

The Twins and the Magic Closet!

By
Diane Dowsing Robison



age 5



age 13

A journey with grandparents where two girls on the edge of adulthood rediscover their magic within.

The Twins & the Magic Closet



*To my granddaughters, Kaitlyn & Courtney —
the blessing of two lives delivering so much
magic to the rest of us.*

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by

Diane Dowsing Robison

Photographs by William F. Robison

— with contributions from his daughter Shawn Anne Robison!

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THE TWIN & THE MAGIC CLOSET!

— *Finding the Magic Within* —

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	
Introduction & The Closet	Pg. 7
Chapter 2	
Anytime ... was Exploring Time	Pg. 11
Chapter 3	
Discovering the“ Fashionitas!”	Pg. 15
Chapter 4	
Closet Fun — (& And Responsibility — Ye Gads!)	Pg. 19
Chapter 5	
Time Moves Forward	Pg. 23
Chapter 6	
Life Changes!	Pg. 27
Chapter 7	
Coming Home	Pg. 29
Chapter 8	
Dreaming is Believing	Pg. 37
Chapter 9	
You’re a Powerful Instrument	Pg. 47
Chapter 10	
Turning On the Switch	Pg. 55
Chapter 11	
Into the Garden	Pg. 63
Chapter 12	
S'mores & the Illusions of Life!	Pg. 69
Chapter 13	
The Keys: Unlocking the Veil to the Other Side	Pg. 75
Chapter 14	
Embrace Changes!!!	Pg. 87

Chapter 15	
Breakfast on the Patio	Pg. 105
Chapter 16	
To the Pool; It's Too Great a Risk to Play It Safe!	Pg. 111
Chapter 17	
After the Swim: Awakening to Our Possibilities!	Pg. 115
Chapter 18	
The Reservoir Against Cynicism	Pg. 123
Chapter 19	
Feel Alone?	Pg. 129
Chapter 20	
A Dinner Out: But How Do I Communicate with Humans?!	Pg. 137
Chapter 21	
A Magic Bullet to get Through a Tough Moment	Pg. 151
Chapter 22	
Hot Chocolate on the Patio: Who Do I Compare With?	Pg. 159
Chapter 23	
Lifting Spirits On the Way to Bed	Pg. 171
Chapter 24	
Breakfast in Sunshine & A Walk Down Memory Lane!	Pg. 181
Chapter 25	
The Beach, The Fourth Dimension, & Quantum Physics	Pg. 191
Chapter 26	
Writing in the Sand and Our Heritage	Pg. 203
Chapter 27	
Saint Anthony Remarkable Power!	Pg. 209
Chapter 28	
Saying Good-Night as We Come to a Close	Pg. 217
About the Author	Pg. 227



Courtney Michelle & Kaitlyn Diane
Age, 3

Introduction

Whether it is organized or messy, our closet often reflects where we are in our life. “A messy closet is a reflection of a messy mind,” my Mama used to say. As one of her most significant battles in the details of everyday life, her closets were a regular chore. With a stiff upper lip, she faced the micro-activities and daily demands of life by continually organizing her closet.

With great respect to my Mama, I dare say that it’s not necessarily a reflection of a messy mind, as a very full and diverse one. But that could be my rationale for all the time I spend pondering as I gaze upon the various clothes that reflect my life.

Open the doors. There’s much to think about as we search upon the items that symbolize our days and nights. Ponder all the mundane, unique, glorious, and unexpected events that brought those items into being — and then dream of what might lie ahead for our favorite outfits.



CHAPTER 1

The Closet

A closet can mean many things to many people.

More than a place to store our clothes, it can provide a place to think. In the morning, we reflect on our day as we look at our clothes. With

each garment, memories come flickering back ... only to be replaced by the next thought as our eyes seek to find the perfect item for what lies ahead.

But, the right kind of closet can be even more. It can be a place to escape, to pretend, and to try on different dreams as we place the colorful garments in an array of combinations on our bodies.

Especially ...

If it's Grandmama's walk-in closet: A room that provides a safe and welcoming threshold as the entrance to our imagination. A place where our dreams become real. A place where, as we try on the different articles, we find out who we want to be.

This is precisely the kind of closet Kaitlyn Diane, and Courtney Michelle (Kaite and Coco to their family members) have known since their birth 13 years ago. Identical twins, yet different in the most beautiful ways, the two have shared hours and hours in their Grandmama's closet — often with their younger cousins, Ridgely and Griffin. Sometimes, when other children were visiting, they too would be allowed to experience the magic of this particular room.

It's not a large room when the closet door is closed — but even with the racks of different clothes that line each of the remaining three walls — the children and their guests always fit comfortably. At least they did in the

younger years. Griffin got older and was not terribly interested in dressing up; it got a little tight when he tried to use the space under the lower racks as his “fort.” Also, while exchanging multiple pieces of clothing and accessories from child to child — Griffin found it a great place to practice his scarcest “peek-a-boo” attempts.

Ah, the treasures that could they would find in that marvelous room!

Above the clothes on the very top shelf, were an assortment of fabulous hats and purses. And it was simply incredible that Grandmama kept a small bright red stepladder in there to reach all the essential items. The twins learned to master the ladder by the time they were five and were more than happy to hand anything down that anyone needed for their various ensembles.

Peeking out from under the bottom rack of clothes was a variety of shoes for every occasion and season. And way in the corner, a basket of fascinating belts! Colorful belts, beaded belts, wide belts, thin belts, silver, and gold belts — a lifetime of belts!

You could tell the life Grandmama lived by looking at her clothes.

There were her famous “grubby” clothes for the beach, walking, going to the gym, and hanging out with Granddaddy. These were sweats, shorts, tank tops and sweatshirts — and lots of easy-going pants with drawstrings at the waist.

Then there were her better “casual” clothes. Jeans in a variety of

blue colors, nice shirts, and tops, soft, casual pants (lots of stripes!), stretch leggings. And sweaters ... lots of sweaters: some light and some heavy. Then there were the long, full-length cardigan sweaters that flowed when she walked.

Going someplace special with her friends, or to a business meeting, Grandmama had the clothes the twins liked the best: Outfits made up of skirts, more formal sweaters, and soft flowing shirts, dress pants, tailored jackets, dresses, and suits.

Then came the most exciting clothes — formal evening wear! Long dresses, colorful wraps, flowing long skirts, and pants made out of beautiful material. Then there were all those tops! Long tops, short tops, wide stitched see-through tops made of delicate threads that layered over other tops, colorful tops with silver or black or yellow or red woven through them, and tops that came off the shoulders! Although the long dresses were difficult to move in when they were very young, they never hesitated to try them on for a few minutes. And as the twins got older, this also became a favorite category.

Almost every trip into that closet, good use was made of nearly all items. (Well, Grandmama's "grubbies" weren't used much ... what could be the fascination in those, after all, everyone wears grubbies.) Needless to say, that small walk-in closet looked like one of the busiest — and messiest — dressing rooms that any clothes designer had ever seen!



CHAPTER 2

Any Time . . .

was Exploring Time!



Because Kaitlyn and Courtney lived about an hour away from their grandparents, they only had a chance to explore Grandmama’s closet about three times a year — on those occasions when they were actually spending the night. Oh, they saw their grandparents a lot, but often it was at the beach, or a fancy restaurant, or at their home or their Uncle’s... or some special place they were all visiting. However, on those trips, when they were at Grandmama’s home for longer than just a few hours, they had plenty of time for their magic closet.

Sometimes they could go into the closet after breakfast when the adults were talking, or in the afternoon when the day’s activities were coming to a close. But entering the magic closet was especially fun when there was a party going on, and the kids needed to escape the noisy adults.

But, wanting to make sure the adults didn't feel that the kids were abandoning them, the twins always made sure they displayed each outfit in a continuous fashion show throughout the house. If the cousins and other friends were there too, this made the show one of the main highlights!

At times like this, the parade of outfits was a combination of revolving fashion show and talent contest. As each young one came into the living room, the child automatically did a little dance or sang a few bars of a favorite song. It just seemed a natural thing to do. The whole event would end when the adults felt it was time for the kids to go into the magic closet and return as little children dressed in clothes that fit.

The combination of clothes and accessories that made up each outfit was stunning — and it was particularly fascinating to see how the combinations changed each year. Courtney and Kaitlyn never tired of playing with the same clothes, because as they grew older, the combinations of what they pulled together from that magic closet changed. Their outfits went from fun and outrageous, to exciting and clever. Always different than before — and always different from each other.

But there were a few standards.

Every time Kaitlyn put on Grandmama's red heels, she felt secure enough to experiment with every other color and fabric combination there was, no matter its "category." Although Kaite loved to ponder over her chosen items (could a blue and yellow flowing skirt go with a short-cropped orange sweater?), there were no limits for Kaite as long as she had on her

red shoe.

Courtney played with the clothes with abandonment. She never seemed to give a thought as to what looked “right” with any other item she was pulling down (formal purple polka-dot top with red striped beach pants ... terrific!). And how she loved the belts and scarves! Then without fail, within the first few minutes of coming out for the fashion show, she drifted over to the bowl by the door where Grandmama kept various sunglasses; how Coco loved sunglasses! This was where she found her security. Bold was her middle name, as long as she could poise wearing one of Grandmama’s big sunglasses.





CHAPTER 3



Discovering the “Fashionistas!”

Over the years, it was great fun for Grandmama to discover where her twin granddaughters were. Day or night, no matter what was going on in her home — and no matter how many people were present at Grandmama’s — at some point, she would realize that she hadn’t seen the twins for a while. Then she would go into the bedroom and open the closed closet door. There would be several sets of eyes staring up at her. Upon their discovery, a smile would cross their faces, with a sly look that said, “look what we’ve discovered!”

Loving to play dress-up when she was young, Grandmama delighted in Kaite and Coco’s joy of playing in the closet. She knew that

their imagination was taking them much further than that special little room.

One of Grandmama's most treasured memories of playing dress-up came long after she passed the little girl stage.

The most unique item she liked to dress up in was a long flowing satin and chiffon gown — two layers together that made the body and the spirit feel elegant. She dressed up in this unique gown so many times over the years — and twirling around indoors and out (wherever her fantasy took her) — it finally started to shred and tear. By then, Grandmama was well on her way to dressing in her own clothes, and as a young girl in the last years of grammar school, she was beginning to feel quite fashionable.

One day, while sharing some memories with her mother, she discovered how that beautiful dress came into being.

“It was my wedding dress, sweetheart,” her mother responded.

“How could you let me ruin your wedding dress?! Grandmama asked in a bit of a shock.

“But my sweet one,” her mother replied, “nothing gave me greater pleasure than to see something I loved being so happily used by my little girl.”

All Grandmama could do was reach for her mother and wrap her arms around her, burying her head in her Mama's soft red hair. And to this day, she still remembers the light, beautiful scent of her mother that was so familiar to her.

“For you to see the magic in that dress through your imagination was

so much more important than saving it in a box where it would never be worn again,” her mother responded softly. “You gave it lasting value.”

This was the memory that flashed through Grandmama’s mind each time she opened the magic door, revealing her grandchildren playing in a world of their own. In this special place, these little humans were finding out who they were and what they wanted. All of this was happening naturally because of a small room full of clothes and their wondrous imaginations.

Grandmama felt that learning to make-believe — and to dream — are vital for every generation because of all the harshness we face in life. Children keep dreaming, and then use those dreams like a torch to light their way in the world. ‘How else do we achieve?’ she often thought to herself.



Why ... Hello!

Welcome to our dress-up closet.

(Courtney, Kaitlyn, cousin Ridgely, and life-long family friend, Avalee)



*But what do you mean
... you want us to hang
up the clothes???*



CHAPTER 4

Closet Fun (& Responsibility — Ye GADS!)

However, by the time Kaitlyn and Courtney reached six, Grandmama felt they needed to learn how to hang-up the clothes each time their adventure in the closet came to an end.

Yes, it was a chore that went along with the responsibility of playing in the closet. Especially now, since they were passing down this tradition to their cousins. As tasks go, it was not terribly exciting for anyone (including Grandmama!), but absolutely needed if the twins were ever going to find real value in their dress-up time.

In the beginning, their little hands couldn't quite make things hang properly on the padded hangers, and sometimes Granddaddy would come in to help put things back on the higher racks and shelves. Since Kaite loved the hats the most, she needed assistance, putting them back up top, as

opposed to leaving them on the closet floor.

And often, when Courtney would try to get away with folding a piece of clothing and stuffing it under the lowest hanging rack of clothes, she was brought back in for a re-do in front of Grandmama.

But, nobody really cared if the shoes were put away mix-matched. Long after the twins were gone, Grandmama would see a blue striped tennis shoe put away with a silver open-toed heel, and it made her laugh out loud.

As Kaite and Coco got older, they became pretty good at putting all the dress-up items away, knowing that this was the price of having access to Grandmama's closet whenever they were inspired. Eventually, they agreed that it was a little price to pay.

However, the only real fun in doing this chore came when their cousins Ridgely and Griffin were old enough to participate in the cleanup. The twins loved the idea of putting them through the paces, making sure they did it “right.”

It gave Kaite a chance to be the “teacher” – a roll she dearly loves – so she'd stay on them until they finished. But while Coco loved being a dictator — never understanding why people just didn't see it her unique way — she bored of her cousins' whining. She would escape as soon as Kaite started explaining the procedure the second time around. And, Kaitlyn much preferred to be the only one in charge — much to her cousins' chagrins.

Feeling he shouldn't be penalized for only playing with a few hats and granddad's ties, Griffin would also leave, convinced that joining

Courtney in whatever she was cooking up would be much more productive.

Courtney and Griffin have always been a pair, being more “covert” (sneaky) in whatever they’re trying to hide. Quite the contrary, Kaitlyn and Ridgely “leave everything on the table.” Meaning: They say “everything” they feel, often over and over again. So, these two were inevitably left in the closet by themselves to discuss the cleanup process; repeatedly.

It was their grandparents’ thought that each of them possessed individual personality traits that were going to serve them well in life — once they learned how to use them properly.



Cousins play dress-up together.

Then dress-up for the holiday season:

Courtney & Griffin, Kaitlyn & Ridgely.



CHAPTER 5



Time Moves Forward

Time moved forward as it invariably does, and Kaitlyn and Courtney were blossoming into young women. Their preteen years are full of soccer, junior high activities, friends, and studying. When they have extra time at Grandmama's — often during a holiday period — they turn to the journals that Grandmama has always kept for them. Or, they spend time in Grandmama's office using the computer to create stories. Sitting next to each other, Kaite writes while Coco sketches the story's pictures on a pad.

Helping Granddaddy in the kitchen was Kaite's favorite thing. Coco loved helping too, but she usually grew tired of the chores that went along with creating a family meal; the whipping, the stirring, and the measuring just seemed to go on and on and on. She preferred to go for a walk or kick a soccer ball outside, especially if Griffin were there to play with her.

The exception, of course, was at Christmas. The family tradition on Christmas Eve afternoon was to make and decorate the most delicious cookies. All of the cousins loved everything they had to do to get to that wonderful time when they could test their creations!

The twins were well into their 12th year when they started revisiting Grandmama's

closet. The exploring took on a different nature — the magic closet had transformed itself into a marvelous clothes shop with inviting apparel.

It all seemed different now because there were so many items that both girls could wear as an addition to their own outfits. In Courtney and Kaitlyn’s mind, they had ‘grown-up.’ They had waited a long time to get even a fraction of an inch taller than Grandmama — and while they weren’t quite there yet, they were definitely close. Now with Grandmama’s watchful eye, they search her closet whenever they need something extra to wear.

This new phase started when the whole family was going out to dinner, and Grandmama felt that they needed an extra “wrap” for a particularly chilly summer night. Grandmama told them to follow her to the closet. Picking several wraps she felt would be appropriate for each twin’s outfit, she told them to choose the one they liked. The girls loved dressing alike for special occasions but preferred individual taste in clothes for most other activities, so they felt quite grown -up in having a choice.

Both Courtney and Kaitlyn were amazed that the items they chose fit perfectly. As the girls went back into the living room where everyone was waiting, their mother looked at her mother and winked. “Well, they’ve officially made it into your clothes, Mom. They’ve been waiting for this for a long time.”

“Oh, how true, my dearest daughter,” Grandmama replied with a twinkle in her eye. “It was interesting to see which wrap they chose ... and which they rejected.”

Granddaddy put his arm around each of his granddaughters and added, “It’s going to be fun to see how their style changes over the next few years.”

Kaitlyn squeezed her arm around her grandfather. “Granddaddy ... There are just some things I’m never going to wear.”

Courtney quickly added, “And Grandmama loves some pretty strange color combinations.” Glancing over at her grandmother, “As beautiful as your clothes are, Grandmama.”

Uncle Ryan looked at his twin nieces with a shy smile and added, “I agree with

you, Dad, life's going to be interesting with these two budding fashionistas."

From that point on, Grandmama's closet became the twins' personal department store. But they soon found out that disappointment was often part of the hunt.

"Grandmama," Kaitlyn said one morning when they were getting ready for church, "I think your red heels will be perfect with my outfit." She had them in her hands, smiling enthusiastically at her grandmother.

Grandmama kissed her sweetly as she took the colorful heels away from her granddaughter. "No."

Kaite followed her out of the closet. "What, that's all I get ... a no?"

"That's all you get, sweetie — it's not time yet."

Kaite's face scrunched up strangely as she let out a very loud sigh and went to put her own shoes on.

Several months later, everyone had gathered there to go out to dinner and a movie. Courtney came out of the closet wearing two belts, one on her waist and one on her hips, and a very colorful scarf. Her sense of design was in full swing. She looked great — if she had been 18.

As Grandmama proceeded to take off the two belts, Coco's hung her head low in disappointment. She turned her big brown eyes up, catching her grandmother's gaze and holding it.

Oh, okay, you can wear the scarf." Grandmama relents. "But I thought you didn't like certain colors together?"

"Well Grandmama, what can I say," Courtney replies with a wink and a kiss, "you're just buying better combinations."

As Coco starts to skip away, Grandmama responds with a knowing look. "Isn't that amazing, since I've had that scarf since you were five."





CHAPTER 6

Life Changes!

Six months after the girls turn 13, while finishing their last year in junior high, Grandmama and Granddaddy moved to a brand new home. It's a beautiful condo with floor to ceiling windows across the living room that looks out onto a large patio. And it's right in the middle of the city!

The stars at night are woven through nearby trees, and around tall skyscrapers a short distance from the patio, producing a visual piece of artwork that's breathtaking to behold. The stars and the different lights of the buildings, weaving continuously around the massive tree branches, provides an endless living picture that Grandmama and Granddaddy love to watch late at night. Other than sailing on the sea around far-off islands, this is their favorite view.

Large potted plants, along with smaller, colorful pots of flowers, fill the patio. A small chiminea provides a crackling fire at night (great for s'mores!), and nearby is a long glass table with many chairs for outdoor dining. And Grandmama's dolphin fountain in

the middle of it all has become the perfect music for this setting, day or night.

The two-dolphin dark blue fountain was a present from Granddaddy to Grandmama on her 50th birthday, and she loves it dearly. In fact, as a gardener (an unexpected trait she inherited from her mother), there isn't one thing she doesn't love about this special patio. And as always, no matter where they live, the statue of St. Francis of Assisi guards everyone and everything within the large thick patio walls.

There is also a smaller garden patio outside of Grandmama's office, where she put a few places to sit among all the plants. She knows that Courtney will be drawn to this tranquil garden as a perfect place to draw, to think, and to ponder — yet not so far away from the family that she can't respond to something special that might be happening.

The kitchen, dining room, and living room are combined comfortably into one giant, gently sun-lit room, all looking out onto this massive patio —allowing everyone to be a part of every activity. This is particularly pleasant for anyone who has chef duty in the kitchen, and we know who that usually is. Granddaddy truly loves being in the kitchen and felt Kaite would too. Just this past Christmas, Kaite officially become Granddaddy's sous chef, carefully jotting down the secret family recipes, executing all the seasonings flawlessly, and never complaining about mashing all those potatoes.

However, there is no “walk-in closet.” The “magic closet” was no more, not as a physical place anyway. But then, Kaitlyn and Courtney no longer need it to be.

It just takes a little while for them to understand that.



CHAPTER 7



Coming Home

The first time the girls get to see their grandparent’s new home is a few months after the move. So, everything is ready for them. Their journals are safely tucked away on the office bookshelf. Though not as many pictures are on display as when they were growing up, individual family pictures are placed now throughout the condo. And in her office is a new Christmas gift to Grandmama — a photo project with different photos of each grandchild participating in their favorite activity.

In a place of honor in the new kitchen are Granddaddy’s Christmas presents made just for him — beautiful candles and his personal chef apron. On the sizable formal patio hangs the wind chime the twins made years ago — while in the small garden, the most precious of gifts are on display. Hanging under a protective covering next to the sliding glass door is the “family” mobile made from ice crème sticks, beads, and wire with each family member’s name.

It’s a warm Spring break, and the girls are going to spend a few days with their grandparents, and their Mom is going to return on Easter morning to celebrate the day with her family. For the twins, the day after Easter will start the last few weeks of school until

Junior High Graduation, where once again, all the family will be with them to celebrate. Then, the summer looms ahead with great excitement — high school is just around the corner for Kaitlyn and Courtney!

There's no doubt that a strong wind of change is in the air for everyone. The Universe works that way sometimes.

After they arrive at their grandparents' new home, the girls look around excitedly, asking questions in each room.

"The kitchen is wonderful," Kaite says right away.

"I love the office," Courtney replies as she gazes at the particular pictures that Grandmama has put in the photo present they gave her a few months before.

They are so busy with the inside that when they walk outside to the central patio, it's like entering a whole new room. The patio caught their breath when the twins first came into the apartment, but once out there, it's bigger than they suspected, making the whole place feel twice as large.

They then go back into the office and take a tour of the garden patio. It's here that they recognize all their favorite pots of flowers, and the precious things they've given Grandmama throughout the years.

Back inside, they go through the master bedroom and both bathrooms. Kaite loves the big master shower. And Courtney, who absolutely adored the really "big" tub her grandparents had before, is thrilled that there's a Jacuzzi tub in the guest bathroom.

Both girls comment that their grandparents' bed now looks like something out of a fairy tale. With a floor to ceiling window framing the bed behind it, the bed is raised from beneath by several inches, with an extra-long bed skirt covering the bottom. To both girls, it indeed looks like it is sitting in the middle of an enchanted forest.

"Ah yes, I've always wanted a bed I could climb 'up' into ... it makes me feel special," Grandmama comments as the girls quickly climb up to enjoy the view. "And having all that storage underneath for our luggage certainly helps!"

"Ohhhh, how clever Grandmama," Kaite says as Courtney slides across the bed

and quickly lowers herself towards the floor, head first. Practically doing a headstand with her lower body is across the bed, with head and shoulders almost on the floor, Courtney lifts the bed skirt to see underneath.

“Wow ... there’s tons of space under here, Grandmama. I wish I had my bed like this — what a way to ditch my clothes.”

She looks up at her grandmother, who is staring at her with a half-smile and a raised eyebrow. “I mean, I could clean up my room so much faster ... but I’d never put my clothes under there.” A mischievous little smile automatically spreads across Courtney’s face — one she’s never been able to hide when trying to get herself out of a jam.

Kaite is sitting cross-legged on the bed and looking around. Grandmama knew just what’s coming next, and waited for it.

“But Grandmama ... there’s no walk-in closet.”

I know, sweetie, plenty of closets where the doors slide from side to side, but no special little room filled with racks and shelves to walk into.”

Courtney quickly looks around. “No magic closet????” What are we going to do?”

Grandmama climbs up onto the bed between her granddaughters. “Girls, you don’t need a place anymore.” You have the magic closet within you.

“Oh, sure ... that’s something nice that adults say when kids are disappointed,” Kaite says before realizing that she is talking aloud.

“Well,” Grandmama replies, “that’s true. That’s what adults try to do when they have to soften a blow. They say something that makes a disappointing moment look not so disappointing, hoping to give the child a new perspective. But have you ever thought that because we grown-ups say these special little ‘truths’ ... they just might be true?”

Kaite looks at Grandmama, then looks out the window.

“What’s true? That we don’t need our magic closet anymore? That just doesn’t make sense. Where else can we play make-believe?”

Grandmama puts her arm around Kaite's shoulders, "First of all, it's been a long time since you've gone in my closet to play make-believe."

"That's true, Kaite ..." Coco responds as she looks at her grandmother, "the last time I went in was because I needed something to wear to go out with the family."

Grandmama also puts her arm around Coco. "True. And second of all, you don't need the magic closet because you both already use it every day on your own."

"Huh"... both teenage girls said in unison.

Grandmama laughs gently. "Girls, the magic closet was a place where you learned that whatever you wanted to be ... you could be. It was a safe place to pretend, and that wonderful, magical room gave you the confidence to experiment. Oh, the outfits you created! You two dressed up in hundreds of different combinations. And then all you had to do was believe."

"Believing? That's easy." Kaite responds. "Well ... maybe it's not so easy as we get older."

"It's not. Trust me. Getting older is h-a-r-d." Courtney adds as she takes a deep sigh.

"But believing is a part of who you are," Grandmama says with her eyes shining, "and you practiced it continually. All those countless hours of dress-up and make-believe. You learned so much about yourselves. You expected that who and what you were becoming in that magic place, awaited you in the outside world. "

Courtney immediately responds. "Ohhhh, you tried to tell me about this one time Grandmama ... it's called, it's called; oh, I can't remember!"

"What a surprise," chuckles Kaite.

"Well, at least I knew it was called something!" Coco responds as she puts her fists on her hips. Then, glaring at her sister, she adds, "I listen."

"Actually, it's called the LAW OF ATTRACTION," Grandmama says as she tucks a piece of hair behind Coco's ear. Then she looks at Kaite. "But understanding how it works is far more important than remembering its name."

“Sounds like dreaming to me,” Kaite responds as she rolls over and puts her head on her grandmother’s shoulder.

“Well, it is,” Grandmama responds as she pats Kaite’s head. “But the part that makes dreams possible is believing. Believing puts dreaming into action.”

The girls think about this seriously, as Grandmama continues. “Over the years ... I could see that each of you had a personal story going on in your minds with every new outfit combination you came out in.”

This instantly registers with both girls.

“Yeah ... when I was younger, I was a fashion model!” Courtney eagerly speaks up. “Everything I put on looked perfect ... especially when I could add the final touch of your sunglasses!”

“It was the red shoes that did it for me, Grandmama,” Kaitlyn added. “When I was younger, red shoes made me feel older and wiser. Then as time went on, no matter what the outfit, the red shoes made me feel like I could someday be the most admired woman in the world.” Kaite got up on her knees and spoke to her imagined audience somewhere out in the garden. “A great leader!”

Kaite thinks for a split second. Then sits back down and says quietly, “I guess that helped a lot when I got teased in school.”

“How sweetie?” her grandmother asks.

“Well, somewhere deep inside, I just knew that I was special, so I figured that the dopy kids at school would someday see what a spectacular person I was!”

Kaite throws her arms out again to the applauding audience in her imagination. Kaite looks at her grandmother and winks, “Must have been those red shoes, Grandmama.”

Courtney ignores her sister’s antics. “But how did we use the magic closet when we got older? How did all those years pretending and playing dress-up make a difference now, Grandmama?”

“Himm ... now let’s see.” Grandmama takes each girl’s hand. “What elective

did you take this year in 8th grade, Courtney?”

“Fashion photography,” she smiles as she answers.

Then turning to the other twin. “And you, Kaitlyn?”

“Leadership in government.” Kaite tries to suppress a smile as she answers.

“My point. Those electives were there for you. Each of you got to pursue your desired ‘interest.’”

“Well,” Kaite rolls her eyes and smiles, “you could call that lucky.”

“Or” Grandmama rolls her eyes right back at her granddaughter, “you could call it a demonstration.”

“A demonstration? Courtney inquires. “Like you said of the sunset? Remember, the last time we were on the beach?” Courtney again uses her very best practiced Grandmama voice, “That magnificent sunset is God’s finger painting and a daily demonstration of his love for this planet.”

Grandmama smiles at how well her granddaughter has mimicked her voice. “Well, demonstrations come in many forms — and that’s certainly one of them Courtney. A sunset demonstrates that God’s beauty is around us, even when we’re not looking for it.”

“Mom says that demonstrations show up all the times in the blessings we have ... our food, our family, our friends.” Kaite adds to the conversation.

“Absolutely Kaite, how right she is. Demonstrations also show up unexpectedly in the kindness of a stranger — or something of beauty that catches our breath — or even a ‘nudge’ from an unknown source telling us to get out of harm’s way.”

“Boy, I’ve felt that nudge before,” Coco says. As her sister looks at her in puzzlement, Coco adds, “There’s a couple of balls I’ve dodged on the soccer field that I didn’t even see ... I just turned in the right direction at the right time to avoid catastrophe.”

“Well, come to think of it,” Kaite responds, “I have too. We’re taught to move into the charging ball, so we have greater control and less chance of getting hurt. But

sometimes that ball can come out of nowhere.”

“And that’s when I’ve felt myself move out of harm’s way ... even though I didn’t know the ball was aiming for me,” Coco reveals excitedly.

Exactly! says Grandmama. Something outside of your control inspired you to move Coco.” A message; a demonstration moved you.”

“Yeah, well, I’ve been smacked a couple of times — and it hurt.” Kaite looks suspiciously at her grandmother. “So, what happened to the demonstration, Grandmama?”

“That’s a good question, Kaitlyn. But, no sweetheart, that’s not a demonstration as much as a good old-fashioned smack. That happens in life. But, getting hurt sometimes — emotionally or physically — just means that the Universe is trying to teach us something. We don’t always know what it is at the time, but eventually, we find out.”

Courtney pops in, “Seems kind of drastic - a blow to the body!”

“Ah, true,” Grandmama responds. “But since free will is our birthright, it could be that the lesson is there to guide our decision making — for the next time. That’s how we build our tools for dealing with life.

“Himm,” Kaite shakes her head. “Sounds like a conspiracy to me.”

Grandmama laughs and slides off the bed. “For me, I’ve found that the simplest demonstrations provide answers that we expect, but have no idea where they’re going to come from.”

“Oh, oh, oh,” Kaite adds eagerly. “I saw one the other day! Mom went to return a can of paint — a custom color that she said she spent too much money on — but did it anyway because she wanted to make our bedroom really special. It turned out to be the wrong color, and when she took it back, they said they couldn’t do anything — unless someone walked in the door that wanted that exact same color.”

“Oh, I remember that! And then ...” Coco tries to jump in.

“No, Coco!” pushing her sister to be quiet, “Let me tell it! Right that minute, a customer walked up behind Mom and looked at the color and said, “that’s the exact color I was coming in for!”

“And what did mom say?” Grandmama asks.

“She smiled and thanked the customer. Then she said to the clerk, ‘I just knew there’d be an answer!’”

“Your mom was always a great learner,” Grandmama comments with a smile. “And we have to be on the lookout for these signals. So, getting back to your original thought Courtney, I like to think of demonstrations as living notes from God — the infinite divine mind to which we are linked from birth.”

“So ... luck has no part in our lives, Grandmama?” Kaite asks, still wanting more confirmation.

“Oh sure it does in some form. But you help create that luck with how you think and the actions you take every day. “

“Wow. Really?” Courtney responds.

Kaite raises her eyebrow at her grandmother — still not wholly convinced.

“What I’m saying is that this Universe, and the intricate systems that are part of it, are not just one big giant coincidence, my sweet Kaite.”



CHAPTER 8



Dreaming is Believing

Just then, Granddaddy pops in his head. “Well, what fun! I see all three of my girls are having a slumber party on our big bed! Is anyone going to be ready for dinner in a few minutes? The BBQ is getting hot, and I’ll be putting on the hamburgers soon.”

Confirming shouts go up from all three of them, as Grandmama asks, “Do you need any help, sweetheart?”

“No,” Granddaddy answers. “Everything’s almost done. You keep solving all the mysteries of life here, and I’ll have everything ready before you know it.” He gives Grandmama a big wink and starts an old sailing song as he turns away.

“Now that was a demonstration of real love,” Grandmama whispers loudly as the girls giggle at Granddaddy’s off-key voice, still wafting in the air.

Courtney is ready to move off the bed and heads toward the great smells coming from the BBQ. Kaite is still trying to track what her grandmother was saying about her magic closet, and why they don't need it anymore. As far as Kaite is concerned, having a magic closet at Grandmama's house was as important as having a great kitchen in which to bake Christmas cookies!

"You said that believing was the second part of dreaming," Kaitlyn announces. "So, I need the magic closet to remember how to believe!"

"Oh, hush puppies ... that's just silly." Grandmama ruffles Kaitlyn's hair as a jester of endearment. "I also said that the power to visualize what you want and then expect it to become a reality ... is a tool. A tool, my dear granddaughter, that you carry around with you constantly."

"So the magic closet was a place we developed this ... power? A power we all have?" Kaite questions.

"Yep. You use what you learned in the magic closet every day — which is to say that you truly have some say in your future."

"Yeah, but the details are always a little foggy," Coco adds, coming back in the room and climbing back on the bed.

Grandmama then ruffles Coco's long hair. "Well, what fun would there be in knowing about all the twists and turns that lay ahead! Just tell the Universe what you want and go for it. Believe it's yours. Then, leave the details up to God."

a "So, I can actually help shape what comes into my life Grandmama?"

Courtney responds, now much more interested than a few minutes ago.

“Sure. The deep images of your wants and desires are a part of your subconscious. And what you put in your subconscious — what you truly believe in ...”

“... Goes out into the world and then comes back to you —in some form,” Kaitlyn completes her grandmother’s well-known thought.

A very recognizable thought comes popping into Coco’s mind. She rises on her knees, and again sounding very much like her grandmother, she proudly adds, “What you visualize again and again is what you draw to you. Don’t dwell on something you don’t want to happen, only that which is a good and right image.”

“Absolutely! Well, well, well, my wise little one, you were listening.”

“Well, we heard it enough.” Kaite jokingly pokes her grandmother in the ribs. “But, I think I now get it ... what you meant.”

Courtney stands up on the bed like a crusader out of her favorite video game. With every word she speaks, she animates with her arms and legs, looking somewhat like a modern ninja.

“Okay, Grandmama ... basically, you're saying we're one big pulsating magnet. We send out the energy of what we desire, and then that energy takes form, and then ZAP — like a powerful superhero, we draw the physical situation into our life that completes that picture!”

Courtney ends with a broad jump as she flops on the bed.

Grandmama and Kaite grab each other's arm to steady themselves. Grandmama replies, "Well, that's a pretty good description of your power."

Courtney immediately sits up and turns towards her grandmother. "So it's a power I have to use every day — or what, it goes dormant?" Then getting an inspiration, she adds, "Like Tinkerbell's light when she wasn't feeling strong?"

"Himmm ... sorta." Grandmama replies, thinking.

Kaite rolls her eyes again and buries her head in a nearby pillow. "Not Tinkerbell again, Courtney."

Grandmama continues. "No, I think it's a good analogy."

Kaite rolls back over and looks at her grandmother, inquisitively.

"Like anything," Grandmama continues, "if you don't use it, it becomes fragile. You still have it, but you're not using it at full capacity. And if you're not open to using your powers at full capacity, God can have a hard time getting through to you."

Kaite responds sarcastically. "Oh, I see. Blame it on the poor human; it's not God's fault." All I know is that when I went into the closet, I didn't have to think about my powers or what I wanted ... I just became it."

"Precisely!" Grandmama responds excitedly. "It was something you did automatically: Make-believe — being genuinely inspired and becoming what you wanted. You believed in that; you trusted that

without a doubt. You carry that with you now, Kaite.”

She then rolls her head back into the pillow as she speaks a muffled reply. “I’d still rather have my magic closet ... it would make everything much easier!”

“Aha ... wouldn’t that be nice? But change is something we have to embrace. That’s called growing up.” Grandmama replies.

“Well, there’s my sister’s problem right there,” Courtney says kiddingly. ‘Change’ is not her favorite word.” Kaite tries to reach out at Coco with a flailing arm.

Grandmama grabs Kaite’s arm before she can swat Coco and sets it down. “While our path continues to change along the way, you carry that power with you, it’s a part of you, and it doesn’t go away. The more you rely on it, the more you trust it, the stronger it gets. And, it’s your direct link to God.”

Kaitlyn raises her head and looks at her grandmother. “Still ... rather have my magic closet. It made me feel good just to know it was there if I needed it.”

“Oh, that I completely understand. We all like our comfort zones.” Her grandmother leans into her and kisses her on the cheek.

“But I dare say Kaite,” Grandmama continues, “that what you learned years ago in the magic closet – the development of your power to visualize and to accept — paid off for you yesterday.” Kaite sits up and looks at her grandmother as she continues, “After a lot of hard work, that

is.”

Now Courtney is carefully listening as Kaitlyn responds. “Yesterday? I used the power of the magic closet yesterday Grandmama?!?”

“Yes, didn’t you make a tough goal in soccer during your game?”

“Yes ...”

“How did that happen?”

“I wish I knew! I just did what I was taught,” her granddaughter responds.

“Well, let’s go back a little further than that,” her grandmother smiles.

Just then, Courtney adds, “Come on, Grandmama ... both of us have been playing soccer for years now. Where did the magic closet come into play???” She tries to roll her eyes just as Kaite has mastered it, but Coco fails, and her face just ends up looking twisted.

Grandmama tries not to laugh at Coco’s strange face, so she quickly turns and looks at Kaitlyn.

“Okay, Kaitlyn ... how good were you when you started?”

“Well, certainly not as good as Courtney.”

Courtney looks at Kaitlyn with a raised eyebrow and a smirk on her face. Again, she rises to her knees with her fists on her waist.

Looking at her sister, Kaite knows what exactly this means. “Okay ... not very good ... at all.”

“So, what did you do?” Grandmama’s asks.

“Well, I was determined to be better, so I kept practicing. B-u-t, I didn’t practice in the magic closet Grandmama!”

“Really?” Grandmama looks at both girls as they just stare at her. “Not literally, of course not. But the same principle applies.”

The girls still look confused.

Tell me — what exactly did you see in your mind’s eye when you practiced?”

Kaite thinks and then answers. “Well, I just kept kicking the ball over and over and over ... and each time I failed, it made me angry. I wanted to quit.” She looks over at her sister and then continues. “But instead, I kept saying to myself, “I can do this ... I can do this! If others can do it, I can do it!”

“Okay, good.” Grandmama answers. “Now, what did you see in front of you when you practiced. Not what was going on around you, but what did you see with your inner eye?”

Kaite’s beginning to see the light. “Well, finally, after a lot of practice, and not listening to others tease me ... I got to the point that I could see that I was going to kick that ball exactly where it needed to go!”

Kaite smiles with understanding. “And you know ... after a while, I wasn’t afraid of the ball or failing, or someone is rushing me. I just knew that I was going to connect with the ball.”

Getting back up on her knees, Courtney now responds. “Ohhhh,

clever Grandmama. So you're saying that all that time in the magic closet while we were growing up, pretending — or visualizing — ourselves to be something special ...”

Grandmama finishes her sentence “It taught you a tool. How to use valuable power.”

Kaite rolls happily over on her back. “Oh, I like power.”

“Well, there's a big responsibility with this power,” Grandmama continues with a slight smile. “Remember Courtney's Ninja a few minutes ago on the bed?” Courtney beams and Kaite just rolls her eyes again. “You are an electromagnet force. When you request something without any doubt or reservation — when you form it over and over again in your subconscious —you give it life. The energy is sent out into the Universe. It then boomerangs back on you.”

“Got it, Grandmama. I think you've made that clear.” Kaite says.

“But ... you have to accept and know that it's coming. And you have to be very, very grateful. Even when you can't see the results yet.”

“That sounds like a lot of ‘faith’ to me,” Kaite almost whines. “I wish it were easier to see at times.”

“Oh my precious, so do I!” Grandmama adds with energetically. “I wished school were easier too ... but that didn't stop me from learning.”

“I'll second that. The part about wishing it were easier!” Courtney chimes in.

Grandmama continues. “Listen carefully, girls. ‘Doubt’ is a negative

emotion that just gets in the way of things. Every day each of us has to work at releasing those empty fears. That's the responsibility of using our power. Concentrate on your goal. Believe in what you desire and believe in yourself. That's how you build faith deep inside that carries you through it all.

Both girls are looking at their grandmother. She has their attention.

"It becomes easier as your belief becomes reinforced." She ends with a thought that the twins can tell is very familiar to her. "It's a partnership with God."

"Not always easy with your friends teasing you," Courtney adds quietly.

"No, it isn't." Grandmama agrees. "We all live with a lot of unnecessary noise around us, all the time Coco. You can't give that noise any power."

"Huh?"

"Meaning ... things you hear, or see that upsets you, or causes you to doubt; you can't let any of that have power over you."

"Right. Easier said than done Grandmama." Coco responds.

"True, but it can be done. Every day."

Grandmama takes both girls' hands. "Look, my beautiful granddaughters, faith is 'an absolute belief that we cannot see with our eyes — until it manifests into that which we can see.'"

"Even though we have no idea about the details?" Coco questions.

“True. And delightfully, the details are not our worry,” her grandmother responds.

So, you’re saying that faith is the ‘proof’ of that which we cannot see??” Courtney asks.

“Actually, yes. And I know that’s hard to remember at times. But active faith is not a ‘hope’ or a ‘wish’... but knowledge and acceptance.”

Kaite is leaning against Grandmama’s shoulder. Coco puts her head down on her grandmother’s lap as Grandmama strokes her hair. “Understanding the spiritual laws is something we work at every day — throughout our lives — at every level of our growth.”

“Even you, Grandmama?” Courtney asks.

“Especially me, sweet one.”



CHAPTER 9

Your Powerful Instrument



Kaite is still thinking about her missing magic closet.

“You’re saying that in the magic closet, I saw what I wanted to be. Whether or not I understood it when I was very young.”

“Correct.”

“And that it’s the same principle ... or law ... I apply to everything I want to happen in my life.”

“Correct.”

“So you’re saying that it’s like ordering a happy meal. Meaning, I made a specific request, and I expected it to be fulfilled.”

Both Grandmama and Courtney just look at Kaitlyn – a little surprised by her symbolism.

“A unique analogy. But, okay.” Grandmama responds slowly.

“Wow. The innocence of youth!” Courtney laughs, still on her back but now with her legs in the air.

“You’re one to talk, Tinkerbell,” Kaite shoots back.

Grandmama is not about to let her teenagers off the hook. So she goes with the tide. “Truth is often very innocent. And simple,” Grandmama starts. “You put in your request. Somewhere in the back kitchen, the happy meal is being made. You get out your money and expect your order to be delivered to you. You firmly believe that it will be.”

Grandmama’s on a roll now.

“In fact! All this was all activated by your belief that you could have a happy meal when you first walked in. And actually, you had been dreaming about it all day long. Then, when the time was right, it became a reality.”

Kaite sits up again. “Come on, come on, Grandmama ... are you really saying that life is as simple as ordering a happy meal??? In my analogy, we already know that it’s possible to get what we want because we can see the building. Those yellow arches.”

“True Kaite,” Grandmama happily responds. “The arches are a famous icon that tells us what we want is in there. Now — start having that same strength and ‘undeterred’ faith even if you don’t see the building. That takes courage, but it really doesn’t have to.”

“Courage?” Coco responds.

“Yes. Sometimes using your powers appear as simple as ordering a

happy meal. But you have to do the work of seeing those arches even though they're not in front of you. You have that ability. It's all waiting to be activated by you — by your belief in what you want.”

The girls are pondering this.

“It's not always easy to put into words. Just remember that you are a powerful instrument. That's where it all starts. And, that all began in your magic closet!”

Grandmama once again slides off the bed, thinking she's overloaded her granddaughters enough for one talk. But the girls have more to discuss.

“Okay, when we can visualize, and expect, a certain result ... that releases that image out into the Universe to become a reality,” Kaite says.

“Right. That's the law. And, the power to use that law is given to us from the day we are created.”

“But how does it actually “work” again, Grandmama? And let's not go to my happy meal,” Kaite jokes.

“We manifest what we want through our deep subconscious images and our words. In fact, it's been proven that words are wrapped in light.”

“Wow,” Coco responds, somewhat amazed and fascinated.

“And because of our ever-increasing electromagnetic field ... that energy goes out from us and actually takes form in the future. Therefore — that which we believe and accept and work towards — gains power and becomes the life awaiting us.”

“Like the boomerang,” Kaite responds quietly.

“Like the boomerang,” Grandmama repeats.

“Himm ... when did you discover all this?” Courtney asks as she now rolls over on her back.

Grandmama laughs gently and falls back on the bed. “Oh, I wish I could say I were so wise, so all-knowing! But, this knowledge — this law, and our power to use it — has been passed down for thousands of years, and in every culture throughout the world. It has been written about and communicated continually by spiritual leaders, philosophers, and writers, along with generations and generations of parents and children. Men and women who live the everyday experiences and seek dreams. Like us.”

“I just wish I had all your confidence Grandmama,” Kaitlyn adds.

“I’ve hit some pretty hard walls in my life Kaitlyn. But, as my mother taught me: ‘If you do your homework now, it all pays off when a tough situation comes along.’”

“What did she mean?” Courtney responds.

“That you can’t do your homework in the middle of a test dummy,” Kaitlyn interjects quickly.

“And believe me, Grandmama continues, “I’ve been tested. We all are in life, even people you envy the most. That’s why we’re here. To learn.”

Grandmama turns and looks directly at Kaitlyn.

“And don’t call your beloved sister a dummy. That’s not what you want her to think of herself!”

“Right,” Courtney agrees with quite a righteous smile on her face. “That’s not the image of myself I want to project.”

Grandmama shakes her head at Coco’s dramatic flair. “Exactly, our words have great power towards others as well. Why destroy someone’s confidence just to make yourself feel good for a second or two?”

“Yeah, why did you want to make me feel bad?!?” Courtney attacks, now feeling she has the upper edge on her sister.

Kaite sinks back into the fluffy bed and looks at her sister. “Okay, Coco ... I’m sorry.” Looking at her grandmother, “I’m just not confident as my sister, and I struggle with it all the time, Grandmama.”

This surprises Courtney and brings her back down off her soap-box. “Oh, for heaven’s sake, Kaite, you have no reason not to be confident! You should be in my skin. I may be good at sports, but I don’t hold a candle to you at a lot of other things.”

“Wow, how can you say that, Coco?? Besides being great at sports, you’re funny and witty, and never seem to mind what stupid things anybody else says. And, other than getting good grades, what have I done?”

“Well, sis ... that was a super cool goal you made yesterday!”

Kaite smiles. “Yeah, it really was.”

“And no one else even came near making a goal. It was a hard team we faced,” Coco remembers with a shudder.

“Those are the stakes in life,” Grandmama says. “A lot of hard things are in our path. All we can do is train our mind, our body, and our spirit on how to accomplish that which we want. We take risks, and we fail sometimes. But pretty soon, the answers we need come — often through some interesting channels.”

“But I don’t like to fail,” Kaite says with a sigh.

“Ha! I agree. Nobody does!” her grandmother responds quickly.” But you have to believe you’re going to do well. Otherwise, it’s like a race car driver that keeps looking at the wall. Doubting and giving into fears makes your worse thoughts happen. So, pretty soon, that driver is going to hit the wall, instead of staying on the track.”

“You’re speaking metaphorically again ... aren’t you, Grandmama?” Kaite chuckles at her wit.

“You know I am. Careful Kaite, your intelligence is showing.” Grandmama says as she winks at her granddaughter.

“See ... there you are, Katie!” Courtney says, exasperated. “I had no idea she was speaking metaphorically ... well, whatever it was that you just said. You’re soooo smart, and I have to work hard to keep up with you. I know that I say that I don’t care that you have better grades, but I do.”

“But you do make the grades Courtney! And you’re the fun one everyone wants to be around!”

Courtney’s back on her knees. “But they turn to you for help ... because you reach out to people. I don’t do that as well,” Courtney reflects.

Then she sits back down again and is very quiet. “They just look at me sometimes because I’m weird.”

“How Courtney?” Grandmama asks her granddaughter.

“Oh, when people ask my opinion, I always come up with something off the wall. I just can’t help myself.”

Now Kaite’s on her knees. “And tons of kids love you for that Coco! They’re always telling me how cool you are.”

“They do??? I never saw it that way,” her sister responds, genuinely surprised.

Grandmama’s looking between the two sisters, who are now going out of their way to support each other. “Bravo Courtney, it’s good to be unique – and off the wall ... because that’s who you are. Cherish it. In fact, I wish I were a little more ‘off the wall.’”

“Wow. Okay, Grandmama, I’ll be the confident weirdo,” Courtney responds with a sly smile.

Grandmama shakes her head and smiles. “There you go, girl. Be happy that you’re different, Coco! You too, Kaite. I know how it hurts when you don’t conform to everyone else, but I promise you someday you’re going to understand that it’s okay to be the best of who you are. After all, as they say ... absolutely nobody else can do it as well as you can.”

With that, she gets off the bed and heads towards the bathroom. A thought flashes through her mind, and she immediately turns around. “I am warning you both — and I’ve learned this several times in my life —the

only person either of you can compete with is yourself. Trying to compare yourself with someone else's standard is a slippery slope."

She disappears into the bathroom, and Courtney whispers to her sister, "How did we get on a slippery slope?"

Kaite just shakes her head. "I'll explain later."

*

CHAPTER 10

**Turning on the Switch
(Sounds so easy!)**



Grandmama immediately comes back with the girls’ favorite brush. First, she starts on Courtney’s hair. “Look, my sweets, I know it’s hard to grasp — that you’re made in God’s image, and that you have this incredible power at your disposal. But you do.”

“Sometimes, I just feel lost, Grandmama,” Coco responds quietly. “I feel I’m important ... but ... but ... there’s sooo much to understand!”

“Oh, I understand, sweetheart. Our perspective is somewhat limited from this three-dimensional world. But start with this ...”

Grandmama now stands back a bit to make sure she can look at both girls together.

“You are both an integral part of the creative power that governs everything. The power that created you is pouring everything into you, so you own those powers too.”

She turns back to finish Courtney’s hair. “And yes, we spend a lifetime learning how to use these powers correctly.”

“A lifetime!?!” Kaite falls back on the bed again. “Why is it so hard for me to understand what to do! I thought growing up would be easier! There are so many choices and so many roadblocks!!” She ends with a dramatic flair and flings her arm across her face.

Grandmama and Courtney look at each other, sharing a secret smile. As she pulls Coco’s hair back in a ponytail, Grandmama comments, “So many hormones to deal with!”

Kaitlyn moves her arm away and just glares at her grandmother.

“Well ...” Grandmama continues, “just be grateful you’re here — in a country that doesn’t stand in your way — for whatever you want to achieve.

Kaite throws her arm back over her face. “Oh good, now we get a civics’ lesson. On top of everything else, I get to worry about persecuted kids in other countries.”

“Drama Queen,” Courtney interjects in a low whisper. Grandmama keeps on talking to Kaite, but pulls Courtney’s ponytail quickly – just enough for the correct impact regarding her’ whisper.’ Grandmama continues.

“Of course, it’s your obligation to reach out and help others one day as a citizen of a free country. That’s also why you’re learning valuable tools. But right now — you’re overwhelming yourself!”

“And me too,” her sister quickly interjects in a firm voice.

“I quite agree,” Grandmama responds, signaling Coco to sit down as she pulls Kaite up and starts working on her hair. “Let’s look at it this way. You must have the right mental and spiritual framework for Divine Intelligence to continually pour abundance into you. However, you’re blessed with free will; so, it’s up to you whether or not if you want to have a good attitude. But if you want the results you’re seeking, it’s your job to be positive.”

“It’s not your job to whine and complain.” Her sister whispers as she sits on the bed.

Kaitlyn is standing as her grandmother is brushing her hair. She chooses to ignore her sister once again. “And being positive means that we accept that everything will work out. Because we understand the law and the powers we were given?”

“Yes, That’s the place we start. And that’s the place we come back to whenever we’re lost.”

“You mean I’m going to be lost ... later ... too?!?” Kaitlyn groans as she twists around to look at her grandmother.

Yes, Kaitlyn. As we grow, we encounter even more obstacles and tests — along with new rewards. And to help us cope, and frankly, succeed,

we need to return to that central core — that inner strength which nourishes us.

Both girls are silent.

“We turn to God and the power that created us. Otherwise, we do feel lost and alone.”

“So, that’s why we go to church or take a walk on the beach?”

Courtney asks.

“Absolutely. But, it’s really not hard to find God. He created us in His image — and he’s always there within us.”

Silence again. Grandmama is finishing Kaitlyn’s ponytail.

“Sometimes, we just need to go over the basics with Him,”

Grandmama smiles.

Kaite’s eyebrows go straight up. “So ... like repeating first grade, again?!?”

“Well, yes. Sometimes, that means going back and renewing the very basic laws we first learned. But that’s not demeaning. It’s actually quite smart.”

Kaite just rolls her eyes at her grandmother. Grandmama ignores her as she continues.

“Being in touch with our spiritual world is a daily activity. It takes vigilance and discipline, like anything else lasting in life.”

Courtney now has a question, as she stretches out on the bed. “So, our powers aren’t ‘automatic,’ Grandmama?”

Grandmama finishes Kaitlyn's hair and then looks at both her granddaughters. She speaks lovingly. "Our powers are always there, but they are powers we *choose* to initiate. Just like it's our job to flick a switch before the lights can come on. That's how the dynamics of the law start."

Almost to herself, Kaite speaks softly, "First we put on the red shoes ... and then we 'are.' And what we *are*, we believe and accept."

"Perfect! You are right-on Kaitlyn Diane." Grandmama gives a small tug to her ponytail.

"Why does that seem easier than it sounds?" Kaitlyn responds.

"I can remember to do that!" Coco perks up. "I can flick on the switch. I can do that ... I'll just call on my inner Ninja!" Coco again stands up on the bed.

"That — and a continual stream of thankfulness," Grandmama responds as she starts to brush through her own hair.

"Being grateful even when we're unsure, or lost, demonstrates our appreciation for that which we have. It shows that we're ready to receive our gifts."

"Kind of like Christmas," Kaite responds.

"Yeah, like Christmas." Courtney smiles at her sister.

"Yes ... like Christmas — every day." Grandmama smiles.

Everyone's now ready for dinner. Grabbing each girl's hand, Grandmama pulls them up from where they're sitting on the bed. Then, with one on each side of her, she quickly loops her arms around both of them.

“And, you two, I am proud to say, are now old enough to understand these laws. And, from understanding comes confidence and trust.”

“Right ... when does that happen?” Kaitlyn starts. “One day, I’m fine, and —”

Courtney finishes her sister’s sentence, “And the next day — whoosh! Out the window.”

Well, like everything else, it takes practice — for the rest of your lives. Happily, as you two well know, the practice gets easier if you stick with it.”

“Ah, the secret to spiritual understanding is practice?” Courtney asks.

“No, practice is how you get there. Spiritual understanding is knowing the laws that govern us.”

Kaitlyn wishfully looks as she puts her arm around her grandmother’s waist. “And how does this bring us back to our magic closet Grandmama?”

“It’s the same dynamics, Kaite ... just as you freely demonstrated when you were very young in your wonderful closet.”

The girls are looking at her intently. Grandmama smiles. “Now you can do the very same thing — now that you’re conscious of the law.

Still looking intently, Courtney responds, “I think I see the link ...”

“I know you do. It goes like this: Want something, expect it, believe

it, and believe that you're worthy of whatever you desire. And hold tight onto that. No matter what."

"What if we find out that ... well ... it's not the right dream. It's not what we thought we wanted?" Kaite inquires, almost looking sadly at her grandmother.

"Then you'll be guided elsewhere. Trust me. But that dream will get you started on a path of action. The key is to keep listening."

"Like praying mantas, with long antenna always searching the field around them!!" Courtney smiles as she visualizes her favorite little creature in the garden.

Her sister just looks at her bewilderedly and shakes her head.

Grandmama laughs and moves towards the French door leading to the small garden right off her bedroom. It's a private garden where she grows special roses and colorful flowers.

"Speaking of your garden creatures, let's go out in ours and pick some flowers for the table. I think we have a few minutes before Granddaddy calls us."





CHAPTER 11

Into the Garden

Just outside the door, Kaitlyn picks up her favorite clipping sheers sitting on the table. She’s been clipping flowers since she was very little, and it’s still calming for her to work in Grandmama’s garden.

“Back to our magic closet Grandmama,” Kaite says as she looks carefully at the plants.

“Ah, yes, your magic closet. Using our God-given powers — starting when we’re young, impressing our subconscious. We do that through pretending, which comes easily and naturally to the soul.”

Both girls pause and take a quick moment to reflect. Coco smiles as she remembers how easy it was to pretend.

“I like that, Grandmama.”

“Me too,” Grandmama agrees as she spies a particularly vibrant yellow hibiscus.

“I love to pretend ... and to dream.”

She clips the flower and then reaches for a deep pink rose nearby. “Thus, we are continually sending out vibrations from our consciousness — and preparing the world we have yet to live in ... for our arrival.”

Grandmama hands Coco the flowers, and says with a flare, “That which we expect, is already manifesting itself!”

“I don’t understand what ‘manifesting itself’ means Grandmama,” Courtney responds with a slight frown as she puts the hibiscus in her ponytail.

“Well, that is understandable, sweetheart. It goes like this: That which we expect — somewhere, somehow — is already making itself ready for us. Meaning, things are already ‘manifesting’ ... or ‘happening,’ But we can’t see these things until we move forward and meet them in the future.”

“Like the man who wanted the exact same decorator color as mom did?” Kaite adds as she clips a few dead leaves from a plant.

“Exactly.”

Now Coco brightens. “Oh ... I got it! So, when she needed to return something that’s not returnable — that man was there at the paint shop,

already needing to buy it.”

Courtney leans down and smells a sweet rose. Suddenly she looks up with a new-found realization. “Gosh, how awesome. That’s like changing the physical molecules ahead of us — through the power of our visualization!

“Yep,” Grandmama replies. “And ... without a spec of doubt that it’s already taken care of. Not unlike multiplying the fish and loaves of bread.”

“But Grandmama, some would call that a miracle,” Kaite says. “The man in the paint store being there, just when mom needed him.”

“Some would. Miracles are happening around us every day. Big and small.”

She gathers both girls and gives each a quick kiss. “Miracles are acts of divine power, providing what we need.” has been leaning against the patio door into the living room for several minutes, admiring the three of them in the garden — and now finds a perfect opportunity to join in the conversation.

“It has been proven like a zillion times throughout history girls,” Granddaddy smiles as he walks over and puts his arms around the twins. “You have to expect that the problem in front of you will be taken care of. And, if you don’t understand how or why that’s okay. Just know that it will — and sometimes, in a wink of an eye!

“Exactly,” Grandmama responds. We are told that we have within

us the same power.”

“Just like Christ multiplied the fish and bread to feed the people,”

Granddaddy adds.

Grandmama looks round and then nods towards the growing sunset.

“Remember, that sunset is the very power we are in tune with. We are a part of that vibrant creation — and can call on it every day.”

“If we choose,” Kaite adds, always the pragmatic one.

Coco instantly takes her best Ninja stand. “True, but why wouldn’t we! How awesome to have that protect us.”

Kaite just shakes her head at her sister and gathers all the flowers she’s cut.

Grandmama hands Coco the clipping sheers for her to put away.

“Maybe leaving your magic closet — the actual physical room — came at just the right time in your lives. I just hope you never forget it.”

“Why would we ever forget our magic closet, Grandmama!?”

Courtney asks in surprise.

“Well, sweetie, that’s a good question. As life gets busy, we tend to forget that we participate in how our lives take shape every day. It’s too easy to start relying on those things around us that we physically see and hear. And actually, a lot of that is often an illusion.”

Both girls raise their eyebrows and look at her in sheer confusion.

Grandmama heads them toward the garden door.

“But more about that later.”

Granddaddy claps his hands and says, “Okay, everyone, this is a good time to announce that dinner is served on the main patio!”

“Perfect timing. Whose as hungry as I am???” Grandmama asks.

“Me!” Courtney heads quickly through the French door. Kaitlyn, with an armful of flowers, is fast behind her.





CHAPTER 12

S'mores & the Illusions of Life!

Dinner is over, and the long glass patio table has been cleared of dishes. The flames are lightly dancing in the chiminea, and everyone is gathered around roasting marshmallows for their “some mores.” Laughter abounds, but soon Kaitlyn moves the conversation back to what they were discussing just before dinner.

“How can the world around us ... all the events, all the places, all the people, *and* what they say and do — be an illusion Grandmama???”

“Well, let me think.” She takes this moment to pop the last of her some more in her mouth. “I got it! Is something that was said to you in the 4th grade — the girl that used to make you cry — a part of your life now?”

“No ... I don’t even remember what it was she said that made me cry.” Kaite reaches out to roast another marshmallow. “Funny, I’d forgotten all about her.”

“Wow, I remember her!” Courtney jumps in. “She was *nasty*. She even turned on me when she thought I was you one day — and I did nothing!”

“Basically, she was a bully — and worthy of forgetting,” Grandmama responds as she sips her coffee.

Granddaddy passes a toasty marshmallow over to Coco.

“Now here’s a thought, Kaite,” Grandmama continues. “I remember that year was the Christmas where we all woke up together, and you two were so surprised by your new bikes. Does that Christmas have anything to do with your life now?”

“Well, yes ... my first new bike was great.” She pauses, then continues. “But more than the bike, I remember how wonderful the whole season felt. Magical. And that Christmas was particularly important because Kassie was home, and it was the first time we’d seen her since she left for college.”

“So, what does that memory do for you now?”

“It still makes me feel happy ... I felt loved by my whole family. It just couldn’t get any better than that.” She turns and smiles at her grandmother. “After all, it was Christmas.”

Granddaddy speaks now. “So, how important was the nasty girl?”

Kaite gazes into the fire as a small smile forms on her lips. “Not.”

Grandmama winks at Granddaddy as she speaks to Kaite. “So ... the negative things that someone said to you, you chose not to hold on to. It

was merely an *illusion* of reality because it had no impact on you. The nasty girl was insignificant.”

Even though her mouth full of a gooey treat, Courtney can’t resist adding her two cents on to this thought. “An insignificant little nat ... buzzing you at the time.” She’s now using her sticky hands for emphasis. “I get it! So she held no real power over you. No one like that should ever hold power over you — or me, for that matter!”

Granddaddy gives Coco a sticky high-five. “I couldn’t have said it better myself, granddaughter!!!”

Coco beams as she reaches for another marshmallow for her hanger. “Yeah, I just wish I could always remember that Granddaddy.”

“Don’t we all,” Granddaddy replies.

Grandmama grabs the bag and gives Coco one. “Okay wise one. I think that’s enough for tonight.” She turns to Kaitlyn to hand her one more marshmallow as well. “So, I ask you, Kaite... what was real and what was a passing illusion?”

Kaite smiles.

Grandmama continues. “Ahhhh. Discovery is fun.”

Granddaddy is turning his last marshmallow ever so slightly. “So the law — that we are one with God — gives us the tools to see, *and* to accept through faith, that which we want to be.

“Copy that. It seems so simple,” Courtney agrees, with only a slight smirk on her face.

Granddaddy winks at her as he continues. “And that energy — your deepest thoughts that flow from you, along with the words you speak — draws to you that which you want.”

“As my sister said, ‘seems so simple,’” Kaitlyn speaks quietly.

“I understand what you’re saying, girls,” Grandmama says. “Yes, it sounds simple, but it’s active work, and something that gets easier the more you do it. Often we have to consciously ignore the noise around us — to understand what is real and what is an illusion.”

“Is that why it’s so much easier when we’re little Grandmama?” Kaitlyn inquires. “We just pretended all we wanted ... with not a care on our minds! Oh, life was so much easier!”

Granddaddy responds to Kaite. “True, life is simpler as a child. But little children don’t have the freedom to guide their own lives. We get older, and we get more freedom. And with it a lot more responsibility.”

“This responsibility thing isn’t all it’s hyped up to being,” Coco interjects.

“Ahhh ... but it’s part of the package,” Granddaddy responds with a small smile.

“Unfortunately, along with growing up, we also become more ‘earthbound.’” With that, he pops the last of his gooey morsel in his mouth.

Grandmama’s girls curiously look at her. “You know, more concerned with the physical realities and the activities of life, which happen as you get older. The trap is that we become obsessed with things we can’t

control or are simply not that important.”

“Illusions!” Coco interjects happily with arm extended over her head in triumph.

"Right on, kid," Granddaddy replies.

"And you say that all of these fighting illusions... all the things and people that disturb us ... is continual?!? Throughout our whole lives!?" Kaite adds.

“Yeah, I thought when we grew up, all of our problems would be over,” Courtney chimes in.

Granddaddy and Grandmama just look at each other and laugh.

“We all think that when we’re young,” Grandmama says.

“Sorry, not a chance Coco," Granddaddy adds. "Life is fun and adventurous and rewarding. But it's hard."

“Takes a lot of inner strength,” Grandmama says just before she pops her last bite in her mouth.

“And just where does all this inner strength come from, because there are times I just want to hide under the bed,” Coco responds as she nudges a few embers in the fire with a stick.

“I know that feeling Courtney,” Granddaddy replies. “Our inner strength is a divine power we draw from. It’s always with us if we turn to it. It’s up to us.”

“Ah-ha, again! Communication is everything!” Kaite raises her long marshmallow fork and smiles. “Right up my alley.”

“You’ve got it, kid,” Granddaddy now gives Kaite a high five.

“And believe me, girls,” Grandmama adds, “I’m here to tell you that material things and situations can’t provide a lot of comfort in life if we don’t have an inner strength. It’s like walking through the woods at night without a flashlight.”

With that, the embers that Courtney has been playing with erupt quickly, providing a new glow to the family area.

"Wow," says Courtney. "Now *that's* a demonstration!" They all laugh.



CHAPTER 13



The Keys: Unlocking the Veil to the Other Side

It's getting late now, and very dark, except for the twinkling lights in the patio and the burning fire in the chiminea. The evening is still warm, so no one is in a hurry to go inside — even though some really good movies are waiting to be watched that Granddaddy downloaded earlier on the big screen TV.

“Okay, so the law is that God and I are one,” Kaite states as she stares into the fire.

“Yep, that's irrefutable,” responds Granddaddy.

Kaite continues. “And the powers that God possesses, I possess ... if I choose to have an active faith and believe. Trust. Accept that it's true and demonstrate my confidence.”

“Yes ... in fact, in the Bible, there is a direct command,” Granddaddy smiles as the glow of the fire adds a softness to his face.

“Oh ... that book. I don't always get it.” Kaite responds.

“Me neither,” Coco adds.

“I certainly understand that,” Grandmama adds. “The Bible can be hard to understand in today’s modern English.”

“Why?” Courtney adds as she leans forwards and hugs her knees.

“The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and then translated for the world by the Greeks. It’s quite full of metaphysical interpretations.”

“Oh, metaphysical,” Courtney responds, “We just studied that in English class! But I exactly forgot what it means.”

“Metaphysical interpretations of the biblical stories are the spiritual laws – or some say mystical laws,” Grandmama answers. “They are important laws that transcend the physical laws of nature here on Earth. And we must live by those laws to be successful.”

“More laws!” Kaite pops up.

Grandmama smiles and reaches over to gently touch Kaite’s face. “Really no different, and no less important than living by the laws here, Kaite. I don’t need to tell you what happens when you ignore a red light at an intersection. Or, how that wonderful little symbol on the streetlight can tell you when it’s safe to cross the street.”

Grandmama looks back into the fire’s glow. “The Bible was written by God through man over many years and contains the wisdom of the ages ... the keys to the veil between this world and the other side.”

Granddaddy continues. “Then, when the Bible was translated into English — based on the culture at that time — a great deal of the original

underlying meanings were left out.”

“So, today’s literal interpretations can often appear confusing,” Grandmama says. “Even angry and negative. The opposite of what God created.

“Example please,” Kaite responds, almost defiantly, with one hand on her hip.

“Like, ‘fear of God’ is actually, ‘respect for the laws of God.”

“Or, the laws of ‘Divine Intelligence,’” Granddaddy adds.

“Wow,” says Coco. “What a difference.”

“Okay,” Kaite says with renewed interest. “But what about my powers and why I have them? What was the direct command in the Bible you were referring to, Grandmama??”

“Good question.” She answers. “This particular passage is quite clear: ‘I say that you are gods, and every one of you is sons of the Highest.’”

Grandmama gives this a moment to settle in. “You see, Jesus was not God; he was the complete manifestation of God, and so are all people.”

“I know what that means, Grandmama!” Coco sits up straight and almost announces her next statement: “Manifestation ... something that is made real, on a physical level!”

She looks at her Granddaddy and loudly whispers, “Was I close?”

“You were sweetheart!” He responds as he quickly gives her head a rub with his hand.

“Whew,” Coco says. “Then I guess that in this case, it means that ... God became Jesus??”

“Very good!” Her grandmother claps her hands together. “Jesus, and all great spiritual leaders throughout the ages, understood that *since-we-were-created-from-God* — through the thought process of Divine Power — then, through our thoughts, we can also create. That’s the gift we are given.”

“But, why do you call God’s creation ‘a thought process,’ Grandmama?” Kaitlyn asks.

“Because creation wasn’t an accident or random circumstance. How could it be? Just look above at the heavens and the stars. Then, look carefully at the intricacy of that leaf next to you. And, then look at each other! It was all a planned creation, Kaitlyn.”

“Okay,” she responds.

“Therefore, it was thought about first, as is everything you see around you. Everything that’s created by man started as a thought.”

“Just as God created us — in his image, with his powers —” Granddaddy adds, “now we can create.”

His twins are looking carefully at their grandfather, as he continues. “So, you see, the thought-process is our most powerful tool. The energy that flows through it can change the world.”

“And little children start out automatically with that belief,” Grandmama gently adds. “I saw it in the two of you every time you

stepped into that closet and came out with a new outfit. You thought you were — *whatever* you believed when you put on a particular outfit! And with complete confidence, I might add.”

Courtney immediately stands up and takes her ninja stand. “Aha! I am powerful!”

Kaite again rolls her eyes at her sister, as she looks around the large patio. “Oh, like the chiminea? Or this chair? I guess you’re right. Before they were created, they were a thought in someone’s mind.”

“Yep,” Granddaddy answers. “Or how the computer works. Even the use of fire and water! All started as thoughts. We create — or manifest — from our thoughts; we make it real. Just as God created us from that same divine process.”

“Okay, we can create ‘things,’ Kaitlyn starts. “But to visualize what we desire ... and then to have that energy go out into the world ... and then come back to us in a physical form ... that’s asking a lot! How do we know we can do that?”

“Because when you were created in God’s image,” Grandmama starts, “*you are the transparency that He shines through*. It is a part of you, as much as your capacity to love or think or create.”

“So, we have all the same powers? No limitations?” Kaite questions.

“Nope. No limitations.”

“Hmmm. Come on, Grandmama,” Kaite responds with a bit of

doubt.

Courtney is finally coming down from her Ninja stand. “Yeah, I don’t feel very powerful at times.”

“I understand.” Grandmama sits forward in her big, comfortable chair and thinks for a moment. “Okay, Kaite. You separated a plant for me last year, taking a small section of the big plant — which is the main source — and planting that small section on its own.”

“Oh, I remember watching you do that!” Coco pops in. “You did a very good job, sis.”

“Right,” her sister responds. “If I remember, you were too busy drawing to get messy with me.” Kaite then turns to her grandmother, reluctant to see where this is going. “Okay, Grandmama. I’ll work with you.”

“What happened then, Kait?” Grandmama’s asks.

“Well, the new plant grew.” Kaite looks around. “And there it is right there in that pot. Doing quite well, I might add.” She gets up to look at it. “Wow, look at all the new growth on it. It’s gotten so big; I didn’t recognize it.”

Grandmama then turns to her other twin. “And — what amazing new fact did you learn about the ocean, Courtney, the one you just told me about?”

“Himmm,” she ponders. “Oh! That a teaspoon of the ocean has every element of the whole ocean in it!” She smiles, quite pleased with

herself.

“So why would you two be any different?? God created you both in his image. And, since He made you in his image, He’s given you access to the knowledge He possesses. Every minute of every day, it’s there for you to use. This is your birthright.”

“Understand girls,” Granddaddy adds, “God is not a mysterious force somewhere out there. He’s within you. Just as that little section of the new plant is, Kaitlyn. Or, as the teaspoon of the ocean is, Courtney.”

Silence. Just a few seconds.

“Clever, Grandmama. You too, Granddaddy,” Kaitlyn responds.

And then Courtney cheers. “NO LIMITATIONS! I like that!”

“But we have to make an effort first, Coco,” Grandmama immediately responds. “When we were given free will, that was the only requirement. Just like turning on the light switch when we enter a dark room.”

“We’re continually turning on light switches?? Coco responds and thinks. “*Oh*, you mean, turning to God. We have to make an effort to ... connect!”

“Exactly!” Granddaddy responds.

“Then, when we consciously learn to use our God-given creative powers — we draw what we desire into our lives,” Grandmama adds enthusiastically. “And, as we draw events and people into our lives, we’re presented with lessons. It’s God’s guidance that helps us to understand those

lessons.”

“By our mistakes and our successes,” Granddaddy says, “we grow even more. Quite a wonderful process.”

“Indeed, nothing random about it,” Grandmama smiles.

“Oh, I handle my successes quite well. Like winning at soccer. I love doing that!” Courtney exclaims.

“Good example.” Granddaddy says. “But winning at soccer tells you a lot more. It tells you what kind of person you are. Do you win with grace and honor? And hopefully some humility. And when you lose a game, how you handle it? How you grow from failure, also tells you what kind of person you are.”

“Why do I get the feeling that you’re not just talking about sports?” Kaitlyn raises her eyebrow at her grandparents. They just smile at her. “Oh, like dealing with the nasty girl. I get it.”

“All through our lives, Kaitlyn, we have to deal with nasty situations. We’ve all done it,” says Grandmama. “And dealing with success also presents challenges.” She looks at Courtney and winks.

“Lots of trial and error,” Granddaddy adds.

“Yeah, and from what you’re saying, even my successes are work! Not a pretty picture to tell a kid,” Courtney responds with a pout.

“A kid, that’s on the verge of adulthood, my cute one,” Grandmama adds. “Look, you’re going into high school. This chapter in your life is the first real conscious test of strength and character. And, it will continue, I

might add. You both will be exposed to many elements and situations that the real world will eventually present. How you deal with them now will help mold the kind of person you become.”

Granddaddy leans forward. “And the kind of person you become determines the kind of people you draw into your life.”

“My heavens ... what a chain of events!” Kaitlyn proclaims.

“I’ll do you one better,” Granddaddy quickly adds. “Take the wrong road, with the wrong attitude, or do the wrong thing — or worse, continue to go down that road when you ‘know’ it’s not the right road — those choices will hurt you as a person.”

“So, you see, girls,” Grandmama adds. “giving in to a nasty emotion, or bad decision can lead to the very ‘opposite’ chain of events you wanted in the first place. Doing the wrong thing is always harder and more miserable in the long run.”

“We all make mistakes,” Granddaddy adds. “But the principle is to acknowledge our mistakes and learn from them. Growth. Not always smooth or easy. But that’s why we turn to God for guidance.”

“And comfort,” Grandmama says quietly. “Trust me, I know from experience.”

“Soooo ... *who* I choose to be ... is dependent on *how* I choose to accept a lesson???” Kaite inquires.

“Yep, her grandfather acknowledges. “As it’s often described in literature: Taking the dark side, is one path. Taking the light side, another

path. Both with consequences. But again, that's why we have free will. God didn't create us just to be a puppet."

"Yeah, the dark side," Coco thinks out loud, "what a waste of all those magical powers."

"How true, my granddaughter," Granddaddy says. "The great thing is if you make a wrong decision, and you know it's wrong — while you may have to pay the consequence — you can still become the person you were meant to be by . . ."

". . . learning from your mistake and making a better choice!" Coco beams as she finishes his thought. "Got it." She gives a thumbs-up to her grandfather.

"Is that another part of God's Laws?" her sister asks.

"Sure, Kaite." Grandmama answers. "It's called forgiveness. Which is what I meant when I said I've turned to Divine Power for comfort: *He forgives you your trespasses, as you forgive others.*"

"Ah, we get strength from the big plant from whence we came!" Coco responds, sounding quite poetic.

Now it's Grandmama who gives Coco a thumbs-up. "Right — the unbreakable bond with that from which you were created!"

"Is making a better choice what you called strength of character Granddaddy?" Kaitlyn now asks.

"Yep, It's like an internal muscle. And believe me, it's a muscle that keeps developing in every phase of our lives."

“My! I think that’s a metaphor!” Courtney interjects.

“It is!” her grandfather responds. “And, *metaphorically* speaking — the original muscle is forming right now —for both of you. How you act while facing life’s tests — the big ones and the small — determines the shape and strength of that muscle.”

“Sounds overwhelming. I’m not sure I’m up to the task.” Courtney says with a yawn.

“We all feel that way at times, Courtney,” Grandmama replies as she stands up. “But right now, I think we could all face anything better with a nice cup of tea before bed.”

“Wow, I’ll second that. I’ll help you, Grandmama.” Kaitlyn says as she unwinds herself from her chair.

“Me too,” adds her sister. “But I need to make a pit stop first.”

“Well, I’ll stoke the fire and hold the fort down here until you lovely ladies return,” Granddaddy says to the now-empty patio as he reaches for a few more small pieces of wood.





CHAPTER 14

Embrace Changes!!!

Grandmama comes back out to the patio carrying two cups of hot steaming tea, followed by Kaitlyn, who is carrying two more full cups. Then Courtney emerges with a tray holding thick cream, stevia, honey, napkins, and teaspoons. Granddaddy stands up and takes the tray from her. He sets it down on the small coffee table that sits in the middle of the comfortable patio chairs. The fire in the chiminea once again has a lovely glow to it.

“You were talking about our metaphorical muscle, Granddaddy,” Kaite says as she passes him a cup.

“Yes, and all those horrible tests we have to face,” Courtney adds as she takes her cup from her grandmother.

“I think you're exaggerating Courtney. I never said they're all

'horrible.'

“They are to me. Tests. Yucky,” she replies as she pours cream in with her hot tea.

“No sweetheart, we're talking about our successes as tests as well,” Granddaddy smiles warmly at his granddaughter. “The key is that we learn how to deal with life. With that knowledge, everything we experience is something that makes us better than we were.”

“And, I promise you this,” Grandmama adds as she stirs her tea, “*all* the lessons learned will ultimately give you greater confidence about yourself.”

“Well, I could go for a little more of that!” Courtney responds.

“Couldn't we all,” Kaitlyn joins in as she snuggles back in her chair.

“Life throws a lot of changes at us, things we didn't expect.” Granddaddy says, sitting back and taking a sip of his rich tea. “Some good and fun and easy, and some very difficult. But it gives you the tools to handle these situations along the way as well.”

“And there we are back to the beginning of our conversation,” Grandmama adds cheerfully, putting her teaspoon down and sitting back with her cup. “How we embrace these changes, and the lessons they inevitably bring, will determine who we are.”

“Ah, the strength of character again,” Kaitlyn replies with a smile.

“That's it,” her grandmother says. “And *that* determines how well we can move on. It's our choice.”

“Like Mama?” Kaite inquires. “She always tells us that she’s learned a lot through her mistakes.”

“And you always tell her how proud of her you are Granddaddy,” Courtney chimes in.

“I am. Both your grandmother and I are. She’s certainly gone through a lot of change.”

“She’s definitely made lemonade from lemons. That took a lot of courage,” added Grandmama, “and a strong belief that she was protected in whatever she chose to do. No matter how scary it seemed.”

“Mama was scared?? She always seems so strong,” Kaite states.

“At a tough time in her life,” Grandmama begins as she sets down her tea, “when she and your dad were divorcing, she felt like she’d hit rock bottom. Your Mom literally had to start over again.”

“Or, maybe she just picked up where she left off from years before — when she chose a different path,” Granddaddy says.

“True. Either way, her confidence was low. Her feeling of self-worth was almost non-existent. But, because of you two, who were still very little girls, she knew she had to pull herself together and provide a life for you.”

“After decades of being away,” Granddaddy adds, “she went back to college, and followed a passion in geology she once thought was beyond her abilities.”

“And maybe it once was, in her mind. Maybe she didn’t feel worthy

of those dreams," Grandmama continues. "But then, when she returned to college, she had a lot of life's lessons under her belt. She was determined to be a success."

"Wow. I'd say so. And now she has her master's!" Coco exclaims.

Grandmama picks up her cup. "So, every path we take gives us something with which to build our lives." She sits back in her chair and smiles. "If we choose to let it."

"Now, that's a strength of character," Granddaddy raises his cup in a salute. "She's a difference in the world, and I hope she knows it. I do know that with all she's going through, she is happier than I've ever seen her."

"She's certainly moving heaven and earth to make sure she's doing everything she can for you two," Grandmama looks at both girls. "She wants you to have choices and opportunities within your reach."

Granddaddy continues. "So, our destiny has less to do with what we've been dealt with in life ... then it does with *our* decisions on whether we're going to succeed or not. Ultimately, how our life turns out is based on how we choose to deal with the lessons life offers us. Your Mom turned to God a lot during that very risky time. It gave her a strength even she didn't believe she had."

"Well ... she has a LOT of strength now. That is one strong lady," Kaite responds.

"Yeah — scary sometimes," Coco adds, crunching down in her

chair.

“I think that’s part of being a parent,” Granddaddy gently laughs as he takes another sip.

“Wow, I never realized how hard it must have been for her,” Kaitlyn shakes her head slightly at the realization.

“It was,” Granddaddy says. “But your Mom gained a lot more from her mistakes than she might have otherwise. That was her path. Now she knows, without a doubt, that you have to create the life you want — regardless of hurt or failures. That’s part of the process, and no one can do it for you. You can only depend on yourself for success.”

“Shucks. I’m still looking for a magic bullet,” Courtney adds, please with remembering a new term she learned in school.

"That's okay, kid. We all do until we grow up and realize that it's just a waste of time." Granddaddy winks as Coco. "Always expect success in your life ... but understand that there will be obstacles in getting there."

Kaitlyn sits up and recites: “The person you become is determined by how you handle those obstacles.”

Courtney imitates her sister: "Learn the lessons without hiding behind excuses."

“My ... I’m impressed,” Grandmama says.

"Me too," Granddaddy adds as he turns to his wife. "Do you think we might have gotten through?"

“I think maybe we just talk too much. They’ll be reciting to us in

their sleep.”

“Well, whatever it takes. They always say you have a second chance when you have grandkids,” he winks at his wife.

"Ah, yes, there's hope! But now, maybe it's time for b ...”

Before Grandmama can finish her sentence, Kaite jumps up and says, “No! One more cup of tea! I'll bring the kettle out.” And she dashes into the house.

“And I will stay ever vigilant here ... protecting our grandparents from any night invaders.” With that, Courtney takes a strange, but lifelike stance; the position of her favorite green garden insect. On one leg, she slowly turns her head left and right, up and down.

“Ahhh,” Granddaddy exclaims, “the Praying Mantis returns. Now our garden is official!”

With that, Kaitlyn returns with a kettle of hot water. Upon seeing her sister, she rolls her eyes as she sets the kettle down on the table.

Courtney flops down in her chair. “Well, I've done my job. The night is complete.”

Granddaddy pours hot water into her cup as she continues. "Granddaddy what we were talking about before — that the decisions and choices we make determine who we are. Is that what they mean with the saying, 'you are the author of your destiny.'?"

“Goodness, sweetheart, you really learned a lot in your literature class this year. Yes, that's exactly what is meant. Despite the surprises in life,

the person you become through dealing with life's lessons — starting now — shapes your ultimate destiny.”

Granddaddy then pours hot water in Grandmama's and Kaite's cups. “Handle your successes well, and you draw greater opportunities to you. When you get up again after failure, you gain a greater resilience to life's challenges. In fact, often our greatest achievements come after we've gotten up and tried again.”

Uncle Ryan keeps telling us that ‘the only failure is not trying — if it's something you really want,’” Kaitlyn adds as she stirs the cream into her tea.

“Well, that's what got him through the Navy SEALs training. And a lot of other things in life he didn't see coming.”

“Yeah, but failing is scary,” Kaitlyn adds as she puts both hands around her warm cup.

“What to be scared of? Let's think about it, girls. There's much more pain in not having a productive life ... in not making a difference in someone's life ... in being alone because you're afraid to reach out to others. And, of feeling so scared of confrontation or rejection that you never even try. Or — of not doing something, anything, to add to your corner of the world! Now, those are all things to be scared of.”

“And all of that, besides making you miserable, go against our basic nature,” Grandmama adds as she sips her hot tea.

“What???” Courtney looks up from her cup.

"Well, we were born with the desire to 'seek' — to be part of something greater than ourselves. It's an intricate part of our spiritual DNA, and probably why we were put here on Earth." Grandmama sets her cup down and continues (as always, expressing with her hands). "Most importantly, we were given the tools in which to belong ... to share ... to *seek*. No matter how much we may try to deny it, removing yourself from all of that gives you no options, no growth, and no way to be really happy."

"Meaning," Granddaddy adds, "it's worth being scared at times."

"But, when I fail, or something happens I can't control, I don't like the pain. It hurts." Coco responds.

"Well, you will feel the pain, you can't avoid or bury it," Granddaddy adds. "The only way to get over it ... is to go through it. Now, that can be scary, but there's no other way to get to the other side! And the sooner you face your own pain, the sooner you can find out how to handle it."

"So ... that's when you need something to hold onto," Kaite adds, feeling comfortable with the understanding.

"Absolutely correct," her grandmother responds. "And you're finding that you have something important to turn to and hold on to. A source deeply connected to you. Your own personal guide."

"That sounds great, Grandmama," Kaite starts. "But sometimes I feel fear, and I don't know what to do about it. Like when I'm bullied. Or I fear something might happen to Mom when she's traveling. Or ... what if

we have a terrible earthquake?" Kaite's overwhelmed by her thoughts. "What do I do? How do I tap into my source?"

"Yeah," Coco agrees. "All I want to do is run away and cry."

"Oh, I know that feeling, honey." Grandmama reaches out for a hand from both girls. "If, at the worse moment of fear, if you quietly let every fiber of your being relax, and see yourself surrounded by a light that's penetrating you ... you'll be feeling God's presence."

Both girls are looking at her. They want to believe she's right.

Grandmama squeezes their hands. "Can you do that right now? Want to try?"

She releases their hands, and the girls sit back in their chairs, closing their eyes.

"Let go," she says quietly, "with every fiber. Just *be*. Feel yourself surrounded by warmth. Feel yourself the center of the circle, and now penetrated with light. Just let it happen. Take your time. When it's comfortable, say to yourself, 'God and I are one.' Say it over slowly." She waits.

"Oh, Grandmama ... something's happened," Coco says, eyes still shut.

"It's like something lifted up and off of me," Kaite adds.

They each slowly open their eyes. There is a difference in their faces; fear has disappeared.

"That which you felt, that communicating light, is a protective love

... surrounding you every second," Grandmama says. "No different than when you were being held close as a baby by those who love you. Trust it. You have nothing else you have to do except feel it around you. Could you feel that hurt in your chest dissolving the more you let go? The more you allowed yourself to feel the light permeating you throughout?"

"That's exactly what it felt like," Kaite says.

"And that didn't take long," Coco adds, smiling as she opens her eyes. "It's like it swallowed me up."

Granddaddy laughs gently, "God doesn't take any time in visiting you. 'Instantly' is the right word. And, as you go further with this ... this prayer or meditation ... it happens even faster. Actually, in a *blink*, when you call upon it." Granddaddy snaps his fingers in the air.

"It was like the light was consuming me," Kaite adds. "And it felt good."

Courtney pops in, "Yeah! Swallowing me up ... but in a gentle way!"

"What you did, girls," Grandmama begins as she sets her cup down, "you have opened the door for Divine Spirit to touch you, guide you, and communicate with you. And when you do this – for any reason — you will know what to do next. I promise. You will hear it, and you will feel it. The conversation will have begun, and then ... you will be able to move on with your day. Knowing beyond a doubt that you're not alone."

Grandmama picks up her cup and starts to take another sip, but then

Granddaddy reaches over with the pot of hot water and refills her cup. She nods her appreciation and then continues.

“I did this a lot when your older sister, Kassie, was having her heart operation. So little, at six months. So many tubes are coming out of her after she got out of that long, long surgery. I just keep seeing God’s light calming her, and then I was calm. As the light penetrated, I could actually see her healthy self, happy. My little one radiating joy.”

Looking at the fire, Grandmama has an incredible calm reflected in her face as the warm firelight surrounds her. “Faith is the substance of that which we wish for — before we can see it.”

“But what if I open a discussion and get a busy signal?” Coco asks. “I mean, what if you don't feel like God is answering?”

“Or even listening?” her twin adds quickly, but quietly.

“God hears you the moment you ask. The hardest thing for us to realize is that he’s within you every second of every day, awaiting *your* communication. But fear and doubt can get in our way. Our emotions are strong, and that makes it hard to hear. I know that only too well. So yes, sometimes, when we open the conversation with God, we feel like we’re getting a busy single — or that the phone is just ringing and ringing ...”

“So, what do you do?” Kaite asks.

“To stay ahead of my fear —that which helps me to stay open to Divine Power — I talk sincerely with God several times a day; it doesn't matter where I am. We had these conversations not just during Kassie’s

surgery, but all through the months leading up to her operation. Staying open to Divine Power dissipated the worries and calmed my aggravating ‘reasoning mind’ that congers up all those worries — until I felt the calm take over. It was tough at times, sometimes I felt like I had to put a bomb under my fears and blow them up! Only then could I hear God.”

“I like that image Grandmama,” Coco rejoins.

"Me too, sweetheart," her grandmother responds. "But God always got through. Even if I didn't get a specific answer, I could feel the calm take over, and I knew something ‘right’ was happening.”

"Well, I think we should be shown a big map of the situation; then we wouldn't have to worry!" Kaite huffs, sitting back in her chair.

Granddaddy answers while leaning over and ruffling his granddaughter's hair. "That would require something greater than our ‘reasoning’ mind. Man's logic and reason can be very limiting.”

“How true!” his wife says. “All I unequivocally knew — feeling it everywhere within me — was that a greater force than I, with my limited pea brain, was taking care of all of us.” She looks into the fire again. "We live in fear, or we live in faith.”

“And she came through it fine,” Granddaddy adds. “And look at her today. She's a marine biologist for heaven's sake!”

“But ... what if she had died?” Kaite calmly speaks up.

Silence is momentarily the only thing heard amongst them. Then Grandmama speaks with quiet, fearless certainty.

“Well, that would have been a horrible thing for us – and we would have had to deal with all the lessons her passing would have presented, probably for the rest of our lives.” She pauses and softly smiles at Kaite. “But, it wouldn’t have been horrible for Cassandra.”

Kaite looks at her grandmother, and ever so slowly smiles back. “Ah, life everlasting.”

“Right, sis!” Coco adds, quite ostentatiously. “I think that was the *whole point* of Christ’s rising — and all those witnesses saw him.”

"Perfect Courtney," Grandmama adds. "That's exactly why we celebrate the Resurrection — knowing it as the very reason for His Crucifixion.”

Then turning back to Kaite, she continues. “And as overwhelming hard, it would have been not to have her in our lives ... I know how much more blessed I was just being allowed to share the time we had. So, I guess I’d have to say Kaite, that if it meant losing her early, or never having her at all, I still pick being with her for the time we had.”

Kaite responds slowly. "Well, when you put it that way, Grandmama ... I guess you can say that about anything that's ripped away from us,"

"How wise of you, my little one." Grandmama reaches over and squeezes her hand. “You asked a critical question, Kaitlyn, and I want you to know that I thought about both sides of Kassie's outcome. I had to, and that's only natural. But again, I couldn't let fear control me. I would have accepted a different outcome, but I was determined to want the first option! And, I

needed to impress that upon my subconscious."

Courtney sits up with great zeal. "Which acts like a magnet ... and boomerangs back into reality! I got it; I've actually got it!!!"

"So true, my sweet, And, that's the only action I knew to take," Grandmama responds. "So, all I could do was see her healthy ... which I believe helped her physically. And then, when I continued to get those same strong images bouncing back at me when I prayed, I knew she'd be okay. It wasn't arrogance. It was hearing what God said to me."

"Like hearing the future!" Coco again gleefully pops up.

"Yes, sort of Coco! But this all takes practice to calm yourself enough to 'hear.' Sometimes you have to try several times when you're in a difficult situation, to actually be able to experience the presence."

"But ..." Kaitlyn inquires again, "why does it take time if you said God was always there?"

"All I can say, Kaitlyn," Grandmama says, "is that a lot can stop us from hearing or seeing what God is trying to communicate: Free will, our physical sense of survival, our ego, or just being or just being out of practice with the two-way conversation that God's trying to have with us. And of course, it is when we need guidance 'instantly' – when we are the most scared — that's the most difficult time to 'get out of ourselves.'"

"Huh," Kaite just looks at her grandmother.

"That's an idiom Kaite," Courtney is more than eager to answer. She smiles and speaks with great riotousness. "An expression unique to our

culture.”

“I know what an idiom is, idiot child!” Kaite responds in a low voice to her twin. “But I don’t know exactly what that idiom means.”

Grandmama ignores this quibbling and continues. “‘Getting out of ourselves’ ... is to get out of our own way and put our immediate feelings aside.” And ... this is the very time we need to do just that. When we pray.” She sits back in her chair and looks at the stars; then continues. “The important thing to realize is that no matter how much it hurts ... you have to let your ego play second fiddle.”

“What’s second fiddle ...” Kaitlyn starts.

“It’s a metaphor!” Courtney announces with pride. “Meaning, you have to put your ego aside and truly pay attention to what your lessons are offering you.”

Kaitlyn leans into her sister and whispers: “Okay, Courtney, will you quit showing off! I acknowledge that you got a higher grade than me in English.”

“Yes, I did, didn’t I? Amazing. My A trumped your B+! I’m glad you made me take stock of myself, sis.”

“I remember that talk,” Kaite immediately responds. “But I think you’ve gone a little overboard now.”

“I’m just trying to project my ‘self-worth.’ Even though you are the smarter one — and, don’t ever call me an idiot again!”

Grandparents listen to their twins’ banter, more than confident

they can handle it. As the finish, Granddaddy adds, “Well, I think you two have worked out a lot tonight.”

Kaite puts a finger to face and looks upwards. "Let's see ...Embrace the changes. Pay attention. Be vigilant. Stay connected to your source, and you'll come out on top. Your right Granddaddy, we covered a lot of territories." And with a smile, as she stands up and stretches. "Now, all we have to do is spend a lifetime perfecting it all!"

"Ah, but isn't it nice you have a place to start!" Grandmama adds as she stands up.

“No, Grandmama, we started with our magic closet," Coco says as she gets up and gathers the two cups belonging to her and her sister.

“How right you are, Courtney,” Grandmama adds gently. “But now, I think we all could use a soft pillow to lay our weary heads upon.”

Just then, Courtney puts down the two cups and moves in another direction.

“And then, when I awake, I will be vigilant! Ever on the lookout ... like a Praying Mantis! Always turning my head to see what’s going on.”

Courtney takes another strange, but lifelike, the position of her favorite green garden insect. Again, on one leg, as everyone watches as she slowly turns her head left and right, up and down.

“Okay, I’ll join you in that.” Kaite takes a very difficult poise next to her sister.

Silence.

“Where did that come from?” Granddaddy whispers to his wife as they stand in the patio doors, going into the living room.

‘Don’t ask. Let’s just say we have two very expressive granddaughters.’”

“My, that magic closet did wonders,” Granddaddy says as he kisses his wife on the cheek.

“We’re demonstrating a simple analogy, of course,” Coco says as she and Kaite return to human form.

Quite happy with her selection of terms, Coco smiles with great delight at her grandparents. “Okay, I think my work here is done at last. I’m heading for bed.”





POOL
&
BEACH
BABIES
... Always!



CHAPTER 15

Breakfast on the New Patio!

Breakfast was in full mode as Grandmama awoke the next morning. The sun was bathing the living room as the girls and Granddaddy were whipping up a storm in the kitchen. As Grandmama enters the great room, Granddaddy smiles and places a hot cup of coffee on the large bar that separates the kitchen from the living room.

"My, what a lovely surprise," she comments as she sits at the bar to watch her family. "Ah ... coffee, the nectar of the Gods. Thank you, sweetheart."

"You're quite welcome. I see you're dress for this morning's activity," Granddaddy answers as he starts to whip the raw eggs, adding a little cream to make sure that scrambled eggs become soft and fluffy.

Courtney quickly looks up from placing the freshly cooked bacon on a large serving plate. At the same moment, Kaite, who has been buttering the

toast, turns to look at her grandmother.

“Oh, you have your bathing suit on!” Kaite smiles with anticipation.

“And your sarong wrap that I love so much. Are we heading to the pool or the beach!?”

“Since we have such a big, beautiful Olympic size pool in the garden area, I thought you guys would enjoy a swim. I even bought a couple of those soft beach balls to play with.”

"Hooray! I was eyeing that pool yesterday as we were coming in," Courtney adds. "I love all the potted giant palms trees around the pool. It makes me feel like we're someplace exotic."

"Ah, but you are!" Granddaddy adds as he carefully folds and refolds the eggs in the hot pan on the stove. "You're at your grandparents' new home! We specialize in exotic." The twins both smile as they roll their eyes at their grandfather.

“And, still eyeing my clothes, I see,” Grandmama says as she winks at Kaite.

"Okay, well, I guess some things never change," Kaitlyn responds with a smile as she hands her grandfather all the breakfast plates.

"Okay, everyone!" Granddaddy announces removing the big cast iron pan from the stove. "Grabs plates and silverware and head to the patio. Breakfast is served!"

The birds are chirping in the big oak and Jacaranda trees near the

patio, with an occasional crow adding his rough caw to the mix. The water in the blue dolphin fountain is adding to the delightful ambiance as the family is finishing breakfast. Under the green umbrella, on the long glass table, plates are now empty as everyone leans back in the comfortable, round Mexican chairs that have been used at meals since before the twins were born. The whole patio is filled with colorful potted plants and now bathed in a mixture of sunlight and shade from the massive trees nearby. The family is, as always, deep in conversation on this beautiful morning.

“Is that anything like what our English teacher was explaining?” Kaite is in the middle of asking her grandmother. “About the metaphor of “changing horses in the middle of the stream?””

“Could be,” her grandmother responded, pouring a fresh cup of hot coffee from the decanter on the table. “If we're doing one thing, and we do not get the results we need, *it's the time, at that very moment*, to change how we're going about doing something. And yet, when we're in the middle of a problem ... or a relationship ... that's the very moment we tend to rely on what we've always done.”

“Why do we do that?” Courtney asks as she picks up a small piece of leftover bacon from the serving plate and pops it into her mouth.

“Because it's comfortable and a habit we automatically turn to ... even if it doesn't work.”

“So, how do we change when we're scared?” Coco responds.

“Ah ... that’s the secret,” her grandmother says, leaning back in her chair with her hot coffee. “We just do. Again, not always comfortable at first.” She takes a sip and goes on. “Change is how we actually choose to receive — and respond to — information. Be it in a crisis, an argument with someone we care about, or a lesson that comes out of nowhere.” Grandmama sees that Granddaddy wants a coffee refill and takes his cup to pour fresh coffee from the decanter next to her. She continues talking while doing so.

“Again, changing your attitude gets easier when you realize that everything you go through, every situation, every emotional upset, has a lesson. It’s tucked in there somewhere for you. And though it doesn’t seem so at the moment, that lesson, no matter how big or small, can make you a better, and ultimately happier person.”

“Not always easy to remember when you’re in the heat of things,” Granddaddy adds, taking his full cup and leaning back in his chair.

“Like what kind of ‘moments’ are you talking about?” Kaitlyn asks.

Grandmama thinks for a moment and then speaks. “You’re losing at an important soccer game. Or, your teacher catches you completing an assignment poorly. Someone is criticizing a skill or accomplishment of yours. A friend is making you feel you're not wanted. Or, there’s someone you're angry with, and you don't know how to communicate what you're feeling. You’re feeling jealous and unworthy during an argument; the other person’s not trying to understand you. Shall I go on?”

"No, thanks, Grandmama!" Courtney responds. "All that's devastating. And I've had every one of those things happen to me!"

"Me too, Coco. Now, I'm not saying that the person criticizing you is always right, but that's what you need to discover. Nor may the lesson seem fair. But that has absolutely no part of the equation."

"But it's important that things are fair, Grandmama," Kaite demands.

"Yes, it is important Kaite. But that's not something that you can always control. And, often there are other reasons for a particular situation that you're never going to know about. Like getting dismissed from something when you thought you were doing your best. Or something is taken away from you. Or an opportunity was missed you had prepared for."

"How unjust," Kaitlyn responds as she leans back in her chair, past the overhang of the umbrella, and looks up at the trees.

"I agree. But you have to stop and think, 'what was my lesson in this?' Again, really hard to do! But that's your only job. Without seeking *something* from the experience that makes you better off than you were, you end up beating your head against the wall."

"Why would I do that!" Courtney adds quickly.

"Oh, Courtney!" Kaite just rolls her head and then shakes it at her sister's response.

With a slight smile, Grandmama looks at Coco and continues. "I just mean that you end up hurt, angry, or resentful and with no place to turn. And often, you can't even understand how your actions might have contributed.

So, you get defensive. And then you end up on a dead-end street.”

Sitting back and looking at both her granddaughters, she continues. “Look. I’ve found it feels better to just admit to yourself that you’re hurt, but that you’ve got to get over it. Sometimes the other person *is* wrong. But if you care about them, you need to find a way, *right then*, to relax and help turn the situation around. It does no good to put them on the defense again. Better to be calm and try to explain yourself without anger.”

Granddaddy leans in and adds, “You’re putting the control of a situation back in your own lap.”

"And, you're changing horses in the middle of the stream!" Kaite says as she makes the connection with the metaphor her teacher was explaining.

“Exactly!” he responds. “And then other times — when a situation does seem out of your control, and basically unfair — I’ve found that it usually turns out that there was something better for me up the road.”

“Ah! Like Grandmama always says, ‘The world can be unfair, but ultimately the Universe is just.’” Courtney announces in her best Grandmama voice.



CHAPTER 16



To the Pool: It's Too Great a Risk to Play It Safe!

A while later, the family is walking out across the lawn towards the pool. Everyone is in bathing suits and cover-ups and flip flops, carrying towels.

“Sure, there are risks in life everyday Courtney,” Granddaddy is saying with his arm around his granddaughter’s shoulder. “Every time you get on a plane or go out in public. Or live in an earthquake zone. Or swim in the ocean. Or ride a bike. Or ski. Or have feelings for someone or great passion for something.”

"I get it, Granddaddy," she responds as she looks up at him and slightly smiles. "But again, this conversation is heading towards depressing."

He laughs affectionately. “But think of it this way. The risk is far greater by *not* doing something, or not participating in life or investing in people. What some people call ‘playing it safe’ — the outcome is never good.”

“In what way Granddaddy?” Kaitlyn asks as she walks beside him.

“Yeah, this isn't sounding good," Courtney adds.

“There are four lounge chairs over here, everybody,” Grandmama adds as she enters the gate to the pool. The rest follow her. They pick four chairs in the sun, and all put their towels down and take their wraps off. Once they settle down, Granddaddy continues.

"Well, to answer your question about why the outcome is never good when you always try to take the 'safe' way in life; here it is from my experience." Granddaddy adjusts the lounge chair and sits back. "By always taking the 'safe way,' you find yourself alone, afraid of everything. Your fear of everything — especially being hurt by people — paralyzes you. Then you get the very condition you didn't want; you're alone and drifting. You're now controlled by illusions. You've given up your power to go out and actively participate in life.”

“Now, *that's* scary," Courtney says as she leans back to get comfortable.

“Look, girls, you may get hurt in life,” their grandfather continues, “but sadly, those who have no spiritual direction get hurt the most and for the longest ... with little to take them forward. But, by taking a chance on

life, knowing you're not alone, you overcome your fear of being hurt—allowing you the opportunity to gain far more than you'll ever lose." He leans back, smiles, puts his arms up, and his hands comfortably under his neck and closes his eyes. "In fact, I'll guarantee you'll have far more positive experiences than negative ones. That's a win as far as I'm concerned."

All is quiet for a slight moment. Everyone is enjoying the sun. Then, Courtney speaks, "Can you give me a guarantee in writing Granddaddy?"

"Of course not, my sweet granddaughter." Granddaddy opens his eyes and looks at Courtney. "But what's our other choice? Is there another path that will provide a better result? Do we take a chance on life and all it has to offer — knowing that we're protected, knowing that we're guided, or accept that everything is haphazard and that all circumstances in life are to be left to the wind!?? Now that's scary!"

Grandmama is enjoying the sun but can't resist adding a thought. Her eyes remain closed behind her big dark glasses. "Understanding our feelings and how to move on effectively is a process we go through every time we take a chance. Every time we interact with others. Every time we participate in life."

Granddaddy reaches over and squeezes her hand. "But I promise you this, girls. Every time we step out there, we gain far more knowledge than one can imagine. And that's the springboard that moves us forward!"

"Hmmm," Courtney responds in the chair on the other side of her grandmother, "all that still sounds pretty scary."

“And, that's *exactly* why we need council from a source greater than our own small reasoning intellect!” her grandmother responds as she turns and looks at Coco. “And we have it! It's our birthright — an umbilical cord. Can't be untied – it's there forever!”

“Figuring out all of this is not easy. Not at first.” Granddaddy adds as he swings around and sits up. “But at your age, it's important to start, because you're beginning to take part in life ... on your own terms.”

Kaite is sitting on the other side of her grandfather and also sits up. “After all we've talked about, what's the alternative ... really?”

“Hmmm ... This growing up stuff is a lot trickier than I thought,” Coco responds as she and Grandmama get up.

With that, they all hit the pool.



CHAPTER 17



After the Swim: Awakening to Our Possibilities!

After lots of swimming, tag, and throwing the light beach balls, the gang gets out of the pool and heads to their lounges to dry off. The pool area has gotten much busier now, but it still doesn't feel crowded because the pool is so large. Just an incredibly pleasant day in the sun with strangers sharing in the joy of being outside and near water.

Drying off before she sits down, Kaitlyn is now staring at the water as it twinkles in the sunlight across the pool. The other three are now seated comfortably in on their lounges, and suddenly Kaite is aware that her family is quietly staring at her.

She feels them looking and realizes that she hasn't moved in a couple of minutes. "Oh ... I was just thinking that the water reminded me of what we were talking about last night," she says as she sits down and puts her legs up. "The way you choose to face the lessons in front of you is

guided by the attitude you take into each day. Like a boat being steered by a rudder; our attitude is your rudder.” She smiles with satisfaction.

“I love symbolism!” Courtney exclaims. “I can really get into this. I actually think my English teacher might have been on to something.”

“Good analogy Kaite!” Grandmama does a thumbs-up and then sits back. “A person with a good attitude is better equipped to look at things honestly. And, then they're less apt to be afraid of what they see. They know that things can get better.”

“Huh? Run that by me again, Grandmama,” Coco says as she lifts up the dark sunglasses she snagged from her grandmother's drawer.

“Of course, happy to oblige sweetie,” her grandmother says as she lifts her dark glasses and looks directly into her granddaughter’s big brown eyes. “If someone’s in a positive frame of mind ... and that becomes a habit ... they tend to have more support around them. Then, they’re less likely to feel cut off, even when they’re alone. They’re in a healthier frame of mind. Make better choices.” She winks at her granddaughter. “By the way, my glasses still look great on you.” Coco winks back.

Putting her glasses on the top of her head, Coco responds, “I get it. You’re positive and send off the right vibes — so people naturally want to help.”

“Yes!” Granddaddy says excitedly. “Those ‘vibes’ draw things and people into your life that help open new doors and solve new problems.”

“Yea. More tools!” Kaite joins in with her eyes closed against the

sun.

“It also opens up the flood gates for God’s power to flow in,” Grandmama says as she casually hands her own glasses over to Kaitlyn.

“Thanks, Grandmama,” she says with a big smile. “I see the magic closet follows us.”

“Indeed, indeed,” her grandmother replies as she puts her hand above her eyes to shade them from the sun. “If you whine and find excuses for everything — or are negative and always looking for something to complain about — you’ll get little support from the world around you. This leads you to be even more resentful. It’s usually what selfish, and jealous people suffer from as well.”

“Yeah, I know a few people like that,” Coco responds, putting her glasses back on her eyes.

“Boy, you said it,” Kaite adds. “But we can’t go around smiling and giggling at everything ... we’d look ridiculous.”

“Yeah,” Coco adds. “That’s soooo junior high.”

“We’re not talking about a giggly, hyper-imitation of happiness,” their grandmother replies. “We’re talking about a deep-down connection with the world around us. That takes getting outside of ourselves. Basically, to stop thinking about ourselves.”

“Easier said than done Grandmama,” Kaite adds.

“True, but we start by not thinking of ourselves as victims in any situation that occurs — and start looking at ourselves as a warrior. We find

those small miracles each and every day. And trust me, they're abundant.” Grandmama then lies back down. “Once you've opened yourself up to looking around ... you'll be absolutely amazed at how often you witness God's demonstrations in your life.”

Courtney immediately moves onto her knees and takes the stance of a Ninja warrior. Her family watches her, as do several people around her.

As Coco sits comfortably back down, she says, “What?? It's what we've discussed. It takes vigilance. That was my vigilance stand.” Silence from her family. “Just saying ...” After she picks up the sunglasses that fell when she took her poise, she adds, “Yeah, but there's always someone who wants to rain on my parade Grandmama.”

“Ah, yes. But, part of the habit of being happy is to understand that if someone is continually negative, we don't have to be a part of it. Try to get them out of your life — or ignore them.”

Granddaddy now sits up. “Remember Courtney, as you change and grow and face life, it's not always easy to be happy. Some days are just tough. But the habit of ‘happiness’ is a habit that becomes part of who you are.”

“Got it. My default mode!”

“If you like ... yes. Good. But girls, being a happy person overall, is also a moral obligation. Misery and negativity produce a chain effect in the lives of people around you. You owe them, yourself, and Divine Creation more than that. Granddaddy lies back down. “More importantly, as you

allow you yourself to be happy on a regular basis, you'll be able to deal with the world more on your own terms.”

“And, it'll rub off on others — which is a nice plus,” their grandmother adds.

Now Kaite sits up. “What kind of ‘happy’ are we talking about here, Grandmama? Dancing in the streets?”

“Well, that would undoubtedly be fun but highly unrealistic. What we're talking about is the warmth of a smile to a stranger. A simple thank you given honestly to someone who's helped you. And each day, sincerely asking those in our life how they're doing — and then actively listening. Being aware of the world around us. Again ... it's the choices we make every day that keeps us feeling good in spite of anything else.”

“It's that what they talk about when they say a person has a light inside them, and everyone can see it?” Courtney inquires.

“Definitely,” Grandmama replies.

Kaite shakes head. “Okay. I understand that what you put out, comes back. But it seems so easy for you, Grandmama.”

“It does come easier for some — part of the nature we're born with. But life's just as tough for people like us. Perhaps more. We tend to take more risks, but then we get more moments of rejection and failure.”

She looks at her girls, who are looking intently at her. “But ... many more chances of success.” She smiles as she leans back on her lounge. “You see ... happy people don't have less pain; they just deal with

it better. And have found better resources along the way. Physical, mental, and ...”

“Spiritual!” Coco finishes her sentence, smiling as her big dark glasses catch the reflection of the noonday sun.

“Yes, definitely, Coco. They may be afraid, but their attitude has helped them build strength and resilience. And *that* builds both confidence and trust.”

“What I've found for me,” Granddaddy interjects, “is that happiness awakens you to the world around you ... both the seen and the unseen. Being awake to the world around us gives us the ability to see and understand the daily demonstrations in our lives. All those little symbols and happenings that pop up constantly on our path.”

“Like mom and the paint,” Coco reflects.

“Just like that — the stranger who needed the unique decorator color she had bought by mistake!” her grandfather responded.

Kaite looks at her grandparents over her dark glasses, which have slipped down on her nose. “So, being happy gives you confidence. And you trust more, but you still get hurt??”

“Yes,” Grandmama answers. “But you have a much better chance of success. Ultimately, a person who has learned to be happy will take more risks in the right direction. Thus, more rewards — and more understanding of how to enjoy what you’ve earned.”

Granddaddy sits up and looks at his girls. “So, happiness, and

thankfulness, are attitudes with which you choose to face each day. Those attitudes see you through the good and difficult times – and *that's* what builds your character.”

“Ah, that again!” Courtney replies.

“Yes. That's where most things come back to in life,” Granddaddy replies. “Attitudes' are as powerful as any other tool in your arsenal.”

Coco jumps to her feet. The ninja returns.

“Good sis, really good. We get it.” Kaite smiles as she reaches for her sister's arm. “Now, sit down before you embarrass me.” Coco obliges with a smirky smile on her face, since embarrassing her sister is a continual goal.

“Look,” Grandmama now adds, “we all know that it's not easy to be happy a lot of the time, but once you make an effort and put yourself in that frame of mind, no matter how easy or difficult it is, you'll be amazed what can be accomplished. Doors open.”

“And — as Grandmama has taught me, girls — the habit truly becomes easier as you move through life.” Granddaddy leans back down. “And yes, it's scary to ‘change horses in the middle of the stream,’” he smiles at his wife as he takes her hand, “but oh-so-worth-it.”

With that, Granddaddy breaks into an off-key rendition of the song, *Smile, and the World Smiles with You*.

Instantly the twins stand up, gather their things, and head back to the apartment — giggling.





CHAPTER 18

The Reservoir Against Cynicism

Kaite is blow-drying her hair in her grandparents' master bathroom while Courtney is in the guest bathroom taking a luxurious tub. After Kaite puts down the hairdryer, she turns to her grandmother, who has just finished putting on a touch of make-up.

“What I don't understand,” Kaite starts, seeming out of the blue, “is why anyone would reject all those powers were given as our birthright? Maybe I mean ‘turn away.’ Either way, it just doesn't make sense when you realize how much we were given as tools to actually succeed on this Earth.”

She picks up her grandmother's lipstick. "Not to live in fear of what's around the next corner. Why run from that???" After quickly applying the soft coral lip color, she hands the small tube back to her grandmother, she continues. "And ... why wouldn't someone want to be happy??"

"All good questions," Grandmama says, taking the lipstick and putting it in the drawer with a few other things. "When humans are hurt enough or disappointed, they tend to become cynical. Lots of unexpected things can happen, and their dreams don't appear to go the way they originally planned. They might face rejection, disappointment, or watching someone in harm's way, financial survival, death of a loved one, loss of a family pet — these are all the experiences that often happen on the way to living life."

Arm and arm, she and Kaite leave the bathroom and head for the great room.

"And if you let all that overwhelm your blessings, your hopes — and your true knowledge, then ..."

"Ah ... the light inside dims," Kaite acknowledges.

They go into the living room where Granddaddy is waiting. Having set out lemonade for everyone on a tray on the oversize ottoman in front of him, he's relaxing on the L-shaped couch next to the expansive patio windows looking onto the patio.

"Right," Grandmama responds to her granddaughter's statement, as she and Kaite sit down on the big couch. "The light dims, and sometimes

goes out. And instead of getting back on track and replacing the negativity — step by step with God-given guidance — they take the 'easier way' out. They ignore the guidance they've been shown, out of fear. They become cynical and negative. To me, that's actually a lack of courage. So, in reality, the 'easy' way is really a nowhere ride to self-destruction.”

Courtney comes in, wet hair and all, and plops down next to her sister and reaches for the lemonade's last glass.

Granddaddy hands it to Coco as he speaks. “And ... I know it's hard to realize in your young lives, but in this great country, nobody has to stay miserable. Nobody has to stay poor, and everybody can get help. You can create your own ‘good breaks.’ As my father repeatedly told me, ‘the one thing that separates the successful from the unsuccessful in life is *tenancy*.’”

“So, no need for cynicism!” Courtney remarks and raises her glass after taking her first sip.

“You got it, kid!” her grandmother responds as she raises her glass. “Granddaddy and I have experienced almost everything the human condition can experience in our five decades together. And with God's guidance, which we count on continually, we've found a way through every situation — and been better for it.”

She thinks for a moment, then continues. “In my life, I have seen dozens of people in far more difficult situations than I'll ever know — and they've become pillars of strength and light and wisdom. They are the true

heroes that live in every neighborhood. So, I have little tolerance for whiners — the ones who won't make an effort. They turn away from the powers — the tools — they were given by their birthright.”

Grandmama leans back for another moment of reflection. “The powers we're given — even though they seem out of reach at times,” she raises her glass, “truly act as a reservoir from which we can all drink.”

“A new metaphor!” Coco announces as she clicks glasses with her grandmother.

Grandmama smiles. “Yes, a new metaphor just for you.”

Kaite joins in. “So, the pain of disappointment is compounded by the pain of turning away ... from the reservoir?”

“Yeah!” Coco gets a spark in her eye. “Also, that analogy ... ‘from which we all drink’ ... that’s like being upset that you don't have anything to drink, and then when someone offers you water, you turn away from it.” She settles back into the couch, quite pleased with her line of reasoning. “I mean... how dumb is that?”

Kaite smiles at her sister, “Coco, you never have to worry about being smart or communicating. Trust me, with that mind, you're going to do just fine.” With that, Kaite picks up the tray of empty glasses and heads into the kitchen.

“Thanks, sis!” Coco responds to her sister. Then leaning into her grandmother, she whispers, “That was a compliment, wasn't it?” Grandmama smiles, squeezes her granddaughter's hand, and nods her head,

yes.

From the kitchen, in the great room, Kaite calls out, “How about I cut up a plate of fruit to hold us over?”

Now stretched out at one end of the couch, Granddaddy responds, “That's great, sweetheart. Our dinner reservation at the beach isn't until sunset; fruit is a perfect way to hold us over.” With that, he shuts his eyes and gives in to a nap.



CHAPTER 19



Feel Alone?

Kaitlyn returns with the plate of colorful fruit and sets it down on the ottoman with several large napkins.

“Well, I understand what you're saying, that happiness is an attitude. But it's hard to be happy when you feel alone,” she says as she sits down and puts a napkin on her lap.

“Oh, I hear you,” Grandmama says, picking up a small bunch of grapes. “But being alone is part of the human condition ... throughout our lives.”

Courtney has chosen a large slice of apple, but before her first bite, she says, “You know, I never felt alone in the magic closet, but there are times, even being a twin, I feel all alone.”

“I understand, girls. I get it because I’ve been there. But feeling alone needn't scare you — it’s not permanent.” After popping a few grapes in her mouth, Grandmama continues. “And yet, it's a feeling that can sweep over us at the oddest times. That's when we have to use the strength and power of knowing that we're part of something greater than we are. And that while we may feel ‘alone,’ ... we're never 'abandoned.’”

“Again, easier said than done,” Kaite replies as she finishes the last of her perfect banana slice.

“Ahhh ... that’s when you have to ‘connect.’ Remember? Plug yourself into Divine Mind.”

“Ohhh – another trip!” Courtney responds as she wipes her hands on her napkin.

“Huh?” her sister replies, looking at her.

“That's what it felt like last night on the patio when Grandmama showed us how easy it was to pray. I felt like I took a mini-trip.”

"Oh. Okay." Kaite responds. She uses her napkin to wipe the last of the pineapple bite from her lips.

“Perfect!” Grandmama responds. “So, let's say that now we're feeling alone and vulnerable. So, let's take another quick trip. Okay?”

“Okay,” the girls reply in unison.

Grandmama starts. “First, feel bathed in bright light. It may take a moment, but let the light surround you and warm you within. Enjoy it.”

The girls sit back and gently close their eyes. Slowly, a slight smile

forms on each of their lips. Grandmama continues.

“Now say a small prayer if you like. A few statements all your own to God. All thoughts are accepted.”

The girls are still and relaxed.

“This is how you open the door to receive.”

A few seconds later, Grandmama gently says, “Then ask yourself ... when do you not feel alone? It’s okay if you want to say it out loud. It’s up to you.”

Coco: “When I am walking on the beach.”

Katie: “When a friend hugs me.”

Coco: “When I’m laughing with Mom.”

Kaite: “When Courtney and I are sharing a special moment.”

Grandmama continues, almost whispering. “Then hold those moments very close, and when you feel alone, call up those moments; the ones you’re feeling right now. Don’t let the moment of vulnerability you find yourself in go by — until you can feel that warmth and see those special moments in your mind’s eye.”

Silence.

“Then, if there’s a special problem you’re having, ask for it to be resolved, and say thanks that it’s taken care of. That’s all you need to do. As you close, ask for strength to be with you as you move through your day.”

Silence. Slowly each girl opens her eyes.

“Gosh, that seems so easy. I do feel better,” Kaite is the first to speak.

“Wow. The more I relaxed I became, the more I remembered all those times I felt happy and protected. I felt so ... opened,” adds Coco.

“Yeah . . . *free*,” says Kaite.

“That's the law at work,” Grandmama says gently. “You and God are one — and all can be taken care of.”

“Gosh, and it felt like it only took ... like a few seconds,” Coco adds.

“True, and it gets even easier the more you practice it,” Grandmama replies as she reaches for a slice of apple. “Soon, you'll realize that while you may be alone, you don't have to be lonely for long. And, while you may be scared or nervous about something, you are wrapped in protection.”

“Just tune in,” Kaite smiles as she grabs some grapes.

“A mini-mini trip!” Coco announces.

“Yep!” her grandmother adds. “Get out of God's way. Relax and let God through. Sometimes, it may take a few tries to set up the communication, but you'll get there. Keep using your visualization to see yourself in perfect light.”

Courtney finishes her fruit and asks, “But, what if we're using this ... a moment with God ... to help someone else?”

“Ah, I've done this with you two all your lives! In fact, I've done this with every person I've loved, going back to when I was very young. When my parents would go on a trip — or anywhere, my young mind perceived as out of my sight.”

“What did you do?” Courtney questions.

“Same thing. Same process as you just experienced. You start by actually seeing them surrounded by light, whatever color, whatever intensity you like. Then request that they are protected. Use whatever words or imagery you want. And then always give thanks that it's being done.”

“That doesn't sound as easy,” Kaitlyn says.

“It is eventually. And just as quick. But you have to believe that your ‘phone call’ with Divine Spirit has been received.”

“How do you know that it has?” Courtney asks.

“Same way. As you pray, and as you visualize, you feel a wave of inner peace. Sometimes it happens instantly; sometimes, it just takes a little longer. But you have to relax and trust the process. It works.”

“Our ‘built-in’ communication?” Kaitlyn says.

“Absolutely. It came with the body at birth,” Grandmama smiles and winks at her girls. “Knowing that we can always turn to God, can lead us to that inner peace just when we need it.”

Granddaddy opens his eyes, smiling. “And these are not just words girls,” he says as he stretches and sits up. “Trust me. After seven decades of living, I know from what I speak. But first ... you have to be ‘willing’ to turn to God.”

“Ah, I remember,” Courtney interjects. “The only thing we're asked of is to take the first step.”

“Right,” Kaitlyn adds. “We have free will. That was our only condition.”

“You got it.” Granddaddy responds as he reaches for a slice of banana. “That’s not as easy to do as one would think — if we don’t understand the spiritual world from which we came.”

“Give it over to Infinite Spirit and know that it’s fixed. Fixed in ways our limited reasoning mind can’t always conceive.” Grandmama says after finishing her last bite of fruit. “As my Daddy always said, ‘Daddy Fix.’ That’s God’s promise too.”

“Wow, I like that saying. ‘Daddy Fix,’” Kaitlyn says.

“Me too,” her sister adds.

“Yep, whenever I had a problem, I’d have a long conversation with my Daddy. And he’d always end the conversation with ‘Daddy Fix.’ Somehow that relieved my mind, and I knew that the problem was going to be solved.”

“When did he first say that to you, Grandmama?” Courtney asks.

“It started when I was very, very little, but it’s something he continued to say to me — always with a wink and a smile — *long* after I was grown. It was a keyword that helped me relax and see things from another perspective. It definitely helped me stop worrying, get out of the way, and let a higher power take care of whatever I was sad about.”

“Just like you did when you were a little girl!” Coco exclaims.

“Just like that. It taught me to trust. And as I grew older, it reminded

me to trust every time I doubted. Even when the doubts tried to come frequently. I just kept repeating to myself, ‘Daddy fix, Daddy fix.’”

“Can I use that word when I talk to God, Grandmama?” Courtney exclaims. “Thank you, God ... Daddy Fix.”

“Of course, Coco! Excellent choice. If that really works for you, that’s great. Then you’ll know that the call has been received. Now you can hang up the phone — and go on with your life. And I promise, your Great-Grandfather will be smiling every time you that phase.”

“Wait. Hang up the phone??”

“Sometimes for a prayer to be answered, you have to hang up the phone... metaphorically speaking Courtney.”

“Ah, yes. Metaphorically. I really do like that word.”

“We know you do,” Kaite responds to her sister as she pops a grape in her mouth.

“But ‘Daddy fix’ is a great visualization,” Grandmama continues. “Knowing that you’ve given your request, you need to end the conversation so God can go ahead and work for you. You need to hang-up the phone. That is why we say, ‘Amen’ at the end of any prayer. It means ‘So be it ... It’s done.’ And you can move on — knowing it’s done.”

Granddaddy then adds, “It’s amazing that once a prayer’s released — by hanging up the phone — and you accept that it’s complete, how much better you feel knowing that it’s been taken care of.”

“Wow,” Courtney replies. “Are you sure, Granddaddy?”

“Trust me ... I've tested it a thousand times.”

“I'd say that's a pretty good test run,” Grandmama responds as she stands up. “The sun tells me it's late afternoon, and I guess we'd better get ready to go out.”

With that, the girls dash off the couch, each one trying to outrun the other for the guest bathroom.

Granddaddy looks up at his wife. “Somehow, I think I'm the last in line to get ready.”

Giving him a quick kiss, she answers, “Good thing, it doesn't take you nearly as long as it does

us!” And with that, she heads towards the master bath.



CHAPTER 20



A Dinner Out: But How Do I Communicate with Humans?!

As they roll down the highway in Grandmama’s red convertible, the sea air drops the temperature as the late afternoon sun heads behind the horizon. The girls wanted the top down on the trip to their favorite seafood restaurant, which sits above the boulders lining the beach. The convertible has traveled parallel to the sea for several miles. As the sea breeze blows, the girls bend their heads down for protection in the back seat.

Grandmama turns in the passenger seat and looks back at the twins, huddling together. “Are you girls all right back there?”

“We’re fine,” Kaite announces over the wind’s sound.

“We can pull over and put the top up.”

‘No,’ replies Courtney. ‘This is worth it! I love seeing the ocean —

when I pop my head up.’

“Ditto,” Kaite agrees.

“Ah, their grandmother’s own granddaughters,” Granddaddy exclaims from behind the wheel. “We’ll be there in about five minutes anyway.”

“Good, because the way this weather is turning,” Grandmama looks out at the sea as the dark clouds start to hide the sunset, “and judging by how big the waves are getting, I’d say we’re in for a storm.”

They pull into the parking lot just as a few sprinkles start to fall. Granddaddy quickly brings the top up, and everyone gets out.

Inside is decorated in a Hawaiian theme while the dark paneling and overstuffed booth seats give it a warm and cozy feeling. Beyond that, what continues to bring awe to each who enters is floor-to-ceiling windows spanning the whole width of the restaurant — while the ocean waves nearly break against the massive glass.

And no matter where your seat, you have a view of the ocean. From the entrance, the hostess escorts the family down each level until they reach the tables next to the window. They came in early enough tonight that they’re seated at a booth where they can practically be part of the last-of-daylight mixing with the storm’s elements.

“Wow, what a great time to be here!” Kaite says, practically pressing her face to the glass.

Coco, sitting across from her sister, puts her hand on the glass freshly sprayed by a breaking wave, “Yeah, I’ve never been here during a storm.”

“Our timing is perfect,” Granddaddy comments. “Within the hour, darkness will descend. Then all we'll be able to see from the floodlights on the restaurant's roof is the last of the waves on the rocks.”

“But we will still hear them!” Courtney says as she looks at her grandmother next to her.

“Yes, we will. King Neptune is definitely talking to us tonight,” Grandmama adds as she opens the menu, and the waitress approaches to take their drink order.

In the last of the late afternoon light — after the drinks are delivered, and the orders were taken — the family continues to be memorized by the sea's dynamics.

Then, looking at her grandmother, Kaitlyn leans in across the table and says, “So what's with you and old King Neptune Grandmama? You've mentioned his name all my life.”

“Hmmm. I don't know. I've always had an affinity for him. He represents the sea and everything I love. Swimming in it, sailing on it, watching it.”

“And definitely walking next to it!” Kaite adds as she takes a sip of her non-alcoholic pink fruity drink.

“Yes, definitely! That we do love,” Granddaddy responds. Sitting next to Kaite, he easily clicks glasses in a toast. “To King Neptune and the sea.”

“Here, here,” Coco responds as she and Grandmama toast together

with a clink of glasses.

“So, King Neptune is a way of connecting with the sea, Grandmama?” Kaite inquires.

“Yes. I guess he represents the spiritual aspect of me. All the known — all the unknown. Respecting my limits with the sea.”

“It is magnificent ... but it is scary at times, Grandmama,” Courtney adds as she takes another sip.

“How true. I guess that’s why I wanted to learn to sail so desperately growing up. I somehow always felt that in loving the sea, I had to push whatever limits I had if I wanted to really understand it. Even if it scared me.”

“Did it work?” Kaite responds.

“Most of the time. I find peace in my knowledge of the sea, and my experiences gave me that. But the journey continues, and I'm still working at it.”

“Vigilance again!” Courtney raises her glass.

Immediately, her sister speaks in a quiet growl. “Don't you dare go into your praying mantas here!”

“Okay, okay ... I wasn't going to!”

With her elbow on the table, Kaite puts her chin on her hand and looks at her grandmother. “It sounds like communicating with the spiritual world is a lot easier than communicating with humans. At least the humans in my world.”

“Am I suppose resent that?” Courtney kiddingly whispers out loud across the table to her grandfather. Granddaddy winks back at her. Grandmama and Kaite ignore them both.

“It can definitely be more difficult communicating with humans, Kaite,” Grandmama responds, setting her glass down. “But what part of our species are you having trouble with? Boys, girls, adults?”

“All of the above.”

“All the time?”

“No. Just when I want to say something important. It never comes out the right way.”

“I can second that,” Coco interjects, finishing the last of her bubbly purple drink.

“Maybe you’re looking at it from the wrong angle,” Grandmama responds. “I mean, only thinking about what you want to say.”

“What other angles do I have to work with???” Kaitlyn responds, now sitting up straight in her chair.

“Well... you start a little earlier in the game ... before you need to communicate something important.”

Since they haven’t been served yet, Grandmama leans gently on the table and says, “You need to understand the perspective of whom you’re talking to.”

“Of the person to whom your talking,” Courtney whispers low while taking a sip.

“Absolutely right, Courtney!” Grandmama turns to her and smiles. She puts her arm around her granddaughter's shoulder and lowers her voice. “But correcting someone in public is condescending — let alone rude in interrupting the conversation, sweetie — so save it for later. Just be happy you understand proper grammar.”

Courtney whispers back, “Oh ... okay, Grandmama,” and continues the final attack on her drink.

“I'm waiting, Grandmama. What do you mean, *'understand the perspective of whom you're talking to?'*” Kaite gives her sister the evil eye when Courtney looks up with the desire to ‘correct’ again.

“Look,” Grandmama starts, “you have to know upfront what the other person is feeling. Reach out. Ask questions and be willing to listen. That's hard at first, but you'll get answers. Some you'll like and some you might not. Who knows, but then you'll have something to work with when you go to want to let people know how you feel about things.”

“Hmmm. Interesting,” Kaite replies, taking another sip. “So, this will clear up confusion about what I’m saying understanding the other person first??”

“If possible. It's called semantics. Meaning, what's going on in one person's head is not the same thing going on in another person's head — even when they're talking about the same subject.”

“But, if you’re talking about the same topic Grandmama,” Courtney adds, “how can there be a miscommunication? Facts are facts.”

“Ohhh, if only that were true! First, facts are often from the perspective of the way you choose to interpret them. That's why you need to ask questions ... to see if you're even on the same page.”

“Huh??” The twins both respond, again in unison.

“I mean, if you're talking about a red rose ... you can be thinking of the lovely smell or deep color. But when you mention a red rose to someone else, all they can think about is the thorns that prick, and how they don't like the color red.”

Coco thinks. “Well, that certainly shades the conversation differently.” Pause. She's suddenly pleased with the pun she's created. “Shades ... red ... get it??” she says to no one in particular as she smiles to herself.

She then looks around the table and sees everyone smiling — which she misinterprets as laughing at her. “Okay, I may not say things on a deep level like Kaite, but ...”

“Stop Courtney! Granddaddy interjects. “You don't say things like Kaite, because you're not Kaite. But you say so many things brilliantly and colorfully for Courtney!”

Grandmama adds, “You both have your own incredible style, Courtney. And you have to realize that we were smiling at you because we were admiring your quick wit.”

“Okay ... me too, Cort,” Kaite responds when her sister looks at her for approval as well. “You done good.”

“Thanks, sis, I appreciate it. And for that, I won’t even correct your grammar.”

Kaitlyn ignores this last comment and turns to her grandmother. “So, you were saying — it’s how we interpret things.”

“Exactly. We have to learn to read . . . or to sense . . . what's going on around us. Even when it's just between two friends, and if you don't understand why something was said or done — ask. It just might save a lot of unnecessary hurts.”

“*Epecially* between those we love,” Granddaddy adds. “I mean, how often is a spat about a misunderstanding??”

The teenage sisters look at each other. A coy smile appears on their lips.

Their grandparents give each other a knowing look.

“In fact,” Granddaddy continues, “getting in the habit of asking questions ... and really, *honestly* listening ... can help you throughout your life.”

“*Epecially* when you want to talk to someone new,” Grandmama adds, “but really don't know what to say to them. Ask a question. Strangers are usually flattered when someone cares enough to inquire about what they do or how they feel or what their dreams are.” Sitting back and finishing the last of her wine, she adds, “And, you actually might learn something new. Imagine that.”

Kaite thinks for a moment and then asks, “What if you find that ...

well ... you've picked the wrong friend? That you really don't feel comfortable with that particular person.”

“Ah ... well, that happens,” Grandmama responds, shaking her head gently. “Sometimes, with one individual, or sometimes with several people collectively. A 'group' you thought you wanted to be part of.” Her quick look at Courtney silently warns her not to correct this colloquial way of speaking. Courtney gets the hint.

“A whole group of people??” Kaite responds. “Not easy. And please don't say to ‘just change friends,’ Grandmama. You couldn't possibly know how hard that is.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, everyone likes being with you.”

“Right ... and I just started out that way? Years of living and learning didn't make a difference? Oh — with a few tears thrown in??” Grandmama says dramatically, with a touch of sarcasm thrown in. She softens her voice and looks at Kaitlyn directly. “That was the first really tough lesson I had. And it started precisely when I was your age.”

“Really? What happened?”

She looks far away, remembering. “We had just moved to a brand-new area, and of course, I wasn't happy about the move. But it was the start of 8th grade, and I decided that I wanted to be part of the ‘in-crowd.’”

“Wow,” Courtney says. “Talk about adding insult to injury. A major move, and then the ‘Queen and her Wanna-Be's!’”

“Well, it wasn't quite that dramatic; there were some nice girls. And the boys that congregated around them were ... pleasant.”

“What happened then?” Kaite asks.

“Slowly and surely, I ‘got in.’ But by the end of my freshman year, I realized that ‘most’ of these people were not people I really enjoyed. And, they actually cared very little for me. Oh, we had fun at times. Some good memories. But I seemed to be doing all the work in keeping up the friendships.”

Granddaddy shakes his head. “Not a good sign.”

“No, and I knew it. By then, as much as it hurt, I *somehow* found the self-reliance to pull away and seek-out something better — eventually. As a test, the summer between my freshman and sophomore year, I didn't call anyone of that ‘crowd.’ Not to go to the beach, or the movies, or anywhere.”

"Gosh, what happened, Grandmama?" Courtney now asks.

“No one called me. But my cousin and I were close, and we went places. And a girlfriend I'd been close to in my old neighborhood; we hung out and giggled a lot.”

“How did you feel?” asks Kaitlyn.

“Oh, I cried from time to time. It wasn't fun realizing that I wasn't important to them. But then, I realized that they weren't that important to me — and that's a lesson that only comes from being very honest with yourself. As soon as my sophomore year began, I started seeking out one or two girls I had actually enjoyed but hadn't built a lasting friendship.”

“Why hadn’t you?” Coco wants to know.

“Honestly. Until then, I had been too busy spinning my wheels with the girls I thought I was 'supposed' to enjoy.”

Grandmama looks out at the darkened ocean and continues. “Slowly, as I made an effort with the girls I actually liked, we started forming a group. It was an easy-going group with diverse personalities. I was still casually friendly with the other girls — everyone usually is in high school, but they didn't seem to miss my presence.”

“I’m so sorry you were ... hurt. It’s so odd to think of you that way,” Kaite says gently.

“Thanks, sweetheart.” She holds her wine glass and continues. “But from that experience ... as difficult as it was ... I learned the real underlying values of friendship. And *that* has guided me through every new experience my whole life — with both male and female friends.”

“And, I’ve watched and learned!” Granddaddy says.

“Right back at you, kind sir,” Grandmama says.

The girls continue to listen after their grandmother pauses and then adds, “I didn't know it then girls, but I was molding my concept of true friendship and whom *I* wanted to be as a person. It certainly opened me up to see people differently; to see all the possibilities.”

“Wow, you women really do go through a lot.” Granddaddy reaches across and takes his wife’s hand.

“True! Maybe because we’re built to guide civilization.” She

squeezes his hand in return. “That's a full-time job, and it's part of our structural make-up to start young.” She winks at her husband. “As much as I often wished it weren't. Females can be tough to deal with.”

“So complicated,” Kaitlyn sighs.

“So bitchy,” Courtney adds.

“I don't remember having that much going on in high school,” Granddaddy replies. “Oh, a little rejection here and there, but the hurt could be ignored at the end of the day.”

“Right. Case in point,” his wife responds. “When you're young, you guys don't deal with all this stuff because your DNA contains a different set of ‘needs.’”

“Oh, true. Very true!” Her husband answers.

“Men ... so simple!” Kaite sighs again.

“Not really, Kaite. Just built different, which is the way it's supposed to be — if we're going to conquer the world together.” Looking back at her husband, Grandmama adds, “Your youth is about conquering, and then protecting.” Granddaddy nods in agreement. “But as you guys develop into grown human beings, eventually you covet loyalty and value real friendship.” She takes both his hands in hers and squeezes them. “But ... you need the other traits first — conquering the world in front of you, and then protecting that which you cherish — if you're going to do your part to move civilization forward.”

Groaning, Courtney interjects, “Can't I just skip this part and go

straight to adulthood?”

“I thought you didn’t want the responsibility of being an adult,” Granddaddy asks.

“I don’t. But it seems heads and shoulders above all this learning and testing.”

“Yeah,” her sister agrees. “How’d you get through it all, Grandmama?”

The waitress is now seen approaching with a huge tray of hot, succulent food.

“Well, first of all, I just kept thinking that there *has* to be life after high school,” Grandmama answers as the waitress sets down the tray. “And — something else really helped. But, more about that, later girls. Look now at the feast before us!”





CHAPTER 21

A Magic Bullet to Get Through a Tough Moment

The storm is over by the time our clan finishes dinner. They hang out awhile as the grandparents enjoy coffee, and the twins split an exotic dessert. When they finally go outside, it's so refreshing that they decide to take a short walk along the rocky shore

With the clouds gone, the moon appears brightly in the sky, illuminating their way along the beach. Even the ocean has calmed down. The waves are quietly lapping on the shore, and the air seems warmer.

“So, what was the second thing?” Kaitlyn asks as she picks up a shell.

“What, Kaite?” Grandmama answers as she and Granddaddy walk, each with their arm around the other’s waist.

“The second thing that you said got you through the turmoil of high

school.”

“Oh ... well ...”

“Come on, Grandmama, don't hold back!” Courtney says as she avoids the water that is coming towards her shoes. “First, you believed that there was actually life after high school. And the second thing was ...?”

“Okay. It was — *The Lord’s Prayer*.”

“Oh, *please* ... a prayer!” Kaite stops and looks at her grandparents. “I'm with you on most things, but do you really want me to stop, and actually say a prayer in the middle of a day. A day that's quickly turning my life into a disaster!?!”

“Hold on, Kaitlyn.” Grandmama stops and looks at her granddaughter. “Didn't we discuss *listening* to someone's opinion, with a somewhat open mind? HmMMM??”

Silence. Only the small waves swirling against the shore are heard. Grandmama turns and sits on a nearby rock. She pats the space next to her for her granddaughter to sit. Granddaddy now has his protective arm around Courtney, who definitely doesn't want to head down the rabbit hole she thinks her sister is heading towards. Together, they move close to the wall.

Kaite sits down next to her grandmother. She lets out a small sigh and responds with, “Okay — I'll do my best.”

“Good. Now what usually turns your day ‘into a disaster?’”

“Things unexpectedly taking a hard-left hand turn. Not going my way, I guess.”

“And what usually causes that?”

Pause.

“People,” she replies.

“Oh, definitely, usually people,” Courtney adds.

“And, are these people particularly close to you?”

“Sometimes. Sometimes they're just people in my atmosphere.”

“Are you overly concerned about people ‘in your atmosphere?’”

“No ... I guess not. It's pretty easy to brush off their annoyance.”

“Okay. So, if it's someone you're close to, who puts you in this state of trauma — do you think they intentionally set out to hurt you?”

“No. Not intentionally.” Pause. “Not really. Well, I just don't know.”

“Okay. Now how long does it take to send a text.”

“What??”

“You send them all the time. What do you think your average time is in creating and sending a text?”

“I don't know. Maybe 15 – 20 seconds.”

“Do you send them on good days, or on bad days as well.”

“Grandmama ...” Kaite squirms, well aware of her grandmother's tricks.

“Just go with me here, Kaitlyn.”

“Okay. Sure. I send them on both good and bad days. Why??”

“And ... how long does it take you to contact God?”

“Okay, I see where you're going, Grandmama.”

Ignoring Kaitlyn, Grandmama continues. “And if you're a vibrating force — a power given to you at birth — then do you feel a negative situation can be healed through you?”

Pause. “Yes.” Kaite senses that a trap has been sprung.

“Good! Then I have just the prayer for you! It takes a few seconds. It directs your vibratory force in a direction to heal. Takes away insecurities — melts them! — — and works every time!”

“And that helped get you through high school, Grandmama?” Coco chimes in.

“Yep! Even in the middle of a disastrous day. In fact — *especially* then. And most especially when it has to do with ... people!”

Kaite puts her head on her arm, resting on Grandmama's shoulder and quietly declares, “I've been hoodwinked by my own grandmother.”

“So, to respond to your original statement Kaite ... yes. A simple, powerful prayer helped me get through moments of great anxiety or fear when I was your age, especially when dealing with people. And especially in the middle of a disastrous day.”

“But we all learn *The Lord's Prayer* when we're young,” Courtney says as she sits down on the other side of her grandmother. “You mean you didn't start saying it until you got into junior high??”

“No, I always said it growing up; and always felt protected by it. But then my mama showed me how to also use it as a real force for healing my relationship with someone else.”

“How?” Again, both girls in unison.

“Oh, I’m so glad you asked my little ones!”

Grandmama stands up and turns around to look at both her granddaughters.

“The words are so powerful in this ancient prayer they work for everyone, no matter what their religion, what they believe in, or how they’ve been raised. This works with anyone you’re upset with for any reason — even if they just cluttering up your ‘atmosphere.’” She winks at Kaite.

“Okay, girls, relax and shut your eyes.”

They do.

“Picture the person you’re trying to heal with — and picture them, smiling. Then start to say The Lord’s Prayer. Really think of the words like *‘on Earth as it is in Heaven.’* I mean, that’s a promise straight from the other side.”

Grandmama allows a few moments of silence.

“Now, if you find that it’s difficult to hold a good image of the person ... because you’re cleaning out your toxins as well ... start over. And keep starting over until you can hold their image: they’re smiling at you, and they’re at peace. Hold that image while you’re saying the prayer all the way through.”

Both girls still have their eyes closed. Kaitlyn is doing fine, but Courtney opens one eye and looks at her grandmother.

“I promise it will happen. Courtney. You’ll find yourself 'softening' and relaxing each time you go through the process.”

Courtney again shuts both eyes. As Granddaddy quietly takes Grandmama's hand, all that's heard is the waves' rhythmic sound. Slowly a smile forms on her Coco's face, and Kaitlyn is now looking very contented. Grandmama gives them a few seconds to finish.

“Then, when it's done successfully, release the moment, and go on with whatever needs attending to in your life.” Grandmama adds softly, “You will be amazed by what happens.”

Coco and Kaite both open their eyes. Kaite speaks first. “Well, I do feel a peace about this person I didn't before.”

“I used a situation that someone else controls,” Courtney adds. “One that makes me nervous. Will that work too?”

“Oh yes, anything difficult looming over you — you just direct this prayer at it, and it will take care of the problem for you. But, what it does to *you* is the key.”

“I did feel better after I finished,” Coco responds. “Like I don't have to worry about it so much.”

“What happened to you the first time you used it this way Grandmama?” Kaitlyn asks.

“Well, I believed it would work, or I wanted it to work, so I really tried to do my part. I tried it the first time on a close friend. We had just had an argument. And believe me, it took a while with my eyes closed to see her

happy, but as soon as I could see her really happy in my mind's eye, while I was completing the whole prayer, I felt so much lighter. It was like something melted inside — and being happy washed over *me*.”

“But how did you know it worked?” Courtney asks.

“Ah — the ultimate question! First, I forgot about the fight and how I felt about it. That all seemed to wash away after the prayer. Then, the next morning she called and apologized! I actually held the phone out away from my ear and looked at it. I'd never heard her apologize for anything. Mainly because she was so shy; she really didn't know how to.”

“Oh, that's why you said that if you're close to someone, you have to give them the benefit of the doubt,” Kaite says. “Assume that they didn't hurt you on purpose.”

“That's right. Otherwise, they shouldn't be in your life — or at least not close to you.” Granddaddy adds. “And if you trust them — even when mistakes are made by either one of you — you need to believe that they wouldn't want to hurt you.”

“If you love them, and want to build a strong relationship, you have to start from that perspective,” Grandmama continues, “That is, assuming that those you love are *not* trying to hurt you on purpose. It's amazing how you approach them after that — no matter how hurt you may have been. Thus, the prayer is to neutralize anger or frustration. This is a form of protection for you as well.”

“Definitely not healthy to go around with all those toxins in you,”

Courtney wisely adds as she gets up when Granddaddy offers her his hand.

As he offers Kaite his other hand, she asks, “What if the person isn’t worthy of us? You said that others should value us, and if they didn’t, they weren’t worthy of us.”

“I did,” Granddaddy answers. “And sometimes we need to eliminate certain things, even certain people, from our lives. But, on a day-to-day basis, we can’t just walk away from situations or conflicts we don’t like.”

Grandmama chimes in as they start walking again. “So, any difficult situation is worth your prayer.”

“But I thought you said that all we had to do was turn a situation over to God,” Courtney states emphatically.

“We do need to turn it over. But we’re giving God something to work with Coco. And we’re setting an important tone within ourselves. Again, prayer is your phone call. And, holding a good image of the person while you’re repeating this — *The Lord’s Prayer* — not only neutralizes any negativity ... but the vibration then reaches out and does its magic.”

Courtney looks up at the moon. “Ahhhh, magic ... show me the magic!!!”

Kaite rolls her eyes. But then she too repeats along with her sister:

“Show me the magic!”



CHAPTER 22



Hot Chocolate on the Patio: Who Do I Compare With?

The lights are twinkling on the patio as they walk in the door, making everything in the apartment look warm and inviting.

“How about hot chocolate before we head to bed.”

Courtney whips her head around. “Bed Granddaddy? It’s only 9:30! You do realize that we’re *almost* 14, don’t you?”

"No ... really?? But I was just teaching you how to jump over the waves yesterday." He smiles as he turns to go into the kitchen. "Of course, I know your ages. It must be all that salt air and walking under the moon. I feel like it's the middle of the night."

“I’ll help you, Granddaddy,” Kaite shouts from the patio.

“I’ll help too. I can test the marshmallows,” her sister joins in.

Grandmama has lit candles on the outdoor dining table when Granddaddy comes out with a tray of cups holding steaming hot chocolate. The girls are following behind with an abundance of napkins, paper bowls, and a really large bowl of fresh-popped popcorn, drizzled with rich butter. They put everything down on the table. Each grabs one of the six comfortable round Mexican chairs that surround the long table. The moon is high now, and the plants in the patio have a special glow surrounding them.

“I love the tiny lights that are lining the umbrella,” Coco says, pointing up to the lights on the underside of the green umbrella that stretches out over most of the glass table.

“That was our final lighting touch. So glad you noticed Coco,” Granddaddy says.

Courtney gives a large sigh, and then carefully takes a sip of her hot cocoa.

“What’s on your mind, sweetheart?” Granddaddy asks while he fills her paper bowl with popcorn.

“You keep saying that success is something we find within ourselves.” Courtney is now looking soulfully at her grandfather.

“I do. Sounds easy, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah. But what if you find that you’re not really very good at anything?”

Her grandmother raises an eyebrow at her. Courtney knows what this means.

“Well, maybe a few things,” she says with a half-smile. “But ... everyone else seems better, and more confident.”

“I’d like to say that you’re just silly. But that’s not a very satisfying answer,” Granddaddy replies.

After quickly putting a few kernels of popcorn into his mouth, he turns slightly towards her. “Look, honey. Thinking that everyone else has ‘more’ than we do — or is ‘better’ than we are . . . is the kind of thinking that we all have to pound out of our consciousness. And it’s a process we work at.”

“Great. Not so simple,” Coco grabs a few kernels. “How do we do that?”

“If you’re honest with yourself, you’ll find small successes in every day of your life. Not just in school or sports, but in your relationships. And also how you interact with the world around you.”

“Harrumph!” Courtney responds. “Okay. I can see where I’ve got some things going for me.” She pauses. “I mean, I’m lucky I’m good at some things, and I’ve worked hard at others.”

“Right, you have.”

“But come on Granddaddy, anyone can look around on the soccer field and notice that there are some girls that are ... are ... so much better than I am! They’re always in the right place, at the right time, with the right

move. I honestly try hard ... I just never seem to look as good.”

“Ah ... ‘look as good.’ So, you’re competing with how they look compared to you?”

“Yes. No. Oh, I don't know.”

“Courtney, I know it’s hard to compete, I do. But the only person you can ever, *ever* compete against is yourself. Otherwise, if you keep measuring yourself against others, you’ll drive yourself crazy. In sports, or any other area of life you'll be competing in — ‘improving’ is the success you're seeking. ‘How much better did I do than yesterday,’ is what you judge by.”

He reaches out and squeezes her hand and then picks up his cup and sits back.

“That’s the ball you’ve got to keep your eye on,” he says with a satisfied smile as he takes a careful sip from his steaming cup of cocoa.

“Ah, clever Granddaddy,” Kaitlyn reacts, “a real knee slapper.”

“Why, thank you Kaite, my dad loved saying that!” He and Kaite click cups.

Courtney is half mumbling to herself. “Compete only with self. Check. Right. Another lesson to add to the list. Check. I’m exhausted.”

Grandmama then joins the conversation. “Remember, Coco, when I said that a lot of things we see and hear are just illusions?”

“Yes ...” Courtney says quietly.

“Well, looking at someone and assuming that they’re perfect in

everything they do, or that they don't have any insecurities, or worries, or disappointments — or even that everything they say is the truth as you perceive it — is part of that illusion. Stop focusing on what's outside of you.”

“Great idea Grandmama. Sounds easy. And how do you suggest I start??”

“I will ignore the sarcasm, my dear granddaughter, because I know it sounds just like a lot of pretty words at your age, but you've got to trust me on this.”

“Okay, I'm listening.” She looks at her grandmother and sees the raised eyebrow. “Honestly, I'm listening.”

Her grandmother continues. “First, never lie to yourself. Be rock-honest about how you feel about something. Go as far as asking yourself that very question, and then answer it honestly. No one else is listening. Then you'll be able to determine if an emotion you have is real or ‘an illusion.’”

Courtney is listening, waiting. Her grandmother continues.

“You know — like, I'd check to see if my answers to myself were silly or petty, as they often were.”

“Silly or petty, in what way Grandmama?”

“Like if I were jealous of someone. Or when I'd find myself thinking that I wasn't getting enough attention.”

“Ohhh ... that.” Coco acknowledges.

“Uh, huh. That. If you find that you're petty or jealous, and you really have no basis for it, you dismiss it. But if it's real, then you know that you

have to find a way to deal with it.”

Courtney nods slowly as this sinks in. “Got it.”

“So ... the ability to ‘stop focusing’ on those things outside yourself — that which you can’t control — becomes much easier when you can sort out the real problems from the ‘illusions.’”

Then, having just finished his own bowl of popcorn, Granddaddy joins in. “Focus on your improvements; make that effort in athletics or school, or whatever. Then you can take the measure of yourself in a positive way.”

He lets this sink in.

“Look, we all make mistakes, and we all trip-up,” he continues, “but if you’re not positive about who you are and what you’ve tried to accomplish, you’ll appear ungrateful for the efforts you’ve already made.” He reaches into the large bowl to fill his own empty popcorn bowl. “And also ungrateful for all you’ve been given to work with, in the first place.”

“And that absolutely gets you nowhere,” Grandmama adds as she too reaches for the fresh popcorn bowl.

“Uh oh,” Kaite interjects, “I know what’s coming next.”

Granddaddy continues. “And you know what happens when you’re ungrateful?”

“Told you,” Kaite whispers out loud to herself as she pops some popcorn into her mouth.

Quickly mimicking Granddaddy’s deep voice, Kaite answers his

question, “If you're ungrateful, *then* who would want to give you anything more?”

Granddaddy nods a ‘well-done’ at his granddaughter and quickly adds, “And, then what kind of image are you sending to the universe... to Divine Power?? You're actually saying,” he drops his voice even deeper, almost like a growl, “I quit. I'm not happy. I don't have enough!”

“*Come-on*, Granddaddy. That's not what I meant.” Courtney says as her sister offers her a fresh bowl of popcorn.

“I know, honey. But that's how it comes out when people start comparing themselves to others. That attitude can become a habit, no matter who's doing while whining.” He picks up a few kernels of popcorn. “And that habit is what I’m trying to stop with you now.”

“Self-analysis is good. Whining is not,” Grandmama adds after taking a sip of her drink. “And, it's not limited to any age group. We’ve all done it.”

“Yep, you're right, Cort!” Kaite adds quickly, taking a sip from her cup. “This growing up stuff is tough.”

“I sense you’re going to offer a better solution, Grandmama,” Courtney says with a very teenage smile on her face.

“There were a couple of important things my mama taught me at your age,” she smiles in remembrance. “It took me a while, but I finally got it.”

“What the hey. I'll take anything at this point,” Coco responds.

“Sure. Advice from our great-grandmother,” Kaite states, “whom we’ve never met but is probably sitting next here with us right now. Seems perfectly logical in this family.” She looks around at the family, looking at her. “I’m not sarcastic. It *does* seem logical. I’m hooked.”

“Okay, Grandmama, we’re ready,” Courtney says. “I think the hot chocolate has lifted my spirits.”

“Okay,” Grandmama leans back and crosses her legs to get comfortable. “First, it’s a matter of learning how to draw people towards you.” She looks out beyond the patio to the large trees towering in the sky. Remembering her mother’s words, she speaks from a much-memorized statement:

“Reach out and let other people know you care and are interested. Then, relax and let them come to you on their own time. You can’t overwhelm people into liking you.”

Granddaddy interjects, “Okay, now you’ve got to tell them what they use to call you!” He’s now covering a gentle laugh.

“Well, I tried overwhelming people with niceness and an ‘up’ spirit when I first started in the work world. But, because it came naturally to me, I was actually overwhelming people with my enthusiasm. So, my first boss kindly said — in her very British voice — “we certainly appreciate your enthusiasm, but we don’t need a bouncing baby seal around here.”

After the girls stop laughing, Courtney continues. “Okay, that seems fairly easy. Don’t overwhelm people into liking me.”

“Easy for you to say Coco, only because you don't like to ‘overwhelm’ anyway — just like me,” Granddaddy says. “However, I've found that *I do* have to make an effort and reach out.”

“Yeah, that part's not so easy.” Coco responds. “The part about letting them know I care. Also, the part about being interesting. That's a downer.”

“Well, when you start to open a relationship with someone,” Granddaddy replies, “you have to be an interesting person. So — know more about the world than just your own circle of activity. Look around. Explore. Read. It'll also help to ask the right questions when you know someone's interested in something.”

Kaite adds, “Sounds like that's a recipe for attracting boys.” She chuckles.

“Bingo,” Granddaddy smiles. “And I also found it worked wonderfully in snaring your grandmother.”

“Besides,” Grandmama interjects, “doing all that is important for you as well — no matter who's in your world. You'll find that your life is just more fun.” She looks at both girls. “Remember, anybody can be interesting. And ... anyone can be boring.”

“Roger, got that part down,” Courtney says.

Her grandmother raises her eyebrow. Coco quickly adds, “Okay, I'm not boring all the time.” She looks at her grandmother, sincerely. “Really, I've got it, Grandmama.” With that, Courtney repeats from a

running list in her head. “Be interesting. And *of course*, learn to be a happy person – get into the habit. Learn to be interested in others — ask questions, especially to break the ice with someone new.”

“Told you this was tough,” Kaite says as she reaches in her bowl for the last kernels.

Her sister immediately adds, “I just never knew there was this much energy in making friends.” Coco pops a few kernels in her mouth and then says, “Okay, what's next Grandmama?”

“So, the next thing my mother taught me is a bit trickier. It’s where you need to focus your attitude.”

“I think my head is beginning to hurt,” Kaite interjects.

Grandmama just smiles as she continues. “And this will serve you with men, women, friends, family, or people you’re just meeting.” She's got the girls' attention. “Even teachers and people you may work with ... so listen carefully.”

The girls are.

“It’s a little trick that helps with your attitude adjustment. It automatically puts you in a better frame of light. It also provides you with greater comfort when you're going into a situation you're not sure about.”

Both girls sit up a little.

“I hear a magic bullet coming,” Kaite whispers out loud to her sister.

“Not quite ... but almost,” Grandmama responds. “Okay, Kaite and Courtney — what do you think of when you're approaching someone. Or

better yet — going into a situation where there's a lot a people, and they're focusing on you?”

“How I look,” Kaite immediately responds.

Coco adds, “My list is longer than that.”

“Right, and, naturally, our first thoughts are about us and our insecurities,” she replies. “But here's what you do next time. Pretend you're coming into a room — a party, let's say. And as you come in, the focus is on you.”

“Oh, fun. A teenage girl's best nightmare,” Coco groans.

“Yeah, what’s the trick to get out of this one?” her sister adds.

Grandmama makes sure she has their full attention and then starts. “Instead of thinking, *‘Oh ... here, I am.’* You immediately look around — look directly at a couple of people — and say to yourself: *‘Oh, there you are!’*”

The girls really think about this for a second. Grandmama continues.

“I promise you it immediately changes your whole attitude and gives your complete persona a different look.” She takes a pause. “A welcoming look that’s actually ‘inviting’ for someone to want to meet you. An absolute 'glow' if you will.”

“I’ve seen people like that when they enter into ... well, whatever space I’m occupying. Usually adults, but I know that look Grandmama,” Courtney responds.

“Yeah,” Kaite adds. “Kind of like a breath of fresh air when they

walk in. I thought that was something people just had naturally. Like they were born with it — or not.”

“Nope,” Grandmama states as she reaches for her cup. “It’s all ‘attitude’ directed in the right place. You’ve just taken off of *‘the me’* in your attitude and replaced it with *‘the you.’*”

“And just like having a happy nature, it’s cultivated,” Granddaddy says. “Trust me. Been there; done that. A lot.”

“I think I need to take notes.” Kaite laments.

“No, you’re fine, you’ll remember all of this when you need to,” Grandmama responds with a thumbs up. “And really girls, you knew a lot of this. You just didn’t know you knew it.” She winks.

“Yep, my head is starting ache,” Kaite sighs with a half-grin, as she leans her head on her sister's shoulder.



CHAPTER 23



Lifting Spirits on the Way to Bed

The family comes in from the patio to start the long journey to bed. Getting everyone ready for bed at the same time in any family is a long journey, especially when there are two 13-year-old females in the home. After the kitchen is tidied and coffee is readied to turn on automatically in the morning, Courtney asks if she can take another tub. “You love tubs as much as I once did,” Grandmama recalls as she heads for the master bathroom to give Kaite a fresh towel. Katie quickly grabbed the large master shower and is now humming away as the hot water warms her body.

Granddaddy comes in from the den/office where he has opened the big sleeper couch for the twins.

“How are you feeling now, honey ... spirits any better?”

“Sure, Granddaddy,” Courtney replies. “Talking with you two really helps. I guess there are times I start to feel myself . . . panic. I start to doubt my ability to do ... well, anything. And now, I'm facing high school! Will I really get through?” She sits down on a barstool and puts her elbows on the counter. “I don't know why these moments sneak up on me.”

“Well, you're looking out into the world beyond your own family,” Granddaddy says, sitting on the barstool next to her. “And that's a lot to take in sometimes. Especially if you don't have all the tools yet that you'll need to navigate the great unknown out there; that's why these next four years are important. They help make the foundation that you'll draw from, and build on, as you find your way in the world.”

“Yeah ... well, my toolbox doesn't seem very full yet. Things were so much better when we played in your closet. I didn't know as much! I just became whatever I wanted.”

“And that was the start of your toolbox; the one you've been creating that since you were very little Coco. Grandmama and I are just trying to show you and Kaite that you have so much more at your disposal than you realize.”

“And that's a good thing, Granddaddy,” Kaite chimes in as she comes in with PJ's on and hair still damp from the shower. “Because what looms ahead seems scary ...” she leans on the counter across from Granddaddy, “but really kind of exciting.”

Grandmama has followed her with a hairbrush in hand and stands next to her at the counter.

“It is scary — and exciting,” Grandmama adds, brushing Kaite's hair. “And life continues to be like that as you evolve. You two are dealing with a lot of elements. Your bodies are changing, and you’ve got roaring hormones you need to navigate. You’re starting a new phase in your school career, which is really the beginning of your gateway to life. And you’re becoming very aware of the world outside of your own protective circle. All this is an amazing amount to deal with.”

“And self-doubt is part of what you have to deal with,” Granddaddy adds. “It’s how we analyze ourselves. But when it puts us into a state of fear, that's when we have to do something to neutralize it. It no longer becomes a constructive tool.”

“I have no idea how self-doubt could ever be constructive! It’s awful,” whales Courtney putting her head on the counter.

“Agreed!” Grandmama adds as she finishes Kaitlyn’s hair. “So, for me, knowing I have a greater resource than ‘just me’ is priceless. It literally frees me. No matter what, I know I'm not alone.”

Courtney looks up at her grandmother. “You never doubted it, Grandmama?”

“I don't think I really ever doubted it ... I've felt a presence with me all my life. Although I've turned away from it at times, especially when I was younger.”

“But why did you turn away?” Kaite asks.

“I think it's part of the process. Somewhere around your age, we start getting ...” she pauses.

“Cocky,” Granddaddy finishes the thought for her.

“Okay,” she smiles, “I'll go with that. We get cocky — and feel invincible — as youth does. It's natural. And we ignore our connection to the spiritual world. Then, at some point ... we notice that we don't feel as ... full inside. Things are a little emptier. As we turn back to God, we realize what's been missing. It's a valuable growth process.”

"Boy, do I understand that," Granddaddy adds.

“I finally realized that God's there, and always watching out,” Grandmama adds as she hands the brush to Kaite, “waiting to be invited back in.”

“So, he can talk to you?” Courtney responds, making both a statement and a question.

“Yes, sweetie. So he can actually get through to you,” Grandmama responds by leaning on the counter and putting her hand over Coco's hand. “And he's waiting so he can take the load off that you've put on yourself. But you have to ask.”

Kaite now puts her arm on her grandmother's shoulder. “God just takes your problem away, Grandmama?”

She nods. “Every time I assign a problem to Divine Mind, it's taken care of. When I finally turn it over, it releases me from fear — and stops the

seeds of panic.”

She gives Kaite a hug as she moves to the sink for a glass of water. “I know a solution is in the process of manifesting, *far beyond* my knowledge.”

“How do you know?” Courtney says.

“Because a calm takes over, throughout my whole body. It’s a quiet, all-encompassing emotion you can’t bluff.”

She starts to fill several glasses with cold water. “At times, I’ve had to work at actually turning the problem over. And unfortunately — sometimes I wait until I really have no other choice.”

“*The last desperate act!*” Kaite adds with enthusiasm. “I read that somewhere — my lit class, I think. That’s how you build tension in a story.”

“Ah, how true. Art imitates life,” Grandmama says as she starts to distribute the glasses of water. “But it’s miserable when you actually have to live it. Just think. I could have saved myself time and a lot of needless anxiety. All I had to do was assigned the task ahead of time! I’m getting better, but I’m still learning.”

“*You* waited until the last minute before you ‘*called*’ Grandmama??” Kaitlyn raises her eyebrow.

“Yes, sometimes. But Divine Intelligence knew my needs all along.”

“How?” Courtney asks.

“Because the Infinite Spirit hears me every time I put forth a prayer — often before I realize it’s in prayer form.”

“Oh ... oh ... I know this one!” Coco responds. “Because ... you were already projecting your thoughts through your images ... and your words?”

“Perfect Courtney, right!” Grandmama reaches over and gives her a high five. “The divine mind produces the perfect answer to your wishes ... or your ‘statements’ — whether you say them out loud or not. It's all part of the communication process. God’s just waiting for you to relax and get out of the way.”

“We do that through trust,” Granddaddy adds. “Just like when we’re little, and we knew that our parents are going to take care of us.”

“Right,” Kaite adds. “Because we expect them to know more than we do.”

“Exactly,” says Granddaddy. “But believe me, as we grow up, it’s not always an easy thing to do: Getting out of the way of God's action ... 'trusting' that the best possible direction will manifest itself.”

"Boy is that true," Grandmama shakes her head slightly. "But when you finally wise up and assign it to Divine Mind, you can relax because it's out of your hands.”

She takes a sip of her water. “And that’s when that incredible calm takes over within me.”

“I see.” Kaitlyn reflects. “It’s kind of like doing your homework ahead of the big test.”

“It’s exactly like that, Kaite,” Granddaddy reflects. Kaitlyn smiles as

she and he click water glasses.

Now Courtney asks, “Was it like that for you, Grandmama, when you knew that Kassie had to have open-heart surgery? I mean, weren't you worried since she was only a few months old?”

“Of course, we were all worried. And since your mom was so young herself, I was concerned for her as well. She was dealing with being a new mother and then seeing her little, precious baby going through such a traumatic event.”

“Not an easy time,” Granddaddy recalls. “But we just ... moved forward.”

“We did,” Grandmama nods at her husband in quiet agreement. “We held tight onto each other. But to answer your question Coco, the only way to calm the concern was to tune-in — and *allow* God's presence to be part of me.”

“But how did you feel during all that Grandmama?”

“It was almost like being in limbo. Like, I was in a car that I wasn't driving — going around a very rugged mountain.”

“Wow,” responds Kaite.

“But throughout the whole journey, from the moment I entered the car, I kept getting the feeling that I was protected. I didn't have to work at it. It was around me ... around all of us ... continually. It allowed me to focus on taking care of the day-to-day needs ... without being scared.”

“And,” Granddaddy adds, “with everyone living in one house, she

couldn't afford to get anxious. Or, we all might have crumbled.”

“But I must say that at times,” Grandmama says as she refills her glass, “in the private moments, plain old physical emotion ran like a roller coaster. But that's part of being human.”

“Boy,” Kaite responds. “Your work was definitely cut-out for you there.”

“True.” Grandmama leans back on the counter. “But that 'presence' also opened me up to seeing colors and sounds in a way I hadn't before.” She pauses for a moment, caught in thought. “Incredible moments of joy were magnified. In fact, just holding your older sister became a gift in itself — her smile radiated Divine Spirit. There was literally no room for fear ... or doubt.”

“Through all six months of waiting for the operation???” Kaite reflects. “Now, that's some powerful stuff.”

Granddaddy laughs, “I think that's what we've been trying to tell you.”

“Powerful indeed,” Grandmama says, putting her half-full glass down on the counter. “In fact, God's presence — the continual presence that enveloped me; a presence that I depended upon every day, through communication — is also what got me through Uncle Ryan's arduous SEAL training, and his assignments overseas.”

“Now, that's scary,” responds Coco.

“On the surface, yes, Coco. But I couldn't allow it to be, because I

knew, without a doubt, he was in the right place. He had done so much just to get to that point in his life.”

She sits down on a barstool and reaches for her glass. "But a lot of my ‘homework training,’ as you so perfectly captured Kaite, started long ago when Granddaddy was in the hospital with a broken neck. And I was *very* pregnant. In fact, I was already overdue in giving birth to your uncle.”

Both girls are startled and talking on top of each other.

“You were in the hospital, Granddaddy!!”

“When?”

“Why?!”

A distant look comes into his eyes as Granddaddy responds. “It's odd because it seems so far away now ... and yet every detail is vivid. It was a car accident. A man was careless and selfish. It was 4 in the morning, and I was coming home from an all-night editing session. A drunk hit me broadside when he ran a red light. It happened just ten days before Uncle Ryan was born. Quite a busy few weeks there for God. But the surgery I had was successful, although recovery took some time for me to conquer. And a week after the operation, I got to be in the delivery room when Uncle Ryan was born.”

Grandmama laughs softly in remembering. “Now, that was a night, the night Uncle Ryan was born! After they took me back to my room, I kept going into Granddaddy's room to check on him, and then to the nursery to check on our new, incredible family member. Then shortly later, I'd do it

again. The nurses finally asked me if I'd like something light to eat — just so I'd relax. I was so overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, and finally, relief, I couldn't sleep.”

“It was quite an experience for all of us! Granddaddy continues. "But your grandmother, Uncle Ryan, and I checked out of the hospital together! Gratefully, we all got to go home to your mom, who was awaiting anxiously for her new baby brother.”

“Oh ... wow.” Both girls.

Granddaddy leans forward. “Look, my beautiful granddaughters, it would have been great if all the decisions we make in the world... all the changes... were of our own initiating. Then at least we'd feel like we were a part of the plan! But we are part of the plan — and that's what we have to trust. And we have to expect that no matter what our lessons are, it's going to be good.”

Coco smiles and looks at her grandfather. “That's what you mean by saying that our prayers are answered, even before we ask?”

“Yes, indeed, sweetheart,” Granddaddy responds.

"Now," Grandmama says as she walks around the counter and takes Courtney's hand, "if we haven't waited too long, I believe that there's still that hot tub that I drew for you my precious."



CHAPTER 24



Breakfast in Sunshine & a Walk Down Memory Lane!

As the early morning sun starts to rise in the sky, Grandmama takes the sliced bagels out of the oven. She butters them and puts the cheese between two halves just as her sport-warriors come in.

“Perfect timing. I was just waiting for you to arrive to scramble the eggs.” Putting the bagels back in the oven to melt the cheese, she then pours the eggs and cream into the hot frying pan.

“You were right,” Granddaddy states as he pours a hot cup of coffee. “No one on the courts at this hour. But I saw some of our neighbors heading for them as we left.”

“It’s nice to have two courts here in the complex,” Grandmama says, carefully scrambling the eggs and adding bits of crumbled bacon.

“It’s hardly fair. Granddaddy against the two of us.” Kaitlyn

grumbles as she puts the rackets away.

“Yeah, and with that serve. I thought he's supposed to be old,” Courtney adds as she hands her sister the bag of balls to put into the closet.

“I'm proud to say that at this point in my journey,” Granddaddy smiles, “you can finally call me old, if you wish. It took a lot of living to get here!” Granddaddy boastfully announces as he raises his cup. “But my body can still be healthy and strong. I'm making sure it's here to serve me until the day I drop.”

“And being on the tennis team in high school didn't hurt either,” Grandmama chimes in. “Breakfast in five. I'll meet you on the patio after you wash up.”

Granddaddy, Kaitlyn, and Courtney join Grandmama on the patio where a big serving tray of warm bagel, egg, and melted cheese sandwiches are awaiting them. Each puts a hot sandwich on their plate as Grandmama pours steaming coffee. It's early, but the sun is already warming their bodies.

“Today is definitely a day for the beach. What does everyone say?” She announces as she passes Granddaddy a new cup of coffee.

Cheers and grunts are heard through closed full mouths.

A few minutes later, everyone sits back in their chair, quite satisfied.

“Well, you got what you wished for my love,” Granddaddy says to Grandmama. “No June-gloom, so we can get to the beach early. The surf should be up this morning; fun bodysurfing.”

“That's Grandmama. Wishing her way through life — and it works!

I'm sticking with you,” Kaite reflects as she takes a sip of her cold water.

Granddaddy laughs. “That's for sure. She spent one night working on the weather during a white-out when we were skiing once. They said it was going to be that way for days. We awoke the next morning to sunshine.”

Courtney shakes her head with a smile. “You really have a strong phone line Grandmama.”

“Well, you've put me on an unneeded pedestal. Although, I thank you all for elevating me so,” Grandmama holds up her cup in a salute. “But, let's be real — it's not some unknown magic,” she says as she takes a sip of her coffee. “However ... it is powerful.”

“But using it for *the weather*, Grandmama?” Kaite says. “I'm envious.”

“No need to be my gracious granddaughter. You possess the same ability,” her grandmother responds. “God is not only acting on every level of our lives — producing for you what you want and need — but our connective power with Divine Mind works on even what ‘appears’ to be the smaller details in our lives.”

“Like when? I mean other than taming the weather?” Coco teases.

“Well ...” She looks around. “This move. I had been craving a large outdoor space. Someplace the whole family could come together outside.”

“Yeah, that deck outside your office upstairs in the old condo was fine when we were little,” Coco responds. “But it got a lot smaller as we

grew up.”

“True,” Kaite adds. “There wasn't much room for anything but your small garden. But I loved cutting the flowers up there — and looking out into the city from way up high.” Kaite looks around and smiles. “I know. Now I have even more flowers to cut.”

“Ah yes, that beautiful view; above the treetops,” Grandmama responds as she pours her husband more coffee. “But since it was in a loft, away from the main activity, it really was just a place for me to enjoy while I worked.” She sits back again in her chair. “Life is a pragmatic compromise. We have to choose what is best for us at the time — knowing that we can make other choices later.”

“And now we needed something different,” Granddaddy says, taking a sip from his cup. “Time had come, and we both knew it.”

“I had the feeling for a while that we weren't going to be in our old condo for much longer,” Grandmama comments. “It wasn't a bad feeling, just a certainty that our time there was drawing to a close. I knew our family was changing, and Granddaddy's and my desires were changing.”

“I remember all the family pictures you had filling the walls,” Coco chimes in. “I loved looking at them.”

“And, the hall was a gallery of each generation — great grandparents down to us when we were born,” Kaite pops in excitedly. “I really felt like I got to know all of the people I didn't know.”

“That's why I did it,” Grandmama responds. “It's important for all of

us to see *'the shoulders we stand on.'*”

Coco furls her eyebrows into a question.

Her grandmother responds. “Sir Issacs Newton: *'The reason I have seen so far is that I have stood on the shoulders of giants.'*”

“Oh, I like that one,” Coco says.

She pauses for a moment, then Coco adds, “I loved the pictures you framed that took up two whole walls in the guest bedroom — there must have been a hundred of them!” She leans back in her chair, remembering, “Pictures taken during all of the events in our lives together. The beach, Christmas, summer, traveling, sports — pictures of each of us.”

“Well, it wasn't quite hundreds,” Grandmama laughs. “But I wanted you to see yourselves with our big family — everybody together as you grew up. I felt it was important that you realize how much love you were surrounded with during those years. And honestly, I loved looking at them too.”

“Yeah,” Kaite smiles enthusiastically, “I used to rush in there every time we came over to see what photos you'd added to the guestroom gallery!”

“Those walls of photos enhanced your visual memory — you got to live those moments again and again.” Granddaddy adds. “Now, that history will be with you always.”

“And that huge underground parking garage!” Courtney adds.

“Oh, the garage,” Kaite quickly adds. “That’s where we learned to

roller skate! Gosh, we must have practiced for hours.”

“And the Christmases there Grandmama, with the fireplace glowing, and lights twinkling everywhere,” Coco reminisces. “Even wrapped high on your Fiddle Leaf tree — the one that reached to the top of the two-story ceiling!”

“It was a lovely place for you to grow up in,” Grandmama smiles at her granddaughter’s memories. “We were ‘comfortable’ — but eventually, that’s not always an overly productive feeling,” she adds, almost to herself.

“How so, Grandmama?” Kaite asks.

“Well, although we were content, we weren’t completely satisfied any longer. I kept picturing a large patio ... over and over again ... sometimes without ever being conscious of it. Everyone was older, and I longed for someplace we could all be together outside — like when your Mom and Uncle Ryan were growing up.”

“Grandmama just loves being outside,” her husband adds.

“True,” she laughs. “So, every building I’d drive by, I’d wonder if they had the perfect patio. It was just a habit I got into. Over time, I saw the perfect image of a patio grow in my mind’s eye. And I could actually feel myself in it.”

“Just like when we were in the magic closet!!” Courtney responds as the epiphany hits her. “Every time we played dress-up ... I guess we saw ourselves in the future; as what we wanted to be! Wow... I just never realized it.”

“So true,” Grandmama agrees. “That's the very dynamic we've been talking about. And now, look around. This patio, and this wonderful condo. I have my luscious outdoor space, and from under the treetops, we see the city!”

Grandmama leans back and looks up through the trees to the skyscrapers above; their windows reflect the early morn sunlight. “Where we are right now, was magically waiting for us.”

“And, we never would have been led to our new home,” Granddaddy adds, “if our previous landlords hadn't suddenly needed to move back in after so many years. Now, Grandmama has her heart's desire.”

“Ah!” Kaitlyn joins in, “Mom taught us this one: ‘God works in mysterious ways. But His methods are sure!’”

“The only thing God, or Saint Anthony, didn't show us, as we were moving, Kaitlyn,” Granddaddy adds, “was where you hid the chess piece when you were about 3.”

“I love chess and playing with you, Granddaddy,” Kaitlyn winks. “I must have wanted to save the queen for me.”

“So, you remember which piece! Her grandmother exclaims, “but somehow, I could never get you to remember where you toddled off with it.”

“Oh well, who needs the queen,” Granddaddy jokes. Then, looking at his wife, he adds, “I thank your grandmother every day for the new

change in our life — her visualization and faith brought us here.” He winks lovingly.

Kaite looks at her grandparents. “So, that’s why you say that the perfect time had come for us to lose our magic closet?”

“So, we could start to do it on our own ... using our powers?” Courtney adds.

“Yes. To be aware of your powers,” Grandmama replies. “To realize that the spiritual world — to which you belong — is not haphazard and random, but something you can count on.”

“Without learning how to use our God-given powers,” Granddaddy continues, “the world can seem very cold and distant when you have nothing to count on except external things around you.”

“How true,” his wife agrees. “It’s through an inner power that we learn how to commit to life. We learn how not to give up.” She takes a hand of each granddaughter. “And I promise you both ... connection with Divine Consciousness can calm us, excite us, inspire us, and help us see through the fog that settles around us. At any age.”

“And,” Granddaddy brings his finger up for emphasis, “shows us how to search for answers when we don’t understand.” He laughs and leans back. “I’ve been clueless so often. Especially when I was in high school.”

“How to search?? Like ... how to google?” Courtney asks, being clever again.

Playing along with that thought, Granddaddy adds, “Well, actually,

yes. How to Google in *the* most important Internet — or broadband if you will, that governs all worlds.”

“There you go again, Granddaddy,” Kaite adds. “Is that plural — worlds — with an ‘s?’”

“Yes, you heard me correctly. However . . . before discovering the 4th dimension and quantum physics together, I think we need to head to the beach before a crowd takes all the good spots.”

“Good idea!” Grandmama says as she stands up, lifting the large serving dish and heading indoors.

“Wait, wait, wait,” Kaite adds as she stands and starts to clear the table, “4th dimension and quantum physics — now that's a discussion I want to have!”

“Me too!” Courtney says as she clears the coffee carafe and cups. “I must say ... for old people, you really have interesting things to say.”

“Sweetheart,” Granddaddy yells out to his wife as he gathers the rest of the items on the patio table, “did you say it was child abuse to dunk our granddaughters in the ocean??”



CHAPTER 25



The Beach, the 4th Dimension, and Quantum Physics!

Our noble group arrives at the beach in time to find a perfect spot. Setting their things down only a few feet from the high tide, they put up the large colorful beach umbrella, layout the oversize blanket, and head for the water.

The waves are large and crashing, but nothing stops our four beach warriors from diving in and under the waves. Eventually, they reach a spot just far enough out that they can catch high waves, but not be pummeled by each one.

Over the years, this is the beach experience this family has longed for every time they've headed out. Perfect waves and perfect day — no matter what part of the coast they're on — or what side of the country.

Many times, the twins' older sister, Cassandra has been with them when she's home. They've often swum with their cousins, Ridgely and Griffin — whose dad, Uncle Ryan, loves to lead the way out beyond the breakers for all who's daring. No one has ever stayed behind.

Uncle Ryan, and their mom, Shawn, were trained in the ocean from the time they were very small — and to this day, love sharing it with their parents and their children. It's in their blood, as the sea often is.

Together, this family has conquered waves from early morning rollers to late afternoon shore-pounders. The beach and the ocean are a second home to all of them. And, even when they're apart, as they are now, they are together, bound by their memories and vibrations.

Today, the four adventures are enjoying the rare private time they have together. After swimming for about an hour, they work their way out and drop in the wet sand. Time for Granddaddy's traditional sandcastle!!!

Oh, the hours and hours the twins have spent perfecting the perfect castle under Granddaddy's tutelage. Only for it to eventually be wiped away by the incoming tide. But against all the odds, this band of daring adventurers always try to stop the tide.

As Grandmama dries off, she watches her husband roll his granddaughters in the wet goo that was once a magnificent castle. "Ah, "forever green in my garden of memories," she thinks to herself — reciting a well-used phrase, her own grandfather perfected long before she was born.

After watching the three of them run into the sea to wash off, she

starts to take out the many snacks they packed. Several different munchies are laid out under the umbrella for the returning architects as they grab their towels to dry off.

Soon, everyone's flopped down around the snacks, and with a cold drink in hand, start to enjoy their typical beach "lunch."

"Okay, Granddaddy," Kaitlyn brushes the sand off her legs and folds them under her. "What's all this about the 4th dimension and quantum physics?"

"Well, let's see, where did we leave off. I need to know the run-up to my brilliant thinking," he smiles as he pops a piece of cheese in his mouth.

Courtney immediately answers. "Kaite had just asked you why you said 'worlds' instead of 'world' when you talked symbolically about how to search the internet governing *all worlds*. Worlds; plural."

"Good grief Coco, you remembered that specifically?!" her grandmother smiles as she reached for a lovely piece of watermelon. "You have no reason to ever feel you're being outshined. Definitely an editor's brain."

"Ah yes," Granddaddy says as he sits up. "Okay, let's start with the 4th dimension. It's what we refer to as the other side."

"Oh, I think this is going to be right up my alley," Kaite says gleefully.

"And, what we call the other side is *actually* the real world," Granddaddy continues. "A parallel world where there are no limitations."

As Granddaddy takes a sip of his drink, Grandmama takes a moment to add, "Actually, it's through our vibrations, that we bring *that* world through to *this* one. That's the power we were given."

"I think I'm blown away." Courtney looks dumbfounded. "Vibrations ... is that what you call prayer?" she asks.

"Well yes, prayer — and actually, all forms of communication with the other side," Grandmama answers as she reaches for a small piece of salami.

"See, it works like this," she continues as she sits up, "It's actually very scientific."

"Oh, good. I like science." Katie states.

"The higher the frequency of our vibrations," Grandmama starts, "the more easily we communicate — both sending and receiving."

Grandmama looks at each girl. They're still with her, so she continues.

"Then ... the more we communicate with God, the more we strengthen our powers. It's kind of like developing an electrical force field around us."

"Wow," Kaite exclaims. "We're an electromagnetic force field! We studied that this year. And, we're vibrating at a certain rate."

"I learned that too," Coco adds. "Everything that has life in it is vibrating."

"True," Grandmama responds. "So, the more we use our powers —

everything we've talked about all weekend — and the more we are communicating with Divine Mind, the more we vibrate. Therefore, the greater the force field around us. Correct?"

"Sure. That makes sense," Kaite answers. Both girls are nodding.

"And, it's vibrating at a higher frequency," Coco answers.

"Correct."

Grandmama waits for a beat.

"So, we've just established scientifically that by being in tune with the spiritual plane — and by using our powers through prayer and visualization — our electrical field is intensifying."

"Check. Roger that." Both girls respond simultaneously.

"Therefore, the more we are in tune with the 4th dimension — the spiritual plane — the more we can 'feel' and 'hear' from that side. Thus, the more we are guided."

The girls nod.

"You see, the guidance is always there. Once again ... our only job is to prepare ourselves to 'tune-in.'"

"Like turning on the TV!" Coco offers.

"Okay ... good." Grandmama nods appreciatively.

"But what if you're not paying attention?" Kaite responds.

"Well, you're protected; as a parent protects a child. But remember, you have free will to draw any kind of situation into your life."

"Huh?" Kaite questions her grandmother.

“Meaning, if you're not paying attention,” Grandmama continues carefully, “and you're continually visualizing negative images in your mind — those will manifest themselves in your future as well. Remember, it’s a law like electricity or fire — which doesn't have a sense of humor. Both electricity and fire can be life-saving or detrimental. It’s how the process, or the law, is used.”

“*Meaning*,” Granddaddy interjects, “if you live in a state of hate or anger and snap at people, you can’t then say, ‘but I was only kidding,’ and make everything right. Eventually, those traits will be returned back to you from others.”

“How true,” Grandmama continues. “So ... the law can be used with positive or negative results. People that 'tune out' — and refuse to believe in anything — rarely draw those things and people into their lives that give them true success and ultimate happiness. They forever wonder why their 'heart desires' elude them. Sadly, they usually end up very unhappy people.”

“Uh, Oh. No happiness, no appreciation.” Courtney nods her head.

“Yep,” Kaite responds to her sister, “that's a deal-breaker right there.”

“And, sometimes,” Granddaddy offers, “when I'm not paying attention as I should, my ‘guardians’ on the other side will poke me — and I definitely feel it.”

“You're kidding, aren't you Granddaddy?” Courtney turns and asks.

He says nothing, but smiles.

Kaite looks at her grandfather, and then back to her sister. “I don’t

think he's kidding."

"Been practically knocked down at times," Granddaddy offers. "Just saying ..."

Ignoring this, Kaite returns to something that's on her mind.

"But remember Granddaddy, you said "worlds ... the plural with an s."

"I did." He pauses and looks at his wife. "I think they're ready."

"Me too." Grandmama looks directly at her girls. "You guys are really smart — and with a keen imagination with which to visualize."

The girls sit up a little straighter, proud of these compliments. (And naturally at 13, feeling the statements are well-deserved.)

"And," she continues, "after all we've talked about, I know you're ready for this. So here goes."

The girls are listening — not wanting to let their grandparents down after such fine compliments.

"Think of your vibrating energy as part of a path that travels through the past, present, and future. All three paths exist together. Theology has known this for thousands of years, and now science is discovering this as well."

"Ahhh! Quantum physics!" Kaite acknowledges.

"Correct. The past, present, and future are parallel *worlds* — plural with an s — all existing just on the other side of what is a veil to us," Granddaddy adds.

“Whattttttttt???” Courtney groans again. She immediately stretches out on the sand. “Oh, my head’s hurting again. I don’t think I’m ready to be a 13-year-old yet.”

“Come on, Courtney,” Kaitlyn admonishes. “You’ve drawn about such things. Worlds parallel to each other. I’ve seen it tons of times.”

“Oh ...” She now sits up with absolute realization as to what they’re talking about. “So, I have.” She pauses. “I wonder how I knew?”

“Hmmm ... I wonder,” Granddaddy comments. “Even when we become too *‘Earthbound,’* with age, our knowledge from the other side comes through.”

““Earthbound??”” Coco looks at her grandfather. “You’re trying to make my head hurt more, aren’t you, Granddaddy?”

“Here, let me help Courtney,” Grandmama offers.

She leans against Granddaddy’s legs. “Please do, Grandmama.”

“Well first — you don’t doubt your 6th sense with each other, do you, Coco?”

“No, of course not. I’ve been sending and receiving my thoughts to Kaite as long as I can remember.”

“And, when you were barely toddlers, you definitely had developed your own language!” her grandfather interjects. “Cutest babbling, I ever heard! You two had the communication down solid.”

Grandmama continues. “Well, your 6th sense — sending and receiving telepathically — transcends the limitation of our five physical

senses here on this Earth plane.”

“Okay.” Coco digs her feet into the sand.

“So, the 4th Dimension — the Spiritual world; being a part of Divine Mind —transcends the other physical limitations that gravity provides here on Earth.”

Coco looks blank. Her sister looks at her.

“Come on, Courtney ... you know, we're living in ‘3D.’”

“Ohhhhh. The physical limitations of height, breadth, and depth,” Coco responds, quite pleased with herself. “So, you’re saying, Grandmama, that the 4th dimension is just as real.”

“I am.”

“And that in the 4th dimension, there aren't any limitations.” Coco continues. “Just like there are no limitations when Kaite and I send our thoughts to each other – no matter where we are.”

“Correct.”

"See Courtney," Kaite announces, "you DO have a brilliant 13-year-old brain . . . just like me." Puffing out her chest, Kaitlyn glows at the thought of her own brilliance.

Grandmama turns to her husband and whispers. “Oh, this is such fun; I love this age!”

Turning back to her granddaughters, she sits up very straight for extra emphasis. "Excellent girls! Now stay with me."

The girls are focused on their grandmother.

“So, time and space are also boundaries that have limits; therefore, they are only based here, on Earth. But ... time and space are only 'illusions' on the other side.”

“How come?” Now it’s Kaite who’s curious.

“Love transcends time and space. Thoughts transcend time and space.” Granddaddy quietly states, reaching for a cracker.

“Okay,” Kaite says.

“I’ll buy that,” Courtney adds. The twins look at each other and nod in agreement.

“These are elements of the 4th Dimension,” Grandmama continues. “Which is the other side, God's world. Therefore ... *all* is limitless on the other side. No boundaries or restrictions as we understand them here.”

“Okay. I'm still with you. So far.” Courtney says.

“Good girl. You too, Kaite?”

“I am now. It's really quite logical, Grandmama,” Katie responds.

“And ... the other side is where we come from,” Grandmama looks at her girls intently. “Meaning ... where we were created.”

“Got it,” Courtney nods.

“And, since that's where we were created... we will always be inalienably tied to our creator.”

Granddaddy interjects, “Think of it as inalienable rights in the spiritual world.”

Courtney looks closely at her grandfather, “Ummmmm ... I know it's

in the Declaration of Independence, but what exactly does 'inalienable' mean Granddaddy?"

“Inalienable rights are natural rights that are endowed by our creator to every human being,” Granddaddy responds. “And, they can't be taken away, broken, or violated under any circumstance — which is why the founders put it in the document that's the very bedrock of this nation.”

“Gosh, thanks, Granddaddy,” Kaite adds. “I was going to ask the very same question.”

“Yeah, thanks, Granddaddy,” Courtney smiles at him.

“You're both quite welcome,” he gives Coco a quick rub on the head and reaches out his other hand to do the same thing to Kaite. “Never be afraid to ask.”

Courtney now turns to her grandmother, “I'm sorry, go on, Grandmama.”

Grandmama happily gives her a thumbs-up and then continues.

“Where each of us comes from, on the other side of the veil — everything is limitless. Health, success, happiness, and purposeful life are ours for the asking.”

Grandmama sits back, picks up the cold drink she set securely in the sand and adds,

“‘Under grace and in a perfect way,’ as they say.”

“And just think,” Granddaddy states, “all that good is yours. It's there for you to draw upon. As long as you do it with total appreciation.”

He smiles at his girls. “That’s the power you’ve were given when you were born. Now, it's all up to you.”

Kaite adds, “Sooooo ... we can declare what we want and expect that it will be delivered —because Divine Spirit is awaiting us to ask.” Before anyone can respond, she continues. “Ah. The magic closet.”



CHAPTER 26



Writing in the Sand and Our Heritage

It's late afternoon, and after one last swim, the family decides to take a walk to finish the day — a must-do tradition with every member of this large family.

After picking up several shells for their grandparents' shell collection from beaches all over the world, the twins watch as Granddaddy writes on the sand:

“Hello world! We’re Blessed To Be Here!! Love, Kaitlyn & Courtney ... & Grandparents!”

Grandmama comes up after him and with her own stick, adds:

“My account is full & overflowing! Thank you!!”

The girls read what their grandmother is writing, then look at

Granddaddy with a quizzical look with their eyebrows furled.

“It’s about everything we’ve been talking about — only Grandmama’s using the symbolism that’s often associated with the whole process.”

Girls are still looking strangely at their grandparents.

Granddaddy smiles and starts to walk as the girls fall in next to him on each side.

“It all works kind of like a Universal Bank Account. You put in a deposit — be it faith, spiritual development, appreciation — and you withdraw what you need: Success, happiness, guidance, etc. Just don’t be afraid to draw upon it.”

“Wow,” Kaite responds. “But what if a lesson stumps you. And you can’t make your deposit?”

“That gets into what we talked about yesterday,” Grandmama says, moving from behind the girls to next to them. “It’s the effort of taking personal responsibility — in honestly acknowledging that there’s a lesson to be gained. You’ll figure it out if you allow yourself to approach your situation that way. God’s not putting a time clock on you. But once you know something ... you can’t pretend to ‘unknow’ it.”

She pauses and picks up a shell. “You literally have to bless everything you experience as a success.”

“Huh?” The twins respond together.

Granddaddy answers. “You’ll come to understand that as you bless

something as 'a success,' no matter how difficult — doors open, and the light dawns.”

“Okay. If you say so, Granddaddy,” Kaite replies, kicking at the wet sand.

“I know what you're thinking,” Grandmama says, putting her arm around Kaite as they continue to walk. “There are lessons here on this side of the veil we have to learn. And sometimes they’re terribly difficult lessons that absolutely don't make any sense on this Earthly level.”

Granddaddy finishes her thought, “Especially when we’re trying to find purpose in life here, on Earth — a place that appears to be run by imperfect humans.”

“And that’s part of our schooling,” Grandmama adds.

“So, we're going to school continually here, AND on the other side!” Coco exclaims quietly.

“We are. But from what I've been ‘told,’ school's rather nice on the other side of the veil, sweetheart.” Grandmama smiles over at her. “And with each journey here, we're advancing — hopefully.”

“But as you see,” Granddaddy continues, “we have the tools right here, while we’re on this particular ‘field trip.’ Tools we brought along from the other side.”

“The real side,” Kaitlyn offers, now with assurance. “The permanent side.”

“Is this why people say ... when they’re getting ready to die ...that

they're 'going home?'" Courtney asks.

"I do believe so." Her grandfather replies. "And from what I've witnessed — they often seem very content at the end — no matter how afraid they might have been."

Kaite pops up quickly. "Better than being born at least. All that work and exhausting effort and crying just to get here!"

Grandmama laughs. "Maybe that's why thankfully, no one remembers being born. I personally believe that the first memory starts with being held."

They walk in silence for a few minutes. Granddaddy's now scouting the edge of the surf for shells as they walk.

Kaitlyn is the first to speak. "So, the magic closet is where we first learned to practice our tools ... when we were very young."

"Yes," Grandmama begins to comment. "When it was completely natural ..."

"Ahhhh! 'When we weren't 'Earthbound!'" Coco announces knowingly.

"Exactly." Her grandfather answers with pride.

"And because we become earthbound," Grandmama adds, picking up a shell, "we get caught up in the things we have to do that keeps our daily lives running. Then we start sacrificing our spiritual connections."

She hands Granddaddy her shell to put in his bathing suit pocket. "That's why we need to work diligently and continually on improving our

spiritual force.” She stops and pauses. “We need to retain it — before we can't see it anymore.”

“What do you mean??” Kaite asks.

“It's called becoming ‘secular.’ Granddaddy continues. “This is when you only depend on the physical world around you — cutting yourself off from your rich heritage and inheritance of the Spiritual world.”

“How really dumb,” Courtney expresses defiantly, picking up a shell.

“That — it is,” Granddaddy adds. “No other way around it.”

“Spiritual understanding — and the powers given to us through our very creation — prepare us for every step in our life,” Grandmama says as she adds another shell to Granddaddy's now bulging pocket.

Kaite spots a lovely shell just as a wave pulls back. Once she hands it to Granddaddy, she turns to her grandmother. “Why is it so hard for some to understand that Grandmama?”

“I have no idea, sweetheart. Maybe they haven't been guided, or maybe they don't want to investigate, or maybe they're just scared of the unknown. But they're robbing themselves of their own tools.”

They walk for a minute. Then, Grandmama stops and turns to her twins.

“Come to think of it, without actively tapping into that knowledge available to us — it's like trying to get a job without an education. You can do it, but it's going to be a lot harder to succeed when life throws unknown

situations at you.”

She smiles at the waves and the sun that's beginning to drop lower in the sky. “Without an education, you definitely won't have a lot of options at your disposal when searching for solutions. Even the opportunities you do have will be hard to see.”

“Gee,” Kaite says, “If life is all about options, as you’ve taught us, why would anyone want to close this reservoir of options off?!”

Courtney has no desire to be as poetic this time. “Dumb, I tell you. Just dumb.”

"And on a purely practical side," Granddaddy offers, "with spiritual awareness, our internal eyes stay open. We become more appreciative of the small wonders in our lives." He puts an arm around each of his granddaughters. “It's like looking around in full color — as opposed to just seeing things in black and white.”

“As I said, ‘dumb!’” Coco responds. “I’d prefer everything in full color.”

“Yeah,” Kaitlyn adds. “Especially when I’m visualizing — in my magic closet.” She winks at her Grandmama and looks up at her grandfather and smiles.

With this, her sister laughs — and gives her a solid thumbs-up!



CHAPTER 27



Saint Anthony's Remarkable Power!

The family arrives home happy, tired, hungry, and sandy! Everyone takes turns at a shower, and both the guest and master bathrooms go into full swing! Soon everyone is in the kitchen, pitching in to help make dinner, while soft music is playing throughout the home. Because the sun's gone down, and there's a slight cool breeze out on the patio, they decide to eat inside at the large round dining room table. The fact that everyone is slightly sunburned may have also added to the desire not to sit outside.

Just as they are serving up the plates in the kitchen, Kaitlyn asks a question, seemingly out of nowhere.

“Who’s Saint Anthony?”

“What?” her grandmother replies.

“You've mentioned him a couple of times this weekend, Grandmama. I was just wondering who he was, and why do you like him so?”

“Ah ... well, good question. I thought I told you about this wonderful saint. He returns lost things!”

“Well, I could sure use him,” Courtney interjects as she dishes the hot fresh broccoli and cauliflower onto the plates. “Somehow, I keep losing my homework.”

“Right Court,” Granddaddy adds with a slight laugh as he tosses the salad. “It usually helps to do the homework before you lose it.”

“Ohhh Granddaddy,” she replies quickly in return, “what fun would that be?”

Grandmama is pulling the chicken casserole out of the oven. “Well, let's sit down for dinner, and then I'll tell you about Saint Anthony and why ‘nothing is ever lost, you just can't find it.’”

“Well, this should be good,” Courtney replies as she takes the plates to the table.

“Yep,” adds her sister carrying the last of the plates, “sounds like this guy really earned his sainthood.”

Hunger has overtaken all four of them. After a prayer was said, blessing the day, being together, and the food, little is heard for a while. Soon, little is left of the salad, vegetables, and chicken.

While Granddaddy and the twins clear the table, Grandmama gets

the big bowl of cherry Jell-O from the refrigerator. Everyone returns, and she sits the bowl on the table with the whipped cream.

As she serves the fresh, wiggling Jell-O into small bowls, she remarks, “Okay, now I think we’re ready to introduce you to Saint Anthony!”

“Yes,” Kaite responds, “I definitely want to hear why ‘nothing is ever lost.’”

“Yeah,” Coco adds, picking up her spoon for dessert, “you could have fooled me.” As she takes a spoonful of whipped cream for her Jell-O, announcing, “Besides, it sounds like the ‘you just can’t find it,’ puts in all the work back on me. Again.”

“Ah, but that's why we have Saint Anthony!” Grandmama answers as she puts a large spoonful of whipped cream on her dessert. “He’s the Saint in charge of finding all things!”

“Let me guess,” Kaite adds, “*but* you have to turn it over to him. No holding back.”

“Bingo!” Granddaddy responds as he digs into his wiggly bowl of Jell-O.

“My mama first told me about Saint Anthony when I was young. I willingly accepted it as true, but I had no empirical proof of my own,” Grandmama reflects, spreading her whipped cream around her Jell-O. “It was a nice theory that I liked to believe in — but hadn’t observed happening.” She pops a spoonful of Jell-O into her mouth.

“*S-o-o-o*, what happened??” Courtney asks.

“I was in the 8th grade and was out playing tennis one day. The court at school was overgrown with vines all over the fence. I hit the ball past my partner, over by the back fence. The overflow of shrubbery was everywhere, all across the fence on both sides. My partner and I had no idea where the ball was; it just disappeared.” She takes another spoonful of Jell-O.

“*A-n-d*,” Courtney says.

“Well, it was our only ball, I was so exasperated and convinced we weren’t going to find it, I finally let out a deep sigh —I said, *‘Okay, St. Anthony, you find it!’* I took about five steps and just happened to glance up at the fence — about two feet from the ground. Sticking in the fence, tangled in the vines with just a touch of the yellow ball showing, was my tennis ball.”

She pops the last bite in her mouth, and then finishes with, “I was sold. It was gospel. And I’ve never doubted again.”

Granddaddy continues. “However, last year, when the whole family was together at the pier — was THE most impressive demonstration I’ve observed in dealing with, our beloved saint. It was when Grandmama had to take her wedding rings off — which she never does.”

“Oh yeah! I remember that,” Courtney interjects. “You were taking trapeze lessons that we all gave you for your birthday.”

“And to fly on the trapeze, you had to take off all your jewelry,” Kaite adds. “I saw you put your rings in your purse.”

“Right, and I should have just given them to Granddaddy, but I didn't,” Grandmama adds. “Then your cousin went into my purse for gum while I was up high on the trapeze platform. I saw her and just smiled at her 'sneakiness.' I completely forgot that my rings were wrapped in a Kleenex buried deep in my purse. Hours later, at home, I went to put on my rings, and all I found was an empty Kleenex. My heart sank. I mean, it *sank* — and I immediately got hot and cold all over. By then, it was almost midnight, and I knew that I had to live through the night before we could go back to the pier in the morning.”

“Oh, Grandmama,” Kaite adds sympathetically. “I've never seen you without your rings.”

“And they're so special since Granddaddy designed them,” Courtney adds. “How did you ever go to sleep??”

“It was hard. I kept asking God to remove any fear from my mind; to erase all negative thoughts into nothingness. That wasn't easy. But finally, I completely turned it over to Saint Anthony. Before I fell asleep, I came to peace with the fact that we don't really own anything; that, for a while, we're just the guardians of our possessions.”

Grandmama is quiet for a moment. Both girls wait for her to continue.

“After that, I finally accepted that those wonderful rings didn't define me ... no matter how saddened I was in not having them. So, I blessed the time I had them — and somehow fell asleep.”

“But boy, did she pop out of bed early the next morning!” Granddaddy says as he puts down his coffee cup. “We were down at the pier just after as the sun rose. We immediately went to the place you guys were sitting.”

“But wait — wasn’t that high over the water?” Kaite starts. “I mean, the pier has huge spaces in between the wood slats.”

“Yeah, I remember looking straight down into the ocean from where we were sitting on the bleachers!” Coco adds.

“Exactly,” Grandmama confirms. “And on the very edge of those slats — in two different places — we found both rings. In fact, one ring was on the last plank of the pier; another millimeter flying through the air, and it would have gone directly into the sea.”

“W-o-w!” Coco replies with eyes wide open. While Kaite is silently sitting there looking at her grandmother — mouth slightly open.

Grandmama looks at both girls and says, “So, ‘nothing’s ever lost, you just can’t find it’ — but Saint Anthony can.” With that, she stands up and starts to clear the dessert dishes.

Granddaddy picks up the remaining items and follows her into the kitchen. “Hey, I’ll start the water to boil so we can get to dying those eggs for Easter. It’ll be about 10 minutes before you’re on duty, girls!”

With Granddaddy in the kitchen with Grandmama, Courtney whispers to her sister. “That’s one saint I’m adding to my emergency call list.”

“You got it! A definite addition.” Kaitlyn responds, still in a mild state of shock.

“Do you think they really did fall in, and Saint Anthony brought them back up??” Courtney whispers.

“Teetering on the planks overnight, or magically retrieved from the sea. What difference does it make?” Kaite whispers back as she raises her eyebrows in question to her sister.





CHAPTER 28

Saying Good-Night as We Come to a Close

A few hours later, Easter eggs are dyed and piled high in a colorful basket on the large counter separating the kitchen from the rest of the great room. Then — all snuggle down on the big couch to watch a movie.

By the end of the film, everyone's struggling to keep their eyes open. The sun, sand, and swimming, topped by a good dinner, has done its trick for this happy clan of warriors. They all get up, and while the grandparents start to put the house 'to bed' for the night, the twins get ready for a long night's sleep.

Granddaddy is making the morning's coffee; Grandmama is watering a few plants on the patio in preparation for another hot day tomorrow. It's still and beautiful out, and all traces of the slight breeze of a few hours ago have completely disappeared.

Kaite comes wandering back into the great room, toothbrush in mouth, and finds her grandmother on the patio.

"I'm sure there's a reason you're chewing your toothbrush, my dear Kaite."

"Oh, that." She takes the toothbrush out. "I was waiting for Court to finish at the sink. Naturally, she was taking her sweet time — and I had a thought I wanted to tell you, so I just wandered out here."

"Oh, okay," Grandmama reaches up high with the hose where several colorful pots are holding red and pink Mandevilla plants cascading down the wall. "What was your thought?" The soft lights that decorate the patio give the broad leaves of the big potted plants a certain glow from the water droplets.

"Well," Kaite starts while plopping down in the white wicker chair, hanging her leg over the arm, "did you ever notice that you often quote famous philosophers, who are actually well-known scientists? Benjamin Franklin, Isaacs Newton, Albert ... Albert" her voice trails off in thought.

"Einstein. Albert Einstein, Grandmama finishes her granddaughter's thought. "One of my very favorites ... *Imagination is far greater than knowledge.*"

“Yes, that one! Oh, and Plato. Mustn’t forget Plato.” Kaite sits up as she recites, “The one with the greater knowledge has the greater responsibility.”

Coco comes out into the patio, flops into the other wicker chair, and jumps into the conversation. “I heard that one every time I was told I should ‘know better’ during an argument with someone.”

“Yeah,” her sister jumps in, “mom’s pulled that one on me a few times!”

“Very good girls,” their grandmother adds as she winds up the hose. “But Plato wasn’t a scientist in the normal way of thinking. He was a student of Aristotle and practiced metaphysics.” She looks up at her granddaughters. “But I digress. What was your original thought Kaite?” She comes and takes a seat on the ottoman in front of them.

“Oh ... yeah. Scientists are also great philosophers. I thought that scientists only believed in that which they could see— or prove. At least that’s what I keep hearing. And yet, all yours believed in so much ... more ... that can’t be proved.”

“Hmm, interesting.” Grandmama nods her head. “Actually, any great scientist, and doctors I’ve talked to throughout my life, know that true science is a process. A hypothesis is formed ... facts that can’t be verified but, if true, would explain certain known phenomena.”

“Oh sure, we’ve studied that,” Courtney says. “If those concepts prove out through experiments or testing, they become a scientific theory.”

“True. These great men of science found by studying life — how events happen to us, and how our choices affect our destiny — that many things are true that can be explained only by 'a force' beyond us. Each recognized and wrote about a divine spirit from which we are created.”

Granddaddy comes out to join everyone on the patio. “I can't tell you the number of times I've heard of a doctor saying,” he sits on the ottoman next to his wife, “according to all scientific facts after a patient survived who was supposed to die ... ‘a far greater power than I, saved the patient.’”

“That was told to my dad after my sister was born,” standing up, Grandmama adds, “So you see, to deny any other option than what you ‘think’ you know, limits your critical thinking in just about every area of life.”

Granddaddy stands up and offers a hand to each girl to raise them up.

“Is that why you always say Granddaddy,” Kaite questions as she takes his hand, “that we have to study all aspects of history?”

Taking his other hand, Courtney stands and adds, “Yeah, like studying our country's history ... the good, the bad, and the ugly?”

“Absolutely,” he responds. “If you don't, you'll miss something that might have enlightened or inspired you ... or something that will lead you *not* to make the same mistake again.”

As they march through the open patio doors, all three arm-in-arm, he continues. “In fact, all debate in life should be looked at that way.”

“Granddaddy, you're so wise,” Grandmama says, smiling as she walks behind her trio.

Grandmama comes in to say goodnight to her twins in the den. They've just climbed into the big blow-up bed Granddaddy set up for them before they arrived. It's an extra-large double bed, so the girls have plenty of room, especially since they both enjoy kicking in their sleep. Grandmama made the bed with their favorite sheets and blankets — so each night, they've felt 'at home again,' even in a new home.

“Well, my beautiful girls, thank you for sharing this long, long weekend with your grandfather and me ... we love being with you,” Grandmama reflects as she sits on the side of the bed.

Each girl can easily reach their grandmother, and so they do a group hug. “Us too, Grandmama,” the girls respond.

Then Coco says, “It feels good here now. It doesn't feel strange.”

“I was afraid that I was going to feel so lonely for your other place,” Kaitlyn adds and then smiles, “our growing-up home.”

“Have you ever felt that way, Grandmama?” Coco asks.

“Oh, more times than I can count,” she responds. “Usually, before I've been able to make memories in the new place.”

She indicates for the girls to slide down and get comfortable.

“But there are lots of times I've felt lonely — times when no one's around. Times when everyone I needed was just someplace else. That's just

life.”

“Gosh, I know that feeling,” Courtney responds. “How did you shake it?”

Kaite softly punches her sister on the shoulder. “Come on, Court — she picked up her special phone,” she winks at her grandmother.

“That I did,” Grandmama replies. “But first, I'd usually have a cry to wash things out. After a few tries of ‘calling’ God — conversations don't always flow easily when you're feeling like that — I'd begin to hear Divine Spirit. Slowly, I'd feel a sense of comfort sliding around me – like a warm blanket, something from the other side of the veil. That's when I knew ... again ... that there was a power higher than me backing me up.”

“I just don't get it,” Kaite says, “why do we have to go through soooooo many lessons!”

“I agree!” Courtney adds with great emphasis.

“I know how you feel,” Grandmama sighs. “Lessons on this side of the veil that we have to learn, sometimes don't make any sense — imperfect humans in our way and all that.” She winks at her granddaughters. “But it's part of our continual schooling.”

“Schoooooool again!!” Coco moans.

Granddaddy comes in and leans quietly against the doorway.

“But think of all the fun you'd miss if you weren't going to school,” her grandmother pokes her. “And all the people you get to meet.”

“And all of the incredible things you're inspired to do!” Granddaddy

adds as he comes over to give each girl a kiss good-night.

“And our terrific grandparents,” Kaite adds coyly.

“Good addition, kid! I’ll second that.” Granddaddy responds.

“Good-night, my lovely ones. I’ll see you early tomorrow. Your mom's going to join us for Easter brunch before you all head back home.”

“Is mom going to be here early enough to join us for Easter service at *Church-Walk-On-the-Beach*?” Kaite inquires.

“Oh, she said she wouldn’t miss it,” Granddaddy replies as he gives the “ok” sign with his hand. “So, we’ll prepare a light breakfast when she gets here; it’ll be early. Maybe we’ll have some of those eggs you dyed tonight.”

“Great!” Kaite announces. “But, you have to hide them first in the patios Granddaddy.”

“Right ... tradition!!!” Courtney reaffirms.

“I was planning on it! So, get to sleep, my beautiful granddaughters. Sunrise comes early.”

He smiles, salutes the girls, and flips off the light as he exits.

The girls and Grandmama are left in the patio's lights, that are reflecting off different surfaces in the darkened room.

“So, my dear, dear granddaughters,” Grandmama says as she lies the twins back down on their fluffy pillows, “Your magic closet is right here with you, no matter where you live. Everything you conceived of while playing dress-up and pretend, are concepts you will practice every step of

your journey. Your life, and the miracles in it, are limitless. She gives each one a hug. “Remember ... life is a game — you just have to know how to play it.” She kisses each girl on the forehead, and then stands up.

“Grandmama,” Kaitlyn starts, “Will you leave a light on in the garden so I can see there when I wake up in the night? I know that I’m protected, but sometimes I just get a little ... nervous.”

“Of course, my sweet, I’ll leave the twinkle lights on in the big plants,” Grandmama says, sitting back down. “But also, I have something special that will help a lot with moments like that.”

“Woooo, what?!?” Coco chirps up. “May I have it too? I get a little nervous at times!”

“You get a 'little nervous' a lot,” Kaite responds.

“I can’t help it if I have an over-active imagination,” her sister shoots back.

“Ah, I know what you both mean. My daddy gave me something when I was young — the night before I was to have major surgery.”

“What was it???” they both inquire in unison.

“A special prayer. And whenever I said it, I could feel the panic leaving my body. Since then, I’ve used it countless times when I needed to feel secure.”

“All your life?” Kaite reflects.

“All my life ... in many situations. And it’s never failed.”

“Why?” Coco asks.

“It's quite a powerful vibration. Magic, almost I'd say. In fact — I've used it on each of you when you were facing something difficult. I've just changed the words a little, and it's helped me keep you safe each time.”

“Okay, teach it to us, Grandmama,” Kaitlyn says with a low voice.

“I'm ready,” Courtney responds. “But hurry, I feel the sandman approaching.”

Grandmama smiles, “This is a gift handed down from beyond — just for each of you.”

Then she softly recites the prayer:

“I am the transparency that God shines through.

He and I are one, not two.

I shall not worry, fret, or plan ...

But relax and be free,

And let God work his plan through me.”

“Why, that's lovely, Grandmama,” Kaite says, smiling as she slowly closes her eyes.

“Yes, I feel better already,” Coco adds as she yawns. But will you say it to us again in the morning, so we can learn it?”

“Good idea,” Kaite says as she starts to drift off.

A very soft and peaceful smile comes across each girl's face.

Grandmama kisses each slumbering granddaughter on the cheek and

tiptoes out of the room, where Granddaddy is awaiting her just outside the office door.

As she closes the door behind her, he kisses his wife gently. Then looking around with great satisfaction, he says,

“What a wonderful new magic closet we have.”

The End!



*The twins with their siblings (L to R) —
Wendy, Kaitlyn, Chelsea, Alex, Cassandra, and Courtney.*



Diane Dowsing Robison

... is a writer and independent producer who lives Los Angeles with her incredible husband; truly "the wind beneath her wings." Throughout their amazing life together, a son, a daughter and five outstanding grandchildren have taken their blessings over-the-top.

Having created and served as publisher/editor-in-chief of an industry magazine, she also co-wrote the iconic book, *A Martian Wouldn't Say That* with the late Leonard Stern, (creator of *Mad Libs*). Her recently complete novella, *Beyond Forever* is the springboard for a staged musical,

The true story recounting the friendship of two best friends — the family's Great Dane (Sabrina) & their Squirrel Monkey (Samantha) — will be published 2021 in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Magic of Dogs*. And her novella, *Beyond Forever* (the journey of a man and a woman with a love so strong. they 're driven to reunite through four lifetimes), has been designed as the springboard for a staged musical

Diane recently finished the pilot to a television series she and her partner created — and their company has just completed the financing for an independent film they will produce in Malta, Italy and the United Kingdom.

THE TWINS AND THE MAGIC CLOSET! now joins as the companion to her previous book, **CHURCH-WALK-ON-THE-BEACH:** The story about the twins' younger cousins during a long weekend with their grandparents, culminating with an inspirational walk on the beach. Both are slated be published together in one book . . . **THE MAGIC OF BELIEVING.**

The Twins & The Magic Closet!

A true family story



Twins Kaitlyn and Courtney (13), have hidden and played in their grandparents' walk-in closet all their lives ... where something truly magical always happened. Now, embarking upon the world of high school, Kaite and Coco, are also faced with leaving behind their wonderful 'magic closet' as their grandparents move to a new home.

However . . . it's during a long weekend with their grandparents in a new environment that they rediscover the magic they themselves have always possessed — powerful knowledge for young adults facing a challenging world for the first time.