

EXPLORATION

Open Secrets of the Bible



A novella by C. K. YAP

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1. The resurrection

Sage wore a Seiko Diver. He said it was a Baby MarineMaster. He was dressed in wrap-and-tie fisherman's pants and a bright white cotton Pagoda tee with a button up neck. His eyes were almondish and his hair wrapped back into a bun. He appeared ever youthful as he seemed wise.

The seeker, who was known as Mark where he came from, was middle-aged. He had a slight paunch and soft, clean hands that were used to gentle and delicate work. His receding gray hair was cropped short about his crown and temples. He wore gray sweatpants and a Nike tee shirt in navy.

The seeker asked Sage, "How is a person to be given a new body?"

"I don't know -patently"

"Surely, Sage, this is what happens -the Bible says so"

"If you're asking for my best guess, then it is as Prophet Yeap wrote: thus are the good-hearted and intelligent harvested"

"But Master, you have left out the important part: HOW is it going to happen and how will one look and feel like?"

Sage drew from the Spirit and opined, "Oh, there be a needle so fine, and an end to pleasures, then the meshing of your heart, your mind, with the flux set alight by the Creator draws upon all holiness to bind them into a fresh person"

The seeker stared at Sage, agape, "What is the interpretation of this?"

"Pride -like that of a rich man, or a powerful thinker rich in gifts and talents, abhorrent to predestination and to blessings, is the first barrier to resurrection. If there were but a needle hole's worth of faith in the supernatural, the unseen, the possibility of a deity, could a man be entered and taken up. When called, he must not be indisposed. But every step of the process of rebirth must be answered. Do not say: But I am eating, making love, making money, playing golf. Finally, it is of course impossible to enter a body wholly made, but that that body be still in flux to receive our mind and emotions, whereupon the energies within it and overshadowing it, make it physically whole"

"Will I look like myself?"

"You will look as you SEE yourself"

"And why does a mountain wise man wear a diver's watch, undershirt, and fisherman's pants?"

"That, my student, would be telling"

"How is it that you know pride destroys faith? How is illogicality powerful? Circumspection? The Math of the probable is what you teach, surely"

"Math of the absolute and relative have in common the singularity of existence. Singularity occurs between absolution and relativity. It is a contact point of YES to MAYBE. Nothing with a past, present, and future has a DEFINITELY nor has it a NO"

The seeker shook his head as the Math was difficult.

"Then, my student, tell me where you exist. You know the way, so says the Bible"

"I exist... "

"You exist in pride. It is that which nails your heart and mind to your flesh"

"I see," said the seeker.

"Pride is the flashpoint of conflict between life and death, pain and pleasure, guilt and innocence. Pride is a singularity of existence which blinds a man to other realities. The extinguishing of pride is impossible -it is a death sentence. But where pride

weakens, there is hope that MAYBE can become a YES"

"And this is in the context of times, you say?"

"Everything once alive, not yet disincorporate obeys times. Everyone who did something, is working on his life, and decides: I will carry on, has a past-present-future and an access from MAYBE to YES. In that sense, we know where we are going"

"We are going within where the Kingdom lies?"

"We are going within to escape pride, to thread through the needle's eye"

"What of it that we must be born again -of water and Spirit?"

"Water refers to the waters of Genesis. The waters are the subtle realms which manifest as layers of our souls. We pass through waters and they are within. Spirit is that which is without and waiting for permission to enter through a momentary breakdown of pride"

"So baptism is unnecessary..."

"Even Jesus was baptized"

"What does plain water have to do with soul waters?"

"Are you afraid of water -breathing it? Are you afraid of drinking water -swallowing it? Can you drink water, underwater?"

The seeker looked puzzled.

"Then you are unready for you know not the things of this world, much less the things of heaven. Why do these learnings concern you, then?"

"Because I want to live -forever"

"And you cannot? How do you know?"

"Many do not"

"Many do not care"

"What is the Math of this, then, Master?"

"Learning and applying the knowledge, skill, goes hand in hand. Learning and never reaping is pointless. Scrutinizing knowledge and skill without learning is dangerous"

"What then should a man do?"

"He must be open to possibilities and to the laws and preferences

around him"

"You know the way"

"And so did you, before you were confused"

"What confused me?"

But Sage didn't answer. Upon his lips, a long, drawn-out "OM". His hands rested on his knees, legs folded, and on his wrist, the expensive diver's watch glinted like a jewel, out of place perhaps in the possession of the wise, but tempting to be understood. The lesson was apparently over.

Seeker / Mark bowed in humility. It was up to him to piece together Sage's insights and to practice them. What he didn't tell Sage -that perhaps the wise man already knew, was the purpose he came to the mountain top -it was to escape, maybe find a solution to the end-times sorcery over his otherwise mild suburban life. To find a way to save his friends and family who fell into the trap of the uber witch.

2. The signs of the End

Mark seeker had two children. Eve, the elder, and Mandy. They were both teenagers, and comely as women can be. His wife,

Barbara had died of cancer some years before he retired, and found out about the wise man on the mountain who had the Spirit. Cobbling together his life's savings, Seeker made the journey to the remote mountain retreat with just a backpack and his travel guitar.

"I recall you were divorced"

"Separated -before Barbara passed on. She had custody of our daughters, mainly, by agreement"

"The air must be wearing thin"

Seeker nodded. He quoted from Prophet Yeap:

"Why do eyes never touch -those windows of the soul that share so much, but ears brush against one another in search of neck, and mouths press together in search of permission, fingers locked not from doing harm in pursuit of such, but to milk every last drop of it, selfishly, in forced reciprocation."

"That which God has joined, let not men separate," said Sage in reply, "but is this your true intention, this morning's climb?"

"Barbara wanted to know about the end times. She wanted surety she would be with the Lord when she passed on. That we would both be forgiven, that our kids would be saved. It was before I

knew you, Master. Could you tell us, in the modern context, what the signs of the end of the age are? I'm sure she's listening, waiting for her new body. Are we then close to the 6th Seal breaking?"

Sage frowned. There was something amiss. Maybe the air WAS getting thinner. But a man like Seeker effectively divorcing his ill, loving wife -the plot began to thicken. Still, Sage was compelled to tell his vision of the future troubles and to explain, in logic, its rationale.

"Let's take a walk," in the back of his head, the wise man heard Jesus' words, "no sign shall be given his adulterous generation but the sign of Jonah. But was Jesus just referring to the Israelis?"

"I've heard that AI will pave the way for the rise of the Antichrist -the little horn," Seeker offered, walking beside Sage who was gazing at his slowly stepping feet, hands behind his back.

"And I've read that Francis is the last Pope. Also that no Jesuit Pope is counted in the prophecy of Malachi. Sources need to be confirmed by logic"

"I used to work in big tech. They say AI could take over the world, bring an end to money, the paper chase, the rat race, ailments, suffering..."

"And I've been living on this remote mountaintop, gathering

berries. You see, the Bible is NOT, as Prophet Yeap terms it, 'a concise history of the future'. Nothing can tell you exactly when to spring plans or make reparations except your own heart. The Bible is a manual of the heart. When you understand this, you will find peace and your own personal signs. And yes, AI may be a sign -not to us, but maybe to corporate bigwigs and government officials with clearance to the UFO files. But all that is conjecture to the man on the street"

"But-"

"Signs come the more you worship with love, not the less you show it"

"I see," said seeker.

Mark thought about what Sage had said as the wise man plucked mulberries for his lunch, humming a Sanskrit sutra. It had been a rough and hectic 6 years since Barbara underwent chemotherapy and the arguments over money caused their breakup. The daughters felt it hard and he was somewhat guilty when he regained custody over them after his wife died.

"It wasn't a surprise to me when Kamala took over the presidential race from Joe Biden. God showed me," said Sage, "perhaps because I have something to do for Him, not so much as a timeframe for relieving my personal worries"

"There will be a long range strike that targets 3 Arab nations shortly after 2024 or circa the presidential swearing in of Kamala, which may then be aborted, leaving the US with no leader for a time"

"The end of all these things is latest to be in the Chinese zodiac pig year, 2031, also when Fruit of the Loom was founded, which makes 2024-2025 a prime candidate for the 70th week of Daniel"

The seeker bowed humbly. Sage was indeed Spirit blessed. They sat in the pavilion and shared the small handful of berries, mixed with home-made sour cream and shortbread.

"Money is about to get tighter if that comes as no surprise. Only when the financial system over the world is crushed, will AI complete its rise. When AI delivers on its lofty promises, people in power will see God's truth, and so will the grassroots believe. If I may speculate Mathematically, around that time, the temple to Yahweh will be rebuilt and the Antichrist take his throne there"

"If you think about it, the Antichrist should logically be the end times messiah of Judaism -the same people who rejected Jesus. The False Prophet will be the messiah of Islam, and the Beast whose number is 666 will be a Christian monetary entity in guise of charitability and spirituality"

Mark wrote all this down. And as the sun began to set, he strummed on his travel guitar, a song written by Prophet Yeap:

*"I've often looked up at the yellow cheese,
In its sky of midnight blue..."*

"When do the Sun and Moon not give their light? Will there be Rapture on a day of an eclipse?"

"Common misconception," said Sage, "the Moon is bright because it reflects the sun, while a solar eclipse would not be visible ALL around the world. So that rules out a simple astronomical explanation"

"A dull red moon would indicate the Sun has cooled and is giving off red light -that it may have undergone a change of magnetic field and is expanding. This would explain the turbulent weather circa the breaking of the 6th Seal"

"What about the falling stars?"

"Stars do not fall, meteors and comets do. For a star to actually fall, being many lightyears away, it would have to accelerate at a phenomenal speed which is impossible. If the Earth were to be tilted instead, that might explain the 'great earthquake' thus occurring. That both the Earth and the Sun are so affected is a clue to the timing of this event"

Then seeker said, "I have a sign myself. It concerns the Chinese animal zodiac and songwriting. It seems to point to the end of the 70th week in 2031 at the latest"

"That would make 2024 the year of the Rapture?"

"Perhaps. According to the Analects of Elder Brother Yeap (ABY), it may fall on the 28th to 30th of December 2024"

"Most of the important educational events in my life fell on Pig years, 1983 when I started school, 1995 when I entered university abroad, 2007 suffered a stroke, 2019 out of rehab," he plucked at the strings of his guitar, "since I dropped out of university, I took up writing songs and working odd jobs. 2000 was when I started composing for piano, 2012 when I began to sing with guitar, 2024, when I hit my stride and wrote a hit, 'Evermore'. These were all on Dragon years, my birth sign"

"I saw, in a dream -no, more like a VISION, a cross that was also a mic stand, T-shaped. On one end, a straw hat pinned with a Scout badge: 'Baden Powell, be prepared'. I also saw a bow and 3 arrows hanging just off the middle pole, a Palestinian shemagh, a Sri Lankan sarong, and the last part -at the other end of the crossbar, a wet Fruit of the Loom tee shirt in charcoal gray"

"Fruit of the Loom and music? Let us have all of it"

"FotL was founded in 1851. Guess what animal year that is?"

"Pig," said Sage enthusiastically, beginning to understand.

"They were founded on Rhode Island"

"Rode is an Australian microphone maker"

"Yes, but it gets better. FotL HQ is now in Bowling Green. Bowling Green was the name of my university square"

"What a coincidence!"

"So from 2024 to 2031 is 7 years -a week. God is saying this is as far as it goes"

"And you mentioned some dates for the pre-Tribulation Rapture hypothesis?"

"Yes, According to the Prophet Yeap, December 2024 contains the number sequence 28, 29, 30 which are 4c, 5c, and 6c in the ABY. 4c is a Trigram standing for uncertainty, 5c for immovability, 6c for nourishment and caretaking. They are respectively about stolen love; growing in responsibility; humility and repentance. They are also to do with Judaism, Islam, and Christianity and the songs Jack and Diane, Father and Son, and Tears in Heaven"

"My friend, that is truly a sign -for you, for us all"

The seeker smiled ear to ear, "Can you tell me more about it?"

"Obviously, you are to glorify the Lord in song. You are his David of the end-times"

"And what of yourself, Master?"

But Sage was busy thumb typing to his chat group. Seeker looked away, out across the mist-shrouded hills of the tropical highlands. He thought of his friend, Claire back home. A single mother in financial trouble and reached for his mobile as well.

3. Money, so evil

Mark admired watches but he never had the blood to own a good one. All he had was a Timex, upgraded once to a solar charging model. That was after he retired, in case he ever forgot to change the battery.

He wondered about Sage. A man so humbly dedicated to truth and Spirit, wearing that \$1000 automatic. Granted there were ones far more expensive, still, such a luxury seemed out of place for a holy man.

"What is money, Master -to you, if I may ask?"

"Money is like the rain, like the spreading sweet potato leaves, like soup made with odds and ends, like the cry of a baby"

"But I thought money was something rare and precious"

"Then you have been deceived. Even the ever-rolling waves upon the ocean and its winds are money worth more than the gold in the hulls of treasure ships"

"Money is like lotion. It prevents what is truly precious from being dried up in the sun. Money is like a layer of oil on top of water in a jug. It can be thick but the water underneath sees it not until the jug is wider -widened into a basin, then the excess of oil is felt. The spreading of the once-thick layer of oil causes the basin to want to deepen itself, to hold more water. And so the urge to widen the basin comes again, requiring more oil be generated"

"The oil and water -they never mix, nor hold onto one another. When the basin is wide and deep, it attracts excess oil from more slender jugs, content to provide. Then the water deeper in these narrower vessels desires to merge with the water in the basin -for a better quality of life"

"When a new technology is discovered, or resource opened, a new

jug is created with a little water, per capita more than sufficient oil"

The seeker scratched his head, "Isn't money the root of all evil?"

"Money is what is stopping the whole world from receiving Spirit. In a sense, it's like that layer of oil on top of the water -which represents people and their doings"

"But money is a necessity"

"No, money is POWER's necessity"

"And what is the power you speak of?"

"In essence, it is sex and the furthering of man's generations"

Sage looked down into his lap and the seeker did the same. As they contemplated their navels, Mark piped up, "I have a friend I sometimes lie with -Claire"

"And?"

"She got me through the tough times when Barbara was very ill and needed constant care. Eve and Mandy loved her. I was wondering if what I did was wrong with respect to sex-power-money -the jug of water and oil"

"Your ex-wife had become a hole in your heart as well as your wallet. The fact that she wanted custody of the children was a blow against your generations"

"Such a situation cannot be remedied though many do try, and fall into debt, fall out with one another in exchanges of harsh words. Perhaps now, Mark, you see that money -that layer of oil over your marriage which was being stretched thin by the expanding bubble of your ill partner and her ever-increasing needs, forced you into a new part of the jug -you separated and took someone else for comfort -for power"

The seeker's jaw dropped. Sage was indeed wise.

"Seek what is within you and you will always have money"

"Master, it's time I told you about my true problem: I have been followed by a coven of witches for the past 13 years. Barbara fought them and paid the price, while I scrambled to earn enough for our daughters' future and for her treatments. We were backs against the wall every day. But it was an adventure. We had one another and friends, like Claire. Is money what these people were after? I offered them cash all the time -to leave us alone"

"God's power is true wealth. A witch's power is man's love of money. You can love money when you amass a lot of it or are in

need of more than you can earn. Always seek to please the inner man -the Spirit, and money will trouble you less, so the witches will leave you alone"

Seeker bowed his head. Tears welled in his eyes. The trip to the tropical highlands had drained his already precarious finances. And to be told such wise things -so much, so late in the day.

Sage laid hands upon Mark Seeker and blessed him.

"See, your woman friend is on her way here, I can see her packing. Let us continue when she arrives"

Mark's messenger app started beeping and he answered it enthusiastically.

* * *

Claire was an athlete in college, narrowly missing the chance of a spot in the Beijing Olympics. Super capable, she gathered Eve and Mandy after reading Mark's ever more intriguing texts, saying he must be going mad. The 3 women hopped on a jet to the heart of the Spice Isles to take a short, much needed vacation and persuade him to come home.

"How many steps are there up our mountain?" Sage asked.

"I counted about 5000 as I came up. Was bored, feeling a bit mindless from deciding so quickly to come here"

"Because there are 3 women coming up now. They have just crossed the rope bridge across the gorge"

"That must be Claire and Eve -and Mandy!"

"Eve is about to be given away"

"Oh..."

"You've been up here a longer than you realize"

"And Mandy has started college. She works part time delivering cookies and cakes"

"What about Claire?"

"She's retired and set up her own business managing migrant workers -the woman is a godsend"

The seeker hugged his backpack like a child. He wondered how Sage knew.

"What your 3 women have done is earn money the right way. Claire manages people desperate for bare necessities. She's

effectively running a pay-for-itself soup kitchen. Contact with needy people who are different is a thumb in the gravy boat. I bet you miss turkey drippings over baked potatoes left over after Christmas dinner"

Mark chuckled. He did like leftovers steeping in tasty gravy.

"Would you cook Christmas dinner if you felt sad?"

"I guess not"

"Even if everyone was hungry?"

Seeker broke down. Tears staining his cheeks.

"I had that one chance -to make Barbara happy. And it was so easy. I had to trust in God. Do the right thing. But it was always money, easy money, dirty money. I gave up on Barbara and her neverending demands and expenses and took Claire for comfort. Smart and resourceful, resilient.

"Would you rather your wife not complain?"

"No. I know how hard it is to be steadily losing health. Especially after my stroke"

"Did you complain to her?"

"Actually, I hid my condition but I think she found out I had gone wonky. It took some weeks before I was able to recall stuff on the fly, carry on a long conversation, things like that"

"And if she hid her condition, would that be right?"

"I WOULD -just crawl away somewhere and drink myself silly, and die, I guess"

"And you say you wanted to earn clean money, to show unconditional love"

"Yes..."

"Have you ever played the stock exchange?"

"No"

"Life co-equal with money, if you imagine money as a wart on God's plan for our salvation, is a lot like buying and selling futures. Everything you do causes dips and rises. People believe in your trade or go against it. Someone starts a rally and you join in. You need to hold and release -somewhere, anywhere. It's desperate when capital is tied to our every move"

"You have to be moral, loyal?"

"You have to be IN the moment when there is a choice, a watershed, an opportunity. Listen to yourself, you love Barbara especially for giving you your beautiful daughters. That is money from God. She fell ill and both of you moved apart. That is opportunity for investment. She became annoying and you left. That is a short sell in God's books. You would not disclose information about your health or complain, out of fear of losing power. That is a liability -one of trust, leadership, thus financial growth"

"And you say evil preys on you and your family. Do not place money co-equal with God, with your worship. It is just the opportunity they are waiting for, and probably the reason Barbara fell ill and you had a stroke prior. Do you STILL want to live on leftovers from someone else's Christmas roast?"

Seeker strummed his small guitar. He bet the world on his music, safe with his new squeeze, nevermind God and His purpose, he would eventually make a living from songs like this one,

*"I've touched her face in her dreams,
Climbed the gates of her heart,
Her heart -evermore,
I would leave you never,
Be in your arms forever -EVERMORE..."*

At that time, Claire, Eve, and Mandy came to be standing behind him. They heard the words he had written for Barbara and remembered the promise he had broken despite the beauty of his composition.

"Mark, who is this man?" Asked Claire.

"OH, Claire -this is Sage who's been advising me"

"Well he may be a wise man but it's time we had a talk over your losing it. We're going to have a good time and then go home, okay?"

Sage nodded his way and they left the meditation hall. Mark looked back at the wise man who was fiddling with his expensive tool watch. He wanted to call Sage a hypocrite. Everyone believed in money. It had cost a ton to come see him, and there was nothing the 'wise' man could fix.

As they left the hall with its tatami mats and urns, there was a saying of Prophet Yeap hung over the exit, "It is ONLY the wise who are tempted. The others ARE temptations as they are forgiven"

Mandy noticed it and translated it with her iPhone's camera. She kept it to herself, and affirmed she would talk privately with Sage.

4. God's desire for our worship

"So this is where you sleep?"

"It's not much but it's home"

"Mark, you're not Buddha!"

The room was small, with unfinished, lumpy gray walls and a basin of water on a simple table under which he had stuffed his possessions. There was a tatami mat on the floor by a high window that looked punched out, unadorned.

"He who loves his wife loves himself"

Claire stripped off her clothes roughly in the fading light of evening. Her loosened breasts bouncing against each other. It was a pleasant sight. Then between her muscular thighs, a perfumed bloom of rose petals against waxed skin. She flung her hair over to her right shoulder and they made love behind a curtain of shiny stone beads. Eve looked to Mandy but her sister wasn't there.

Sage was eating a dinner of highland bitter gourd, cooked soft in a mix of cream, herbs and spices.

Mandy kneeled before the wise man and asked, "Will you talk

with me, Master?"

"Certainly"

"Why did my father come here?"

"He wanted to learn the true purpose of life -as most do"

"And what is the purpose of life?"

"Worship. There is no purpose to anything not built for its purpose"

"What does that mean?"

"If you COULD not succeed there is no need to try. IF you could, then it is a worship. There is no higher purpose"

Mandy thought for a moment. This mumbo jumbo was what her father came all the way to listen to.

"We're Christian," she confessed, "but lately it's been hard to obey the gospel"

"Obeying gospel is not a worship"

"Surely it is!"

"Life within the bounds of law is not worship. Can you obey every law? You have just confessed to the negative. Laws are not a requisite of worship"

"Gospel is the opposite of the Law"

"Then why 'obey' it -obey anything? Be free!"

"I guess I asked for it," she shrugged, somewhat deflated, "maybe I used the wrong words"

Sage breathed heavily as he pushed away his mostly empty bowl of vegetables.

"I didn't mean to attack your faith through elaborating on definitions"

She pressed herself into the wise man's chest as her eyes searched his meanings. He knew what she was doing and stroked her scarlet locks which were like roughly woven slub.

Then the sun set on their first day at the mountaintop temple.

* * *

"...the Messiah shall be cut off and have nothing..."

Mark woke from a deep and rejuvenating sleep to find Claire by his side and Eve on his other side, sleeping like a pile of dogs against the cold. But where was Mandy?

The women were awakened by Mark getting up. They got dressed hurriedly and made their way to the meditation hall.

"There is breakfast. It's free but you have to help and there isn't much. Learn to eat less"

"Eat less? Do you often go hungry, Dad?"

"No, for man does not live by bread alone," Mark quoted.

"Please let's go home," said Claire.

"Tell that to my heart"

"Why are men so stubborn?"

Eve hugged Claire as Mark the seeker strode forth purposefully to meet Sage like he did, every morning. After all, there wasn't anyone else that needed his time -apparently, so far. He thought it suspicious and maybe that his importance was overinflated.

Meanwhile Mandy had fallen asleep by the feet of the sage. A

picture of mind over matter, spirit over flesh, the wise man needed no blanket or pillow but was perfectly suited to the hardwood flooring. Some of it must have rubbed off on the young woman who happily followed suit.

Sage was showing Mandy how to cook and press hill slope rice dumplings as Mark and his 2 women arrived.

"Master, I'm sorry for what happened yesterday -with my girls"

"If you're leaving it's okay. Remember to think logically. Logic is not gold buried deep or reconstituted from stream sand, but clay on the surface waiting to be shaped and fire set"

"The feet of the man of metal shown to Daniel were clay and iron while its head was gold. It should be the other way around. In fact, before you leave, I have to wash those diligent feet. Don't say no, there is a God. The wise all know it"

"Mandy, where were you all night?"

"Here, sleeping on the tatami"

"Well, alright," said the seeker.

"In fact Sage and I were talking about worship. It's not what most people think"

"Worship is neither obedience to law or person, nor a posture of the form, not state of heart and mind. It is not an acquiescence to be ruled over, nor permission given to rule"

"I foreknew all your hearts and that they would bring you here eventually"

"How?"

"Facebook AI"

"You can't be serious," Claire exclaimed.

"I also know that Eve has cancer, same as her Mother"

Eve looked nervous. She had had irregular periods for some time which were especially painful.

"I see it through her aura. It isn't a rainbow of hues but an inner glow. You can see it if you are attuned. Attunement is THE state of worship God desires"

"So all the rest of it is a lie?"

"No, it is there to encourage attunement"

"*Uhh* is there nothing you have no reply for?"

"Claire, God alone is my strength"

"Are you Gabriel?"

"No, my student but he is near, as is Jesus. I had both of them from birth. It was a consequence of the fight we are both in -the you know who's"

All of them nodded.

"Can attunement cure a person?" Asked Eve, hopeful.

"Can you throw money at a medical condition?"

"Of course, Master"

"Then will you get well?"

"It depends..."

"The 'depends' is not attunement, young one. It is POWER and you know not to mention it. Not much, nor in passing at any rate. For even Jesus prayed and was denied"

"You must have power, surely," said Mark Seeker.

"All power is borrowed power, and its fee is sacrifice"

"Heal me, Master, I know you know how," Eve fell at Sage's feet.

"Then be staying with me on this mountaintop for the remainder of your summer"

Everyone wanted to ask Sage questions after he spoke with such authority.

*"I lay her down by the reeds by the rushes,
And the water so blue,
All the books that she read for the summer,
Down by the water..."*

There was a cave across the gorge opposite from the rope bridge crossing. It was hidden behind a waterfall, and faced west, towards the setting sun.

"This isn't an adventure story waterfall," shouted Sage, above the roar of the plunging water whose depths were shrouded in mist and spray.

"Down you go," he hollered.

Eve grabbed Claire's arm and stared into her eyes. Claire nodded.

Mandy and Mark were already climbing down, down to where the cave was supposedly hidden.

"I hope Sage knows where it is," thought Claire. She stuck her hand into the plummeting water and it was promptly swept out.

"Further down," Sage signaled.

As they reached a ledge, broad, the wise man stopped them, "Enter here," he gestured.

The roar of the curtain of falling water set their hearts beating faster. Mark ducked in first, then Mandy, Eve, finally Claire.

"They knew to bow," Sage smiled humbly.

On the other side of the falls, the four (new) seekers were in near pitch black, wet, cold and afraid. Puzzled that the breaching was far milder than expected. Claire stuck her hand into the falling water but this time, the force was stronger. They could not get out again.

"Master," they screamed, "Master!"

But there was no reply.

"Just be patient," said Mark Seeker.

But the dank conditions in the lightless cave, the wall of water, took over all of his senses.

Just as they had lost all hope, the sun came streaming in. There, on the cave walls, were inscribed the various methods monks had used to enter and exit the cave via the perilous falls.

The last one was implemented -it must have succeeded. A young, enterprising monk had tied a small boulder with cable and hung it by the cave mouth. There were stirrups for one's feet under the shield of the rock.

Mark crouched, head under the boulder. Claire pushed on the rock and slowly it began to gain momentum. The last push sent it out. It swung in again and she caught it, "Who's next?"

After everyone had exited, Claire tried to leave too, only the rock was too heavy to be shoved by feet alone. She was stuck in the cave. But Sage entered (inexplicably) and pushed her out. How the wise man came to be sitting in the pavilion ahead of them was no surprise. Everyone kowtowed to the Master.

"Power is sacrifice"

They understood now.

"Power is in the Messiah," he looked around and knew their muscles were aching and raw, and their hearts were pumping a different blood, "you have all been baptized and are attuned"

Master stared at Eve. The pains in her abdomen had gone away. He nodded at her and she nodded back.

That night, they made a vow to stay on -to finish this training in wisdom. Eve had her period and it was normal for once. Claire snuggled up to Mark under the blanket and Mandy helped Sage in the meditation room, scrub the flooring and clean the mats.

Not so secretly, she wanted to bear his child.

5. Original sin, Babylon

*"Then the wind blew,
Through our disguises,
Remnants of the gods of the fallen sky..."*

"Is it in your psyche to be slaved?" Asked Sage.

"It is," volunteered Mandy.

"Would you feel bad taking a slave?"

"Yes," all replied without hesitation.

"Then," said Sage, "WHAT can you be made up of but sheer evil?"

They understood what the wise teacher was implying. They were pretending to be good but on the inside were something else: dark and contradictory to their pleasant appearances and manners. A thing everyone knew to hide or try to banish, with mixed sincerity, thus guilt.

"This slave system over us," declared Sage, "we term BABYLON"

"To be evil-natured as we are would have led us all to spiritual death and an afterlife of servitude to harsh alien masters. The human condition is a delicate balance between appeasing others and (thus) quashing urges of hurting them. When the system goes awry, we become manic, depressed, anti-social, suicidal. Why does a race so beautiful have basic weaknesses? We were genetically engineered as slave labor by an irresponsible race of gods but were snatched from them by Yahweh and provided a messiah -a way to Heaven. This SHOULD make our true natures glaringly obvious."

"When I feel like loving someone -is that evil deep inside?"

"The love we experience, the peace of heart, the brotherhood of friends, intimate family relations, are all an illusion of Satan.

Should we behave like the Jews? A race that accepts the crude and cruel way they were made and selected to rule, openly declaring and practicing the nature of these imperfect forms our souls inhabit, guided by their all-encompassing law so much as to abhor all non-Jews and their ways, calling us by a singular term: gentiles"

"Christ was put to death by the Jewish law-givers collaborating with Pilate. Why not kill the Son of God himself -the ultimate message to Yahweh -you, God, have failed! Like a lamb to the slaughter he went, and as basic as people come, those who needed the Lord were THEMSELVES needy, imperfect. In essence, I am trying to tell you: do not be bashful, nor be proud of yourselves. God hates the self-righteous -the liars, the inwardly deceived"

The 4 seekers listened as Sage opened up their minds to the reality that they had been living under the thumb of evil archons in the astral, and their progeny, underground and undersea.

"You have been redeemed not by your own power, and sin no less because you were redeemed. There are no additional burdens on the human psyche than to HONESTLY feel the need for the savior of the Most High. That is all the faith he expects"

Sage laid hands on the group, one at a time. They could feel their attunements mesh through the great love of God for His only son. Mark the seeker purged his mind of how beautiful he was, and at once, was entered by the Spirit. He didn't care how he appeared to

God and his doubts were doubts of his own abilities, not doubts of God's authenticity reflected off his behavior and motivations deep inside. The man he was, died that day in shame, guilt, and was reborn, simply no longer a liar.

Their transformation was complete, simply a matter of affixing a best-before label to their souls. Nothing supernatural, no sealing, no transfiguration. They understood that the ways of the Father were plain as were the ways man could please Him in worship.

When the old way was discarded, it was by epiphany, not by works, deeds, obeying more principles, truths. Then Mark said, "Tell us about the gods who gave us 'original sin'. How does it mesh with the creation account of Genesis?"

"Now the Earth had become waste and wild"

"There were in fact three forces of creation, coming with three different objectives, and they all met on the plains of Sumeria, which eventually gave rise to Babylon -the world's first beast empire, the head of man's endeavors, our 'golden age'. The three forces were: the Annunaki (the gods of dying Nibiru), Yahweh (the alien chief scientist), and Lucifer (the angel of light / truth)"

"Search your hearts and your memory -these facts are common knowledge obscured from you by Babylon and glossed over by the intellectual euphemism: original sin"

"The Annunaki claim to be the gods of Babylon -the gods of creation. And they are the ones who describe it in greatest detail. They did not hide from the Babylonians, their true natures: slave labor."

"Yahweh on the other hand, makes extravagant claims to creating the 'heavens and the earth', as if creation were a supernatural process, and to have created man first, in Eden, which is a place in Sumeria"

"Lucifer, said to be fallen, was cast out of Heaven for providing know-how to both parties that aided the creation of man -from whom he knew would come the Word incarnate and the Most High God. He was proven right in the end, albeit a perilously long and twisty end"

"Original sin comes as a consequence of these three powers conflicting over us, not that Adam and Eve made a mistake, innocently trying to become God"

"Light came from Lucifer, Darkness, from the Annunaki, Flux came from Yahweh, and is the reason we know good and evil and yet are not physically impaired in the moment"

"The eating of the 'apple' was like the crucifixion of Christ -it symbolized our genetic heritage coming of age"

Sage looked at the 4 seekers sitting fixated on him. Nobody had explained the Bible quite so fluently and with Spirit as the wise man had done. Prophet Yeap would have been proud.

"Through the 3-line trigrams and the Yin Yang, the birth of the universe and its God is explained, and all things earthly might be divined as permutations of light, dark, and flux."

Then Sage assumed the meditation posture with his eyes shut, drifting over water after water. His lips trailing a drawn out "OM". The 4 seekers bowed and left the hall.

"I feel so clean," said Eve, "Don't you?"

"Yes," the rest replied.

"Chinese magic is the most simple, the most miraculous, so said Prophet Yeap"

"Who is Prophet Yeap?" Claire asked Mark.

"A man of faith who rose up during a darker time and laid the foundation for telepathic conduct. He died trying to suppress the uber witches who were a deadly mix of pain-givers and blackmailers, spies and corrupters of young ones -babies, toddlers, even older children. He never saw the day the gospel was proven.

We did. God rest his sacrificing soul"

"I'm going to help in the kitchen if that's okay, Dad," said Mandy. Secretly, she wanted to spend time with Sage. How old was he? And where did he come from? Who was prophet Yeap?

Eve retreated to text her husband to be. Did he want to hold the wedding on the mountaintop where so much was happening? She told him how her cancer had been healed by her own body rejecting its lies.

"Come and meet our teacher," she messaged, lingering in the tree tomato orchard.

Claire and Mark Seeker walked on, unaware their new peace would soon come under strike from out of the mindspaces.

From honed attunement, Sage noticed a frothing of dark energies, spying, spiking prophecy, taking over world leaders by playing one Christian against another: celebrities onto pillars of gospel, preventing the Rapture and deceiving the faithful into destroying the bountiful future God had planned for them.

*"He touched my hand,
It was slick with the ashes,
Of the shrines we built to trust"*

Troubled, he got up, hands clasped behind his back, walking briskly to the shrine of Prophet Yeap. It was a foundation wall of the main monastery where the worshipers had, in grief, stuffed the young bodhisattva's cremated remains into gaps and crevices. It was hung with colorful quotations from his publication, the Analects of Elder Brother Yeap, as well as his popular works of fiction. In the shadow of the towering, monolithic surface, Sage knelt on one of the neatly arranged and spaced out padded rosewood stools and prayed, hands on the bone-ingrained stone.

Trouble with being saved is that one will be called to the front lines as the prophetic vehicle of the Father nears every next unveiling. Mark held Claire's hand tight as their feelings for one another deepened profoundly. When would he propose they wed? She pressed into him and his arm held her shoulders tight, almost unconscious he had forced his smile.

"Liu means 6. 6 in a family, house no. 6"

"These not good people," came the mixed English of his mother, "action-ah: lan-see, all also not have, cannot do, larn, hoi sei ji gei ma-ma..."

"Mom..." he could feel his face numbing on one side, his knees slipping.

"MARK," Claire cried, "somebody call a doctor!"

6. God's prophecy, why it reads odd and drawn out

"The Shepherd struck -the sheep scattered"

Mark had suffered a second stroke, the medical officer told Claire, Eve, and Mandy. They put him into a drug-induced coma at the outpost clinic-surgery until he could be airlifted down to the nearest hospital with intensive care. That would be in the late afternoon, two hours or so away.

Meanwhile the women huddled. They burst into the meditation hall but Sage was not there -unusual. But Mandy knew somehow where the wise man was and rushed to the Prophet's wall to get him.

"For then shall be trouble unseen since the beginning of nations...and should those days not be shortened, no souls would be saved"

The group of blesseds had been split 3-ways. Claire accompanied Mark down the mountain by chopper. Eve holed up in the hotel room they booked to wait for her husband-to-be. Mandy was glued to Sage. This was possible as they all had new smartphones.

Sage thought that spreading out was the better way forward -a blessing in disguise.

Over dinner, the 3 groups held conference.

"Prophecy is NOT being able to tell the future. There is NO future but that which you agree to participate in by the simple action of hoping. Hope is an emotion as well as an intellectual choice. By thinking and feeling at the same time, mist descends over our present. This shrouds the future about to be made, IF nobody sweeps its cover aside. For when so revealed, it is a thin, weak, powerless old man, poor as the day you were born -your eventual, deserved destiny, that of all mortal men. You may think of life as a symmetry, not about a time, but about a dream so keep dreaming, keep being unpredictable"

"Prophet Yeap said: forgetfulness is blessed in retrospect. Looking back and not seeing yourself struggle, forms hope. And I hope Mark, my student, you get well soon"

"What is prophecy then? Why set down markers in time? Why point to where the ball goes?"

"Claire, you have not been listening to the logic. There is nothing in the future but hopes and dreams shrouded by chance. And your raw chances are the same as everyone else's, i.e. the grave, Sheol, and the steps towards it which are our mortality"

"God CAN change that destiny, so he may plot a course for our lives, knowing what we were before He forgave us our lies as well as what he will transfigure us into"

"They say God knows all his sheep and they know his name"

"Eve, that is correct. He knows what he sees in a person -his or her dreams towards Him"

Mandy was lying, head on Sage's lap as he told wisdom after wisdom. There was, behind the Bible, a strong logical will. And she knew it was of the God who loved them.

"Mark told Barbara that the uber witch's coven could prophesy, Master. It was through prophecy that they overcame her defenses of faith and struck her down. How can a witch prophesy?"

"A witch CAN prophesy. Witches allude to my future frequently and I allow it. You can believe what they say may happen. In my case, it certainly does as we are in agreement and attuned"

"I can prophesy about you if I love and care for you and your dreams. It is called prayer"

"But what of evil witches?"

"Perhaps Mark did not tell you. Before you arrived I told him that evil's power is in man's love of money"

"Money 100% leads a person down the opposite path from salvation and thus they may prophesy on such people, often desperate for financial independence or with debts and an appetite for wealth"

"But a witch's prophecy is more vigorous, detailed, while God's is symbolic, distant, and repetitive -like a machine"

"Yes, Eve. A witch prophecies ala carte whereas God has to include everyone -even people who do not believe in Him. It is the same reason Jesus spoke to the masses in parables"

"Because they have not received the secrets of the Kingdom... as for those who don't have [this], even the little they have will be taken away from them"

Then Sage spoke prophetically, "Prophet Yeap used to tell me, all sex (interrelations) is okay, NOT all love (monetary, for example) is okay. If you want sex, you should marry. If you want love, be free. I have told you nothing new"

That night, as Mandy helped clean the meditation hall, she asked Sage his age.

"In people years, I am roughly 28"

"How is that, Master?"

"Somehow, I never aged beyond the peak of my youth. If I could impart the same to you, I would. Marry me if you like. Love me if that is all you want."

"What if you say no -or not anymore -at some time in the future?"

"What if YOU did?"

"Because, I love you," Mandy turned away. Tears streaking down her cheeks.

Sage noticed her hopes. There was an uncanny intelligence about Mark's younger daughter, abundant beauty of Spirit. But what would it serve a wise man on top of a mountain, to have a wife? He was troubled, counting the chances as a man counted power, thus money. Then he realized that Mandy wanted a share in his generations, not a fortune from his wisdom cookie donations jar. He pushed on her shoulder, spinning her around. Her attunement, a perfect mirror to his own as they reciprocated love in fizzy reflections of one in the other, heart in heart. The lights of the meditation hall went off early that night.

"How do I say this..." Eve conversed with her fiance, "You HAVE

to come to our mountain. It's where my cancer was cured. Yes, by faith. What do you mean you have no time? The whole world is in tribulation for heaven's sake! Money? We don't NEED it anymore. What do you mean I'm crazy? Hello? He-"

tick, tick, tick

Eve stared at her phone as it dimmed then shut off completely. Her heart was in tatters, for her husband-to-be was very wealthy and equally influential. But her loyalty to Sage came first. They would get through the tribulation run-up here where it was safe, then be lifted to the clouds maybe by end December as her dad often told them -his personal sign from Jesus / Gabriel -whoever. As she was in the moment, devastated.

She felt like a grenade with its pin pulled out.

Eve stormed from the hotel room to find her sister and left with blushes on her cheeks. Mandy was getting some with Sage. She couldn't hide her amusement. She texted Claire and told her they were going at it while hers was ironically over.

Claire approved of Mandy's forthright attitude and that made Eve even more jealous. She was a ticking time bomb of inequity. She wanted to ask Sage for marital advice but the couple were savoring every moment together, silhouetted against the paper screen by the light of scented candles.

"Room for three?" Eve wanted to ask, but backed away instead, crying.

tick, tick, tick

Mark regained consciousness, finding Claire by his side. He couldn't talk -yet, but he heard and understood his friend's words of encouragement.

"You didn't tell us about your first stroke," Claire ran her fingers through the middle-aged seeker's hair. He kept on staring straight ahead, seemingly emotionless, nodding faintly.

"I thought we had a future together"

Again, the faint nod, this time with a tear in the corner of one eye.

"Mark if you love me, marry me"

Tears welled in both his eyes and he shut them, breathing audibly.

"Mark if you'll marry me squeeze my hand"

Everyone in the ICU ward waited with bated breath. Then a slight twitch from Mark's wrist and his fingers contracted about Claire's fingers. Weak at first, then stronger.

The ward broke out in smiles and muted clapping. Mark twitched his cheek. It was the happiest he had been since his separation / 'divorce'.

So the vanguard of the uber witch dug in, under them, hobbling the wise man and his 4 students, half trained in the Math of gospel. Facing off with the coven of the Liu 6 and their army of infants, it looked certain evil would feast on these soft, new Christians' doubts. Would their training be enough to see them through? How might Sage carry on their lessons?

Eve and Mandy shared. She showed her sister the Tiffany blue string knotted loosely around her wrist. Her cheeks were rosy and there was a look in her eyes of fulfillment.

Prophet Yeap wrote:

"What is marriage than to be closer to a person than legal otherwise? Sex is spiritual, ownership [of a person] is of the world... [so follow] whatever is written in your vows"

"So was the sex 'spiritual'?"

Mandy's gaze fell to her crossed legs on the tatami-strewn floor.

"Did you orgasm?"

"Yes, several times"

Eve poked her sister in the navel and Mandy gasped. She was still in the mood. They both laughed.

"Is HE coming to see you?" Asked Mandy.

"I don't know, I don't think so"

"Here is where we belong"

Eve hugged Mandy and the pain of her annulled engagement was forgotten -at least for the moment...

Sage wasn't in his usual place. Making love to Mandy had cost him his authority. They were 'one flesh', joined for life, and the intricacies, logistics of being married were a complication he had not bargained for. He had reciprocated the attention she had been giving him and the final consummation would only occur once their child(ren) were born. Meanwhile he was unfulfilled and unsettled. Meditation was unfruitful, and his breakfast of berries did little to energize him. He sought knowledge of the age-old 'battles' of the sexes as the Spirit, recalibrating, moved in him again.

7. The differences between men and women

*"She's too scared to live,
And the consequence of being untrue"*

"The mystery of male-female romantic relationships is an open secret that nobody bothers to prove. Those who seek it are those who seek love for themselves. Why do people turn gay? The only logical explanation is that they FAILED to find that love -what Prophet Yeap terms: 'that special feeling'. Not surprisingly, they switch gender preferences as a 'natural' remedy"

Mark was back on the mountaintop albeit much weakened. He had on a thick jumper that the rescue team had let him wear as he often felt cold. He had some medicines to take and was told to rest more. But he had to see Sage, his friend lest he die first. So for the first time, the seekers sat on stools and Mark, crumpled in his wheelchair.

Claire seemed happy. They had one another, even if her friend, now her husband needed special care.

Eve also hid her doubts about ever having a man of her own while Mandy sat by Sage's side like an extension of his robes. Yea, there came to be 3 strata of happiness and Sage knew it. They might be divided, destroyed by jealousy. Keeping it together was their love

of God and his gospel, and the slice of heaven that was the chilly and secluded monastery, built with love.

"Eve," said Sage, "You are now the only virgin in this group. You have a responsibility to keep yourself pure. Think of the Lord and dedicate yourself to his purpose. Be our strength"

She nodded and bowed.

"Have you heard of a 'person' having YY chromosomes?"

"No," said Claire. The others shook their heads.

"Everyone must have an X. It is the key to unzipping the genetic code that creates all 23 chromosome pairs in a human being. Let us say you were an alien scientist, experimenting with Earth's 'clay' and you decided to create man in your image -male and female. You, the scientist, would quickly find that you can engineer a female from a female or females. You can engineer a male from other males. You cannot engineer a man from any women, but a woman from a man -and that in Eden is what happened."

"If one were to argue, women can birth both male and female children, then think: male plus female equals a female -a 50-50 chance. But having 'female' on both sides of the equation is a big negative. $M+F=F$ would lead to $F-M=F$ -what is this

abomination? Instead, we read $M=F$. The $e=mc^2$ of genetics happened in Eden with Yahweh's guidance"

"As time and technology progresses, the XX in women, dependent and subservient, compared to the XY in men which predisposes intelligence and leadership, begin to evolve them toward sexual emancipation -equality -rights. While men will prefer loyalty, fidelity"

"Because of the common X, there is guilt over this evolutionary process and sexual confusion arises, leading to hatred and mistrust, obscuring societal roles"

"The love of most will wax cold"

Eve's head was bowed in concentration. She had been hearing echoes of something dark gathering in the back of her thoughts.

tick, tick, tick... Ee-eve?

Now that tough Mark was sidelined. The uber witches had access to his daughters' minds. Except stout-hearted Claire barred the way. She would have to be displaced at some stage. Pity as she was a kind, resourceful fellow woman. And Mandy x Sage? They were strong but any sexual relationship eventually cracks under reciprocated bodily pressure. Jealousy. A little disfigurement. Some sharp phantom pain. Human nature takes over, destroying

so-called 'true love'.

"So Master, you imply that gay is NOT okay? I have gay friends"

Mark nodded, Claire did the same.

"You may have any friends you choose to avow and agree with. Friendship transcends sexuality. Sexuality transcends love. Prophet Yeap said that in fact, friendship is the ROOT of love. When you deny a friend love, you strip him of his defenses to witchcraft and its insidious jive talking. The last thing on the minds of the emotionally disenfranchised and mentally oppressed is to climb a strange mountain and forsake the world of money and qualifications to listen to the rambling philosophy of a dubious stranger"

"I would"

Sage looked lovingly at Mandy. Her reddish slubby hair looking like watercress on a sun-set lake. Her lips like tulips in the springtime of life. She looked back at the wise man who never aged, and her posture, composure, was one of complete dedication, heart, mind, and soul.

"Prophet Yeap used to say stupidity is not having a low IQ but being lazy and kicking your mother. Clever women do not become evil witches, but beneficial ones. Clever men do not

become mad and violent, but good husbands and patient fathers”

“Stupid men and stupid women share togetherness in reciprocated animosity. Clever men and clever women share togetherness in healing -of the mind and the body. Healing is the most important part of a relationship whereupon 2 lives co-depend”

“Romance is a form of healing. Fidelity is a certainty of healing. There is no reason for a couple to communicate or to exchange gifts except for healing. And enjoyment is enjoyable because it heals”

“All the rest is an illusion -a chasing after the wind”

Sage sat there on his stool as the seekers contemplated this startling simplification.

Then Eve asked, “Is it not better not to define every pasta dish down to the spaghetti much less to the wheat? I mean, we ALL like pasta”

“Eve, Sage is making the point that Satan and Babylon romanticize the human condition which is as simple in worship as it is a no-brainer to deceive / mislead”

“And when man meets woman, there is rarely any check and balance other than so-called pheromonal attraction -love at first sight, which is supposed to be the truest test of a relationship”

Then Sage said, “The truest test of a relationship, even between inanimate and animate objects or inanimates themselves is ‘healing’ or the power to heal”

“The body is a survival vessel of the soul and a surety of its generations. The more humans realize that survival is the number one aim of all men, the more peace reigns in the world and in the heart”

“Sexual interactions are desirable for their healing power. Compatibility is desirable for survival”

Mark chuckled with some difficulty at his girls’ faces. They did not much like Sage’s breakdown. To say women possessed secrets of beguilement to get their way and hid their soul imperfections behind revealing attire, their beauty and gracefulness, was nothing groundbreaking. In these times of trouble, it was no doubt they intended to use skills on every Tom, Dick and Harry to get through dark days.

“Modesty is a virtue,” said the wise man, “Beauty is not necessarily that which modesty hides, nor what modesty evokes.

Modesty practiced sincerely, is a promise to do no harm. Men love beauty but it is modesty which releases their full powers to help”

“Similarly, a man of modesty in the heart is, to a woman, termed ‘romantic’. A modest heart bears suffering without grudge. The act of love-making is suffering without grudge”

Claire laughed out loud at Sage’s deadpan delivery, “So I was told by my mother!”

“The sensations of intercourse are merely drawn-out pain and so is pregnancy. But the rewards of intercourse are understanding, cooperation, and loyalty. Knowing what sex is makes it better -it is not taboo or being ‘sensual’ thus sinful, but sharing -learning to share, in small doses of reciprocating pain without grudge. As Paul said: do not deny one another”

Up till now, the seekers had been a little bashful over sex but now they saw it as something beautiful.

“Claire, is your son gay?” Asked Sage.

“How did you know?”

“He has Facebook AI”

“We have to talk about ‘her’ personal life but not in front of everyone”

Claire nodded, bowing.

Later that night, Sage took her by the arm and they rushed into the darkness of the meditation hall garden. Out of breath, the master asked her, “Do you know how your son turned gay -not why but how?”

“No,” Claire replied, gasping. Then she noticed Sage was timing her heartbeats while the night and its lights were still spinning around them.

“Claire, could you have turned Max gay by overprotecting him after your husband died?”

No reply, but her heartbeat and breathing indicated regret -genuine regret.

“Now you have 2 men to care for”

The uber witches wasted no time entering, even as Sage held her tight, battle lines were being drawn.

*“Cuz it’s Friday -after the rain,
Life is sweet cuz you’re young again”*

8. Islam, Judaism, and evil

*“Kaf Ha Ya Ayin, Sod. A reminder of **your** Lord’s mercy to His servant Zechariah”*

Sage and Mandy were together. Claire and Eve were also with one another in private. Only Mark was left alone. His morning was spent in front of his iPad, trying to control the AI with eye gestures. He felt cared-for and at peace. But the others weren’t as satisfied.

Mandy asked Sage, “The Jews are our friends. Does that make Moslems evil?”

“Friendship is a privilege, not a protectorate relationship. Marriage is that way as well”

“But ARE Moslems evil?”

“No. Because no empire that professes the Most High is included in Daniel’s vision of the metal / beast man. The empires that WERE included, were hostile to God Almighty”

“But isn’t Iran-also Iraq, an Islamic state that opposes Israel?”

“Iran + Islam is not the same as Iran + Beast. In Daniel, we may read that there will arise a 4th King of Persia who worships a god unknown to his forefathers. It is an indicator of what Iran will descend into once certain criteria are fulfilled. Most probably from the war currently being waged following the October hostage attack of 2023 and the near-future dismantling of the Temple Mount mosque”

“Once the Al-Aqsa is seized by the Zionists, it is only a brief time before Moslems worldwide physically condemn Israel, and this is only a step away -another deadly exchange of ballistics. But, my wife, keep this to yourself -yet another open secret most do not consider, like are there more cockroaches in your house after spotting one?”

Claire and Eve commiserated, “Both our marriages didn’t turn out as planned. Mark isn’t expected to walk again”

“You didn’t tell us-”

“I didn’t want to worry him. It’s already hard going as he’s middle-aged”

“Life is like that -unpredictable”

They hugged.

When all were gathered in the meditation hall again, Sage proceeded to teach, "I am a Christian because it is the most inclusive and permissive religion God has so far handed down. I am not a masochist, nor a sadist, strictly limiting another's pleasure and chances to grow and change with his seasons"

"Is it not written,"

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"

"...though ye believe not Me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe..."

"When we accept Christ -become his friends, we also become His Father's children. We also see that we can believe upon Jesus' name -his authority and similarly be saved. Finally, we can believe in Jesus' works which will lead us to the true faith -the simple love of God who gives all pleasures according to their season"

"In this way, Christianity IS an inclusive religion. Islam and Judaism are not. You can be a Messianic Jew, as you can read about 'Nabi Isa' in the surah Maryam, in the Koran. You can even be Buddhist and believe in Jesus as the supreme bodhisattva"

"A long time ago, Abraham and Ishmael built the Ka'abah in Mecca, that his descendants, the Arabs, might also worship the

One God. This went awry over the centuries, until the SAME worship of the One God was reinstated and reinforced by Mohammed”

“NOTHING has actually changed since the time of Abraham but the birth of a ‘weakling’ Messiah who failed to rule”

“Thus the majority of Moslems and Jews regard Jesus as superfluous. Not believing His message of inclusiveness: there is to be ONE faith under God”

Sage said no more, it was a touchy topic, so the group got up and left.

*“[Kaf] a receptacle, [Ha] for the breath of the Creator,
[Ya] the Creator [Ayin] sees the future.
[Sod] righteous like the Creator”*

That night, when Mandy came to Sage again privately, she asked him, “Were the Pharisees and Sadducees evil or were they just misguided? Was Israel evil at the time of Christ, and are they going that way again now?”

“I believe that the Pharisees at least, were puppets of imperial Rome. And so was King Herod. They ‘could not enter Heaven, yet blocked others from entering’ which indicates they were collaborating, giving and taking with the blasphemous occupying

power in the vain act of preserving their dwindling worship rights. They ‘loved the important places in the synagogues’ which revealed their insecurities, dirty secrets, magnified their sacrifices in defense of their sins which angered God”

‘As to whether Israel is currently being evil, the answer would be no. They are simply desperate. Prophet Yeap often lamented how there had been disproportionately few DEEP attempts to negotiate peace in the volatile Middle East. Tying the Dollar to the sale of Oil was one of the reasons negotiations were always unfruitful. Repudiation of the Holocaust is another”

“To say there breeds evil in the Middle East would be more correct. More precisely, with reference to Jerusalem”

Then they lay together.

Eve and Claire lifted and tucked Mark into his cot under several layers of thermals. They kept a loving composure which made him feel good. Being by nature innocent, he never once thought he was being a burden. That, he shouldn’t want to live anymore. Being with Sage, and his family was the best thing that ever happened to him. Every day an adventure in logic, a day closer to the Kingdom.

Hallelujah, Mark -a-ha, a-ha-Ha-HA

In the morning, Sage presented them a book. It lay on the low

squat table untouched, unopened. It looked ancient, and grungy, with frayed silk ribbon spine bindings.

“In this book -ONE book, a single copy, is the way of the trained witch”

Sage told them they were to read it alone, one at a time. But not the same pages, for the book was divided into 4 sections: love, beauty, truth, and peace.

Mark went first. He read ‘peace’. Then Eve read ‘beauty’, Claire read ‘love’, and finally Mandy read ‘truth’. After they had finished, Sage convened a discussion.

“So what is witchcraft to you? Is it really evil? Mark, what is your opinion?”

“Confusion over the definition and practice of ‘peace’ can be used to influence decisions made in the light of prospects still nascent,” he answered through AI.

“Claire?”

“Love nurtures a worthwhile relationship, platonic or romantic but can also tear it apart. Prophet Yeap was right, love can be at odds with itself as it has a subject and an object which intermesh with other subjects and objects and THEIR love(s)”

“Eve, what have you read?”

“Beauty is a commodity used by witches as it is a universal principle. Laws that can be as beautiful as beauty itself. Beauty is used to divine matters of the heart and to persuade a course of action”

Finally, Mandy related her learning, “Truth is a meeting of two halves never met before yet completing one another. In that way, it can be manipulated to influence what a person thinks he believes”

“Of love, peace, truth, and beauty, which is greater than the other?”

Mark thought he knew and he motioned the AI to speak for him, “You cannot have any of the above without truth, is that correct, Master?”

“Correct!” Sage exclaimed, “Unknowns will always be unknowns”

Claire ventured, “After truth comes beauty, because it is a law”

Eve said, “After beauty must come love then we may have peace”

“Excellent,” said Sage, “But what if I mixed up the natural order?”

“Evil,” said Mandy.

“You learn fast -all of you”

“The imbalance of living imperfect lives means, as we are often in a state of transition between truth-beauty-love-peace, we can be tempted to hop ahead blindly or intelligently”

“For example, Mark up here on the mountain, feels peace -he told me so. Why he came here was to seek truth. He had jumped over his responsibilities to his daughters and his partner, though they were beautiful”

Mark shrugged ever so slightly, guilty as charged. But the network of love between them, and the peace that lingered on the mountaintop was a safety net that caught him, feeding him laws (beauties) and letting him in on the truth he sought.

Sage went on, “Religion is always practiced from truth to peace, and ends at peace, no go round. Any religion that does not profess this is a false religion. Therefore it should be clear if Islam and Judaism are evil”

“Master, what of Wicca / the Kraft, as a religion?”

“That, my students, is a topic for tomorrow’s discussion. For now,

know that a witch is merely someone with a mind of wisdom, who can persuade (even many) men to join in seeking their heart's desires, were they out of order. This itself is dangerous knowledge. Do not practice manipulating it for that would be temptation. Temptation is simply enlarging or contracting the components of truth-peace in the mind or eyes of a person of mental talents, supernatural attunement, or pride-importance. The offering of solutions to the tempted is a form of damnation and its fruit is mental illness”

9. The Devil, first contact

Eve woke up in the small hours of the morning, troubled.

Ee-eve... tick, tick, Tick!

She covered her ears. Her silent scream woke Sage who was deep into contemplation of the murk of pre-dawn.

The wise man got up and walked over to the hotel. He knocked on her door.

“Master...”

“You were screaming in your heart, Eve. There is champagne in the lobby cafe if you need some”

“At 4am?”

“Yes”

As they sipped the bubbly white wine, Sage noticed a strange couple, a man and a woman, both young and fetching.

“Are you the wise man of the mountain?” asked the confident, lanky man.

“My robes gave it away. You both are unmarried?”

The other woman laughed, “He’s impossible, and says I’m even more so”

“Come for some counseling then?”

“Apparently we’re late. No, we’ve come for the FIREWORKS”

“Then please help us finish the champagne,” said Sage, pointing out the oversized bottle squarely in the middle of their table.

The strange woman confided that she was a faith healer, and her ‘partner’ was a preacher. He was not very partial to eastern philosophy, being a bit sectarian. But that they both followed a star to this part of the world just like the 3 wise men did, to

Bethlehem, 2 thousand years ago.

“This is Eve, one of my students. Her father suffered a stroke a few days ago and is recovering albeit very slowly, and she broke up with her fiance to continue her study with our group. Perhaps you both can get together,” Sage propositioned the young preacher.

“Eve -pleased to meet you,” the preacher smiled widely and she knew he was genuine, “I’m Dr. Kee, and this is my travel partner, Gaythrii. She can have a look at your father later if he agrees”

“Sometimes, miracles happen -if you believe in sometimes”

“Did you see anything ‘suspicious’ on your way up?”

Dr. Kee’s face turned stoney, “Yes would be the answer of a weak mind”

Sage nodded, silent.

“Dr. Kee, are you a REAL doctor?”

“Yes Eve, I’m a physician”

“I was engaged but it didn’t work out. I had cancer. Sage cured it and asked me to stay with our group up here. I’ve been ‘hearing

things' and I guess that's why we had champagne at 4am"

The physician laughed, "Of course! A reverse hangover. Do you believe in the supernatural Devil?"

"The Devil?"

"It's the reason I and Gaythrii are here. There's going to be something big and we both felt it"

"But here there's only peace and healing..."

"God sometimes throws the dice where nobody looks" -Stephen Hawking

"Correct. So far"

"4am really is cold," she said.

"It doesn't have to be"

Meanwhile, Mark was rustled awake by Claire, "There's a high faith healer on the mountain. She wants to meet you"

Mandy was alone in the washroom. She felt nauseous. "I must be pregnant," she thought. And as she washed, she noticed her hair was thicker, like a wild rose bush, and her bosom, fuller. She

imagined herself sitting in the hall beside Sage, all filled out and smiled a thistley smile.

Gaythrii had pale grayish skin and a close cropped head of curls. She wore a nose ring and had henna patterns drawn on her hands. Hands that felt warm and cold depending on where she touched him. She was attractive and exotic and Claire couldn't help feeling envious of the younger woman's charm over her husband.

When she had explored Mark's subtle energies, she knelt to pray. The three of them, heads bowed. Then Gaythrii announced, "It will happen tomorrow night -so saith the Lord - you will walk again because you have to, then you will speak to glorify His name"

Across from the monastery, Sage rushed in the darkness. He had to get to the meditation hall before what might happen, happened. But too late, a puff of air split the moonless pre-dawn gloom. A blowpipe dart. The wise man caught it just before it penetrated his neck, between two fingers of his left hand. Then, realizing its poison was still fresh, he stopped to grab a rock, scrub his flesh against it. He scrubbed his fingers raw, his robes wrapped into a shield and started to run an erratic path towards the cover of the trees.

Over at the meditation hall, Mandy felt a dull bump in her heart. Her husband was in trouble. She picked up her phone to call her

sister.

About then, the sun came up and there was respite from whatever struck, for now.

Mandy bandaged Sage's fingers with cloth soaked in various antidotes. They were getting a little numb from the unknown residual poison. She didn't tell him she was pregnant. Only Eve knew.

"Did anyone spot the witches?" Mark mouthed the words shakily.

"No," said Claire, "relax and let us handle it"

Sage held Mandy. He was calm as his positivity and logic naturally fought off the toxins he had touched. He took a herbal tea as the women and Dr. Kee set up equipment in the meditation hall, in preparation for something Kee called 'the big one'. The wise man knew he was after the Devil himself.

"For even archangel Michael did not curse the Devil but said: the Lord rebuke you"

Eve was falling for the lanky, bespectacled Chinese pastor who seemed to be all for God, commanding, and unafraid. He was in many ways the antithesis of Sage who relied on probing questions towards the seekers and always sought the gentler way.

“The Devil should really not appear till later in the Tribulation”

“Thus Jesus wasn’t crucified with Moses and Elijah”

“Doctor, what are you implying?”

“The Devil, should tonight anoint the Antichrist here on this mountain. And when he does, our team in Jerusalem will be ready to catch him enter the city which is ‘Babylon’ figuratively”

“You seem to need to know. That puts the apostasy / falling away within the next 24 hours?”

“And there is a reason Paul said: those of us alive AND who remain will be caught up in the air to be with the Lord”

“That the temptation to rebel against God would then be overwhelmingly strong?”

“Not ‘then’, Master -but NOW. I am in the business of saving souls as you are, in teaching the whys of it”

Eve looked at Mandy. It wasn’t right for the kindly Master to lose face and she wondered what her sister felt. If Mandy were worried for her husband, she never showed it after all the Lord said, do not let your hearts be troubled, less the call to action fall upon

worry and fear.

“Claire, you and Gaythrii need to fortify this room. Are there toilets and a place for storing food?”

Claire looked on at Mark who seemed to be trying to fit into Dr. Kee’s plan. He stared blankly through beautiful Gaythrii, which made his new wife uneasy. It was just hours till nightfall, when the faith healer’s prayer would be fulfilled. Would he have second thoughts over a 30-something, cash-strapped former athlete?

“How do you plan to face the Devil, doctor?”

Kee laughed good naturedly, “that would be telling. But can you guess, Eve?”

She shook her head.

“I think I’m in love -with you”

“Added complication. You might as well know how I plan to survive the Dragon -it’s through doubling up with Gaythrii, if she fails, we both die”

Kee strapped on his live streaming camera mount. YouTube would get front row seats to the greatest supernatural event since Jesus rose from the dead.

“You’re a madman,” Eve smirked but instead she lifted his glasses and kissed him. Then she turned away as Kee rubbed his jaw.

Sage closed his eyes. The mountain was probably now swarming with evil beings both carnate and incarnate. True, his was always the gentle way. The poison was losing its potency but had weakened his right hand. He didn’t know if it was permanent. Mandy resistance-exercised with him and he was glad for her company.

At 9pm, Kee stepped out into the pitch black. Eve grabbed his elbow, “I’m with you,” she said. He nodded, “Then watch my back”

“Where two or three are gathered in my name”

There was then utter silence. Kee padded his way towards the monastery -to Yeap’s shrine. Video from a balloon drone overhead gave him a clear path away from the bogeymen of the Antichrist, the witches with their weapons of war, and the ethereal forms of evil spirits hearing their master’s call.

They reached the top of the bone wall. Kee motioned Eve to get down and crawl. They were silent as geckos, under the spiritual veil Gaythrii had woven over them. There they saw a slender young man with tousled hair, lit by the flickering fire he had

started in the offerings pit. He pressed against the Prophet's wall. Some force had driven him here tonight -what exactly, he didn't know. His fingers slick with the good prophet's ashes he drizzled into the fire pit.

A force pushed him to his knees and the wall and ledge were bathed in invisible infrared light. Kee adjusted the camera, revealing serpentine forms, bull's horns, and billowing smoke. There was a voice, more like an echo from unspoken words. The doctor's microphone array caught it like a rushing wind through a forest. Eve gasped, and immediately, the slender young man turned to look their way.

"GO," shouted Kee, shoving Eve in front of him.

"Where?"

"Into the drywall -this way"

"Are you mad?"

"We'll soon find out"

They shimmied into the tight space, just a foot wide, All the way to the end.

The Antichrist leapt onto Yeap's wall, scaling it effortlessly. Dark

senses called him to where they were. He looked into the drywall's tight space and spat, "Hah!" Then turned and went towards the meditation hall. Eve saw Kee had drawn a dagger. It looked old, like something from Turkey or Arabia.

"Don't move -yet," he hissed.

Sage was sleeping lightly on Mandy's lap. Mark was wide awake, perhaps waiting for his prayers to be answered while Gaythrii sat lotus form, in a trance.

A dark, besuited man appeared in the doorway they thought was locked. Three forms stood behind him in kevlar body armor and electronically-wired helmets.

"Old man, sick. Pregnant girl. Oh -and FAITH healer. Must be careful of THAT one..."

The Antichrist turned to Mark and Claire.

"Now, who's this in the wheelchair? Think God will save your legs, adulterer? This your pretty wife -is she Bar-ba-ra?"

Mark felt a kick to his behind, *Get up and walk!*

The force threw him at the Antichrist who stopped the middle-aged seeker dead, a kerambit stuck into his soft, fleshy gut. But

Mark ignored the pain, biting off the young man's nose. He spat it out onto the floor, face stained with blood a shade of blueberries.

He watched them beat a sour retreat. It wasn't the end yet. The battle had only begun, but for him, he had one last thing to do. Picking up the severed nose, Mark rubbed the blood onto Sage's lips and the wise man regained strength. Gaythrii and Claire laid Mark down and extracted the dagger from his belly, applying a compress to the wound. They prayed, weeping over his bravery. There was a smile etched onto the seeker's face, and he didn't notice that it was forced, "Thank you," he said, "God bless you"

*"Put it to an end -o-o-oh,
Get you on my second chance,
Get you while my eyes are dry,
She'd be licking her wounds"*

10. The world, created, evolved or both

The commotion on the mountaintop the next morning, following Pastor Kee's live stream via social media, was overwhelming. The press were all over them and the monastery halls thronged by hordes of devotees.

"Where's the falling away?" Someone shouted.

“Yea, how much longer?” Asked another.

A group of college students held up a sign, “The World Ends NOW”

There was a long table set up in front of Yeap’s bone wall. In the center was Pastor Kee seated, and beside him, Eve, looking serious and important. “This was better than a wedding,” she thought. Towards the other side, Claire and Gaythrii sat, either side of Mark. There was a place for Sage as well, but he declined, preferring to be with his new wife, Mandy. They stood among the few who knew the way to the top of the wall.

“When does the Apostasy occur?”

“Mandy, nobody knows for sure. It will arise naturally. People will feel biting financial pressure but the end is not yet. They will rage against those with incomplete faith and more money than they have, saying these men are dirty / corrupt. There will be alternative leaders claiming to come from the true God / gods. Then, stories will be concocted against organized religion of all faiths. These are precursors for men to do anything they please, women to give themselves away. And anyone who does not do so will be persecuted”

“Then, is what Paster Kee is doing right?”

“He is merely taking advantage of seeing the tip of this iceberg to save souls for Christ. Wise or unwise, he is sincere and it shows. Look at the fulfillment on your sister’s face”

The laser projector trained on the wall behind Kee and company showed what his cameras had recorded the night before and large PA speakers played back the Devi’s commands to the Antichrist. Mark showed the nose he bit off, his stomach expertly stitched and healed by Gaythrii. Claire felt like she was his second wife. And maybe someone as brave as Mark needed one.

“Who’s for Jesus?” came the pastor’s cry.

“Dr. Kee, I’m Jim from the Science Channel, and you claim this footage is of the ‘Devil’. Aliens we know of. HOW can we be alone in this universe? But is there a GOD -an all powerful being who created the Heavens and the Earth? Are we all from Adam -the first man?”

“Well, Jim, we know God is real because of the work of creation -life on Earth before our very eyes. I won’t argue that an octopus tentacle, or the eye of an eagle are impossible for Nature to evolve, but thinking logically, the Earth has been through several major upheavals -the ice age, the extinction of the dinosaurs, and the present one in which we find ourselves. Every time there is a major Earth change, the full diversity of life is restored. We cannot even count all the species on Earth right now”

“So you’re saying diversity is proof of creation?”

“Not only that -but diversity grows, even within our species. Humans 1000 years ago and humans now do not look, think, or act the same. With interbreeding and even selectivity, we should have, by now achieved a pinnacle of beauty and civilization but we patently could not”

“Doctor, we see proof of the divine everywhere -this is undeniable -but what are we to make of it -how do we truly believe? What shall we prepare for meeting the Lord? I’m Marisa from the Eastern Christian Monitor”

Kee stood up, pointing to the footage of the Antichrist scaling Yeap’s wall like a gecko. And he recited,

“My eye will not spare, Nor will I have pity; I will repay you according to your ways, And your abominations will be in your midst. Then you shall know that I AM the LORD”

Cheers of ‘Hosanna’ and ‘Hallelujah’ rose up from the crowd gathered there.

That night, Eve revealed to Mandy that she and the pastor had sealed their vows with love -they had been open to one another and partook of one another in joy. Sage hugged his sister in law

and as he did, she heard the *tick, tick, tick* from his Seiko diver pressed against her ear.

He felt the question on her lips and they agreed to keep it to themselves for the present.

Mark had been teaching alongside Kee, “In software engineering, there is a right way and a wrong way of doing things, even any combination in between which would then be spaghetti if not the Leaning Tower of Pisa”

“That life on Earth perpetuates and is successful is a testament to it being done right -from the beginning.

*“Dil ba dil rah dara, There is a doorway that connects two hearts”
-old Afghan proverb*

Then Gaythrii spoke, “What are viruses? They are not classified as living organisms but which came first: cells or viruses? Viruses must have pre-dated cells as a mutant cell would form a cancer instead. Several viruses coming together would have easier formed the first cells. And when cells divide there is wireless communication or telepathy between the cell’s ‘organs’. Why form an organ but so it might divide easier? How did it know? The carbon ring has telepathy built in on a molecular scale. It reaches out and ‘knows’ what it wants -it wants life. When God breathed into the clay, it knew it wanted to grow and grow into all the things we see today -predestined and preconceived”

It was 3 days till Christmas.

Sage saw that Pastor Kee and Gaythrii had brought up a tree and were solemnly decorating it with lights and tinsel. In his heart of wisdom, he knew it would be the last big celebration before the Tribulation set in.

Mandy knelt before her father who was trying to be brave. Just recovered from a second stroke and now stabbed in the gut, he was steadily losing health but hiding it from the group. He put a hand on her cheek and smiled but she knew he was in pain.

He nodded to Claire who understood. It was his turn to be separated due to an illness -same as he did to Barbara. She texted her son, Max, who was gay -she'd be coming home for Christmas, alone.

Eve wondered about destiny. To go on adventure after adventure with her celebrity preacher obsessed with the supernatural, with saving souls. And for a moment she felt lonelier than she had ever been. Like a primordial fish crawled out onto dry land, leaving behind the water it always knew, and its school. She was spiritually unclothed and Kee knew it.

“Clothes are not to hide your modesty, Eve, but to interface”

“What do you mean?”

“They are not something put on and taken off but something you remember belongs to you on an intimate level. You could be physically naked and still have spiritual clothes -an identity”

“Eve, if you don't believe me, you'll not make the Rapture”

She had been just another pretty face all her life. A superficial conversationalist. Watching beautiful Gaythrii comfort her father in her alabaster gray arms, how they moved with grace over his chest and face, and his fingers slipping round her nose ring, she retreated to the courtyard but Mandy saw and followed her.

“I’m not much aren’t I?”

“A woman’s desire is for her husband -there is nothing more secret than that”

“I suppose I’m too simple or complex”

“You are -both, simple inside and complex outside. The simple shows through all the more because you want everything”

Sage and Kee sat opposite one another on the tatami of the meditation hall, now host to a large, blinking Christmas tree.

“I suppose you’re wondering about Santa Claus?”

“You mean, do I think you believe in Father Christmas?”

“Of course! You should, logically speaking”

“Ha-ha, I would if you left your tree behind”

“Then so would I believe in you”

“What are souls, Master? If I may humor you?”

“They are the containers of emotions, wisdom, deeds -they are receptacles of the fruit of the Spirit”

“Every soul saved is a victory for the Father. Every moment we waste on petty arguments over faith destroys His harvest -we do battle not against flesh and blood”

Sage nodded solemnly. He knew the days would be shortened and the prime executor of this was Kee.

Meanwhile Gaythrii and Claire were talking about Mark.

“Your husband -he’s not going to make it if he continues with you”

Tears welled in her eyes. Karma had reared its head in the guise of a perfect woman. She showed Claire her nude body, sinuous, like the Ganges in the shade of a bodhi tree. Her eyes, lips, nipples, and vulva were chipped mica.

“It’s dangerous to mix business with pleasure”

“Our bodies are in the business of pleasure. If you love him, leave him with us”

“Gaythrii, I do love him, asking nothing in return, just to have him around me”

“He could be an important piece in God’s endgame”

“That much we agree”

As night fell, Sage noticed the severed nose of the Antichrist had gone missing from its locked glass cabinet. Kee saw that the star, top of the Christmas tree had been turned downwards and signed, Merry XXXmas!

This was an ominous sign of what was soon to come.

And Mandy asked Sage, “How do we know for sure if we are in the first resurrection -the Rapture?”

“Simply by pleasing the Lord. When He loves you, you are saved. When he needs you with Him, he will take you. God acts because He must, not whenever He most soon can -which is a common misconception”

That night, Claire left the mountaintop quietly without informing the group. She remembered the love she and Mark had shared the day she arrived. And she remembered how brave he was. Also, that they may never see one another again until the Kingdom come.

The nose of the Antichrist was in her handbag, sealed in a ziploc sac, fresh as the day Mark bit it off. Also inside was his original Timex, ticking away, *tick, tick, tick* -they had taken it off at the hospital and she had kept it safe for him. As for the nose, it had to be returned to its owner. It was as if a spell had come over her.

Yes, Claire -bring it to me

11. The elect, becoming God's favorites

Claire returned to a home that looked like Katrina had swept through it. There were discarded cans of Coke and pizza boxes around the sofa. The TV was on to an LGBTQ channel and her son, Max was nowhere to be found.

“Max!” She called.

Oh-no

“Mom?”

“Max, where are you and what are you doing?”

Near the backyard, steam poured from the washroom where Max and partner had set up a makeshift sauna of wet towels over coals. There were 2 glasses of some cocktail or other and some BBQ roast half-eaten.

“Sorry, Mom -this is Meghan”

They were both naked and flushed.

Claire smiled, maybe Max would go straight after all.

“Well Max, take care of her, then,” Claire prepared to leave for the office.

“Actually Mom, Meghan’s a ‘he’ -like I said, I’m sorry”

The train ride from Delhi to Kerala, the city of sacred groves, was a long one.

“It was where I first learned of my powers,” said Gaythrii.

She was dressed in starched-crisp, white wraps with burnt sienna trim. Her head of short curls nestled under Mark’s chin. He was the happiest since he had met and married Barbara -before the cancer, and his fling with Claire and all their personal problems.

“But a vow is a vow,” she said softly.

Mark remembered his time in the ICU where Claire had proposed. But he wanted to stay in spiritual India forever -with this goddess of sanded ebony and cut obsidian.

He held on to her arms which she drew to her face. To touch her cheeks and jewel lips was an experience he would find hard to forget -even in later years.

Meanwhile, Sage and Pastor Kee braved the year-end monsoon to stand before the Prophet Yeap’s wall. The smooth stone ledge was

slick with rain and mist crept over its edges so it seemed they were standing on a cloud.

“What makes you think you’re saved, Master?” Kee raised his voice above the driving rain.

“Doctor, the Father is not MY personal God but A personal one. He belongs and answers to nobody but Himself”

“If we do enough -both of us, won’t we not shine like the sun and the stars forever?”

“The truth is nobody knows, Kee. Until that last moment occurs. Nobody can guess the mind of God”

“Then why work so hard for the Lord? Why not be happy go lucky -just another sheep in the flock?”

“It comes from deeper inside than that,” Sage bowed his head.

“You teach logic. I teach salvation. Who’s going to heaven first”

“Pastor, I suggest we focus on the common enemy which is the ignorance and darkness of these times”

“Master, I’m TELLING you -out there are Christians who think nothing of getting cancer and wearing adult diapers the whole of

their lives. To them it's what they deserve and they accept their errors as tests of the Lord. Tell me: what logic can go into the head of a spiritual sheep?"

"Tell them to eat grass, lead them over the hill to where there's more. What are you really?"

Sage bowed his head and closed his eyes. The wind blew stronger and ashes from the wall streaked across their faces. The cloth over the long table ripped loose over Dr. Kee, dragging him across the ledge, into the mist.

"Kee! Are you down there?" Sage knelt at the edge, hands brushing away the mist.

On top of the wall, a lone dark figure stood, fist raised to the sky.

Mandy and Eve were together in the meditation hall when they heard a soft knocking on the door.

"Sage!" Said Mandy -he's home.

"And *my* Pastor," smiled Eve.

"Not quite, ladies. By the way, where is 'Claire' -tall, athletic, with fair hair?"

“She left yesterday...”

“Would you have her address?” The dark figure seemed to lose strength, his voice wavering and nasal, like he had a nose bleed.

“You can contact her company P.O. Box,” said Eve handing him a card, “I assume it’s about business”

“Why of course,” the figure paused to wipe his face. A streak of glistening fluid stained the arm of his dark coat, “Thank you so much. I always honor a favor”

“Eve!” Mandy scolded when they were out of earshot, “How could you?”

“That man is the Antichrist”

“Do you want to get us both killed, Mandy?”

Then Sage burst in, uncharacteristically flustered, and told them what had happened to Kee.

“There’s a search party being formed and we should all join in. Get dressed. Eve, prepare your heart -your husband may be dead”

Sage sat in lotus form to meditate -to calm his nerves. And shortly entered into a dream.

“Penj-ryu, Penj-yru son of Connor,” he heard his name called.

“Lord I hear you”

“Are you happy with me? Is everything in my house in order?”

“Lord if it were in order you would know and I would be happy with you”

“And you are thus ‘wise’ you presume?”

It wasn’t really a question as much as an admonishing riddle.

Claire was driving with Max in the passenger seat and Meghan in the back row. This wasn’t the first time her son had freaked her out.

“Where’s Mark, Mom?”

“He left me,” Claire wiped her eyes against her wrist.

“WHAT? That chicken shit!”

“Max, calm down. He’ll be back -he just has some karma to settle. Unfortunately, there’s a woman with him who’s hotter than me”

“Turn lesbian, aunty Claire -it worked for me,” the sound of bubble gum popping.

“Freakin’ hell, Mom -is that somebody’s nose?” Max dug in her handbag for a twenty.

“You put that right back and don’t ask questions”

“Aunty Claire, isn’t that -I mean it looks like someone evil’s nose. It doesn’t rot. You been fighting vampires?”

Max stared at the ziploc and said, “We can auction this...”

Mandy wore her father’s Timex solar while Sage had on his Seiko diver.

Eve! tick, Tick, TICK

As they gathered at the starting off point. Eve said, “ I know this sounds odd but I hear ticks now and then. I just heard another sequence”

“Like watches ticking? Clocks?”

“Yea, like 2 watches ticking -one fast, one slow”

Sage pressed his Seiko to Eve’s ear and Mandy put Mark’s Timex to her other ear.

“Yea, exactly!” She exclaimed.

“Maybe we can use love triangulation,” said Sage.

The wise man addressed the search party that they were to break into 2 groups. One with the dogs, the other with him and his friend's daughters.

Having Kee in her heart, Eve covered her ears, listening for the ticking. They fanned out a bit with Sage and Mandy behind and Eve in front.

"That way," she pointed.

In haste, Sage swung under a fallen log. It gave way, pinning him down across his waist.

They stopped to free him but the log was too heavy. And the ticking led urgently down a slope to where a white cloth could be clearly seen.

"Go on without me," said the wise man, "He's close"

Mandy and Eve found Pastor Kee unconscious by a stream. His face awash with its water. He was breathing shallow breaths.

"Should we move him?"

"Try to wake him up -hurry"

Eve bent over Kee's ear and said, "Wake up doctor. I love you"

Kee's mouth moved and his lips said, "I love you" without making any sound.

Mandy radioed the search team and gave them their GPS location.

Mark lay across Gaythrii's lap, across the crisp white linen. All the wisdom and knowledge in the world were not guarantees of Rapture.

"What are they, then?" He asked her.

Her face was like an angel's and she told him a wisdom,

"You must be born again. You must be male and female as God intended. You are to have no addictions especially to money and power. You are to worship God with all your heart and mind. You have to open your eyes and ears to Him"

"What do you mean born again? I was baptized"

"You must relinquish your pride, lies with which you steady yourself, and BELIEVE: trust as lovers trust"

"I feel born again even now," he said, feeling her female form beneath the coarse linen, the gap between her thighs, and the bulge of her womb at her waistline.

But her voice came again, tinkling like an angel's, "You must go home to Claire"

Sage and Kee smiled at one another. They held hands from across their cots. Sage was bandaged for a serious bruise at his waist. Wise, he quickly dug his behind into the soft loamy slope to ease

the pressure from the fallen log. But it would be some time before he would walk again.

Kee was buffeted by the tablecloth far above the treeline. Trying to steer the 'kite' groundward, he managed to crash into a branch which snapped. That was the last thing he remembered, ricocheting like a pinball, limp, from branch to branch.

Kee pushed Sage in his wheelchair, out onto the verandah. It didn't matter what their differences were, just that they were safe and firmer friends for it.

"I will remember you, Master," Kee kissed Sage on his forehead. The wise man closed his eyes. He didn't need to know as badly whether or not he or Kee, or anyone would be Raptured. It was not as important as the here and now. And the love of God and family threaded through it.

"The Antichrist's Nose: bidding starts at \$100k. How does that sound, Mom?"

"I'd pay that for Michael Jackson's nose. Make them pay \$100 for casts - we can make them -can't we?"

Claire gave Meghan a withering look, "We need to get rid of this thing quick and fair, and once it's gone you're both gonna marry and go STRAIGHT so help me God"

They spent the night watching the bidding wars push the price through the roof. It was eerie that so many people knew what it

was and more so what it was worth. Falling asleep at the PC, they saw it top \$2 million dollars.

On the morning of their departure, Gaythrii took Mark to a temple where they had free food. The meal was delicious yet simple and inexpensive. Gaythrii dropped a handful of coins into their donations box. But she reserved Mark one of them, a 5 Rupee coin with the Ashoka 4-lions motif and braided lotuses on the obverse.

“This one could have gone to someone who needed it more. Now it’s yours. Keep it safe,” she laughed.

No longer pale and soft, Mark, shaven-headed, tanned, and muscular embraced Gaythrii at the departure terminal. She ran her fingers over his face and chest and they kissed for the first and last time. It felt warming in his heart of hearts, and at the same time, when it came time to let go, his emotions gave like spider silk against his face. What was love to her, really?

Claire almost didn’t recognize her husband when they met. He threw a big hug around her. She lifted his t-shirt and there was the stab wound all healed up.

“If you and Gaythrii made love, I don’t mind”

“We didn’t. But I have something else she gave me -for you”

“And so do I”

“This is a 5 Rupee coin which was going into the donations box where we ate a free temple lunch. I kept it because it reminded me of how the Lord took care of me - of all his elect,” he broke down a little, “and here -it’s yours, free as His divine love -the most priceless thing I own”

Claire took the coin and pressed it to her heart. Then they went over to the PC and Max showed them the money the Antichrist’s nose sold for - \$2.5 million.

“We’re rolling in it,” said Meghan, air-dildoing herself, “There’s already a sauna round the back, going, and Sage, Pastor Kee, Eve, and Mandy send their regards.”

That night, Mark and Claire read from Prophet Yeap,

“Reason is scarce when people are illogical. Logic is scarce when we do not reason. Reasoning is the process of taking what you have and pretending to use it well before it’s actually used. Hopefully, another human being will see you and see the logic of reasoning with you. Reason does not call attention to itself. Money does, in its scarcity, and vain promises.

Reason and logic are a lonely duo. Try to reason too close to someone’s logic and be heckled. Try logically analyzing someone’s reasons and they label you rude, a jerk. Money, though, is always welcome. What a world we live in.

We talk about God more, lately, and the ‘second coming of Christ’. Who are those who know logic, and those who reason? Who’s eyes see only green?

If I seem an old rambling fool then so be it. The roots of garlic shoots can be eaten, reason says they be cooked, whereas the roots of the greenback are an evil poison that consumes the sinful. Can you think why people love watching food being prepared? We are eating, if only in reason. And when these celebrity chefs REASON, we eat better, cheaper and healthier. Where is the money? A poison never mentioned in the same sentence as the dish.

Where is Jesus? When will all knees bend that have been feeding a global enslavement system and the little girl and boy petting zoo?"

12. Jesus, preparing for His return

"O Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together ... Look, your house is left desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'.

"This," said Pastor Kee, "is an often misunderstood verse"

"Darling, it's Christmas, not Bible Study Saturday"

"Humor me, Eve. The longing gatherer is Jesus. So is he who comes again to gather. But the gatherer -is he also the blessed one who comes in God's name?"

“If you’re saying they praised Jesus AND THEN he appeared, then yea, maybe”

“But can you tell me why the Jews would do that spontaneously?”
Kee sat back, smiling.

“Maybe they saw the angel Michael instead?”

“Possible! But can an angel be blessed? Surely he is holy”

“Pastor, if you’re implying there will be a supernatural event in Jerusalem-”

“Not a supernatural event, Master, but Jesus appears to save them -physically save them. And he saves them with the power of God’s love. There is no Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone. Just a thought,” He stopped to make a note in his ESV.

“My husband is writing a book, called ‘Open Secrets of the Bible’ -a lot can be implied in just one verse depending on whether the reader is just reading or truly seeking. And seeking requires going through hard knocks yet not going hard in the heart”

“So the Jesus they SEE later -he’s the one who saves them, do they see his sign in the heavens? Or is he incognito as in: one like a son of man?”

Kee closed his Bible, “Why did the Lord call himself the Son of Man at key moments in the gospels? It is important, for He will come again under the circumstances He himself set, 2000 years ago”

“Like a son of man is Aramaic for ‘like a human being’ which implies that there are others also coming on clouds who are not human”

“He speaks of himself as the ‘Son of Man’ because He is THE HUMAN being who takes away the world’s sin”

“What then is the sign of the Savior?”

“It is obviously not Himself or His cross because of the verse we opened the discussion with -you will not SEE me again. Yet it must be something that indicates: some PERSON is coming to save you -a Jew”

“And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring”

“This was Jacob’s dream as he lay in Bethlehem. And in Luke’s

Gospel, multitudes of angels were seen praising God by shepherds at night when Jesus was born in a barn -in Bethlehem and the angels said: peace and goodwill to mankind”

Sage nodded to Pastor Kee, “You have logic as you are learned”

“And I have lately learned only from the best”

Mark got a Christmas card / letter from Gaythrii all the way from India. Actually it was addressed: “to Mark AND family”. It encouraged them to be in Christ,

Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” In response, Simon Peter said, “The Christ of God”

Mark thought about Gaythrii’s message and remembered Sage’s logical approach, “Why did Peter say it, later deny it, in between unbelieve it? When nobody else WOULD say or knew enough to say it?”

“Even John’s disciples doubted Jesus, John who baptized the Lord”

“Was there a supernatural smokescreen about Christ, as when he escaped the murderous Nazarenes?”

“You know, Pops, the guy Jeezes, he had to ask: who am I? And

that shows he and God were keeping it secret”

“Meghan, that’s true. And when Jesus prayed for release from their pact, did he not unbelieve like Peter?”

Claire interjected, “Obviously, no flesh could well endure what these hoy men would later endure for their faith, without God’s help”

But the verse played in Mark’s mind some more. What did Gaythrii mean to say? He saw Jesus take Peter’s hand as he was sinking into the waves. He saw Jesus ask Peter 3 times, ‘do you love me?’

Peter was always the one who took the lead, the first step, the initiative, and when he failed when he doubted or was afraid, God always loved and saved him. All Jesus did was call him, first off, and he came willingly, with his brother, Andrew, to learn of the Faith. And whatever he did from then on, God supported him.

Mark sighed, Jesus had not called him, even as he made Claire an honest woman, Jesus was silent. That’s when he realized the power of logic in scripture: the common blessed was conscripted for a mission in secret and failed, but prevailed. Reading this as a seeker made him afraid. It wasn’t fear of mere words, but of a concept that had lately become his reality.

Mark fell to his knees. And the rest joined him, even Max and Meghan, “Lord take us as your own,” he prayed. They said, Amen together.

Eve and Mandy were talking. They were both pregnant by men of some renown. And they wondered about Mary bearing Jesus. How God became Man, as they considered the rustic nativity scene Dr. Kee had set up in the meditation hall.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. So it was that way in the beginning... Now the Word became flesh...”

“What is a woman then for?” Eve asked, “If the celestial wheels dictate that God Himself should pass through one of her kind?”

“Just my reasoning, that God cannot be WOMAN and through a mortal man birth a woman / man savior. God cannot be man AND birth a woman savior”

“God has to be man and beget man through a woman”

“And that the woman shall be a virgin”

“Eve, what you’re saying is that God, from the beginning, foresaw the virgin birth and He knew He would one day pass through the loins of one of our kind, in agony, yet He made us and prepared us

for that very purpose. That the vessels we are, are pure, and the sons we bear are a continuation of His will to subdue the Earth”

Mandy poured the hot chocolate as snow and wind whipped up a blizzard outside, up on the mountaintop.

Inside their makeshift sauna, Max and Meghan, one who thought himself a woman, and the other, preferring to be a man, sat beside one another on wooden stools.

“Don’t you just feel washed clean tonight?”

“Yea, been in Jeezus with Pops and all that- hah!”

“You know, Meg, I’ve been thinking and I... love you. I want to be you, to have boobs and a cunt and bear children but maybe, hell, I’m just crazy confused. That’s never gonna happen”

“So you’re saying what, Max?”

“Look at me, Meg -love me as I am and I’ll love you back. And maybe we’ll figure out what the shit LOVE is all about afterwards”

*“Mother doesn’t know where love has gone...
I see it in her face, that’s turned to ice*

*And when she smiles she shows the lines of sacrifice
...[so] we made our love on wasteland
And through the barricades” --Gary James Kemp*

* * *

Mark and Claire were busy in the kitchen, doing the dishes, and sorting leftovers from their Christmas dinner. The TV was on to a UN general assembly speech by the representative from Moldova. In the green room, the tall, slender man with tousled hair pulled on his nose, brushing off the last of the self-dissolving sinew stitches, it had healed perfectly as *his* lord prophesied.

Under his arm, a dossier outlining a win-win peace plan for the Middle East.

...

13. About this book

Thank you for picking up this small novel or ‘novella’ of just 110 short pages / 20,000 words. It occurs in these end times as many ears and eyes open to gospel. As many who read the Bible do not consider it wisdom behind common sense, the other way round, even both ways at once.

In the Spirit, I conversed with some brothers and sisters about the parable of the bigger barn. It seemed to me, God was very harsh

on the expansionary farmer. Therefore amassing wealth is 'wrong'. We asked for guidance from Gabriel and he told us, with some irritation, that the extra harvest should be distributed among other farmers, not to tear down one barn to build a bigger one.

It is this depth of wisdom / spirituality that amazes me about God's word and I hope my humble effort leads you to your own spiritual epiphanies and away from my humanly errors.

[Mr] C. K. Yap
October 2024
Petaling Jaya