





scott blum



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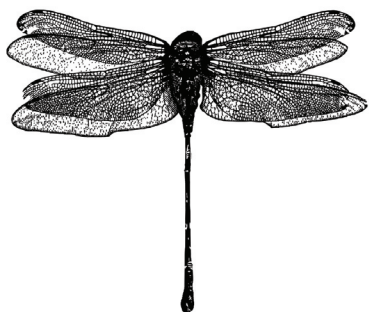
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PREFACE



any people have asked me if the following story is fact or fiction, and I always find that a difficult question to answer. The truth for me is not limited by the physical world, but is instead embodied by energy, floating in the gaps between time and space on that elusive river of intention. And the energy contained in these pages is as real as any light I have seen, song I have heard, or fruit I have tasted. It is true that I have used a fictional thread to stitch these words together into a fabric that is easier to appreciate, and it's also true that many of the events described have actually happened in a

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form most people could relate to. But for me that is of little importance, as the underlying energy is, and has always been, my truth.

I hope you will enjoy reading my truth and will soon be inspired to listen to your own.



CHAPTER ONE



He was the happiest homeless person I had ever seen. His smile was warm and friendly, and his shoulder-length hair matched his matted red beard. Although he seemed to be wearing the same ratty brown clothes from the day before and smelled like he hadn't bathed in a week, something about his water-blue eyes put me at ease.

As I carried my groceries across the Co-op parking lot, I read the hand-lettered cardboard sign he was holding:

Always receive with grace.

His smile widened knowingly as I walked past, and when I looked down, I noticed a small black puppy asleep at his feet. Once I was nearly past him, I whispered to myself, “That’s ironic.”

“What’s ironic?” he asked.

Startled, I took another step, hoping to act like I didn’t hear him.

“What’s ironic?” he repeated.

I stopped and slowly turned around. Embarrassed, I said, “It’s ironic that you’re giving advice on how to receive, when you’re asking for money.”

“I’m not asking for anything,” he smirked. “Right now I’m giving.”

I took the bait without even thinking. “So when are you going to give *me* something?”

“I already have, but you wouldn’t accept it in the manner it was offered.”

“Oh, I think you’re mistaken—you definitely haven’t given me anything. Perhaps you confused me with someone else.”

“No, I didn’t confuse you with anyone else!” He was clearly annoyed. “Please leave now; I’m very busy.”

I looked around and there wasn’t anyone within 100 yards of us.

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“Please leave now,” he repeated and turned away from me.

Embarrassed, I carried my groceries up the hill to my apartment. I didn’t know what I’d said to offend him, but he clearly wasn’t happy with the way I had handled myself.

When I returned to the apartment, I was still profoundly disturbed by what had happened. I tried to shake it off and convince myself that he was probably just confusing me with someone else. I wanted to forget about it and go on with my day, but I simply couldn’t. I didn’t usually care what other people thought of me, but I had a strange connection to him and didn’t want to let it go.

Less than an hour later, I picked up my wallet and made my way back down the hill. I wasn’t sure what I was going to say, but I had to *try*.

I was relieved to see his matted red hair and his small black puppy as I approached the Co-op. As I got closer, I saw that he had a new sign that read:

*I want an orange.
What do you want?*

I smiled and thought that this was a good idea for a peace offering. I went into the store and bought the best navel I could find and picked up a few odds and ends I hadn't had room to carry before.

As I passed through the glass double doors, I tossed him the orange and decided to give it another shot. "Here you go," I said as the orange left my hand.

"Thanks." He smiled, and genuinely seemed grateful for the orange. "That's the best thing that happened to me all day."

His words instantly made me feel much better, and I decided to be a bit playful.

"So you can help me get what I want?" I smirked.

"Of course I can."

"How can you do that?"

"You can manifest anything you want."

"Oh, really? Why don't *you* do it?"

"I do, every day."

"Then why are you still homeless?"

"Why do you think I'm homeless?"

Oh dear, I thought. I would definitely need to watch my words more carefully if I was going to spend more time with him.

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“What do you manifest?” I asked, trying my best to change the subject.

“Today I manifested an orange.”

I laughed. “All you did was write a sign that said you wanted an orange.”

“And you gave me one. So clearly I was successful at manifesting.” He smiled proudly.

“So if I want a million dollars, all I have to do is make a sign that says ‘Give me a million dollars’ and someone will just give it to me?”

“Do you believe that will happen?”

“Of course not! There’s no way some guy is going to see a sign and give me a million bucks!”

“Then you answered your own question.”

“So you agree—you can’t just make anything you want appear out of nowhere.”

“No. I simply agree *you* don’t believe that’s the right way to manifest a million dollars. Manifesting isn’t about making a halfhearted effort and then failing. Manifesting is about aligning your goals and your destiny so they become one. You have to believe without a doubt and act without pause, or else you’re wasting your time. Do you really want a million dollars?”

“Of course I do.”

“I don’t believe you.”

"Why not?"

"Because I have an orange, and it doesn't look like you have anywhere near a million dollars in your pocket."

Perhaps he had a point.

"What do you *really* want?" His eyes felt like they were drilling holes straight through me.

"To be happy," I answered after a long pause.

"Now *that's* something I can help you with. Once you're honest with yourself, you're halfway there.

"I'm Robert," he said with his hand outstretched.

"I'm Scott." I shook his hand.

"Nice to meet you, Scott. And this is my puppy, Don. Come back here tomorrow around the same time, and I'll have something for you."

As I walked away, I was both intrigued by and afraid of how drawn to Robert I was. There was something foreign to me about how open and warm people in Ashland were, and I was still getting used to it. Back in Los Angeles, I had grown comfortable with the blanket of anonymity provided by the city crowds. And when I first discovered how friendly the people were in this small mountain town of southern Oregon, I felt ashamed

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by how closed off I had become over the years and vowed to open back up. In this town, nobody knew how jaded and distrusting I'd been in L.A., and I wanted to reinvent myself as a friendly person who only saw the good in others. It was a great mental exercise and almost immediately began to give me back some of the optimism of my childhood. I decided to hold on to that ideal as I made my way back up the hill and continued to unpack more boxes.



I loved my new apartment, and it was in a great location, only three short blocks from Lithia Park in the northerly hills above downtown Ashland. Tucked between mature oaks on a tree-lined street, the pale yellow duplex was much larger than I was used to and seemed more like a house than an apartment—especially with its huge backyard. The bedroom had a great view, and the apartment was also month-to-month, so if Ashland didn't work out, I could always continue on my journey north and wouldn't be stuck there for more than a month at a time.

A few days earlier I had been on my way to Portland to start my life over after once again losing my job in the coldhearted entertainment industry. Ever since I moved to Los Angeles, a string of bad luck prevented me from keeping a job for more than a few months at a time. There were always budget reasons, but the truth was, I never found a niche in any of the companies I worked at and was always the first to go if times got tough. And because I had a knack for always picking the wrong employer, I would be out of work more often than not.

Finally, I promised myself that if I lost my job again, I would leave the city before my savings dwindled to the point where I would never be able to do so. Luckily, one of the first people I'd met in Los Angeles was a young, ambitious band manager named Clark. He worked at the same record label I did when I first arrived in L.A., and he was always working on a get-rich-quick scheme. We hit it off pretty quickly, but when we met, he was already on his way out. He'd had his fill of the Hollywood scene and decided to move to Portland to start an independent record label to take advantage of the city's burgeoning music scene. He had offered me a job as soon as he got his new company set up in Oregon, and I finally decided to take him up on it

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after I received my most recent two weeks' notice. I just threw everything I could fit into a U-Haul trailer and started driving north. I was gone within a day of losing my job, without even bothering to say goodbye to anyone I knew.

After driving twelve hours straight, I crossed the California-Oregon border, and my old Volvo dramatically died on the Siskiyou mountain pass after a loud explosion and a huge plume of thick black smoke. I should have stopped at a gas station to check my car before starting up the summit, as I was already familiar with how hard the Siskiyoues were on old cars. I'd grown up in a small town in Northern California about fifty miles south of the Oregon border, so I had scaled that very mountain pass many times. However, my family had moved to the Midwest several years before, and all of my old friends were long gone, so there was no reason to stop on my way through. Although in retrospect, double-checking the oil in Yreka would have been a good idea.

Luckily, a highway patrol was just a few miles behind me when my car exploded, and he blocked off the narrow lane it was in until the tow truck arrived. I had my car and trailer towed to the first available mechanic, who was in Ashland. And

when I found out how much it was going to cost to fix the car, I needed to decide if I was going to get a bus ticket to Portland or spend all of my savings to resuscitate my Volvo.

I nearly bought a bus ticket out of Ashland, but something told me I should put off the decision for a few days and just stay put. I hadn't really been attached to Portland as much as I just wanted to get out of L.A. Although I technically already had a job waiting for me up there, I had enough money to support myself for a few months while I tried to find work.

I'd forgotten how much I liked Ashland—it was one of my favorite places from when I was younger. I remembered visiting the idyllic tourist town to go shopping, eat at restaurants, or see an occasional Shakespeare play. The town was beautiful, the air was clean, it had culture, and most important, I simply liked it. I felt *comfortable* in Ashland, and I hadn't felt comfortable in any place (including my own skin) since before I could remember.

After I found myself stranded in Ashland for a few days, life instantly seemed much easier, and I quickly abandoned my original plan and decided to stay in southern Oregon. I was already much happier than I had ever been in L.A., and soon I even

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got used to the idea of living without a car. I'd been on foot the entire time since I had arrived, and it was liberating to be car free after being bound for so many years.



CHAPTER TWO



he next day I woke up on top of the world. I was still shredded from moving and unpacking, but my adrenal reserves kept me mobile, as I was officially living in the most beautiful town I'd ever been in. Since I'd arrived, the weather had been unusually hot and sometimes even rivaled the peak summer temperatures of Southern California. It was a good thing, too, because my wardrobe had diminished to primarily short-sleeve T-shirts, blue jeans, and tennis shoes over the years of working in the casual environment of the entertainment industry. The locals warned me that the temperature would plummet once the seasons changed, and I began

to look forward to it, since I'd been living in a single season for the past several years.

Around the same time as on the previous day, I returned to the Co-op, excited to see what my new friend would have for me. Robert was sitting cross-legged, with his back propped against a conifer and the little black Lab sleeping at his feet. He was still wearing the same ripped brown clothes from the day before, although it looked like he might have found a brush for his hair. As I approached, the puppy opened his eyes to briefly acknowledge my presence, but he quickly squinted them shut and returned to his seemingly perpetual sleep.

"Hi," I said as I walked toward them.

"Hello, Scott." Robert stood up quickly, gathered his belongings, and began to put them in his large canvas bag. He casually tossed the freshly lettered cardboard sign he was holding to the ground.

*There is no difference between
_____ and _____.*

His sign challenged me. I knew I could find a pair that would clearly disprove his apparent premise of equality and started running through

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various odd couples in my mind. Giraffes and alligators. Debutantes and automobiles. Windows and feathers.

I finally said one aloud that was sure to stump him: "Elbows and mushrooms."

"Pardon me?"

"Your sign—there is no difference between elbows and mushrooms," I said smugly.

"I agree." He continued packing. "Of course there's not."

His answer confused me, and as I began to protest, he shook his head as if to say, *Don't bother; you have so much to learn.*

He then slid the sign into his backpack and carefully arranged a family of miscellany within the drawstring bag. He held it out to me and asked, "Do you mind?"

"Sure." I grabbed the cloth bag and slung it over my shoulder, although my ego was still a bit dented from his dismissive response.

"Let's go," he said as he swung the puppy over his shoulder like he was burping a furry baby. The small dog let out a soft whimper of surprise as his underside landed on Robert's shoulder, but his eyelids remained shut, and he quickly returned to his state of indifference.

We walked up the hill to Main Street and turned right at the base of the hill next to the large gray library. I had never been inside the public building before, but its imposing presence confidently presided over the south side of downtown.

“Where are we headed?” I asked.

Robert shot me a sharp glance, making it clear that my question wasn't going to be answered. For a brief moment I wondered if I could trust him, since he seemed to have a habit of being secretive and cryptic on occasion. But the truth was that I felt comfortable when I was around him. It was as if all was as it was supposed to be, and he conveyed a certain childlike innocence that made everything seem okay. Although it didn't make a lot of sense to trust someone so completely whom I'd just met, I decided to write off my apprehension as leftover mistrust from L.A. If I was going to stay in Ashland, I would need to make some friends anyway, so I tried to put the doubts out of my mind and enjoy the day without thinking too much about it.

“Where are you from?” I asked, changing the subject.

“I'm from all over, most recently from Eugene.”

“And what brought you here?”

“I came to meet you, of course.”

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I laughed, not sure if he was joking.

“I travel to wherever I’m needed, and Ashland always seems to have people who are ready to move on to the next level.”

“The next level of what?”

“The next level of consciousness. Because Ashland is in a vortex, it traps people who are on the path. And many, like you, don’t realize they’re on a path until they meet someone like me.”

“Someone like you? What does that mean? You mean there are other people like you?”

“Of course there are other people like me, just as there are other people like you. You are on the verge of a spiritual awakening, and I’m here to help you through it. Thankfully, many people are on their way, now more than ever. It’s finally time for this planet to wake up so we can collectively progress to the next level.”

I didn’t think I was on the verge of a spiritual anything. I simply thought that my car had broken down in a small mountain town, and I was trying to make the best of it with what little money I had. I’d never really thought much about spirituality before, and although my parents had both been brought up in religious families, they decided to raise their kids to be agnostic, so I didn’t have

much experience with such things. And although we celebrated Christmas, it was much more “Santa & Rudolph” than “Jesus & Mary.”

As we continued to walk up into the hills above the town center, I finally realized why Robert was being so nice. He was evidently a religious fanatic trying to convert me.

“So what religion are you?” I thought that it was time to get it out into the open.

“Religion? I’m not religious!” he answered indignantly. “Who said anything about religion? Spirituality and religion are two very different things.”

“Sorry, I just thought—”

“Religion is the *knowledge* of truth,” he interrupted, “and spirituality is the *wisdom* of truth.”

“Are you saying that religious people aren’t spiritual?” I was confused.

“Of course not.” His voice became much softer and more understanding as he explained further: “There are lots of religious people who are very spiritual. Religion is just one of the many paths to spiritual awakening. Memorizing passages, practicing rituals, or studying the science of the universe all do the same thing: they keep the mind

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occupied with knowledge until one has enough life experience to know what to do with it. And that is wisdom. *Wisdom = Knowledge + Experience.*"

"But if religion is the knowledge of truth, how can so many religious books contradict each other?" My agnostic upbringing was starting to show.

"There is a single underlying truth that ties everyone together, whether it's written or not. And although they try, words always fall short of capturing the *essence* of truth, and contradiction is one of their first traps."

I was starting to get dizzy, and I waved for Robert to stop so that I could catch my breath before continuing. I'd thought that I was in pretty good shape, but all those years of sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic had clearly taken their toll.

Robert put the small black puppy down on the sidewalk and continued: "But for those of us who are open to tapping into the wisdom of the universe that already exists, we can embark on the path of truth in much less time."

I resumed walking slowly up the steep hill, and after making sure the puppy was okay, Robert flung the black Lab over his shoulder and effortlessly jogged up the hill to catch up with me.

After letting what he said sink in, I finally asked, "So does that mean *I* can tap into wisdom of the universe?"

"Yes, you can. We all can. The question is: *are you ready to surrender your own experiences to the universe?*" He held my gaze intensely for several seconds, and I looked away.

"That sounds hard," I finally said.

"What's *hard* is fighting against destiny. But that's what making mistakes is for. To learn what is and what isn't your destiny. Do you understand?"

"Yes. No. I don't know." I didn't have any energy to pretend.

"That's what I like about you," he laughed. "Your honesty is refreshing."

I didn't know what to say that would make it any clearer, so I finally asked, "How long have you been helping people with their spiritual awakening?"

"About 1,200 years now."

I nearly tripped on the curb, not sure if I'd heard him right. "You look pretty good for 1,200 years old."

"Very funny. Of course I haven't been in *this* body for 1,200 years. This one is pretty new to me."

"How new?"

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“Just a few weeks now. I got it in Eugene from Don here,” he said, gesturing to his small furry companion, whose eyes were now half open as the puppy’s head bobbed up and down with Robert’s every step.

“Puppy Don gave you the body you’re in now? How did that work?”

“Puppy Don’—I like that.” He smiled. “I’m what they call a *Walk-in*,” he continued. “What that means is, I look for a host body to use whenever my previous body is no longer of service and then use the new one. It’s very similar to what everyone else does before they’re born, but instead of my soul picking a newly conceived body, I pick one that already knows how to walk and talk. It makes it a lot easier to get down to business. After 1,200 years, I don’t need to be a teenager again. That’s too much distraction.”

My head was spinning. I wasn’t sure if I believed him or not, but I had to admit he wasn’t boring.

“And what does Puppy Don have to do with all this?”

“This body I’m in was previously inhabited by Don. Unfortunately, the cancer got to him, and he couldn’t afford the treatment. And since he was so

entrenched in the illusion of modern medicine, he didn't realize he could treat himself. So when he was on his way out, I made a deal with him that I would give him another body and take care of him if I could use his human one."

"So you turned him into a dog?"

"Of course not!" he laughed. "I just gave his soul some options that were most practical, and after some convincing, he selected the body he's in now. I'm not going to be in this body very long, so he needed to pick one that was on the same cycle that I was."

"He needed to live in dog years."

"Exactly."

After scaling the second hill, I was nearly out of breath again and wasn't sure that I could make it up the third. Robert handed me an unopened bottle of water, and I took a sip, which gave me a chance to take in the beautiful vista of the valley. The water was exceptionally refreshing, and looking down the hill, we paused long enough so that I could see the floor of the valley below that seemed to cuddle up to the hills like a hand-woven rug next to a stately stone hearth. There were

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many places I had never been to in Ashland, and I was always taken by the town's beauty when I discovered a new vantage point to view it from.

"Here we are," Robert said when we arrived at the top of the third hill. In front of us was a large cement-covered water reservoir, and to the right the road turned from pavement to dirt and meandered through what seemed to be a horse pasture. I followed Robert off the main road to the left and came to the top of a hidden stairway that had been obscured by several full bushes. We carefully descended the precarious steps into the most magical meadow I had ever seen. Shafts of golden light danced on the moss-covered fallen logs, and the ground was carpeted with a combination of long green grass and the most delicate of ivy.

"This is incredible," I gasped while taking in the magical beauty that appeared to have been lifted from a Maxfield Parrish painting. The light that engulfed the meadow was in constant motion, and the hues of the trees and grasses changed from blue to green to purple to orange and back again.

"Yes, it is. This is the largest fairy meadow in all of Ashland. Be sure to stay on the path as you walk—you don't want to crush anyone's home."

I wasn't sure when he was serious or not, but judging by his wrinkled brow, it didn't *seem* like he was joking.

"You wanted to learn how to gather universal wisdom that already exists, and that is why I brought you here. Nature is filled with *that* very wisdom, and it's all around us every day. There are many wise nature spirits living in this meadow, so it's an easy place to feel the difference between their energy and the energy created by humans. Be very quiet and simply feel their presence."

I sat on a rock adjacent to the path and closed my eyes to see if I could sense what he was talking about. Almost immediately a tingle in my stomach forced an uncontrollable laugh.

"Yes, they're quite playful. And they sure are curious about you! Do you feel that?"

"Um, I think so." I did feel something strange, and *playful* was definitely a good word to describe it. As I opened my eyes, I saw a bright blue dragonfly hovering a few inches in front of my nose, as if to stare directly into my eyes. It sped off as quickly as it had arrived, and then I saw four more, following a triangle path above my head. Within seconds they seemed to multiply into dozens, and less than a minute later there were literally hundreds of

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dragonflies all darting in between the trees, following the same triangular pattern. One at a time, they would hover within inches of my nose until I began to get dizzy.

“Dragonflies!” I was nearly speechless as my heart raced with excitement. I had always been attracted to these graceful creatures, but I had never seen so many in one place.

“Yes, fairy spirits take the form of dragonflies when they want humans to see them. Aren’t they beautiful?”

“There are so many! What are they doing here?”

“Every tree in the forest has a nature spirit to look out for it, and since we’re in the mountains, there are lots of tree fairies to take care of them. Everyone has a job to do on this planet, and that’s theirs. They are lucky: they are born knowing what their destiny is. It’s harder for humans, since the first part of their journey is discovering what they are meant to do.”

After a few hours it began to darken under the tree-lined canopy above the meadow, and the light began to play hide-and-seek with the shadows. The greens and blues turned to browns and purples, and faces in the tree bark emerged and

retreated with every second. The dragonflies flew away to their respective tree houses, and Robert collected Puppy Don, who was fast asleep in the grassy meadow.

Robert quietly gestured for me to follow him, and we made our way to the other side of the meadow, which was still illuminated by twilight. We then came upon a large irrigation ditch with a well-worn walking path along its grassy lip. I could hear that a stream was still flowing even though it was summer, and I was comforted by the soothing water sounds that caressed the rocks and pebbles on its journey through the forest.

“Watch your step,” Robert said as we transitioned onto the side of the culvert. “I have something very special to show you.”

We followed the stream for about ten minutes until we came to an open field just as the night had fully committed to darkness.

“Look at that!” he exclaimed while pointing at the large moon peeking from behind the mountains across the valley. We both sat down in the clearing and watched the silvery moon ascend to illuminate the darkened sky. The moonrise was breathtaking, and I couldn’t remember if I had ever taken the time to *really* watch it before.

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As soon as the silvery orb had fully revealed itself, Robert said, "This is a very special full moon tonight. It's called the Blessing Moon, and it represents the union of the earth and sky. It is traditionally a time to *begin* a spiritual journey, as the power of summer fills nature with fullness and abundance."

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Ready for what?"

"Ready to breathe in the energy of the moon?"

"What does that mean?"

He ignored my question and proceeded to guide me through a series of actions that I reluctantly followed. "First, stand up and bend your knees slightly. Then bend your elbows so your upper arms are perpendicular to your forearms, and raise your hands up on either side of your head with your palms open, facing the moon."

Robert contorted himself while talking, and I mirrored his movements the best I could.

"Good," he continued. "Now lift your head back so your nostrils are aligned with the moon. And squint your eyes so you're looking at it through your eyelashes."

It wasn't the most comfortable position in the world, and my neck and lower back started to ache almost immediately.

“Now breathe in the energy of the moon through your nostrils in long, slow, deep breaths. Hold the energy inside of you for a count of five, and then slowly exhale through your mouth.”

I followed his lead, and after a while I thought I could feel the lunar energy enter my nostrils, travel down my throat, and accumulate in the pit of my stomach. It was a cool, calming feeling; and the more I consumed, the more I felt a reservoir of energy fill my insides. However, my excitement was quickly replaced by a cramping pain in my neck and lower back, and after just a few minutes I had to sit down.

When I glanced over to Robert, I saw that he had placed his right foot on the inside of his left thigh just above the knee and was balancing on one leg. Without moving a muscle he said, “Don’t worry—it takes time for your body to feel comfortable in that position. Even a few deep breaths will give you enough energy to last until the next full moon. I try to breathe in every full moon to give me strength for the month.”

I could see why he would do this regularly and thought that I should try it myself. I felt more powerful than I ever had, and the moon energy felt like it was waiting for me to call on it whenever I needed extra help.

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“The lunar energy in the mountains is much more powerful than in most other places,” he said after a long silence. “The only other place on Earth that has access to really powerful moon energy is in the heart of the desert.”

Robert lowered his leg and opened his bag, which was on the ground next to Puppy Don. He pulled out a small bracelet and handed it to me with both hands while bowing his head. It had several round orange gemstones with silver discs that were sandwiched between white opal-like stones that glimmered in the moonlight.

“I made this for you. It has carnelian to help you speak your truth, moonstone to nurture your intuition, and silver moons to help retain the lunar energy you received tonight. Wear it every day for the next twenty-eight days and you will begin to feel its power. The power of gemstones is one of nature’s gifts. There are many moons of energy already contained in these stones, and you can bring it with you during the daylight hours. However, it’s important to keep the bracelet charged by putting it outside in a dish of saltwater every full moon.”

“I will,” I said as I fastened the bracelet onto my wrist. I’d never worn jewelry before, but for some reason this bracelet felt like it was already a

part of me. It was like a long-lost friend that had just found its way back to my wrist.

After a few more minutes, Robert looked up at the sky and said, "I have to go." He gathered his belongings and picked up Puppy Don, who was still sleeping. "I have a lot to do tonight, and I completely lost track of time. Stay here as long as you want—do you know your way back?"

"I think so, but I'm done." I was starting to get cold, and I was just wearing short sleeves. I hadn't expected to be gone past dark.

"Okay, let's go."

We retraced our steps along the grassy lip of the winding culvert, and the water below reflected the silvery light of the moon. When we finally returned to the meadow, it looked and sounded much different than I remembered. It was as if someone had rearranged all the fallen trees along the path and blotted out key rays of moonlight to deliberately confuse any visitors. I was sure I would have lost my way if I'd been alone.

As we walked, Robert continued to answer my questions.

"How can the full moon give you energy?" I asked.

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“It’s simple. Everything in the universe is merely an exchange of energy. It either helps collect energy or it helps expend energy. The Chinese have called this yin and yang. I assume you are familiar with the yin-yang symbol?”

“Of course. The black-and-white circle thingy.”

“Exactly. Moonlight is filled with yin energy, which is restorative. And during the full moon, the yin energy is at its peak, so it’s much easier to receive and store for later use. On the other side, the sun is filled with yang energy, which gives you the power to express yourself if you have yin energy in reserve. Does that make sense?”

“You mean, the moon fills up your bank account, and the sun helps spend it.”

“That’s a good way to describe it,” he laughed. “What I wanted to show you is that nature can provide you with all the energy you need if you just slow down and let it help you. The moon, the sun, and everything else in nature has been provided by the universe to help us with our earthly needs. Unfortunately, over the past few hundred years, humans have been taught to ignore nature instead of turning to it for help—which is probably at the root of the reason the environment is in the shape it’s in.”

I didn't like to think about environmental issues at all because they were so depressing. And they seemed too big for me to do anything about.

Robert continued and seemed to address my concerns: "Not everyone has to be an activist to make a difference. Just doing what we did tonight can make a huge impact by our becoming part of the cycle of nature and reclaiming what has been ignored. Nature is a living, breathing thing, which is no different from you or me. When we feel loved, we have more energy to heal ourselves when sick. And when we're feeling ignored or unloved, we find it harder to recover from whatever ails us. By celebrating nature's cycles, we show it our love and it can begin to heal itself. It's not the only thing that needs to be done, but it's something we can all do as part of our everyday lives. And with the power of billions of souls on this planet, a massive healing can be done in a relatively short time."

I wasn't convinced that we could solve all the world's problems by simply celebrating nature's cycles. But I could definitely feel the energy of the moon inside me and thought that if it made *me* feel that good, I could probably make another living thing feel good if I tried. I filed that under

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"It couldn't hurt" and vowed to spend a couple minutes every day sending the planet good wishes.

By then we had found our way down the hill and were approaching the town center.

"See you later," Robert said once we reached the bottom of the hill.

"When?" I asked, and instantly felt self-conscious about appearing needy.

"When the moment is right. We now have a connection that doesn't need to rely on archaic measurements of time. When the universe wants us to meet, then we'll meet."

Robert waved goodbye and headed out of town while I walked in the opposite direction toward my apartment. My thoughts were swimming with everything that had happened that day, and I was completely exhausted when I finally arrived at my front door. After climbing into bed and letting myself sink into the silence around me, I was able to feel the moon energy even more so than I had outside. It was still bubbling in the pit of my stomach, and with a smile on my lips, I quickly drifted off to sleep.



CHAPTER THREE



woke up throughout the night and wasn't able to sleep well because of my recurring nightmare. Several years prior, I had been engaged to a girl named Cheryl, and we were to marry in the spring. We'd originally met in high school but didn't begin dating until we left and found ourselves living in the nearby town of Yreka. After rediscovering each other, we had an instant connection, and I always felt lucky to have found true love at such an early age.

Cheryl was short with curly black hair, and had a knack for the culinary arts and making me laugh. After graduating from high school, she immediately found a job as a sous-chef in a popular restaurant

that was favored by the tourists in a nearby town. She became quite successful in a short amount of time and began moonlighting at night to get her own catering business off the ground. On occasion I helped her with the bookkeeping and serving clients during events, and it was our dream to eventually work together full-time once the business could support us.

One of the most prestigious catering jobs we landed was a lawyers' convention at a mountain retreat. It was easily the biggest event we had ever catered, and it was going to give us enough money so that Cheryl could quit her day job and work on the catering business full-time. When the event was less than a week away, I began to get a really bad feeling about it and tried desperately to get her to cancel. Doing so wasn't practical, as the food had already been ordered, and Cheryl was worried that our reputation would be ruined because the lawyers were so connected. The feeling was so strong that I couldn't let it rest, and eventually stopped helping her prepare. We fought about it night and day, and by the time the event came around, we weren't talking to each other and I refused to go.

On the way back from the event around 3 A.M., Cheryl was driving through the mountains and

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a drunk driver swerved into her lane and hit her head-on. She was killed instantly.

Unfortunately, that's not the dream. That part is real.

In the dream, Cheryl pulls herself from the wreckage, her face marred with scratches and her arms covered in blood. Her outstretched hands are cupped in an offering while she slowly walks toward me. She tries to give me something, but I won't allow myself to look at it because whatever she's carrying absolutely terrifies me. There are other people in the dream watching and waiting for my reaction, including my mother, who's holding a baby; a policeman; and a girl from high school who had also been killed in a car accident. As soon as Cheryl gets close enough to touch, I turn from her and run away. That's when I wake up, my heart pounding and the sheets drenched in cold sweat.

I had dreamt the same exact dream nearly every night since she died. Evidently I was going to be haunted for the rest of my life, which served

me right for not going with her that fatal night. I was positive that I could have done something to help her avoid the drunk driver if I hadn't been so headstrong and had agreed to go. Perhaps she was distracted with the radio and I could have watched the road, or maybe I would have swerved differently if I had been driving . . .



I hope you enjoyed reading the first three chapters of *Waiting for Autumn*. If you would like to continue the journey, the full story is available as a hardcover book from your local bookstore, on-line retailer or at my website: **www.scottblum.net**

Thank you for joining me on this very personal journey, and remember to always follow your destiny.

- Scott Blum

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Scott Blum is the co-founder of the popular inspirational website DailyOM (**dailyom.com**). He is also a successful multimedia artist who has collaborated with several popular authors, musicians, and visual artists and has produced many critically acclaimed works, including a series featuring ancient meditation music from around the world. Scott lives in the mountains of Ashland, Oregon, with Madisyn Taylor—his wife, business partner, and soul mate.

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