

SEARCHING FOR LYDIA  
Life love deployments and ghosts

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Smashwords Edition

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This little book is dedicated to my muse; you know who you are.

It's not every day that one has the opportunity to see a ghost. Or rather feel it. No amount of literature, of which there is plenty, movies, or the amount of people that claim they know all about it can prepare one for the actual experience of feeling a foreign presence in your mind.

History is awash in stories where spirits inhabit people on the earth. Ancient peoples and texts abound with the idea of spirits. Coming from a Caribbean background, my past is fairly littered with the ways that spirits are there, walk among us and even speak to us. I watched all the horror movies of evil spirits when I was a kid; I heard all of the stories told orally. The kinds of stories that kept you up at all hours, jumping at every bump in the night; yet, I am not talking about possession by evil spirits, which is what many people think when I bring up the subject of Lydia. It's a seductive, lovely, warm feeling, a total polar opposite to the Linda Blair, head-on-a-swivel, demon possession of *The Exorcist*. Webster's defines the word of spirit as: a supernatural, incorporeal being, especially one inhabiting a place, object, etc., or having a particular character, or an angel or demon. It then goes straight into evil spirits, that place where most people confronted by an unknown entity will go. The word spirit actually means breath, from the Latin, *spiritus*. The main point being that the spirit resides in respiration, as in 'he breathed life into that old car'. The world of the spirits and the natural world are constantly in contact with each other, and someone who can participate in this interaction is called a medium. Apparently, this is what I am, a medium, because I can communicate with the spirit world, or rather one spirit.

It would seem that I have been channeling this female presence, this Lydia for several years now. I know that this sounds absolutely crazy, but since no one is going to read this book, I figure I can say just about anything I want. I know one or two people are going to read this, and maybe get an immense enjoyment out of it, if only to poke some fun at the crazy guy. And I see myself this way, for real. Crazy, I mean. I seriously believe I am going to be that guy that walks around town in shabby Civil War clothes from the Goodwill and talking to myself. Only it will be Lydia I will be talking to, and this brings me to another interesting point. What if all of those "crazy" people that were muttering to themselves, that you made fun of as a kid (you know you did, I did too) are just within their own conversations with their own Lydias?

I intend to research this lady, perhaps the Scandinavian years. As I have a deep seated feeling that she is from Scandinavia, and yet there is a feeling that she has been all over the world. But that will be later. I think the Scandinavian ones would be more interesting. I was drawn to Scandinavia and in fact, just returned from a vacation there.

I am what some people would call a medium, or a channel, not really sure what it's called, but perhaps channel is what I do; as in a tunnel or conduit from the spirit world and this one. Seriously, if someone had told me this several years ago that I would be a channel; I would have laughed and asked them if I could have some of the drugs they were taking. I have done some research and if the other channels in this world are a guide, I have a serious learning curve. There was Jane Roberts who channeled a male spirit named Seth and she wrote several books with her husband on the subject. J.Z Knight, channels a guy named Ramtha who is thirty thousand years old; Esther Hicks channeled a spirit or group of spirits called Abraham; Margaret McElroy channeled a spirit named Maitreya, which is one of the foretold incarnations of the future Buddha, which in Buddhism, I find an incredible beautiful peace.

He is sometimes seen as the Budai, that happy, serene fat guy sitting in the front of some Chinese restaurants, and if you rub his expansive belly, you can get good luck. And the list goes on and on. I am nowhere on a par with these mediums and mystics that channel these spirits. I just happen to channel Lydia, a gorgeous, black haired, green eyed beauty who I have fallen in love with. Yeah, I know how it sounds, I have said as much to my wife, who asked, why couldn't she just be married to a guy who cheated with a hot, Russian, street walker on Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta? I don't know, I guess it would have been so much easier to take. Where mine and Lydia's relationship differs with these famous people who channel is that they teach a beautiful and wondrous world and they love to share it with everyone else. I guess if there's a reason why she chose me, I have no idea what it is, and she isn't telling me. There really isn't any incredibly wonderful spirit knowledge that she holds for the world, because, well, because her world is me; and while that is gorgeous and flattering, I am afraid I don't get a fountain of profound wisdom from it. What I do get from it, is a profound sense of Love from her, and I suppose that this is a beautiful thing; at least to me. Yet, there is a very deep feeling of sadness, a sense of terrible loss, as if she has lost her memory, a kind of Alzheimer's. I feel she picked me because she knew I would fall in love and then I would do anything to help her find herself and get her back on a track to her journey the way it's supposed to be. You see, love has been a very distant and illusory feeling; a tricky, indefinable and puzzling phantom. And yet there is a certain liberating feeling when you channel someone's spirit, it is a beautiful challenge. It is a series of mental gymnastics that perpetuates the story of her as she shows up on the porch step of my mind. It is a sweet and wonderful symbiosis when one is within a presence. I guess this is how those mediums feel when they are feeling the presence of their special spirits. I have never asked a medium this, and so some may read this and call bullshit; but this is how I see it and feel it, and since most of them are con-artists anyway, they can kiss my ass. I see her face in front of me, the long black hair, the emerald green eyes and those curves. It's not like a relationship, or a business arrangement, it's more like a love affair, only a love affair of a kiss only.

Like when I was a kid, my brother was dating a girl named Cheryl, she was older than he was and more mature, and much older than I was. She lived several doors down in the apartment complex we lived in. I knew what they were doing together, I had played doctor with a couple little girlfriends and so I had the opportunity to discover our parts and see what they looked like. I watched him as he went to her house, so when he left, I went inside and simply asked her to kiss me, no more than that, I had never really kissed a girl, passionately, or otherwise, and frankly she was the only girl I knew that was pretty easy to kiss.

She certainly qualified as the older woman. And according to Tim, one of my brother's friends she was what most people would call easy. I couldn't ask the girl I was always hanging around with, Joney. She was a total tomboy; if I asked her to kiss me; she would have beaten the

shit out of me. The only other women that kissed me was my mother and an aunt Josephina who kissed me out of guilt apparently, because she couldn't help pulling my cheeks away from my head so hard it threatened to tear my face off.

So I stood on a chair, (I was quite a bit shorter than Cheryl) and puckered my lips, and she showed me how to kiss. I remember her sighing and being patient with me, she would laugh that tinkling little laugh she had and I can remember the power I felt when I realized I was the one who could make her laugh. This type of power was an incredible intoxicant to a 12 year old, with braces on his legs, gangly limbs and thick black glasses. I was a target for bullies, not a guy accustomed to making a beautiful girl like Cheryl feel good. This was one of the most fabulous times in my life, up to that point. One of the few times, that I had exited the strange autistic, emotionless mental area I was in at that time in my life, probably a direct result of all physical anomalies. I remember it so fondly, and this is the feeling I get when Lydia is around; it is like a kiss; sweet and tender. Kind of scary, when you think about it but when I remember myself standing on the chair with my lips puckered, I can imagine Lydia leaning in for a kiss and the feeling is exquisite. It's not sexual; it's not really sensual, it happens to be small, innocent and a little sugary.

So I have detailed how she makes me feel and how she slides deliciously along my consciousness; but the question becomes, where did she come from? I have asked psychics about this presence, and they either scoff or say that I am too inexperienced, or they are genuinely interested and want to know more. Well, this is why I wrote this, perhaps as a way to tell the love story that is Lydia and I. I just thought I would have to get this out and yell the tale that is Lydia. I had done my research into her, as far as her Scandinavian years, the name Lydia sticking in my mind like cosmic glue. Lydia is a very common name in Germany and Scandinavia, so I figured this was going to be harder than it looked. I was in the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation computer lab the other day, on the base I am stationed at in Afghanistan; it is a large open space with several rows of at least twenty computer stations in neat rows, fronted by book shelves that contain all manner of hard cover, and paperback books. The place is made like a library, with a counter in the front manned by a guy and a sign in sheet. On the counter, there is a series of pigeon holes containing small wooden blocks written with numbers corresponding to the computer one chooses. I always choose number eleven, it's a lucky number and its right in front of the middle set of bookshelves and the privacy wall that surrounds all the computer stations; on this particular one the little privacy wall is broken and affords me a perfect view of the middle book shelf, the top of which is a perfect perch for Lydia when I am there writing my blog or describing our tasty romances. Right then, I had my brows furrowed in concentration trying desperately to find the websites that may point me in the direction of where she came from; the plethora of genealogy sites is absolutely staggering. I could see Lydia sitting there on top of a book shelf quietly giggling at my frustration and I scowl at her shooting her a fuck-you sign and this elicits a mock hurt look and she actually laughs harder at my trying to figure this out.

"You know, you could help me." I say out loud, hoping no one is listening.

"Not on your life, lover" she says as she winks and blows me a kiss, she puts an emphasis on the word 'life' which elicits a new round of laughter. I love her, but I hate her sometimes. She closes her eyes and I see she is deep in concentration. Just then, a movement on the screen, the cursor is blinking there right above a website about her and her last name in Scandinavia which is about three thousand pages long, precisely the reason I was so despondent. Just then, the cursor moves and words magically appear,

'Keep looking, lover, I LOVE YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!'

Suddenly, I hear a whoop! I see her moving around on the bookshelf hands in the air congratulating herself and dancing little dances, pumping her fists in the air, swinging her legs, her gorgeous raven hair swishing around and I see her beautiful green eyes as they fairly twinkle at me. I can't help but smile, and chuckle a little bit out loud, looking around at the soldiers there, but they are not paying attention to us, they are into their own searches or with headphones or talking quietly to their loved ones, into the romances with real people. Thinking about the soldiers existing within romances with living humans puts me in a serious, deeply tragic mood.

"Why do you torment me so?" I whisper seriously.

Suddenly she stops dancing and congratulating herself; when before, her green eyes fairly twinkled; now they flashed angry bolts of green fire. "You see how hard it is for me to force anything on that DAMN computer or to you?"

Uh-oh and now she is serious too, her jovial mood broken into pieces like a precious porcelain vase hurled in anger against a wall. One thing about Lydia is the depth of her moods. The anger can well up in her and be incredibly frightening, like a mounting storm, but by the same token the same depth of feeling is felt within her loving moods, and they are so deep as to be like the mountains I saw in Norway growing gigantic out of the deep blue glacial water. As fast as the anger flashes crimson, she checks it and returns to her self-congratulating; only her elation is an echo of its former self, I have broken her happy mood like a kid smashes a bug in the street which serves to make me feel even worse. I imagine the strength it must take her to manage these mood swings, a sort of spirit bi-polarity, and unfortunately there are no drugs a spirit can take to alleviate the stress. I feel sorry for her and what she has to go through and I can only imagine what it must have been like to wander for so many years after her death before she settled in my consciousness. I asked this once; when I was on another base earlier in my deployment, on a largely deserted base in the Helmand desert area of the country. I had just come from Iraq, and I was deeply troubled about Lydia, I had already decided to see her more often, but still the fact was she was a ghostly presence and I was still trying to wrap my head around this relationship. The thing about a spirit is that they cannot come into your consciousness unless you invite it. Even the evil spirits travel along that same conduit, that same highway, they have rules, speed limits and exit ramps. The person that is tormented by evil spirits is usually a person that through some deep seated need, wanted and asked for that evil spirit. Which is the cool thing about Lydia, she is like a dolphin in the sea protecting me from evil spirits that are constantly hunting the vast open areas between our worlds like sharks hunting for fresh meat. You see Lydia can protect me from the evil spirits because she is an old soul, and she was an old human as well, living to be over a hundred years old. Age equals experience in the spirit world.

"You have no idea lover, how barren the world of the dead can be." She looked down as she was talking, I was walking from the dining facility, to my tent, it was night, and it was incredibly dark because we were in blackout, with the generator run night lights out, and my boots were crunching on the gravel. She would walk beside me, but it was a certain floating motion, like she was slowly rollerblading beside me. I knew when to be quiet and this was one of those times, so I just waited. She continued in a quiet voice, I had to almost strain to hear her.

"The world of the dead exists in several levels, depending on how dead you are, in other words, how much time has elapsed since your end." I had my head down trying to see where I was watching my feet in the feeble light of the crescent moon, silent as a grave. Since I met Lydia, I have never been scared of the dark; I mean I'm seeing a ghost for Pete's sake.

She had her hair down, and the wind was blowing fiercely, sometimes pushing me back and I would have to adjust to the levels of gravel and the sizes of the rocks; the Afghan wind of 120 days, the Afghans call it the Bohd, was in full swing blowing hot over the gravel and the sand was blowing in from the desert and it covered everything with a fine layer of tan dust. But no matter how hard the wind was blowing, when she walks next to me there is only a slight wind, as if her world is barely touching mine, just a slight rubbing action between the two realities; we can see and hear each other and interact with each other, we can even touch each other, but the one difference is the way that weather reaches her. I can touch her, and she can touch me; a truly exquisite and quite strange feeling.

I waited expectantly; I learned to never rush her as she was reminiscing. I kept quiet because this could give me some insight into her origins. I have to know where she is from, I am obsessed and possessed, I am caught between two worlds, one in which I reside looking for a trace of a woman who I have felt to be in a certain place. To be able to see where she has been, perhaps to feel a certain touch, a smell or a clue; a daunting task for sure, but one I am compelled to complete. I have to, God help me, I am in love and as such I have to help her and not just this damsel in distress kind of thing, this is deeper than that. A love that is larger than me, larger than most people, larger than the job I am doing with the soldiers. When she kisses me, it feels like those ancient movies where the tall hero will kiss the woman love interest. A pleasing place to be, she has a feeling like home, that concept that is the one place where you miss the traces of your loved one and the echoes of them resonate in your consciousness like a new flower bud on a barren branch.

She looked away to the outside desert, with the scrub brush and the abandoned, broken clay, adobe-like bricks of the outer walls of the Afghan houses, looking beautiful in their destruction in the moonlight.

“When I died, I was in bed, in the United States, in my state, and yet, I suddenly felt a tug towards” ,, I waited in suspense for what seemed like centuries, I had decided to quit fighting the wind and just sit behind a concrete wall on an outside air conditioning unit, facing the perimeter fencing, the wind was howling around the concrete wall as we sat there. I was leaning slightly toward her.

“I can’t think of it!!” she said dejectedly, suddenly putting her face in her hands. I leaned back as if snapped by a rubber band. Shit. Almost, there.

I spoke this time to break her despondence, I knew the depth of her moods and she could descend into a depression as deep as the guy in that Rolling Stones song, ‘Paint It Black’. I wanted to look deep into those green, sad and hurt eyes. I took her chin gently and moved her face from her hands and turned it towards me away from the destroyed Afghan homes. I looked in her eyes.

“I’m going to find your past, Lydia, I don’t care if it takes a thousand years, but we will find you, I have to, and I will.” I was hoping the thousand year comment wasn’t too over the top, but it was how I felt and I always told Lydia how I felt and I would search for her until the very stars would burn out in the universe. We will find where she came from; Of course, I was hoping the conviction I felt was conveyed to her. I didn’t have to wait long. She floated up off of the air conditioning unit and wrapped her legs and arms around me, softly kissing me, her long, full, luscious black hair fell all around my face, partially obscuring my vision, I didn’t move it out of the way and then she just stayed there holding me. I knew she was smiling; I didn’t have to look at her, because the moonlight was a little brighter, and the world always seemed a little brighter when she was happy, as if the universe mirrored her moods; and I felt an indescribable peace I

haven't felt in a long time. This is exactly the moment, the very second; I fell hopelessly and irretrievably in love with a ghost.

So is this a ghost story? No, this is a love story which just happens to involve a ghost. So who is Lydia? She is the one I have been searching for, for so long. That elusive condition of a relationship that evades me at every step I take. Yet she is the muse that I have been searching for all these years. As my muse, I imagine a love affair between us. Not those torrid love affairs in pulp fiction romance novels; 'She took his hard member and stroked it before directing it's exquisite purple head towards her,,,,' Well, you get the picture. The thing between Lydia and I is not like this, it's sweet, innocent, like those candies in the stores in those wonderful Norman Rockwell paintings from the 1930's, probably because that is how I see her, as she was in the mid 1920's, a young gorgeous twenty-six year old.

The feeling is all there is, she is there and she will be heard. In fact, in 2008, I was writing in an online poetry forum as a woman called \_\_\_\_\_. This was Lydia's name at the time. I still didn't know she was for real; this was just an exercise in creative writing, a way to write as a different gender. Yet, I felt something there, a wonderful entity that was willing to write so I just sat back and let her do her thing. I let her out to stretch and work her magic, and the people at the site were not disappointed. She wrote with abandon, stretching sentences and metaphors until they screamed in agony. She wrote terrible sequences that shook my world and deep lovely poetry that threatened to have every man on that site writing me. I had to council her in her responses to men, her responses like:

'Hey lover, I will be waiting at that Eastern European train station for you, the brunette with the faraway, sad, green eyes.' How can a young guy resist that? Especially the young men that populated the site; if they only knew who was writing them, yet that is the beauty of the internet; no one knows who is writing them. Only the writer knows and he is not telling, because then the world will know that there is a crazy guy with a female presence stalking the internet. For her credit, and because I asked her, she wrote as a lesbian, so I wouldn't be too offended and the young men wouldn't be too broke up when she would let them down gently. Luckily there weren't that many lesbians on the site, so that was a plus.

A woman asked me once, how does a presence feel in your mind? I was thinking with alarm, how does one describe the incredible feeling I get when she decides to show herself? I can only say she slides along my central nervous system, along a path the ancients used to call the third eye, that place called the pineal gland just at the center and just below of the two hemispheres of the brain. It's called the third eye because of its ability to transduce light signals from the eyes. It has been speculated that the gland secretes DMT, dimethyltryptamine, a known psychedelic. The kind of third eye thing that people associate with mystics, yoga practitioners and meditation; which is why her presence is like when I first tried meditation, back in 2008. I was in the lotus position in my studio above my garage. It was quiet, I had the stereo off, a beautiful gift from a fan, a huge Sansui from the 1980's; part of a rack system. I just sat there getting my breathing under control, slow and steady. I was taught by the fan who gave me the stereo that one needs to be incredibly still, the rule is not exactly the lotus position, one just needs to be in a comfortable position that makes the body open. She went on to explain that I had to imagine a beautiful, warm light that splashes on top of my head and travels slowly down over and through my body with a series of slight tickles as it travels over my skin. So Lydia just came in the door then, like a whisper. I imagined her as the light as it traveled all over me in a luscious feeling of slight Technicolor pins on my skin, causing gooseflesh to erupt wherever she stepped. I could imagine this beautiful woman, politely excusing herself as she intruded into my

consciousness. I woke up suddenly and rose up quickly; almost falling over my easel with the canvas of a painting I had been working on. Interestingly, it was an orb in beautiful cobalt blue, with a shadow, the outline of a gorgeous sad woman inside. I was amazed and a little scared, she was so *real*.

A part of me was frightened, but another side of me was intrigued, and curious. She had been real, and I started to shake my head, smiling, remembering my Puerto Rican cousin, Virginia and what she would say. I could see her face clearly with that sarcastic half smile, half grimace she always wears like she just smelled something especially rancid. Of course, when she smiles this face is replaced by a beautiful glow that is incredibly sexy and alluring. Yet, at this moment, I see her sarcastic side as she says,

“You so stupid, chacho.”

But the echoes of her visit lingered, just at the edge of my hearing, like a softly spoken lullaby. I sat down again, I *had* to feel this again, and my curiosity won the debate as always. It was a scientific thing now; I decided to think this through logically. So I sat down and immediately decided to see her again, I closed my eyes and slowly recreated the last few moments. I closed my eyes and frantically tried to imagine the light, imagine the soft warm feeling I had just felt. It was no use; no matter how hard I tried I couldn't recreate the same feeling. I mean, I could recreate a facsimile of it, a distant relative of the last few minutes.

All I got was nothing; all I could do was hear Virginia:

‘You so stupid.’ I tried for at least an hour, slowly running over the details. Nothing; just a dead silence, I started to think I had just imagined it. I looked out the window blinds; when had night fallen? I was staring at the street lamp across the street right in front of the neighbor's house. There was a person under it looking at me as the light was falling all about this person. I think it was a woman in long trench coat, I know, I know, I am just reporting what I saw; I am not trying to clean it up. It was a woman in a long tan trench coat like the coats one sees in those old spy movies in the 1940's. She was hugging it to herself to ward off the cold, which is odd because it was in the middle of July and we were full on into that hot Georgia summer. I ran downstairs through the hallway, waking up the dog, who perked up because here I was about to go outside, so he was jumping up to go too. The wife was there on the couch, not quite blurry eyed, but just there on the couch, looking at me like I was crazy.

She had a puzzled look and was about to say something but held it as I was bounding out of the front door. The dog was right on my heels searching for some problem, he had sensed my mood and was doing that little snort like cough bark just before the real thing came out of his throat, his growl was rumbling deep in his chest. I ran out to the front sidewalk that leads to the driveway and this slides down to the street at an angle as the house is on a hill. The light was there and there was nothing, no one was there. It was empty, even the insects and the bats that buzz around the lamp were gone, it was as if the light was a shaft more than just this illumination coming from the bulb. The dog looked up at me expectantly, he wanted to chase something, or at least take a walk. I patted his head and his ears relaxed and rose and relaxed again as he was trying to hear what it was that had me so agitated. I just shook my head, smiled, patted the dog again, went inside, mumbling some explanation to the wife and went back upstairs. I remembered to lock the door though.

I went back upstairs to the studio. I sat down hard on the floor of the studio feeling pretty weird about the whole thing. Even the dog was down there at the foot of the stairs, he never liked the stairs, always seemed scared of them. Now I was wondering if it was Lydia he was scared of. I just stood up then and as the dog was looking at me with the questioning head-cocked-to-the-

side look, I slowly closed the door and walked back to my easel with the painting on it. I had told the wife, I called it 'the lost girl' as she looked awfully sad and lost.

But she was just an outline, but fully formed breasts, so not a little girl. I sat down on the carpet, I had an office chair in front of the easel that I had found and repaired, but chose to sit on the carpet instead. I remember being incredibly tired and laying down on my back staring up at the ceiling noticing the cracks in the plaster. Another chore to do as any homeowner knows there is ALWAYS something to do on a house. I don't know how long it took to fall asleep but I don't think it took very long and then I was deep in the Lydia experience. She was there, drawing up to me as if she was in a boat or on ice skates. I felt her in my head, soft and delicious. She wasn't as much the light as she was part of the light washing over me and as she touched me with those kisses as I felt exquisite gooseflesh. And I didn't have an erection which is strange, it wasn't sexual it was relaxing, like lying in soft grass among flowers by a river looking up at the sky and imagining interesting cloud shapes. And every so often there would be a cool breeze from the chilly river water. She was also at my fingertips, the fingers that I would use to touch her on her beautiful alabaster skin. It was like we were standing together discovering each other, slowly, patiently and curiously touching each other. We looked at each other and she smiled and I knew I was smiling. It's just then that I noticed the rest of the world around us; the sunlight was everywhere, and glinting off her dark hair splendidly. Then I began to feel wetness on my skin and suddenly I imagined us together walking through the softly falling cool summer rain as it soaked us; walking slowly hand in hand I dreamed us in a tent, camping in the mountains.

I can remember when we argued on the facetiousness of it all, that time we ate bread, cheese and rot-gut Thai wine, after we climbed that mountain in Chiang Mai, the one my brother said we couldn't.

And this had put you on the defensive and you were going to climb it, either with me or without me.

We were straining to get to the top, but we were rewarded with that spectacular view. Perhaps it was the exertion, the tiredness, but we held each other at the summit of the mountain on a grassy rock out-cropping.

Suddenly, an eagle appeared, floating on the wind currents, in lazy circles, hunting for mice, I suppose.

I remember thinking this was a metaphor for our relationship, yet was I the eagle and you the wind, or was I the wind and you the bird's wings?

I prefer to think of myself as the wind, lifting you as we glide together.

As we held each other a soft warm rain began to fall, and we ran together towards the campsite provided by the tour agency and fell with abandon inside our tent. Empty, except for a sleeping bag and a heater/light.

The lovemaking that followed surprised even us, as we touched and wove ourselves into a quiet rug of forgetfulness.

Did the earth move as we touched? Or was it just the other hikers on the tour as we slid as quiet as we could, I inside you and within your arms, so warm, sweaty and hot to the touch. Electric dreams flowed from my eyes to yours.

Afterwards, in the silence of the evening, we discussed psycho-chemical drugs and the future of illusion, while listening to Spanish music on the MP3. Our passion rose to the surface of reiterated rebuttal. How can a tent contain this type of passion? My Knight takes your Queen wrapped in spectacular aluminum wording. The wine takes its toll. The dawn comes upon us like a Brass Band in an amphitheater, all notes, meter and horns galore.



I roll over on the mattress, watching you sleep and imagine that I am a mold spore wildly spinning around in the tank of air that permeates the existence of us and this makes me feel sad, and yet the way you look at me in that beautiful way you reserve for your lovers, makes me feel as if you have reserved me for the best and last of your private stock.

The wine-cellar Gods have smiled on us and taken flight and I feel the air between us has become too thick to breathe. I have to get out of the tent or I think my lungs will burst as if I am too far underwater, the surface is too far away, and death is close enough to touch. Yet, all I can think about is you and the way you swayed your hips to that beautiful Spanish music.

I will admit when Lydia first came on the scene, I had trepidation, a certain amount of misgivings, but she came along slowly, sweetly and gently. Sliding over my mind like a warm blanket in the middle of an especially frigid winter. I took some serious stock of my sanity while looking in the mirror, an intense introspection. I was asking myself, what was this presence? Where did it come from, and why did it come to me, an ordinary refrigeration mechanic? So when Lydia first came on the scene, I did what anybody would do in this situation, No I didn't go see a psychiatrist, I went to see a psychic.

There is a place in downtown Atlanta just off the main public transport train station called five points station, called Underground Atlanta. The area has been the hot bed of psychic activity because the area has been there since the civil war, during Sherman's march to the sea and the subsequent burning of Atlanta. I had never thought about seeing a psychic before, because, well, the only thoughts that came to me were thoughts of criminals and scammers. I had heard through a friend of a psychic named Angela, a white woman from Louisiana. I walked down the stairs from the Pryor street entrance, past the long fountains that frame the levels of the stairs, entering the big glass doors. I was about to go right as soon as I went in the glass door, but Lydia whispered in my left ear, and I went left instead. I was immediately struck by how long the underground area was, essentially an underground street lined by lamps, with storefronts, and in the middle of the street were all kinds of kiosks that one encounters in the middle of a mall. The T-shirt maker; Coffee shops; Perfume; etc; and then my eyes adjusted to the gloom, I noticed several tables. I knew she was the one as soon as I saw her, and I could almost hear a sigh of relief from Lydia. At one table was a thin white woman with a paisley patterned sheer dress sitting at a table in front of a big sign that read, PSYCHIC. She had that light, beautiful skin color as if she had been outside, and all the mysticism that surrounded New Orleans was drawn on the sign with moons and stars.

"Take a guess who the psychic is." I said sarcastically, to which I thought I heard some giggling, in the air, but I figured it was from all the tourists that were milling about all over the underground street. I walked up to the lady at the table; she was turning Tarot cards when she looked up and a sudden shocked look came over her face as she looked at my shoulder. Her eyes went wide; bingo, she must be the one, I thought to myself, I heard more giggling, a small, cute tickling in my ears.

Angela stared at me, mutely, never taking her eyes off my shoulder, which was kind of creepy, and then indicated the little plastic chair in front of her over the table. I noticed the table cloth, her dress and the sign had almost the same pattern as if she was one of those people that dress up as a character at one of those huge, famous amusement parks.. I sat down, there were all manner of mildly curious people stopping by to see the psychic and her new mark, and they were tourists, so one couldn't blame them for doing the touristy thing. I have to give it to Angela, because I know she was seeing Lydia hovering over my shoulder and she wasn't really showing

any alarm, just that she was looking all the time at her, alternating between me and Lydia, and finally her eyes settled on me. I just gave her one of my best sheepish smiles.

“So, what can I do for you?” She knew it was a dumb thing to say as soon as she said it, but I think Lydia was kind of cramping her style. Yeah, welcome to my world. I believe I was thinking this, the welcome to my world comment, which earned me a psychic slap in my mind from Lydia. Yeah, she can do that, if she wants to, I feel it like someone slapping my brain; it doesn't really hurt, it certainly feels like a slap, but more of a twinge in my mind, like a sudden itching where a mosquito bites you. I thrust my head forward a little, looking over my right shoulder, my face must have looked annoyed, which kind of broke the ice as Angela put her hand to her mouth and started giggling and I heard Lydia giggling as well.

I sighed irritated, “Yeah, she can do that.”

Apparently, Angela and Lydia hit it right off; I was left in the middle of these two, wondering what to do. And not knowing what to do, I looked off down the street.

Angela thankfully broke the silence between us, no silence around us as the tourists were flocking everywhere. Somewhere down the street I could hear the sound of a saxophone, playing live.

“So, do you want a reading? I mean, I will do it for free.” Coming closer now to me, conspiratorially, “so what's the story of you two?”

I mentally shrugged and mumbling something unintelligible; I was obviously stalling and I could imagine Lydia getting set up for another psychic slap, I said in a rush, “I honestly, don't know, she just showed up one day in my consciousness, and has been there ever since-“Lydia leaned in to my ear, “Tell her about us falling for each other, lover.” Sweet and to the point, my Lydia is.

“I know she said something to you, what did she say?” Angela was leaning forward; she seemed to be interested.

I took a deep breath and plunged right in, telling her everything in a rush, a raging river of feelings and tastiness, the kind that ends up with a razor and my blood leaking out on the table. It took the better part of an hour to get her up to speed without going into too much detail, but enough for a great first taste; and then I stopped, spent, my insides laid bare on the cards in front of us. Even Lydia had stayed quiet the whole time listening intently. She could be silent too, apparently. When I was finished I just stopped, too spent to go on, it was like I had run five miles, I think I was even sweating.

“Wow.” Was all she said; great ANOTHER woman with the gift of understatement. Gee, two birds and all that. Apparently, Lydia let that bit of sarcasm go past, with no psychic slaps. Like I said, she loves me and I love her as well Angela had to work so we left her there with her looking back at us as if after all this time and all this training, she finally sees what she has been waiting for, but it is too scary to contemplate and so she refuses to really see it. It's like as if you were going to church every day studying all the time, and then the angel Gabriel walks into your house and shows you the world of angels. A vindication for all the studying and prayer.

In my research, ALL I could find was the references to evil spirits. I think this is simply people wanting to sell books, because let's face it, sex sells well, and the only other thing that sells as good as sex is evil possession, spirits and ghosts. Which is almost the same as sex, or love and because, let's face it; love is like a type of possession. Just like anyone else confronted with an interesting problem, I researched it, online and in the library. What I came up with is quite a small amount of literature on the subject of benevolent possession. Just search the

internet. Apparently, NO ONE has ever been possessed by a good spirit. Which is strange, considering how much of our common language is full of references to the spiritual. Such as, for example: he's in low spirits; I see you're in high spirits; I don't know what possessed me;; go to hell; The gift was heaven sent; They are a match made in heaven; you're an angel; you're a devil; I'm in heaven; she's in seventh heaven; this is spooky, or eerie; he played like a man possessed; someone just walked over my grave; and the list goes on and on.

And everyone knows words have power, just ask any person who considers themselves as a witch who has weaved a spell; Words like God; Heaven, Hell, Hades, Purgatory, Limbo, black magic; Voodoo; The Devil; black Sabbath; Witchcraft, Spell; Succubus, Incubus, Poltergeist, Sylph, gnome, Vampire, Werewolf, Evil Spirit, Gargoyle, Mischievous Spirit, Demon, Pixie, Fairy, Elf, Troll, Dragon, Satan, Angel, Archangel; Karma, the Great Spirit, Elemental, Spirit Guide; Guardian Angel, Higher-Self; and THIS list goes on and on.

There are so many people who have never been possessed, although this is through no fault of their own. It is a proven fact that a major part of what we know we just don't see or feel. Most of the sensory input that is swirling around us in a normal day is discarded. Yet some people, namely autistic people don't have this ability to block out the universe. Which is why I was in an altered state in most of my early youth; if you see many of the pictures of me as a young kid, I have a faraway look in my eyes as a result of some early stage autism.

Most people go through their lives never knowing the marvelous world that is going on just beyond their fingertips. I on the other hand, like most autistics had an enormous amount of sensory input coming in; it was scary and so I would just blank out, my brain essentially shutting down. But I really didn't shut down, I believe, my brain was processing the vast amount of information that was there, in the background. I was sickly most of the time; I wanted to vomit from the vast amounts of information flowing from the world outside of me. So I retreated inside. One wonders if I lost my mind then.

Some people lose their minds because the universe doesn't show them anything; how many people lose their minds because the universe shows them too much?

Want to really read something weird? Okay, so I am doing my research into the Lydia experience, and I had already figured out that she was in reality from Scandinavia, particularly Sweden and Norway. So I am doing my research into her *presence* and I was led by different pages to the teachings of William James, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century American psychologist and philosopher who described the experience of the sense of presence as

'From the way in which this experience is spoken of by those who have had it, it would appear to be an extremely definite and positive state of mind, coupled with a belief in the reality of its object quite as strong as any direct sensation ever gives. And yet no sensation seems to be connected with it at all. The phenomenon would seem to be due to a pure conception becoming saturated with the sort of stinging urgency which ordinarily only sensations bring.'

Okay? So that sounds a lot like the Lydia experience I described earlier as a soft, sugary kiss. So you're saying, so what? I get it, I did too, until I dug a little deeper into William James and it seems that his father was Henry James Sr. a noted and independently wealthy, wait for it,, Swedenborgian theologian. Okay, SERIOUSLY? Look it up, this is named for a guy from Stockholm, by the name of Emanuel Swedenborg, a man who was a Christian Mystic in the 18<sup>th</sup>

century, who believed he could speak with angels and spirits. And suddenly I get an incredible urge to go to Scandinavia. I told everybody who asked me, that I wanted to get away from the oppressive heat here in Afghanistan, and I am sure that was mostly why I was there, mostly.

Yet, Lydia shows to me as a young twenty-five year old, with long, luscious dark hair and light green eyes. Her skin is white like porcelain. I can see her just there in her long dark dress as she is in 1925. She is a suffragette from Sweden as well as in the USA.

When I was in Norway, I spoke to a wonderful Christian preacher named \_\_\_\_\_, who described the feeling of God and angels speaking as a direct representation in his consciousness, as an actual voice. Large, clear and distinct, and although this voice spoke to him over thirty years ago, he is still deep within its grip. To hear him preach the Christian gospels is to be in the presence of a man you KNOW has been touched by something. Yet, talking to him, even if I had spoken to him before Lydia came along, would not have prepared me for this type of interaction. To feel it there squirming through your consciousness, it's an incredibly scary, wonderful, beautiful almost sexy experience.

This deployment will be over soon, and I will have to go home again, So, am I crazy? Well of course I am; I am crazy for Lydia's Love. Love, which is the most powerful force in the known universe, this one or hers; and not just that elusive feeling that everybody gets when you tell someone,

“Okay, Love ya,”

No, I mean that beautiful, romantic love that makes the time go by so fast when you are with that person you like so much. That Mr. or Mrs. “right” or “right now”, when the night seems too short and the morning comes with a ferocious intensity and you realize with a crushing depression that your time with this person is over. The feeling that is represented classically by fat little children with wings and stringed lyres playing little games all around your head; of course this feeling is an illusion. It is fleeting at best, like the way that first night spun away from you so fast that your head seemed to hurt with the pressure. The Love experience with Lydia is soft, delicate and flows with a sticky maple syrup like movement. But this love is different than the love that may be around me. I haven't had that good of an experience with love in my life. It's been fleeting at best.

Love in the world I inhabit, to me is a sad, grey country, ruled by loveless ruthless brutes; love is a crushed, dead museum. So imagine my surprise when I get this knock on the door of my consciousness by a female presence, this Lydia, making me feel as if I had just awoken from a dream. To feel that she is real is the best and worst feeling for me. The best in that I know she might be real, and the worst is that *I know she might be real*.

Being in Norway and Sweden was an absolutely wonderful experience, one, I'll not soon forget. It is Lydia's homeland, it is her place of first kisses, loves, hates and lovely winter snows. It is also a land of mystical creatures, trolls, fairies and ancient gods. I had been writing and thinking about Lydia for several years now, and so this trip was a culmination of all that pent up research, feelings and writings that have been moving my mind and my hands. While researching this woman, her writing has been beautiful and incredibly flowery; I found this on the horoscope page for last Sunday in the military newspaper, in the horoscope section:

"You'll learn quickly because you are not worried about having to get things right the first time. Nothing is forced. You simply allow your mind to absorb new knowledge."

Now, I have never put much stock in these horoscopes because I thought they were so much for the entertainment value only, but you have to admit, it *is* a little creepy.

This lady was born in Hesse (?), Germany, I believe she died in the early 2000's and she ended up in my mind in 2008, just before I deployed to Iraq, so, she had many years of sad wandering before she came to me, and she finally found a place to settle; to write the things she has been wanting to say for so long, and perhaps couldn't.

There is an incredible yearning there, an intense desire to get this down on paper. I first felt her back 2008, a little as I was drunk at home; I was just a weekend, after-work recreational drinker; I had recovered from a previous deployment to northern Afghanistan two years before, but was on the verge of not being able to cope with the state-side world, I was having a tough time adjusting. At first, I was terrified. I was writing poetry like a demon possessed to the acclaim of many people at the sites I was writing for, drunk and full on into that special, wonderful place where inspiration comes from. But I got to the point where her presence was scaring me. It was there all the time, and yes, I was writing beautiful and gorgeous prose. But still there was a nagging question in my head. Was this real? And so I redeployed to Iraq, partly to get away from the drinking and so I wouldn't feel her again, and also to get the hell back to a place I had grown accustomed to, a place in a war zone, with a country and people that is backward to some, but to me was the very place I needed, Iraq, the cradle of civilization, the history there is staggering, but what really draws me to these places like the Middle East, and Afghanistan is because they are countries and peoples steeped in traditions, romance and magic. Of course, I was also getting away from the drinking and her; so deep was my aversion to her at the moment. I think I even hear her laughing right now.

As for being deployed, one is not allowed to drink alcohol of any kind, no sex, no drugs, and no alcohol, all of those things normal people miss terribly. I didn't miss the alcohol at all if I knew I could get away from her. I ran from her as if I was on fire. I mean the economy was partly to blame with me coming out here again, my wife had just lost her job, again, the family was doing poorly and I just couldn't pay the bills anymore so I decided to be able get away from Lydia and find a way to pay the bills that were mounting up; a two birds with one stone decision.

Unfortunately, I totally underestimated Lydia's persistence. I remember being in Iraq, I had run there to be away from her and the alcohol, searching around for a pen, it was late at night, I was in my room and I was fairly freaking out because I couldn't find a pen, I was like a full-fledged junky so strong was the compulsion to find something to write with. I settled on a cigarette, smoked outside at *three a.m.*, collecting the ashes in my hand and bringing them inside, writing with my finger dragging the ashes across the paper. It was right then that I realized that I was not hallucinating, she was there and she was not going anywhere; so there were two ways I could go; see a therapist and get her out of my head, or enjoy it and roll with it. It was then I realized, this presence is not going anywhere and I better get used to it or get an exorcist. Since then, I have never been without at least two pens, or pencils

There is a feeling I get, when she comes over me, like a washing feeling, she settles down on me and she wants to write. I think she is guiding me somewhere, and I don't know where. I was afraid at first, but frankly when I went to Scandinavia; it was like a freaky kind of homecoming of sorts. I mean I rented a car and there was no time at all when I was lost, not one time. I never

had that crazy, depressed, despondent feeling when you get lost. How creepy is that? Of course, it is an easy country to navigate, so that would be the explanation by the people that may actually read this and think this guy belongs in Bellevue mental hospital. But they weren't there driving that country like I was; they don't have the wonderful sense of security that comes from having a loving entity with you all the time. It is like being bathed in a warm, soft light, all the time. It was a truly magical time. So how do I tell her how I feel? I mean she is in my head so she must know how I feel? Well, it's not quite that simple you see, she has to know that I care about her. Ghosts have a need to know that the living still care about them, that we haven't forgotten them. Their world is so close to ours, they can see us all the time, and yet they cannot interact with us anytime they like, they have to be invited by us. They have to be loved by us, and when they open their eyes, they want to be able to see not the lonely, terrible place that is all around them, they want to feel that wondrous, warm feeling of reacquainting yourself with a person you have lost touch with so many years ago, and then you pick up right where you left off, laughing and reminiscing about the old days.

I see us in a country house by a lake with a dirt road going to it from the main road flanked by ancient poplar and maple trees. It's remote, and when the moon is full on those summer nights when the fireflies are everywhere and the water makes little noises against the boat dock and that sailboat your Uncle gave you when he couldn't handle her anymore before he passed away. She sits there in the water, gently rising and falling with the softly sounding waves.

When the night is close and the humidity is easing from the heat of the day, we sit on the front porch swing on opposite sides with your feet in my lap as I gently caress them. We are in the very swing your uncle built in the year he married your aunt, the year she still remembers sometimes when her mind works correctly and the Alzheimer's has left the building like a drunk Elvis impersonator. We put her upstairs in the guest bedroom to live out her days in the peace of the house her husband built. If she needs to come downstairs, I can carry her frail body easily. We swing slowly back and forth sipping wine. We don't say anything, we don't need to, and we don't even look at each other. All we do is stare out at the lake, with the moon reflecting from the still black waters. Suddenly, I hear your aunt as she is crying feebly out for a husband who isn't there; you kick me playfully with your feet pushing me out of the swing; it's my turn to get Aunt Silvia. I quickly go up the stairs, to sit by her side. She lays there; A tiny representation of who she used to be; the great woman, the life of the society parties, her alabaster skin which used to reflect the flashes of too many cameras, is now grey and stretched thin against her bones, the twin oxygen tubes trail from her nose to a cylinder on a cart beside her bed, just below an IV tree with a bag hanging from it like a forbidden fruit.

Her hair is as thin as cancer patients, her eyes are shut tightly, and she is in the midst of one her more violent attacks of pain. I watch her and slip my hands into hers, beside a plunger and button for the morphine and this little touch serves to calm her, her body relaxes slightly and her eyes start to flutter open and look over at me. She works her mouth in motions trying to say something and suddenly the oxygen moves over her vocal chords again, she asks me in a feeble voice, between raspy intakes of breath; her eyes wide and pleading  
"Are you my son?"

She isn't related to me by blood, she is your aunt. So I say the only thing I can say to an old woman pleading for a son who isn't there:

"Yes, Mama, it's me".

"Good, I don't like that Lydia's husband; he always makes me eat stuff I don't want to eat, huh!" I grin, as if I am an accomplice in a practical joke. Laughing softly, I say,

"I know, Mama, I don't like him either". She squeezes my hand in solidarity, because the best relationships are usually at the expense of someone else. The sleep reclaims your aunt again, and as she turns her head drifting away on a canoe of morphine, she whispers,

"I really do like him, sometimes." I sit with her for a moment longer; I lean over and softly kiss her cheek. I look up and see you leaning against the door frame with your head cocked to one side, wearing that mischievous grin you are almost never without. I see you and I am filled with a spreading warmth, as if I am in a silky hot tub, or flush from a first shot of liquor. It's then I notice the light from the hallway spilling into your hair, giving an impression of a halo and I think to myself, how fitting that you should like an angel. I get up slowly, and quiet as I can, I tiptoe over to the door reaching for the glass of wine you are offering to me. You turn to go without speaking and I follow you, in silence. There is nothing to say. We have said it all before. That's how I would view us in a house in the country.

I feel like I am on a train to somewhere, a beautiful, wonderful train, and I think it will take me to Germany, with a side bar in Scandinavia again. It has been amazing, and a little creepy to find out that she had lived in \_\_\_\_\_, because I used to work for a trucking company that was based in \_\_\_\_\_ straight out of air conditioning school. That was back in 1998, TEN years before I knew her, back in Georgia, when I worked as wrench-turning mechanic. She would have been alive then; funny how these pieces are fitting into a grand and a little scary puzzle. That fragile thing that is the mind, telling us there is a place we belong in the natural order of things.

And much to my wife's dismay, I think Lydia has come to visit permanently; the one woman she can't fight, a ghost of a presence. It's not like I am at a club with a strange woman and my wife can run in, catching us in the act, confronting us like the people in that show on late-night television about cheaters.

And yet my wife has an incredible understanding into the creative process as in through it all, she has been understanding that the creativeness has me fully in its grip and she will never have this and while this serves to make her feel sad, one way, in another way it makes her happy that I can go explore this side of me that is so engrained in me. She is like the woman that is standing on the front porch, telling me to go; with a sadness that she may never see me again, but glad in the fact that my face is so happy how can she stop me? This is why I write with such a tragic pen. It is all I know, and my relationships reflect this tragic aspect. Still want to know me and pursue this crazy, seriously screwed up love triangle? I just wanted to make this clear to you, so you know what you may be getting yourself into, in the interest of full disclosure, I mean.

I have been researching Lydia's origins, from Scandinavia to Minnesota. She was born in or around 1900 and died sometime past 2000. I think she loved and lived her life on her terms. She loved men and women, I feel like she was in love with people of either gender, it didn't matter to her. A sort of Ayn Rand meets Diane Arbus, clothed in a Georgia O'Keeffe. The research was just a diversion really, when I would be sitting alone in my living room, listening to the dog softly snoring in the corner on his little soft bed. The wife would be passed out on the couch, full on in an ocean cruise in her luxury cabin with captain Vodka.

So I was sitting there asking the obvious question: why would she choose me? Who am I? A mechanic, working outside turning wrenches. Not that being a grease monkey is such a bad thing. It does keep you in shape, and the camaraderie in a shop environment is so far and away removed from the office environment as to be like comparing a NASA rocket scientist to an Eskimo from the upper reaches of the Arctic Circle; while they both have an incredible

intelligence into their respective environments in which they exist, if they switched, both would perish. Now I am an environmentalist, a person trying to help clean up Afghanistan, one base at a time. Unfortunately, being an environmentalist, one is bombarded with terrible information that the world is dying at a phenomenal rate and I am afraid that I may have to go live with that Eskimo before it's all over.

The deployment and the subsequent removal of the forces in Iraq called for a massive cleanup operation coordinated between so many companies, and the local people were queuing up in front of the Ministry Of Justice buildings in Baghdad to get part of the billions of dollars that were shelled out by NATO and the World Bank. Since the Afghani's have TV's and watch the news as well; they figure it's their turn to reap the benefits of a rapidly departing military presence. Of course all of this was circulating in my mind as I was thinking that this Lydia thing must just be the sweat, dirt and isolation taking its toll. This is a major thing out here, and the companies know this as well, because they employ counselors, Employee Relations psychologists, etc.

A good friend of mine said rapidly, 'hey man, just go use them, NOW.'

I would but I am afraid to be sent to the crazy house for observation. Yet, this Lydia presence as I like to call it, is interesting, because frankly this is new territory and I have no other way to describe it; it is like Leif Eriksson trying to describe the upper eastern coast of North America. This is just so new, and interesting. When I first began feeling her presence, I was at home, I had a predilection to alcohol; it warmed me and sent me to the place where I wanted to write.

The first time I really wanted the visits was during that time that my wife was a total drunk, an absolute functioning alcoholic and I was her enabler, running to the liquor store whenever I had the chance to get her medicine, and I would always get some for myself as well, just to be able to get into an altered state of consciousness to be able to receive the visits. I was exploring this new and interesting world, and yet like Leif Eriksson must have felt becoming disenchanted with his new found discovery, I found I was moving away from Lydia, for whatever reason,

I found a reason to not pursue her any longer, frankly, I became frightened and put it out of my mind, running away from her until that time at 3 AM in Iraq searching frantically for something to write with, and nourishing this relationship with her as I went to Afghanistan, straight from Iraq. You see, after a while, after I had run from her, I felt her again. In essence, and much to my wife's disappointment, I fell for her again, HARD. She was insistent; like all the sensitive receivers in the world say, ghosts are insistent, some are violent, and some are just persistent. I think Lydia is the latter. I had run from her as fast as I could get away and then she came back into my consciousness, sliding along my nerve endings, tickling my neurons in my brain until I just let go and decided to pursue this again. The most interesting thing now was that I found I didn't need the alcohol or any such external assistance to feel her. Although, I wonder if it would have speeded things up, yet as I plodded along, like a blind person negotiating new surroundings she was patient, and as of now she still is.

Some people would argue that I could have used psilocybin in mushrooms to achieve the same results, but I was afraid of the control factor. I could control the effectiveness of the alcohol and still function. My wife had been fired from her job because of the alcohol, and so her fall to the bottom started with a vengeance all its own, like a runaway train. It was painful to see her like this, but the truth is, I relished it, I may have even contributed to her drunkenness, so I would have some time for Lydia and myself. I'm not proud of it, but how else was I going to explore



this new and interesting world? When she reads this, I am sure she will probably want to divorce me. I have to get this out or I am afraid I will explode with the pressure.

I still see Lydia as when I first really saw her, and felt her. Her hands are like exquisite porcelain, her skin the reflection of utmost care. It was a Sunday, and I'd had quite a few drinks. My wife was already passed out and would be for hours. So I had time to explore and so I think I began to believe I was on speaking terms with Lydia, it's friendlier with her in here, now. I think of her perfume, as it wafts up to my nose in my mind. I smell her perfume right now, as I am writing this, from some deep place inside. I am at the fuels area office in Afghanistan, full of that pungent odor of diesel fuel. But her perfume is lovely, sweet and *physical*. She gets into my head and won't let it go. I am listening to Cuban music on the iPod, and it is so sensual. Ibrahim Ferrer's ancient voice seductively enters the music and slides along with it, like a leaf floating down a shady river on a hot summer's day. Yet the love I have for her, resides in the physical world as well as her world, and as such, we are fated to be forever apart. Like the two statues of lovers that are forever reaching out and just their fingertips are touching for eternity; our love is a tragedy and as such it is beneath us, away from me and I think I have fallen for a woman who isn't there.

A Don Quixote like love that tilts at windmills and has no basis in reality; and yet this is the place I reside, in an alternate reality, forever on the outside looking in at the normal people going about their business and there I am like a hungry, homeless guy standing outside of a classy restaurant watching the rich patrons as they go about their expensive meals. I have been in this alternate world for as long as I can remember, walking outside the place that is called normal. Now, I believe I know why. The marriage that my wife and I have, the union that has been on life support for so long is now destined for a halt; it's time to pull the plug. Lydia is the next step in an evolution that has taken so many years and so much trial and error. She is there motioning for me, and I with my razor in hand, am slicing along my body again, watching the liquid flow out; and yet I find I don't need this life sustaining blood to hold me together; according to her, we have been foretold for centuries. A fantastic love that spans two complete realities, two universes rubbing together slowly merging just in the place that is us; a doorway that opens with the key that is called Love. But as with any other splendid thing in either universe, that which is the most plush, and magnificent, there is always a price. This price is the never ending cycle of us; one half is extreme sadness and one half is extreme bliss.

She has an ancient soul, this Lydia, full of treasured moments both wonderful and sad; a loveliness that is at once old and intensely tragic. She is sweet, patient, kind and loving as only a soul that has been in love for centuries can be. She has a way to make other things seem small, and yet I see her as a writer of beautiful prose, a woman who wanders, within a sphere of intense despondency; and yet she finds her place, within a silent confidence that can build palaces, palaces surrounded by lovely red Chinese lanterns swinging in time with slow Spanish ballads.

I open my eyes and I am in Rome, 45 BC. I am in the forum riding on a chariot through the streets teeming with people in elegant cloth tunics, togas and slaves wrapped in rags. You are standing with me in the chariot; the wind is blowing your hair in your face as you look at all of the people in the streets. There is a frantic activity everywhere, apparently the barbarian Vercingetorix has been captured in Gaul and there is a carnival atmosphere, a nervous energy permeating the whole of the city.

I watch your eyes as they take in everything like a cat watching every little movement, this attention you have is at once, innocent, deadly serious and incredibly sexy. The horses are

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