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*So the sea journey goes on, and no one knows where. Just to be held
by the ocean is the best luck we could have. It is a total waking up.*

Why should we grieve that we have been sleeping?

It does not matter how long we have been unconscious.

We are groggy, but let the guilt go.

Feel the motions of tenderness around you, the buoyancy.

—Rumi

For all who have been sleeping and are ready to awaken

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Part 1
Chapter 1
Attunement

The door to the waiting room sprang open, and out came a burst of sunshine in the form of dear old Lee and Jo. Arms outstretched, they welcomed me into their warm embrace and then, linking arms, led me inside.

“Been waiting long?” Lee asked.

“No, just a bit. Perfect timing,” I replied.

“Wonderful,” Jo said. “It’s so good to have you with us again. Now, just take a seat there between ours and we’ll get started.”

So I’d arrived once more in this warm place, this magical room that had the touch of a true artist. All the wonders of nature had been captured in this one indoor space. One of the walls reminded me of a dense forest, another the inside of a wave, and a third wall was like vast sunburnt spaces. A pile of granite boulders in the corner provided a perfect ledge in front of the window on the other side wall. It looked out to an ever-changing landscape of purple mountains and wildflower-filled plains. In parts, the floor was made of honey-coloured wood, but elsewhere there was thick, springy grass and a carpet of fallen autumn leaves. The light in here was warm and mellow, like sundown. On one side of the room was a round pool of brighter light that seemed to stream in from above.

I was drawn to the middle of the room and into a shimmering pod that enveloped my presence like a womb. Jo and Lee had seated themselves in the plush armchairs on either side of me. The chairs then somehow moved silently into position so that we were in a triangle facing each other and just touching.

They hadn’t changed a bit.

Lee was of an indeterminate age. Her silky long hair seemed to float around her serene and gentle face. Her softly feminine clothes reminded me of a long-ago favourite artwork. But what I remembered most of all was her stillness and strength.

Jo was ageless as well. Like Lee, he was barefoot. He wore quirky clothes in deep jewel-like colours. I could almost feel the rich texture of his jacket. He had a warm and kindly face and an even gaze with a twinkle of humour. But his calm steadiness struck me most of all.

As he spoke, I remembered the comforting depth of his voice: “So, ready for the big adventure, eh?” His wise deep-brown eyes held such a mischievous twinkle that I instantly remembered why I loved these two so much.

Lee was just as pleased about the whole thing. When she smiled, her clear blue eyes sparkled like diamonds. She wore a look of contented expectancy. Just as I thought it, she said, “Well, let’s get started. Let’s get you a body.”

The hypnotic caress of her words echoed softly in the room as the small hollows at the edges of their seats joined to provide perfect little nests for their hands to rest together. They closed their eyes, and together we sank easily into a state of total relaxation. I loved this attunement part.

The air began to pulse. Soon the softest sound began. It was a single middle note on a bell. It circled on and on, louder and softer, until the air was gently vibrating. Then a deeper tone sounded, anchoring us steady and true. Over the top of these came the crash of the deepest, mightiest gong from an ancient monastery in the mountains. I basked in the glory of this sound as it sent a shudder through the air. Next came the surprise of the most delicate waterfall of tinkling bells again, again, and again. A single higher note sent us soaring then, ringing clear and pure like a soprano bellbird in a forest.

Waves of long-ago smells began to wash over me.

Rain on parched earth ... Mm.

Fine red wine maturing in oak casks.

The rotting damp of a wet rainforest.

A brand-new baby wearing that scent of soft innocence.

Roses, glorious roses! Names floated back with each fragrance. I could smell Tiffany ... and was that Royal Dane? Mm ... And that would have to be Papa Meilland. Glory on a stem.

A breeze blew away the scent of the roses and then brought in another smell. *Hang on. I think I remember ... What is that? I know that one ...* Then I had it. It was wet dog fur rolled in fresh cow manure!

They were being funny now. I suddenly came back and heard us all laughing.

“Gets ’em every time!” blurted Jo, slapping his hand on his leg. He was wiping tears from his eyes and making an effort to compose himself.

A half-hearted attempt at seriousness crossed Lee’s face, followed by a small explosion of childlike giggles.

Jo wasn't helping. He had a way of looking at her sideways, with a lopsided grin like a naughty schoolboy. Despite a concerted attempt at a sensible expression on his face, little snorts and half-stifled guffaws kept bubbling up from his stomach like champagne bubbles.

Lee forced herself to look away from him and, after a few more gentle snickers, said, "All right, we'll get going now."

Finally they settled down.

Jo looked at me admiringly. "You're positively glowing! And as you know, smell is the link. So we always know that a soul is really ready for the transition when the sense of smell is reawakened during the attunement."

The chairs glided away from each other to be beside me again. We were now in a shallow half circle facing a central screen that had risen from the floor. Two ergonomic keyboards had risen in front of Lee and Jo, and Lee had her hands comfortably wrapped around her sphere, which reminded me of an ornate Victorian-era globe of the world.

"So what'll it be?" she asked. "Do you want to do *death*?" The screen turned blue. "Or *guilt*?" A quick touch of another key and the screen turned green. "Or maybe *illness*—physical or mental?" She did something else, and the screen was now pink.

I knew she was asking me for the main life theme I'd decided on, but I couldn't keep up with the screen changes.

"Don't mind her," Jo said. "We just got some new software. She's like a kid on her birthday with this. Just take your time."

I settled back quietly to refocus while Lee gleefully switched the screen through all her favourite colours.

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