however; I feel that the energy of Ravi hasn't really departed but is merely giving me time to reflect on the information so lovingly shared with me. Even though I understand pretty much everything—complex as it is—it brings about even more questions. I grab the pen and paper I had set aside and start a fresh page, frantically recording the main points in bullet point form.

Before I know it, I've jotted down three whole pages of notes, and, exhausted, fall asleep with pen in hand.

THE FILE

“**Y**ou called for me, sir?” says Agent Chris Love, entering the CIA director’s office.

“Yes, come in.” The door closes behind him as Chris approaches the director’s desk and takes a seat.

“The artist’s file just arrived,” says the director without preamble. “Treasury sent it hoping it would instill a sense of urgency in you. The FBI had the file previously. We have been working in conjunction with that agency and the Department of Justice on this case for a very long time.”

“Very good, sir. I’ll take it home and read it tonight.” Agent Love’s hand moves toward the envelope marked TOP SECRET on the desktop, only to have the director snatch it away.

“Hands off, agent! This file is not to leave this building! Do you hear me? If this information gets out it will be the end of everything as we know it.” The director slams his fist on his desk. “Have you seen her yet? Got a plan of attack organized?”

“Yes, sir, but there have been a few complications. Knightley contracted an infection and is being monitored by hospital staff around the clock. Complicating matters is the fact her room is right outside the ward’s reception

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desk, which is constantly manned. It's a busy floor, with nurses and doctors constantly coming and going. Plus, I noticed there is some security present. I have walked past her room to assess the situation and formulated a plan. In order to carry out this operation, I must have complete autonomy."

The director rises from his chair and thrusts an accusing finger in the young agent's face. "You are in no position to demand anything, you insolent bungler! You have two days! Do not enter this room again until you have completed the mission. I want this mess cleared up. I don't even want to think about what might happen to us all if this operation fails. Do I make myself clear, Agent Love?"

"Crystal clear, sir."

THE REASON

I wake to the feeling of sunshine caressing my cheek. My window affords a narrow view—obstructed by a retaining wall—of the hospital’s courtyard, where birds are flitting around a feeder and taking dips in the birdbath. A nurse, lounging on a bench before her shift begins, throws a tidbit of her sandwich to a frolicsome squirrel.

Ah, morning! My favorite time of day, flush with rich possibilities. A chance to start life all over again. All the dreams that fill my mind seem plausible with the dawn of a brand-new day.

I slept the day away yesterday and missed dinner again, and Ron, and everything else. So much has been happening to me; I feel that sleeping is not only enabling my body to heal, but also allowing my mind to process the heady concepts Ravi has imparted.

I sit up in bed and notice the notepad on the edge of the side table, pen placed neatly on top. I suppose the nurse removed them at some point while I slept. I retrieve my notepad and scan my valiant efforts to record Ravi’s teachings. I’m distressed to see my layman’s interpretation of Ravi’s eloquent words reads like the ravings of a lunatic. I really hope the nurse hasn’t read any

of this. She'd think I've gone bonkers! I turn over a new page and begin jotting down things to ask Ravi when we speak next.

"I am here now, dear Aurora. I never leave you, as your intuition told you at the close of our earlier meeting. I am your guide and yours alone. I am with you every moment of your life."

"Okay, I understand now. Thank you, Ravi. I'm very grateful and blessed to have your wisdom available to me, anytime I wish. I wrote down some notes last night after we spoke. Things to ask you. Is that okay?"

Ravi lets loose a peal of indulgent laughter. *"Yes, of course! That is what I am here for. I am waiting for you to ask me things. Guides have prepared for many thousands of years— some, even millions—to assist humans in this highly auspicious time of the great awakening."*

"Awakening? There's that word again. We briefly touched on that last night." I search through my bullet-point notes and come to the bottom of the third page. "Ah, yes, just before we finished, and I fell asleep. I couldn't remember all of what you said. Something about collective something and mass awakening and ascension."

"Excellent recall, Aurora. Collective Consciousness is the energy of most humans on shared morals, values, ideals, and the direction human beings want to go as a whole. For example, humans have decided that killing another human is not acceptable and there must be punishment. On the opposite scale, humans have decided that when there is mutual love and respect between two individuals, they acknowledge these sentiments in a union you call marriage. Collective Consciousness contains many variables; like a set of scales, when one side is weighed down more than the other, the decision has been made. Most of the time it isn't a conscious decision. Most humans choose to indulge their innate capacity to love. Were the scale tipped toward hatred and fear and anger, living on Earth would be a frightful experience, unendurable, I dare say. All negative emotions are part of the darkness you mention in your speeches."

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“I see. And what about awakening and ascension, then? What do they mean?”

“Well, awakening is the birth of a new understanding or way of life. To wake up to a feeling—an intuition deep inside that seeks more from what you are doing. A common question upon awakening is, ‘What is my purpose?’ You are free sovereign beings of light and can transcend the many judgments and limitations placed on you by monarchies and governments, and by other humans. Being told you aren’t good enough, or you don’t have the right ‘this or that,’ are self-limiting belief programs that have been used time and time again to keep humans from reaching their full potential. These programs keep people at a low vibration making it easier for them to be manipulated and controlled—to make them conform and work for the ‘powers that be,’ like slaves. The process of awakening is the awareness that you do not wish to be treated like slaves anymore, and you rise up. You ascend to a higher consciousness, to a higher way of being.”

“Whoa! Wait, we’re being controlled?”

“Yes, but it’s very important to know that Earth is a planet governed by the Universal Law of Free Will, so you actually do have total control over how you wish to live. Over time the element of free will has been altered and manipulated. A program of fear and greed—instituted by various despots down through your history, we call them ‘the powers that be’ and embraced by their callous followers—has adversely influenced human evolution. Once humans learn this truth, you will have the opportunity to shift out of the old way of living into a new way forward for humanity. One of a higher vibration and driven by unconditional love. You will understand more when you go into the vortex and discover your past.”

“That’s heavy stuff, Ravi. Surely, we’re here for other good stuff, too?” I ask, desperately seeking a balance between the good and the bad.

“Indeed. Humans are here to create and love. You love to play and have fun and laugh and live through the heart. It is your right—nay, your duty—to pursue your gifts and passions and to learn vital lessons upon Earth’s sprawling

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classroom. You are here to awaken to the beauty of this planet that is a living, breathing organism. And you all must honor Mother Gaia and protect Her for future generations, for what happens on Earth affects every other being on all the other planets in the cosmos. She needs humans to help with Her evolution and ascension, along with all Her inhabitants. When you think and act from the heart, you are tied to the Divine—our Prime Creator. You are Source Energy personified. Creators. Magnificent manifestors. You need to spread love. Be love. Be the peace you want in the world. You all need each other, as well as Mother Gaia, in order to raise your vibrations and enter higher dimensions of existence.”

Trying deeply to absorb Ravi’s impassioned speech, I find myself at a loss for words.

“Wow! I don’t know what to say, Ravi. It all makes so much sense. I wonder why I haven’t realized this before. Why all of us haven’t realized this!” I sigh deeply.

“Indeed, Aurora. Humans are reaching a new level of evolution. It is all happening now, in your lifetime. It has been many lifetimes in the making. There are many things the ‘powers that be’ have exposed humans to for far too long to keep them at a low-frequency vibration with chemical-laden water, genetically modified food, poisons within vaccines, to name but a few machinations. Slowly but surely the species is waking up, en masse, raising the Collective Consciousness with the choices made every day. The more love is chosen for self and for others, the quicker it will happen. Raising your vibration and living from your heart space has a ripple effect on those around you. Live your life, as you would like it to be. Be a positive role model for those around you. Look after yourself. Be healthy. Stay happy.

“You are doing this with your art, Aurora. You see the reaction some people have as they try to talk you down from your happy place. That is because you are doing what they would like to be doing: living your dream. Fear is stopping them from chasing their own dreams and therefore they act out negatively towards you. This is the self-limiting beliefs and social conditioning imprinted in human’s DNA

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lashing out on their behalf. They are envious of you. These are negative emotions and purely based on ego. The love one has in their life is the only true measure of success. Humans already have everything they need deep within them. The ego-driven accumulation of material possessions and status symbols is a disguise designed to mask unhappiness, even as it incites jealousy and resentment. Such pettiness keeps humans in a perpetual state of meaningless competition. Even your concept of sport, which on the surface seems harmless, brings out the worst in the devotees, as they embrace the ‘winning is the only thing that matters’ philosophy, and literally hate the opposing team. And then there is your political realm, with its childish ‘us and them’ mentality. So much fear and mistrust! Fear is the enemy of all humans. Segregation is the enemy of love.

“Having said that, all humans have awakening markers embedded in their soul contracts. These are situations specifically designed to trigger one’s awakening. Anger is one. Depression and despair are others. Anything that makes one ask ‘What is my reason for being here?’ Or simply: ‘Is this it? Is this all there is?’

“Creativity is a portal out of depression. It is essential for everyone to find their outlet for creative expression in order to communicate to the world who they are and convey their unique identity, as this expression opens a connection to one’s true inner being, as well as the connection to pure Source Consciousness, Prime Creator.

“Of course, there are positive awakening markers, too. For example, anything that allows you to see the beauty in life and makes you want to be a better person—to do what you know is right and help others. Color, nature, animals, friendships, love—these awaken one to the love held within. When you are in love or are happy with what you are doing in life, you don’t feel like putting anybody else down or obsess about having the latest fashionable car or clothes to make you feel good. You feel alive inside; the desire for material possessions fades away, as does your envy of the ‘haves’ whose lives seem superficially perfect. You wish everyone success and happiness.”

“I see. Yes, I get it now. Everything you’re saying is true.”

THE INDIGO

I'm writing notes as fast as I can, and during this process, I notice the questions I wrote yesterday on the opposite page. I need to ask why those men were following me and rammed my car off the road. About all those things they said and the words I'd used while defending myself. What did I mean by those words? I'm not sure how to put it, so I go back to the beginning.

"You say you have been my guide since the beginning of my existence as a spirit being. What is happening to me? Who were those men, and why did they try to kill me?"

"Because you hold the truth and the secret."

"What truth? What secret?"

"You hold the mission codes to transition Mother Gaia into the New Earth and a vastly improved way of living for humanity – one of pure unconditional love and compassion for all beings. And you are awakening, dear Aurora, which means you are raising your vibration to such a frequency whereby you are able to connect to the higher realms-and the information from that plane-where you can access the truth about who you are and why you are here. The 'powers that be' do not wish to relinquish their control over humans, so you dear one, and the information you hold is extremely dangerous to their survival. These 'powers that be' cast a dark shadow over humanity and its evolution, and that is why they are also referred to as 'the darkness'. All humans hold the universe's history in their DNA, but you are able to consistently wake up and remember every lifetime, the truth and the secret that will save the universe from darkness."

I knew there was something I was forgetting. I even asked the doctor if the brain injury affected my memory. I don't remember it, though—the truth or the secret. What happens if I don't ever remember? I talk about light and darkness in my speeches when I wake up. I even recall saying in one of them that I am the truth, the light, and the way. What does that all mean? I didn't know the secret before the accident, so why did I feel I was forgetting something?

"Mission codes? In my DNA? How do I get them out?" I laugh at my naivety.

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Ravi sounds out a hearty belly laugh then sighs, *“Dear Aurora, everything will be revealed when the time is right. All is divinely orchestrated in accordance with the great master plan for Earth’s ascension. You asked about the accident, and how this could possibly be for your benefit. Well, it has enabled two things for you. First, it has given you time. A break from the world for reflection and healing on a deeper level upon any issues still imprinted within your DNA from past traumas. Whenever triggers have been activated and one begins to awaken, the universe will force that individual to take time out to reflect, and to yearn for a deeper connection to Prime Creator.*

“Second, it has given you the chance to discover the vortex and our connection. You were nearly in the vortex in your meditation class a couple of times. I would be willing you to go deeper and let go, but it is very difficult with all the distractions and stimulation within a class, and even at home. Too many distractions from your everyday reality invade your thought processes. That is one of the ways the ‘powers that be’ have kept humans from waking up, keeping you all so busy and preoccupied with the petty problems of your workday world. You all have precious little time to sit still and listen to the guidance given to you. That is why it is so important to seek out a quiet place in nature for meditation, away from distractions and noise. So, it does seem that this accident has, in fact, been very necessary to slow you down and allow you to focus on your mission here.”

The breakfast trolley clatters into my room. The lady sees me writing in my notepad, which I hastily turn upside down in my lap.

“Morning, honey,” she says, removing my tray from its shelf. “Coffee or tea?”

“Coffee, please.”

“Nice to see you sitting up and writing.” She sets the tray down and pushes in the table towards my lap. “Have a lovely day.”

“Thank you. You, too!”

She gives me a warm smile and disappears down the corridor.

THE INDIGO

Buttering my toast, I say to Ravi, “I’m exhausted after all that learning, Ravi. I really hope I do what I came here to do.”

“You are healing, dear Aurora. All in good time. It will happen.”

And with that reply, I feel Ravi has left me again, although I can still sense his muted presence; as he frequently reminds me, he is always with me. I’ve noticed something interesting, though. The energy shifts within me when I’m connecting in deep conversations with Ravi. I become more focused and have clarity of thought. I feel and sense Ravi now. I look at the pages of notes and take a deep breath. So much more information to absorb! The more I learn, the more questions I have, and with that thought, a reply comes, from somewhere in the trackless void of eternity.

“Go back into the vortex.”

The vortex. Yes! Okay, I’ll have something to eat, get some energy, and make a conscious effort to go into the vortex.

End of Excerpt

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