

RAIN

KEEGAN LOFCRE.

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CHAPTER 1.

ALEEN.

Aleen after leaving her work building for another day, happy to be finished for her shift, standing there waiting to catch a bus to her destination, home to her apartment, took out her mobile phone, started using it while her bus arrived.

A bus trip of a ten kilometre travel to and from her place of work five days a week, the bus was cheaper than a taxi, rail was an option of the city Aleen found not to her liking, instead preferring a bus.

Aleen rostered on every third weekend, it was an ugly imposition on her weekend, but she had no choice or say in the matter, if she wanted to maintain her regular income.

Aleen worked as receptionist for a large hotel chain, her job often becoming mundane, sometimes it was enough for her to wish for wealth and universal beauty.

Busy using her mobile phone to communicate with friends, catch up with everything that was happening in the world, while waiting to board her regular bus, giving her enough time to have a good chat.

The bus pulled in to let her and other people waiting for their ride to get on board, many passengers continued on using their mobiles, till it was their turn to get off the bus.

Aleen was impatient to get off at her stop, thinking to herself, 'the bus ride was slower today, seemed to be taking longer than normal, strange, maybe time had been stretched out', it was not, Aleen was just anxious to get home.

Impatience to be home in her apartment, unwind, it had been a hectic day at work, one of those days.

Aleen was ever so glad this day was over, making her physically tired, she needed to rest up in her apartment.

Her tiredness made it appear traveling home was a lot longer than normal, the bus took the same route, the same time every day, it was just her self, pissed off at the world.

She began having an eerie certain apprehension about time, making her feel inwardly a little uneasy, not knowing why, but with a feeling of dread.

Her sixth sense on very high alert for some unknown reasons, until becoming aware of an approaching big storm front, seeing the difference in atmospheric change, looking up from the bus window at the sky clouding over, realising a need to hurry to get inside her apartment away from the storm after her bus ride home.

The bus stopped letting her get off, Aleen making her haste to get inside her building before getting wet by a soft rain starting to intermittently fall ahead of the mother lode.

Safe inside her apartment, Aleen Merlle turned on her computer as soon as she walked in through the door of her apartment, as she did everyday, prior to doing anything else, except close, lock, the door of her comfortable apartment.

Her mobile phone was able to give her ready access to the internet, with a small sceeen to view, Aleen found she was better suited to the large screen of her computer.

Rooms of the buildings were instantly brightly lit up, by lightning flashes sneaking through past tiniest parts not completely blocked from intrusiveness to frightening sight belonging sparkes and flashes.

Loud cracks of mother nature doing her best to scare an entire part of city blocks, told an adancing wild summer storm was beginning to break overhead.

Ghastly silhouettes of tumbling, churning, boiling, in a seething violent atmosphere could be observed when the brilliance of lightning lit up the whole sky.

Noises reminiscent of a full blown war zone erupted, like a trapped monster trying to unleash its power suddenly bursting in pelting rain, wind, hail, lightning, thunder, as the spectacle of a natural phenomenon was unloaded.

Fierceness of a summer storm had broken above the building of her apartment, rain was pelting in splattering of bullets in big raindrops smashing about the landscape, with spears of lightning accompanied by loudest rolling thunder, trying to terrorise the senses.

Hail stones begun hitting roads, signs, glass, metals, ricochetting, from everything, smothering in ferocity of the tempest, buildings stood in defiance against furiousness to onslaught of storms.

Tucked safely from the outside weather, Aleen had no idea nor cared how savage the attack of climate was, totally absorbed in her searching on the computer.

Dismissing large flashes of lightning, great bangs of thunder, not important to her at this time, embroiled in her quest for information searching the net.

Aleen kept searching, finding data she was looking to help her in her night class in studies of the ancient Lewwel, on her way to attaining a doctorate in anthropology.

Taking a night class in order to further her academic accreditation, beyond her being a receptionist for the rest of her life, Aleen having set a course of learning, she should have achieved with her schooling, but didn't, why she had not was another story in itself of lost chances.

Aleen was romantically involved, deeply in love with Richard Harkey, a man not known to show his feeling, even to Aleen, to her, he was plain scared of telling her his true feelings, be prepared to understand her side of loving.

Aleen never pushed the point, not wanting to wreck a relationship having very few flaws.

Richard Harkey was a very private individual, aloof, a computer wizzard, living in his own apartment about four blocks away from Aleen, never much sharing with Aleen how he felt about her, it was not in his nature, he never saw anything untoward in his manner.

His words of love to Aleen were superficial to suit the moment, Aleen hungered to hear of his love for her, she abided his distance from committing himself utterly to love.

Knowing through her talks with some of her dearest friends, some men were like that, not able to say what they really wanted to talk about loving.

Racing to seek shelter from the onslaught of hail now producing a wall of ice stones, to injure anyone foolishly of being caught out in the hail.

Richard Harkey quickly ran without tripping over, to the front of his building seeking shelter, under protection of the weather awning erected for such needs.

Shaking off bits of hail, sprayed rain, clinging to his clothing, Dick Harkey proceeded inside forgetting about the raging storm outside, confronted by a heavy pounding heart swipe in sticky thickness of emotions, gathered in himself, to float around as unrealised fact.

What was this, what was this recognition, he did not know himself, his heart certainly did.

Hastily making his way to the elevator taking him to his apartment floor, walking briskly from the elevator to his apartment door, unlocking and opening the door as quick as he could to get inside, closing, locking, the door after enter.

His mind was on having a shower, change into some dry warm clothes, then to have something nice to eat, make himself comfortable, listen to some songs, or watch a bit of television, he didn't feel to be on his computer, just wanting a quiet night, content with his own company.

Dick Harkey had his evening planned out exactly to the letter what he was going to do, but along the line comes the train of life veering Dick onto another course of action.

Instinct made up his mind to go see Aleen, he missed being with her, he was overcome with his soft thoughts of love at a precise moment to the recognition that he indeed loved Aleen with all his being, he had to tell her.

Urgency compelled Dick to forget about everything, just shower and change as quick as he could to see Aleen, it was imperative, he could not wait to be with her, a shaking knowledge came to call with a thud upon his understanding.

Dick spent no more time than absolutely necessary in arriving at Aleen's apartment, having made himself so very presentable to his woman, who was no stickler for neat and tidy appearances, Aleen liked to slop round in old clothes.

This the only fault Dick found with Aleen, a thought flashed through his mind, about his own idiosyncrasies, no time for them now, there were more important issues he had to gently speak of to Aleen.

Dick thought to himself what had happened to him, he was unable to stop the driving force to his actions.

Knocking repeatedly but gentle on Aleen's apartment, Dick was nervous, fidgety, happy, apprehensive, excited, all wrapped up in his emotions, trying to burst out.

Aleen answered the knocking on her door, surprised to find Dick standing there, she was not expecting him to visit her tonight.

“Is everything alright Richard, you look a little, sorry come in, is something wrong, you know I love to see you, but it is unexpected, are you worried about something”.

Aleen closing the door behind them giving Dick a very passionate kiss, intimately pushing her body in to him, leading Richard to her bed, before Richard had a chance to offer why he had come to her apartment tonight.

Topic of issue he wanted to tell Aleen about, his deep love for her, was somewhat put to the side as their sexual encounter took them to the height of passions, two bodies entwined in delightful embraces.

Both of them satisfied, lay there not uttering a sound, panting from lovely exhaustion to their lovemaking could be heard in the silence of a warmed up bedroom.

Richard held Aleen in a big loving cuddle, Aleen was somewhat intrigued by Richard's show of emotions, he was not usually as dedicated to expressing himself openly as he had been tonight, Aleen was delighted with Richard.

Aleen was the first of them to make a move from the bed, she arose disappearing into the bathroom, while Dick stayed there in the bed sheets, tangled in what he wanted to discuss with Aleen, debating with himself, is this the correct time to ask Aleen to be his wife, he loved her, so, so, very dearly, thoroughly engrossed in his thoughts.

Patiently waiting on Aleen to return back to bed, to join him once again, Dick began running through what he was going to say to Aleen to becoming his wife for ever, he now knew how much he loved her, began thinking back to the moment of realization, to his love for Aleen, hitting him in the chest like a bazooka.

Dick suddenly thinking Aleen seemed to be taking a long while to come back out, she must be getting herself dressed, finished with lovemaking for the time being.

He was disappointed Aleen was still in the bathroom, not out in bed with him so he could tell her many things, he supposed he should have told her before, instead of being so aloof in his attitude.

Getting reluctantly dressed, pulling aside the curtains, looking out at rain still running down outside of building's window panels, closing the curtains, starting to wonder why Aleen was taking so long, he loved Aleen and wanted to be with her always, there were things to discuss.

Dick thought Aleen was taking an excessive time in the bathroom, knocking gently with a soft voice, asking was everything alright in there.

Not receiving a reply or any sort of sign, Dick opened the door to find Aleen sprawled out on the bathroom floor.

He was stunned, then quickly checking for her pulse, finding she had no heartbeats, he tried to revive her, but was unsuccessful in his attempts, calling emergency services.

The emergency service was there in next to no time, administering what help they could to try reviving her, but Aleen was gone, she was dead.

Richard's universe was broken.

The coronor's official cause of death was a massive blood clot had caused irreversable catastrophic damage to her brain resulting in her very quick death.

Dick Harkey barely able to comprehend what was his real resurroundings, from the fantasy he was reversing into, of going back to Aleen's apartment, to be so warmly greeted by a very much alive Aleen.

It was extremely strenuous for Dick attending Aleen's burial in fog filled mists of disbelief to her death.

Aleen's body might have been in the coffin just there in front of his eys, yet he would not give credit to his own intelligence in believing Aleen was dead, in Dick's altered mindset, Aleen was still very much alive.

After her funeral, Dick began to shut down his body, retreating into his little lost world disputing Aleen's death.

He was absolutely heartbroken like any one would be having discovered his love, for the woman he intended to tell of his effections, ask to be his wife, only he did not.

Never really discussing in depth, nor detail, any such plans of a wedding, how deeply he loved Aleen.

Kicking, punching, so angry at himself, for his long held obstinate manner of conducting his life, it was to late now to cry his tears, over not being more forthcoming with his love for Aleen, it was far, far, to late.

Dick fully regretful harboured the guilt now festering deeply within himself, blaming himself for letting her out of his sight, go into the bathroom, he should have held her close to him, told her how he felt about her.

Held onto her to keep her safe, not allow her to go to her death afraid, unaided, he would have been able to save her, it was his fault Aleen was dead.

All these desperate thoughts to being able to save her from her death, played around with his mental capacity.

Deciding to finally end his broken heart, once and for all time, to join Aleen back at her apartment.

Dick taking pills to alleviate his pain, make him sleep diminish his aching, take it all away, let him be with Aleen.

An exploding star impacted right upon his very being, pulling him back into misery of living, into pain of losing a person he loved, by intervention of two loyal friends.

Friends, Arthur Bates, Sid Rey, had come around to Dick's apartment to see if Dick was alright, talk to him, see how he was coping after Aleen's death, keep him company.

Ringling the bell of the apartment, then ringing again, Dick not answering the door, Arthur tried the door handle, seeing if it was locked or not, the door knob turned to his twist allowing access to the apartment.

Arthur thinking Richard must have had a lot on his mind to leave his apartment door unlocked, sympathised with a man having to face what Richard had to, Dick being a little off his usual way, was understandable to Arthur.

Calling out a loud "hello, its Arthur, Sid, you home Dick, you left you apartment unlocked, we came round".

Arthur didn't get to finish his sentence, finding Dick in a deathly coma on the lounge, empty bottle of sleeping medication sitting on the small table next to Dick, in the bottle's empty innocence of being so deadly.

Arthur called an ambulance, telling emergency, a man had take an overdose of sleeping pills while Sid did what he could for Dick, unless medically trained there is not a lot.

Recovery in the emergency room of Ullvak hospital, was not what Dick wanted.

Sid and Arthur there when Dick was able to respond, knew not to ask Dick the obvious questions, talking to Dick as a caring friends, not condemning his deed.

Both men could see Richard needed medical support, to overcome his falling down suicidally, not condemnation from them or anybody else.

Richard was referred to psychiatric specialist Doctor Elwyn Stirn, a leader in her field, quickly hired by Dick's company to sort out Dick's mental problems.

Responding to treatment, Dick making good progress in the care of Doctor Stirn, spending valuable therapeutic time needed for his recovery, in quiet seclusion of a ward at the Preespir hospital, began to come out of his downward spiral.

Having the best help, courtesy of Doctor Stirn, with his company footing the expenses, worried about Dick, one of their most vitally important assets to be fully recovered, people of Richard's calibre were rare.

Discharged from Doctor Stirn's hospital care with the regular visits to an agreed condition of his release, Richard had a renewed emphasis on living a full life, a clarity about himself.

Dick with Doctor Stirn's valuable help, now realised that he could not have be able to save Aleen, no matter what he had done, it was her time of fate, death came for her as it does for everyone, some people such as Aleen were never given extended longevity of life.

Richard continued going for his regular appointments to see Doctor Stirn, until in himself he knew he no longer required Doctor Stirn, he was healed in his mind, he was back to normal, whatever that may entail.

CHAPTER 2.

TIME NEVER LETS GO.

Richard's long leave of absence from his position of computer analyst at Brodge electronics, was nearing the time he needed to get back to work.

Dick was more a computer geek than a normal man, he was not a hero by any means, death of Aleen had badly disrupted his mind, he had he was forced to take some leave seek help, that was all behind him now, he was feeling fine.

Back at work warmly greeted by friend and colleague Arthur Bates, with his fellow workers, happy to see him.

Richard took their well-wishes as they intended their expressions to be meant, looking for isolation of his own computer room, stopped by Helreche Bodge, owner of the company.

“Richard, great to see you have recovered from your traumatic event, any time you want unscheduled leave, you know you only have to ask for it, I am really glad you are back on deck, if there is anything I can do, you only have to say, your important to our firm, and as a person”.

“Thank you for your words of assurances, it means a lot to me, it really does, especially coming from you.

I feel somewhat renewed, keen to get on with all my work, after such a spell away, you and my colleagues have been wonderful in support”.

“Well do not forget, anything you require, if I can make it happen I will Richard”, Helreche leaving Richard to attend to business.

Richard was buoyed by Helreche's words and manner of delivering them, feeling uplifted as he opened his office to be acquainted with the smells he had become used to and missed.

Steeling himself in his position with his brain being distracted from thinking about Aleen, by heavily dependent thoughts given to problems he had to rectify.

His first shift back since Aleen's death, had gone by suprizingly quick, Richard lost track of the time in his deep pondering for answers.

Time to rack the cue, go home, his computer work would be waiting for him the next day, there would always been another problem to solve, someone always wanted their something, yesterday.

Subway transport was his usual mode of getting to and from work, occassionally he liked to take the long walk home to ease his burning mind, much alive with computer algorithms, by the time he walked home his mind was clear.

Walking home was time of reflection on the Cosmos, he liked to consider, implications of this or that, gave him a respite from high technology computers.

Even though he was walking along a crowded street filled with people of the city, he was isolated from them by his attitude of not acknowledging their presence.

To Richard he was simply walking along a deserted pavement free of noises, in a world of his own.

It is funny when not watching, one month becomes to nears end of the year.

Almost Christmas again, Richard baffled how winds blew, sky changed colour, he never forgot about Aleen, he knew the answers.

Another day closer to Xmas, another train ride to and from work, getting off the train at his subway stop, Richard was not thinking of anything in particular, he just wanted to be in his apartment, relaxed with a drink, light up a cigar, quietly sitting down to enjoy the evening.

Entering his apartment, making himself comfortable, he was about to deploy himself on his lounge, deciding to take a look at the outside world from his windows, to see if the world had changed from high up.

Pulling aside the curtains, Richard was able to stand witness to rain beginning to fall in gentle showers on his windows, from clouds having the resemblance of Aleen's sad face, followed by a heavier bout of raining.

Richard could view the gloominess of the rain clouds dissipating, to reveal a clear starry sky shining above.

Seeing the bright stars twinkling in shine, Dick had brought himself a renewed outlook on life, with him eager to embrace proper living, mesmerising in the look of a face upon the clouds, remembering time never lets go of love, neither would Richard.

Looking out at the sky telling himself a change of scenery might be what he needed, no, he told himself, that would be only running away from his past, it never works, somewhere, sometime, it will find you, it is better to face it while able, he choose to stay put.

Letting curtains fall from his hands, Richard walked away towards his liquor cabinet, began to pour himself a long drink, grabbed a cigar, then stretching out on his old lounge, he intended to replace one of these day, making himself comfortable, while he contemplated.

Towards the end of the week the weather turned nasty cold, a blanket of snow enveloped the buildings of the city.

Dick watched through his windows, with his usual drink and cigar, at the snow falling, enjoying the warmth of his room, shielded from the chilly cold of the snowy filled city, Richard feeling a shiver to the cold bleak scene.

A thought to an answer to a poser at work just popped into his head for no reason, he had not been thinking of his work, but was ever so glad he had the answer to his rather very problematic puzzle.

Next day at work Dick was reminded of the firm's Xmas party, all people were expected to attend.

Dick had no choice, but to go out with a few of his co-workers for a couple of Xmas drinks, the company put on the do for its workers, picked up the entire tab as a thank you, for their valuable work throughout the year.

Once there at the party, it was a fun change to see people let their hair down instead of being the stuffy shirts they projected of themselves at the office, Dick beginning to enjoy himself, knowing, how to much alcohol picks apart the inhibitions, being careful of his alcohol intake.

Dick was really enjoying the company of others for a change, his life had always been isolating him, being a very private person, because of his position, he told himself.

Dick knew not to have any more than a couple of drinks, he might let his own hair down, and that would be disastrous to Richard, keeping his stuffy manners to the fore, of his personality.

He didn't really have it in him to be extroverted when he had a few drinks like some of his colleagues, showing the effects of alcohol, Richard was a condescending bastard.

A right proper hypercritical man whom had no idea how he came across in his superior attitude to life, Richard always liked to be in charge of his faculties.

It never once dawned on him, never, in his self ego important arrogant aloofness, his fellow workers saw him as a total dickhead, a toerag, a person with his head up his arse, they only just tolerated his mannerisms because they worked with him.

Richard unawares of the thoughts of his colleagues, in gazing at their carry ons, harmless fun, busy looking down his nose at their playing around.

He seemed to be the main outsider, not joining in the harmless ribbing, the fun of a few Xmas drinks with friends to finish off a year of heavy scheduled work, everyone was glad to let some steam off, all except Richard.

'The alcohol must be stronger than I thought to be having unnecessary imaginings to my colleagues real stupid antics, if they saw themselves as I see them, they would cease their idiotic behaviour immediately.

I only had a couple of drinks, I know when to stop, when its time to depart from a party, it is obvious they do not know when to quit fooling, making a complete fool of themselves'.

Richard said goodnight to Helreche Bodge, making a hasty retreat after saying his excuses to some of his closest friends, others he thought were friends, these people didn't notice a total prick like Richard had gone.

What Richard saw as impoliteness, utter rudeness, the people at the party, including Helreche Bodge, viewed their fun as just that, fun of celebrating the start of holidays, a time of joyous loudness, filled with good humour.

Richard could never see what people saw in making fools of themselves at a alcohol fuelled booze ups, it was not for him, he maintained a certain decorum about himself.

Days after the Xmas break up for holidays, the party had been celebrated like the others, no body was offended, embarrassed, no one was upset, only Richard by his own snooty attitude to life, he couldn't change even if he wanted.

The firm had closed for the Christmas holidays, his fellow workers had gone on their vacations, Richard had booked himself on a back-packing trek among the Ande's foot-hills.

The further he could get away from civilization, the better he felt about taking his holidays, being around many people made Richard uncomfortable.

Richard had been this way all his life, a real loner, a person who could do without companionship, or thought he could, until he found Aleen, the woman he left to late, to tell her of his love for her.

Thinking back to when he first set eyes on Aleen, was in the Nieluarf boullavarde, in Paris.

Aleen was there with a couple of friends in a trendy pavement cafe, the women talking, laughing, with loudness young people do when having a great time.

The day was beaming brightly of beautifull sunlight enhancing the regal splendour of this part of the city where you could view the Eiffle tower in the distance.

There was a distinct smell of cooking waffling about the air making it all the more magical.

The women were really enjoying their holidays, in Paris, the city of love, it was so intoxicating, just the name Paris, conjures up images to thrill.

Richard had lost his way trying to stay on the out of way back streets, in being a loner in the city famed for its beauty, he was right at home sneaking down back alleyways so no one would talk to him.

This compulsion not to be able to happily mix with people, had become Richard's obsession, an illness, he had tried to overcome, time and time over.

Richard planned his holiday in Paris, city of renown, to help him beat his aversion to mixing with people, his self prescribed therapy was not working, not yet, alas he would beat his lifelong sickly tradition, of seeking isolation.

Coming out a long alley type of street after viewing a small private gallery, Richard came out onto the Nieluarf boulavarde, where he saw people eating at the cafes.

People looked to be enjoying each others company, lover's gazing lustfully in closeness of their eyes, people's normality of life on show, 'if only I was able to do that with another human being, become intimate on a level suiting my intellect, but I know I can not'.

Richard once again overstating his own importance to himself, in believing he was intellectually superior to most people, not wanting to asking directions, to show he was just like anyone else, he kept on walking by Aleen and her friends, having found his bearings from a tourist guide.

Richard down on himself for not having enough internal gumption to introduce a conversation, with women he would have liked to get to know, after all it was holiday time, in a beautiful city, still he was badly crippled by his isolation attitude, he could not overcome, it was a drawback to having a happy life, from a life so full of his own lifelong silly hypocrisy.

He wanted to ask the way to the Siental hotel, where he was staying, to break the ice in a conversation with the women, but no, another lost opportunity goes begging.

Richard's awkwardness in talking with someone new, stifled his intentions of meeting anyone he did not have a prior time to get acquainted with, needing to be comfortable with talking to them, it was so easy back at work, dealing with people he knew, here in Paris it was very different.

Back at his hotel, freshened up, readying himself for going out for dinner, he no longer was content to have room service bring his meal up to him, he was determined to beat his diabolical affliction, in the city of Paris of all places, or he might as well take himself back home, forget about his holidays, be lost in his life.

What Richard did not comprehend, with his attitude no one liked, he was seen as self-righteous, condescending, an unlikable man.

Richard kept reinforcing his delusions he was thought of as a knowledgeable, pleasant mannered, thrilling, a nice talking man, any woman would find endearing.

Richard all dapper looking in his attire, he was going to the beat his sickness, thinking of the ways to bring an end to his wanting isolation, was intent to rid his body of such stupidity, yet it is easier thought than done.

On the way down in the elevator, Richard so intense in his own private world, feeling gentlest slowing, hearing elevator doors automatically open, made a beeline for the opening doors of the elevator, bumping into Aleen with her friends, getting into the elevator.

Aleen thought to herself how rude a man is this prick, with no sign of allowing a woman to have a bit of courtesy.

Richard waltzed off, unaware his brash bossy attitude had not endeared him to the women getting into the lift.

Days after his chance encounters with the women, Richard was walking along Neepol street, a quiet street off the hustle and bustle of busy streets of Paris.

Richard spotting the same woman from the cafe and the elevator, sitting by herself, a happy expression on her face, she must have been waiting for her friends Richard supposed, now was a chance to be taken.

Sitting at the table directly behind the happy looking woman, Richard ordered, in his most bombastic style of condescension at the waiter, saying out loud, “ I do hope my order does not take too long, I have business to attend to, I am a very influential man about Paris”, his raised voice in a commandeering style, enough so the woman could hear, be suitably impressed.

What Richard thought was his impressive attitude to himself, didn't work on the woman, getting up, leaving her coffee, half drunk in disgust at the man's attitude.

Richard was a nitwit when he came to dealing with people, he had absolutely no people skills, mixed with his uppity attitude, making him a most unsavoury man.

It was at the Louvre, in a relative quiet time, Richard got to make amends for blunt remarks intended to impress, like his words did back home at work, he thought they did.

Richard had not even noticed a woman standing there admiring paintings, almost colliding with her as he walked, thinking everyone had to make way for his presence.

The woman was totally self immersed in one famous painting, understanding in her mind, why the painting was called a masterpiece.

Richard had stopped walking, standing beside the woman, like the whole universe was only his, looking at the magnificent painting by a renowned master, almost taking his breath away at the beauty of the painting.

The woman looked at Richard seeing he had tears of wonder in his eyes, viewing the painting so much, she was driven to walk away from this absurd mannered man, she remembered from previous encounters, certainly not liking the man's attitude.

The woman was just about to walk as far away from this man as she could, she was here to partake of what the Louvre had to offer, not have her space invaded by rudeness of a derogatory mannered man.

Before the woman was able to take first quick steps away from Richard, he started saying to her of his belief the masters were granted their talents from the Lord himself.

“There could be no other reason for a master painter having such extraordinary skills, paint pictures that could reduce a person to tears”.

The woman was stunned to hear such words from a nematode of a man she didn't want anything to do with.

'How could such an obnoxious man, have the ability to be moved to tears by the sight of paintings, I will never know the workings of the world'.

Her feet were getting restless on the Louvre's floor, part of her wanted to leave never talk to this man, the other was fascinated at a side of himself Richard was exhibiting.

Aleen thought this man residing in the most terrible person, yet he is cultured, her instincts told her to just walk away.

Richard did not understand of himself, why he started to talk to Aleen in a most pleasant manner, an enquiring soft gentle way of speaking, unlike his usual bombastic tone.

“I see you also find the rich beauty in exquisiteness of the masters, to your liking as I do”.

Aleen responded in a cutting shrewish voice intended to direct her displeasure at her target.

“We have nearly met a couple of times before, at the cafe, the elevator, I didn't think a very rude man as yourself would like paintings, they would be beneath your feet”.

Richard's tone of voice reverted back to a usual gruff mode of speaking, but now it contained stark sarcasm with sentiment, full of venom.

“You do not come near to having the fundamental of basic knowledge to my psyche, so why would you assume you have.

Your gall, to insist you know what makes me tick, does me a disservice, you have only just met me, yet you suppose to determine my inner character.

You, woman, have not the intellect to judge me, I find your assumptions so very common”.

“It does not take a very smart person to be aware you are a rude, bad mannered, conceited man, used to pushing people around, well I can tell you something, I am not a person you will push around.

You are an overblown egotistical chauvinist, leave me alone, I do not wish for you to go spoiling my visit to this famous museum, if you do not desist, I will call security”.

Richard taken aback by the slap to his pampered ego, wasn't sure how to respond, settling down his tirade, calmly trying to appease the woman's fiery demnour.

“I am concerned you have been misled by any remark I might have expressed in the vicinity of your hearing.

Sometimes in conversations, the subject conversation becomes a little forward, heated, that is to be expected.

I meant only to convey my feelings at the time, to the topic of discussion, nothing else.

Let me try making amends, patch up our differences, to make it up to you for your disliking my attitude, please, let me take you for coffee, or perhaps out for a meal, my name's Richard”.

“I would not like to entertain that Richard, you have said your piece, I think you are a bum in the true sense of the word”.

Aleen walked off leaving Richard duly chastised.

Richard's mind was agog, he could not believe what Aleen had accused him of being.

Richard was deflated, put in his place, for the not too many times in his life, he had to search himself to see if the accusations had precedent.

Richard thought about himself for a while, dismissed the woman's accusations as rubbish, it was obvious to him the woman was a nutter.

Time of holidays moved on, Aleen and her friends returned to their home town, began their jobs again, life ticked away.

Richard had also returned to his position, he couldn't stop thinking of the woman at the Louvre.

Rain showers were on\off, having to be spoiling one of his days off, the afternoon was a miserable looking sky.

Standing on the footpath waiting to cross the busy road, a sudden heavy rain shower began breaking,

Richard flicked his umbrella open to put up over his head, to protect him from the heavy shower of rain, crudely thinking, what a day to be doing some shopping.

He had no sooner put up his umbrella than a woman asked politely could she share his umbrella, she didn't feel like getting wet, with some other places to visit.

“If I would have known the rain was going to be this heavy, I would have brought my own brolly, the showers were predicted to be very light”.

Richard was flabbergasted, it was the woman from the Louvre, the one he had not been able to get out of his mind, the woman who had told him off, in no uncertain terms, leaving her feelings duly said.

The woman looking up at Richard, recognised him, stepping away out from under his umbrella.

“Please do not get yourself wet, stay under the brolly untill the shower of rain passes”.

In her haste to get away from Richard, the woman took a few rash steps out onto the roadway, being ever so lightly struck by the side of a car, blasting its horn, keeping travelling.

The woman was spun around, Richard grabbing the frightened woman to keep her off the road, from sustaining serious injuries being hit by another car.

The woman so thankful of receiving no injuries from the car, clung onto Richard for dear life.

“Are you alright”.

“I'm ok, just shaken, I'll be right”.

“You sure, do I need to call a doctor, ambulance”.

“No, I'm ok, I'm fine, just feel a bit silly, I'll be fine”.

“Tell me where you live and I'll take you home”.

“You don't have to do that, I am alright just a little scared”.

“Can I call your husband, friend, family, anyone to let know you have been in an accident, but are alright, I must let someone know because you may suffer delayed shock”.

“No, I will be alright, thank you for saving me, my name is Aleen, I know you are Richard, we've met before in Paris.

I will be just fine, thank you so much for being there, I don't need any more help”.

“I insist, Taxi, come on let me take you home, make sure you don't get any late shock”.

Richard was pleasantly surprised to find Aleen lived only a few blocks from his own apartment.

Richard made sure he kept in contact with Aleen, what could be better, Aleen, living, but a few blocks away from his own apartment.

Richard often thought how he came to meet Aleen, love forming slowly in him, because he didn't trust very easy.

His thoughts to Aleen always came with self loathing, angriness, he didn't tell Aleen, how deeply he cherished her, wanted her to be his wife, before it was so fatefully to late.

CHAPTER 3.

TIME FOR A CHANGE.

Going through the guilt trips never really leaving his inner self, no matter how he chose to figure it, Richard not really enjoying his holidays, on a canoeing expedition on the Great Lakes for a month, of tranquility, isolation.

Richard knew it was nearing time to get back to work for another year, wondering what this year would bring, if only Aleen was there to share his life.

His life with Aleen had been a raging fire snuffed out, hurt, devastation, personality lost of reason without Aleen.

At times of him sinking into melancholy, he relied on help Doctor Stirn had given him, as well as his own resolve to overcome the dire thoughts.

Sometimes it would just take the most obscure little reference to Aleen, his mind would spring into taking him back to Aleen, where Richard would be all wrapped in deep misery.

He was becoming resilient in his dealing with such adversity, no one ever knew the turmoil Richard suffered, in the guilt he still felt over Aleen's death.

With all the best psychiatric help available, Richard's emotional state would yo-yo, between getting on with his life, to morbid scenerios of Aleen.

At least he had commanded the thoughts to taking his own life, to join Aleen, in his mind no amount of prescribed medicine easing the incurable burden, Aleen was dead, no amount of wanting could make her alive.

Technology rapidly changing, caused Dick to adapt to this rapid change, lest he would be left behind, that would be the end of his very rewarding position at his company.

His company thinking seriously about promotion to keep Dick with them, demon type outbreaks against fellow workers, other people, were viewed as one drawback to his promotion, Richard knew he had to show he was in control.

The other concern, was Richard's infrequently mood swings, yes they seemed to be getting less, as did his tirades against his fellow workers, some his friends, ever so slowly lessened, it was not easy for Richard to curb his aggression.

Helreche Bodge, greatly impressed with Richard's computer skills, had Helreche Bodge at odds whether to promote Richard, for these very reasons, he would observe.

Helreche Bodge watched Richard closely to see if Richard's bouts of misery, outbursts in loud tirades, had any effect on Richards ability to function correctly, if he was to be promoted.

Happy to be contented in Richard's ability to function in his new position, knowing it would not be jeopardised by a man never forgetting his love for a woman taken by death, something Helreche Bodge found admirable.

Aleen's death nearly five years ago, still Richard fell back into bouts of bad depression, not requiring medical help, he had become accustomed to dealing with these type of bouts in despair, overcoming his mood, the temptation to raise his voice to yelling, when something displeased him, was fading away like the closing of the day.

Richard began to pull himself out of his misery guts attitude, these bouts of self-blame, were a figment of his mind, trying to stop him getting on with his life.

Never feeling love before like he did for Aleen, was a giant piece of himself, locked away against intervention of any kind.

Richard being smart enough to realise death comes to all at some time, for there is nothing one can do to alter the outcome, was finally beginning to master his grievances, with the one exception.

What he couldn't get over for a long, long, time, he would never get over, how Aleen had been snatched away from his life so suddenly, Aleen closed the bathroom door, then was gone forever.

Tick, tick, tick, tick, clock of fate walked around the dial of time, giving the entirety of his life for Richard to explore negatives and positives of his existence so far.

Reluctantly Richard surmised he indeed needed to be in new surroundings to repair his broken life, he knew he was residing in, happy to be there.

It was time, of having to make a new start, no longer an option, a fact to letting go, of a memory bathed in love.

These extremely stressful years, the last five years, put them all behind him, was like pulling his own leg off.

Dick had been promoted, now was the time to repay his company's faith in him, repay himself, break shackles of death, patiently trying to work on his unreasonable attitude.

People saw Richard acting the way he did, like a real buffoon, a talented numbskull, intelligent yet unintelligent moron, he needed to stop, in his new position.

His company had given his time to grieve for Aleen, it was time for him to readjust his being, get on with his own living, to stay glued to Aleen was the wrong thing to be doing, some people happy to be doing the wrong thing.

Dick decided he needed a complete break from his way of life, he had been so comfortable in, wallowing in his misery for nearly five years, five years of blaming himself for Aleen's death.

He required a new start to revitalise, replenish, his life, his soul, his enlightening moment told himself it was not so surprising his will to live diminished after losing Aleen, that had to be put behind him now.

Richard knew he would always love Aleen, always think about her, but dead is gone, can't do nothing about the fact no matter how arguments battle for reason, they will not succeed in bringing a loved one back to life.

Dick's positive frame of mind, overriding the murky thoughts that were holding him prisoner, thought a lot about what his next plan in life was going to be.

Having no particular scope of things to concentrate in preference, a place by the sea would be nice, an apartment in a modern building, a house in the city, close to work.

All sounded like perfect solutions to him, undecided just what he would do, but he was going to do something to break away from his sad life, become really happy again.

His new promotion allowed Dick to modernise his creature comforts, he had a substantial income, large money saved, he was sitting pretty, still could not decide what he wanted to do about a new place to live.

Contacting a real estate agents firm, to begin viewing different properties, for lease or sale, nothing jumped out at him, he was hesitant to the point of being finicky, knowing what he wanted, but he had not yet come across what he required.

The estate agent was not perturbed by Richard's hard to please, asking if would be at all interested in a house in the outskirts of town.

“No further development was indicated by council, tied up in green red tape, from any further development.

This was a property worthy of taking a closer look at, transport was readily available, the property had everything a city dweller could ask for.

You could buy yourself a small place in quiet country living, still in the city confines with all mod cons, beautiful views of the country side out over the back fence, it was a opportunity to have country living in a city, it is a deceased eastate, ready for immediate occupancy”.

Inspection of the house and land, Richard was his usual hesitant self, adverse to buying it, it didn't seem right, it just wasn't him, the longer he stayed looking, the more the house grew on him.

Barbra Shelokk was a great sales lady, started her own reality buisness, doing fine, she liked from time to time going out meeting potential customers, which Dick Harkey was, she did her best to sell Dick the old property, extolling the potential of the place, explaining once again reasons for the state of the place,

“Richard, the old place has potential, it is a deceased estate, the family did not want to spend any money cleaning the property up to increase value, chances of sale, warring family just wanted to be done with each other.

Thus the state of the place, an old woman had lived in the house for years, the mother, was an old hermit begot of her privacy from everyone, including her broken family”.

Richard could feel tranquility the place just exuded, in isolation it afforded to him, development stopped at his back boundry fence, an old half broken wooden gate having to be lifted up when opening it.

The old gate scraping on the oak leaf covered ground, making noises remenicient of an old man creaking from his arthritis as he stood up to move, moaning, where Richard could feel the call of peace, when opening the gate to give access to the land outside the gate.

It was entirely sublime, Dick began to feel at home, before he knew it, he was putting down his roots, he was sold, the old propery had gotten into his willing blood.

The old gate under an old tree reminding him of a ancient look, he smiled to himself wanting to see a legion of Roman soldiers, march past his back fence, in all their regalia, what a wonderful sight that would be, Richard telling himself, knowing it was impossible, it still would be a wonderful scene.

Dick was taken with the property the more he let the house sink into him, it felt right for him now, Richard was pleased with the property, sealing the deal with Barbara.

What had really sold the property to Dick, was the property itself with its old world charm, a refuge in a wild world of impatience.

Dick had been looking, for his world of peace and tranquility, buying this house on a couple of acres of land with unmanicured gardens and lawns, was the chance for him to start over, after the last years of turmoil.

His requirement for isolation, stuck with him, when all his other idiosyncrasies diminished.

CHAPTER 4.

SEASONS OF LIFE.

Richard had given the interior of the old house his personal makeover, the inside of the house reflected its new owner, while the outside grounds were beyond his cityite expertise, knowing he would need help keeping his large lawns and gardens.

Dick was not a gardener by any shape of imagination, instead he left the gardens beds and the lawns of his couple of acres to be tendered by Breek Lomttar.

A hired helper to mow his grass and keep the weeds from taking over his garden beds, general cleaning of his grounds.

Richard was to tired, he told himself after work, to do any gardening, he liked the end result but couldn't spend his own energy on time getting there.

Truth in fact, Richard just happened to be a lazy sot, having enough money coming in, to pay someone else to do his gardening for him, so why should he engage in any sort of manual work, when he could hire somebody else to do it for him, Richard's philosophy to ground maintaince.

Breek Lomttar was a woman who was utterly betaken in her life with nature, she just loved to get her hands dirty, in any gardens, lawns, she was employed to tend.

There was no end of work for Breek, tender caring to her nature, fussiness to details concerning her work, made sure she was employed full time.

Her home life very rewarding, loving husband, three children, taking after their mother in their like for nature.

Breek was nearing the point she thought they nearly had enough money, to start their own gardening business in a couple of more months of strict budgeting.

Another year at the utmost, she would have enough saved with her eager husband, to start their own business.

Breek's husband, Horrie, employed on the council as garbage truck driver, helped Breek in happily attending to their home gardens and lawns with their children helping their father, where ever they could.

From a rural background, Horrie had an affinity with the land, deeply instilled in him, the same as Breek.

It was a happy serene household, Breek and Horrie, striving to improve their life, their children's lives, by hard work, saving as much money as they could.

Their nest egg of savings, growing, the amount they could afford to put towards their goal, increasing nicely.

Their house mortgaged for some years to come, with reasonable repayments of the loan, never really acceptable to anyone having to pay a house loan off.

Life expenses kept finding a way to sap away at their hard earned savings, living got in the way of their dreams, as do a lot of people's.

Everyone has dreams, unfortunately some dreams are just smoke in front of reality, cloud of wishful imagination.

Breek Lomttar and her husband worked hard all their lives, never quite achieving their goal of starting their own gardening business, they did however eventually pay off their loan, own their lovely home they had been paying off for such a long time, time drifted by with stealing their age, without being noticed till afterwards.

Same time that was aging Breek, Horrie, their grown children, the world, also aging Richard.

Dick liked to stand under his spreading oak tree, just lean against the old wooden gate at the back boundary of his small couple of acres, drink in his hand, cigar in his lips.

Expensive cigar smouldering away, by the rush of air to keep the cigar breathing, releasing a strong smell of cigar smoke into the atmosphere, to drift off, able to be detected from a long way, Richard exhaling the cigar smoke, to his enjoyment, content in the moments.

Looking far out across the vast landscape at nothing in particular, just staring aimlessly, at the grazing cattle, the sky, occasionally a wild animal would catch his gaze, whilst taking a sip of his drink, drawing on his cigar.

Cattle walking along tracks following in line, wore away the grass leaving the bare soil exposed to the weather, making their tracks stand out like neon signs.

Sometimes his attention was grabbed by a person or persons playing with their dogs, letting their dogs have the run of freedom, a person walking along a man made track.

Man made by the volume of traffic upon the grasses, by human feet at different times of year, not as distinct as cattle tracks, still they were clearly visible to follow.

The land beyond Richard's gate was privately owned, being run as a profitable going concern, land would be even more profitable, if legal owners were allowed to subdivide into new housing blocks.

Development stopped by government intervention, in banning any further expansion of housing in this particular area, housing could be developed in other areas.

Government's decision was founded on their election pledge of keeping the wilderness, of countryside natural in this area, to the dismay of the owners, eager to subdivide.

A state of status quo therefore existed between the owners and the government, for just how long this stand-off would prevail, was anyones guess, but for now the decision stood, next election, could tell a very different story.

No matter what the decision in the future, fact now it didn't stop anyone from enjoying peace offered by a large expanse of country, adjoining the city's furtherest reaching outskirts, where city limits finished, vast rural countryside began.

Dick often walked to the old gate as a friend would do, be glad to have the company of an old friend, talking to the gate, the surrounds for a while, before walking back to his house.

He knew talking to the gate, tree, surrounds, was not what some people would call normal, but he didn't care, no one could hear what he said anyway.

Richard's new position with his company, was going in leaps and bounds, as the saying goes.

His life was his own, in the isolation he chose to put himself in, it was a pleasure to go to work now, an equally pleasurable experience to come home, have a drink, cigar.

Time led from year to year, without realization, Dick was so comfortable, with how things were going, in his life since he had grabbed his life, shook it from misery, over his Aleen, still Richard's complacency was there in his life.

Towards Easter, Dick was walking back from his gate as usual, looking up at the rain sky, filled with violent storm clouds, he knew he had better hurry up his pace.

To get back in side before the storm broke, he would get drenched if he didn't beat the storm.

Light drops of rain began to refreshingly sprinkle on him, giving Dick the hesitation to feel the luxuriousness of the fresh soft rain, coaxing him to stay out a little longer in the approaching stormy weather.

Richard never did like to be out in inclement weather before, but since purchasing the old property, had come to be pleased by the gentle touch of rain.

Standing in the one spot with his eyes closed, letting the wet drops of rain sooth away, almost becoming aware to late, to get out of the increasing intensity of the rain.

Dick broke into a run for cover from the rain, stopped his running the exact moment a bolt of lightening striking ground close to him, scaring the shit out of Dick.

Dick had closed his eyes so tightly, automatically, he was so scared, waiting for the lightening strike to grab hold of him, shaking him violently like a rag doll, knocking him unconscious, or worse, left on the wettening earth dead.

Richard opened his eyes again after an instant, still standing in the same spot when he froze, he was in the rain getting wet, needing to get out of the pelting rain.

Instinctively checking himself, found no damage to his body, except he was terrible scared, he could have been badly injured, blown to pieces, even killed, was extremely lucky, he knew it, he had to get in out of the storm.

Richard was shaking most uncontrollably when he got under cover from the storm, it wasn't noise of the storm raging that frightened him, Richard knew he could have had his life ended prematurely, being struck by lightening.

Time of seasons once again for the large old oak tree, in starting to have its leaves turn a yellow brownish colour in early autumn, preparing for the sleep of deciduousness.

Sometimes at this time of year, Richard stood under the tree, could hear faint rustle of drying leaves, to a gentle puff of breeze among the leaves as they ever slowly, drifted down towards their spent resting place, replenished again in the seasonal spring bud bursts of new leaves.

Daylight sun becoming cooler, hours of shortening to days losing warmth, quickened speed of leaves giving up their growing on the tree to begin their journey of floating off saying goodbye to the tree.

The old tree looking very sad losing leaves, standing there helpless, when autumn turns to the cold of winter, for another cycle to begin.

A tree losing its leaves in the onset of winter, to be of bare branches joining other plants, in a picturesque winter's hibernation, showing the countryside to another side of life.

Leaves gathering in mats of pooling, some blowing away on the winds of winter, all lost to wilds of breaking down weathered by nature, into matter reused by the soil.

Richard had often marvelled, standing with his drink in hand, cigar in lips, studying how badly misshapen an old gate, stood under an old tree, could be so captivating.

Rushing images of a perfect painting capturing all the ancient smoothness in brush strokes, becoming the fabric of real life, the longer Richard looked.

Splendour, superlative, exquisite, given of total rustic beauty, was how it reminded him, it had an authenticity to a much older time.

Richard thrilled time and time again how the old gate had aged, so eloquently, beautifully, to its misshapeness.

Leaves were growing from the bottom rail of the old gate, trying to hold it in hostage, of never opening.

When Dick did manage in struggle to get the old gate open, on the rarest occasion he felt like opening the gate, it gave off noises of discontent.

No longer bothering to try opening the gate, Richard was content to just leave the gate as it stood, overlooking a wonderful rural scene, to enhance impressions of the world.

Dick was astutely aware of the importance of a aspect of being able to view the countryside in its natural state.

Buying years ago, the old tree, an old gate, broken down fence line of his boundary, somehow meshed together to enliven the property to him, especially the house.

All the surrounding house's land, had once been part of a vast family holding, many years prior when the area of land was a large holding of some many thousands of acres.

Changing hands since then a number of times, due to some financial constraints, something or other, whatever it was causing the sales over time until now.

Times change some peoples fortunes, some for better some for the worse, fortunes are made as well as lost.

The magnificent old oak tree was the last remains of a beautiful walkway of trees, planted a century or more ago, now because of subdivisions, the old oak tree was the last survivor of a time brought to a close by progress.

Spreading its limbs out growing not to any boundary, but to nature's design, the old oak tree endured, weathered, many seasonal times of change.

It's trunk grew on Richard's place, also reaching out across his fence boundary, to shade, shelter.

On Richard's side of the boundary, the old tree spread limbs down, to touch a welcoming feel of a rub, on the low branches, the old tree quite enjoyed being spoken too.

Removal of unwanted trees was how the subdivisions worked, trees disposable, to be removed, when in the way of constructions.

Enacted laws forbade cutting down such an historic monument, as the old tree was regarded.

In the rush to subdivide, in years prior to legislation protecting such trees, all but one of the old trees had been lost forever in this particular area, all except Richard's old oak tree, standing supreme, holding up in sight to see.

Can a person really own a tree, own nature, own the sky, sun, moon, planets, what can a person really own.

Some of the other small holdings of one and two acre blocks, had different types of newly planted trees growing, giving some feeling of country, in a city environment.

Yet these lovely trees, had none of the allure of an old oak tree, none would ever grow to be majestic as the lonely old oak tree, last of its kind in this area to survive cutting down, in the quest for more space for housing.

An old gate standing under an old deciduous oak tree seemed quite appropriate to Dick, it typified himself to a tea, slipping into aging.

Richard often standing with one foot up on a rung of the gate, sipping his favourite wine or whisky, enjoying his cigar, the older he became, the more he enjoyed his drinks, and cigars, be it up at his back fence, or on the sofa in his old comfortable house.

The old gate under the old tree became Dick's revered place to contemplate his universe, his view of the landscape looking from over the gate out, towards the rolling sea rises of grass were a beautiful sight.

Capturing his imagination away from the sometimes stressful position of his computer job, lingering in his mind.

He loved his job, also liking to come home, unwind from the rigours of his day to his welcoming home, pour a drink, light a cigar, usual routine.

Dick discovered on his own Eden, two acres of land, nature came to him if he was receptive to his feelings.

Able to touch the lowest branches of an old tree, feel, see, beauty of nature in living, what a sublime refreshing of consequences, a feeling for natural life had become to him.

Every so often in the self propelled isolation, he came to immerse himself in, he felt the need, the compunction for some company.

Other peoples company, not work related company of fellow workers, he knew that to be false.

Real company of dear, dear, friends, Richard had very few decent friends, the ones he did have, he cherished in his own weird way.

Richard had this strangeness about himself, he simply just foregoing urge for friends company, preferring isolation, until the feeling for some companionship rose up to burst into his life, push back the shadows, let in light for a littlest while.

Inviting his only close friends, Sid Rey, Arthur Bates, whom had stuck by him most of his adult life, to come over to his house for a lazy B-B-Q, drinks, conversations, with their wives, Amy and Terrisa.

Getting to know Amy and Terrisa, through the years of his association with Sid and Arthur, watching them being so happy with their lives, children, the fondness for them all grew inside Richard.

Richard felt completely at ease with them, felt a deep warm feeling for all of them, not like when he met other people, he was somewhat stand-offish, because he trusted no one.

Exception to his hard self indoctrination, he knew it, the utter loyalty of these four people, these dearest friends, Richard trusted implicitly.

Arthur worked with Richard for a long time, he knew he could count on Arthur, to always stand by him.

Arthur's wife Terrias, top showroom executive selling cars, now their children had grown up, flew their nest, able to devote her energies into selling vehicles, to make up for the sometimes hole in her life, when she was taken by her nestlings having grown up, left home.

Her children came round to visit regularly, old man time also came round, putting crow feet on her soft freckled skin, where there never used to be any readily seen.

Conducting her own buisness, Sid's wife Amy, had a very likeable personality, holding her in good stead with her customers, her florist venture growing into a most lucrative proposition, easy paying off the smallish loan needed to get established, with helping to pay fees, expenses, after their only child, a daughter, had gone off to university.

Sid hired when first looking for a job, after leaving school, with minimal qualifications, his life seemed to have been preordained, being a hard toiling labourer, for the rest of his working life.

Fate sometimes intervenes, in the nicest ways, having other plans for some individual, their industrious hard work and trustworthiness, good character traits, paying increased rewarding dividends.

Sid given tasks of being gofer, dogsbody, errand boy, around the store for a couple of years, becoming a yardman, then numerous positions in his climbing up the proverbial ladder, to be a liked manager of a large thriving hardware business, at one of the retail stores in the group.

Always jovial, gaining weight due to advancing age, mostly it was his being in charge, relieved of any such hard work, eating wrong foods, sedentary life style, helped pile unhealthy pounds onto to his body.

Richard really happy to be host to these four deeply loyal friends, he was unlike the Richard most people knew, Richard was almost a human being, not the computer nerd he was really in another life form.

Unable to understand why people could not see what he saw, Richard had a different perspective on things in life to other people, giving the impression he was just weird.

People didn't see what Richard saw of his property, he saw a picturesque couple of acres with a beautiful house, piquantly mirroring in time belonging to an earlier era.

An old wooden gate having a life all of its own, great oak tree to converse with, nature always at the ready, rain he could stand out in, feel the beauty of the raindrops, see the changing skies, witness the sun, phases of the moon.

They saw a very dilapidated old house needing major repairs, broken down fences, too far from the bustle of city living for their liking, it was a ratty dump, required dozing down, to built a new one, clean the mess up.

None of his friends told Richard what they thought of his place, that way they would not have to lie to him about his ramshackle house.

With broken down fences, an old misshapen wooden gate at back of his property, under a very old tree growing on his land, a total disgrace, the place was a neglected trash heap growing worse.

The only thing positive about Richard's property, they could see to be of credit was the lawns, garden beds, kept in tend by the loving touch of Breek Lomttar, Richard's hired help to manage his grounds.

CHAPTER 5.

MEETING A DREAM.

Having come to appreciate things in life, some people never get to experience, monumental simplicity, in a chaotic conundrums of self exposed problems, are found in context of things, when looking at the basics of a phenomenon in an entirely different way, to have little consequence, in a wide world, filled with wonder.

Richard was able to view things, for what they were in understanding.

His new found enlightenment to things, had Richard perplexed sometimes, not knowing whether he really did understand the things he thought he understood, or was it that he had drunk a little too much alcohol, just messing his brain waves up, it puzzled Richard at times.

Things like a season's loud calling of animals, birds, insects, things Dick had never taken time to explore, nor fully seen, or taken note of their domains, never given them much thoughts.

Enlivened to diversity of insects living in his gardens, lawns, birds around, in his oak tree, other trees, their calls, their nests, wonderfulness of nature, seasons, he never took time to really, really, see before, he had opened his eyes.

How brilliant was a spider's web, strung between the branches, or in the leaves of plants, spun intriguing like a mind numbing realization, hitting him with startling clarity.

Insects going about life in tiny worlds in his gardens, fascinated by just how many different kinds of bugs, in all descriptions, there can be in a garden bed.

Outside his fence, viewing living creatures churning up in cattle manure and soil, Dick could see a thoroughly complex, living, thriving, micro-metropolis of life, in the thick nourishment of animal waste breaking down.

Supplying ever more sustenance where some cattle came to rest from hottest part of the day, under the shade of his old oak tree, making more of the thick rich compost.

Over seasons of time dropping their waste products as natural by-products of grass chewers, helping to fertilize the soil around the tree.

Resting outside his boundry fence when he was not there, standing peacefully against the weather, idly chewing the cud, some lying down resting, a scene of quiet serenity.

Cattle lazily moving off when he approached his back gate, dropping their piles of shit, moving off cattle scattered their droppings about with their clumsy hooves.

Mixing, churning up the soil, making a rich healthy mix of vibrant living soil, becoming a scene from another planet of organisms populating the ready made environment.

Dick appreciated nature to its fullest now, coming to the understanding about beauty of things, while his house, land, grew within himself, roots of himself began to grow himself, to allow a better comprehension of what he saw.

This newly found rapport with nature, helped him sooth his nerves when things at work became very hectic, as it often did, pressure of a poser, had it own weight.

Complex problems seemed insurmountable, Richard began thinking of the universe, looking from his old gate's perspective, it is marvellous how many times a solution is there to be found.

Compounding stress of his position floated away, his day finished on a high completion degree, time to go home.

Richard's home always soothing him to take things easy, led to him feeling better in himself, taking large drink, puff on his cigar, unwinding a taught frame of mind.

His acreage had become castle grounds to him, every day at the end of his long tenure working out problems, his mind was weary from involving so intense deep thinking.

Dick was ready to enjoy the exquisite natural beauty of a simple two acre plot, with his house as his nest, puffing on a cigar, having a drink, in a universe of isolation.

Years followed years about, Dick had never thought that much about forming a relationship with another woman on a permanent understanding, not after losing Aleen.

Dick had really never gotten over his love for Aleen, he had shut down his system sexually, thought little about another woman, every time he thought of another woman he was struck with terrible memories of guilt.

Occasionally an urge got so hard to be with a woman, it surfaced, slackened, then was gone.

Richard resisted the urge for another woman to be his friend, partner, or wife, he was just happy with his life the way it was, having got used to himself.

Standing with his foot up on lowest wooden railing of his old gate, shaded in leafy canopy of the old tree, smoking a cigar, sipping on a drink, Dick was in heaven, or as close as he wanted to be until he died, a way off yet he hoped.

Dick staring at nothing of consequence as usual, just staring, on the surrounds of beautiful country side, flying in the clear sky, about to take another sip of his drink.

Sometimes Dick had but a small sip with his cigar, or finished off the contents of the bottle, returning back inside a little worse for wear, it all depended how he was feeling at the time.

Brought out of his staring mood by a woman walking her dog, suddenly out of nowhere saying a nice pleasant hello to Dick.

Her voice startled him for a brief second, Dick gave a quick glance to where he kept his bottle of drink to refill his glass if need be, the bottle not hidden, but more out of sight out of anyone's view that might pass by.

“Hello”.

“Hello”.

“It certainly is a beautiful afternoon.

I often go walking with Bondy when I get the chance.

Sorry, my name's Glory, often seen you standing here beside your gate under the tree, when I walk the other way.

Admiring your peace and quite, you have a beautiful spot to be looking out from”.

“I'm Richard, yes I love to enjoy the peace after my day at work, there are some very nice places to walk.

I hope they keep it natural for all time, we have had enough development for housing, in this area.

It would just spoil lovely peace of the countryside, it would be a great shame, if they take away the walking trails of the area to build more houses, hello Bondy”.

“I must keep going, perhaps I will see you again, say hello another time, bye, Richard”.

“By Glory”.

'What I nice woman to stop and say a fine hello to a stranger, I guess she wouldn't live that far away,--- Aleen'.

His gaze in the opposite direction to watching Glory and her dog walking away, instantly snapped back towards where Glory was walking in the near distance.

Similarities of two women, being reminiscent of each other, mindboggling Richard, 'Glory was Aleen, why else would she stop and say hello, there was a live connection'.

Dick took another large mouthful of drink, trying to contemplate in his thoughts, looking at Glory, 'get a hold of yourself, she was not Aleen, the woman was Glory'.

Leaving his back yard to return inside his house in a state of confusion, brought on by relegated latent memories, Dick was unable to stop them from exploding like wildfire.

Thinking about his encounter, woman reminding him so much of Aleen, 'the woman was Aleen, she had to be'.

Aleen had come to life in Glory, in Richard's mind.

Up until events spun his whole entire world upside down, Richard's mind was as normal as the next person.

Loosing Aleen, shattered his world, his mind readily crumbled, Dick's life had tumbled into an almost oblivion, his love for his adorable Aleen, lost to him by her sudden demise, all because of himself, he never forgave.

Blame always there in the background, haunting his brain like a diseased virus, he could not eject, just keep it under control for the most, until it reared up snake fashion ready to poison his thoughts.

'It was my fault for leaving you go in the room alone, I should have protected you from death, Aleen it was all my fault Aleen, my fault Aleen, I died thinking of loosing you'.

Richard had tried putting his all, everything, into his work, to make sense out of an impossible dire consequence of Aleen's natural death, blaming himself for her death.

Loosing Aleen the way she left him, was shattering to Dick, taking a long time to recover, having his mind settled, repaired, by medical help, with a recuperation period.

Now a nice friendly woman reminded him so much of Aleen, Glory was Aleen, in his mind reverted to illusions of reality, once more alight with fires of impossibility.

Bringing the hurt, disastrous thoughts, flooding back to disrupt him, no getting Aleen\Glory, out of Richard's soft mind, sinking into the fantasy world of dreams that never come true.

Glory was so exactly like Aleen, in Richard's swaying mind, Glory was a decent spoken woman, not ever forward, made polite conversation, nice style of woman, looked very much to Dick, like Aleen was indeed Glory.

Richard's interest in Glory, was deep love, respect, a longing to hold Aleen, feeling the warmth of her alive body.

Aleen reminded him of Glory, reminded him of Aleen so very much, 'which was which, who was whom, how can a one woman be two women in one', plagiarizing his mind.

Richard's mind wavered between normal facts, able to be tricked, by what he wanted so much, for so long, Aleen, in the reality of situations he was fighting within himself.

Embroidered in worlds of make believe over his long dead Aleen, fooling himself into stupid believing Glory was indeed actually, really, Aleen personified in Glory's living.

His thoughts torn between wishful dreams and reality, were competing for his brain waves in a battle of wills, in his head about to explode from the pressure of conflict.

'Had I met Aleen somehow again, was that possible, was it my dream becoming real, no that is an impossibility, but still Glory seems to be uncanny like Aleen'.

Flooding scenes of his being once again with Aleen, burst forth like a tide of ocean filled with feelings.

'I will make it my utmost buisness to find out more about Glory, pronto, in case she was Aleen reincarnated, not ever knowing she was really Aleen, I must help her realise who she is'.

Waves pounded his heartbeats, tears welling up in his eyes, beginning to fall in their sorrow of recognition, to the impossibleness of such a situation.

Richard's mind finally able to regather normal senses mode, switching in easing the tremendous turmoil, allowing some restless sleep for a very disturbed man.

Morning light of another beautiful day broke across the landscape, warming the countryside as the atmosphere heated up to clouds forming to make light rain showers.

Richard waking up with a different mindset, to the bad one he collapsed asleep last night with, thought that in a positive way of getting Glory out of his mind, he would investigate who she was, satisfy himself she wasn't Aleen.

Lingering stupidity reigned supreme, for the briefest nanoseconds in Richards mind, until he reasoned the facts from the total fiction, his protracted delving into his dreams had brought him to the brink of a breakdown.

Seeking some informtion about Glory, was not that hard, for she had nothing to hide, she was happily married, with a couple of young children, a devoted husband, Glory lived a couple of miles away, with a cat and a dog as pets, her children had a pet rabbit hutch in their back yard.

Finding out about Glory, gave Richard information he was searching for, it immensely relieved all silly thoughts Dick had, about Glory being Aleen.

The information was such a load of weight off his recuperating mind, Richard was able to see things clearly as clearly, as an extensive wandering mind, would allow in its hidden meandering through fields of rain aching droplets, each one, one of his unfulfilled dreaming fantasies with his Aleen, never quiet leaving Richard alone.

For all his brilliance Richard never figured out his own character, the seeking isolation, his sometimes slipping into his word of another dimension.

His work position brought Richard into close contact with people at times, he managed to handle this rather well, knowing when his day was finished at work, he could easily retreat into the isolation of his house and land.

Waiting at his gate as usual for any sign of Glory, the longer he waited, more time dragged by to ease anticipation of their meeting again, he wouldn't have to talk to her.

Richard hoped not to see Glory again, yet then again, he had an inner wish to see Glory, the sight Aleen, without putting a scene of strangeness to thoughts of a very smart, but really, a self troubled man.

Richard reckoned he was over his imbecilic thoughts about Glory being Aleen, vice versa, yet threads in hopeful clung to his wishes, whispering their damaging dreams.

Finally feeling the chill of the evening with shadows running across the land, he decided Glory was not coming his way, anymore, Richard was very relieved about that.

With all the heartache Glory had inadvertently caused him to suffer by just saying hello, Richard gladdened Glory was not anywhere to be seen, meeting her, it had just been a chance encounter, he had made far to much of it.

Richard's isolationist attitude to life, had so suddenly had a large mindbending jolt of reconnaissance back to a time of total happiness, with all the set-ups a lonely mind can purposefully misconstrue as real.

Dick did see Glory walking her dog again, with her two little kids, past his back gate, saying a polite hello.

Richard said hello to her and the children, it always stayed a polite hello, nothing more, Dick would have to put up with the aches of talking to someone who could have been Aleen in another life.

Contemplation to his life, retirement, death, all these things came as a gust of hot unwanted wind, intermittently occurring at the front of his mind, in his own dying leaves of time, until Richard was able to push them well back to where they belonged, out of his thought pattern for now.

Dick didn't believe time had ravaged his years of life, like other people, he saw no great aging to his sight.

He assumed he was able to do what he did when he was a younger man, his body movements were now letting him know he was nearing his last years on earth.

Liking to shuffling walk through the fallen leaves in winter, hearing crunching of the fallen leaves, observing the skeletal like structure of his large tree removed of leaves, reminding him of a building without any walls just the staid framework standing out to be looked at, admired, revered.

Snowing was a particular pleasing time for Richard, rugged up against the cold, hearing the noises his feet made when he walked through snow towards his gate.

Standing in the snow, take a drink, light up his cigar, if the snowing was not too heavy, eccentricities belonging to Dick's very finest attributes.

His visits to the back gate a daily ritual, which it had become without Dick realising, he was a man become set in his ways of every day when he got home from work.

It was the same, winter, spring, summer, autumn, he would end up looking out over his old gate at the beckoning countryside, puffing on his cigar, sipping on his drink.

Each season gave him some pleasure, being different in nature's seasonal changing to cycles of yearly time, a part of the changing of year, each having a fascinating outlook.

The spectacular arrival of spring when all deciduous things miraculously began renewing in burst of shoots, bulbs waiting patiently in their ground site, found warmth needed, it was their time to begin their eerie erupting up through the ground, to race towards brilliant flowering.

Spring also brought warming heat to the land, busy pollination of flowers, amazing assortments of bats, insects, birds, bugs, clamouring to find scented honey pots to any of the plants, out in bloom, enticing pollinators day and night.

Myriads of life, nesting birds, cacophony of noises, in some really beautiful, some irritatingly annoying, beginning the next sequences of existences in race to the hot season.

Summer season Richard would be walking around his small parcle of land admiring his well kept lawns, growing trees, seeing plants, smelling scents of flowers having no inclination of the plants name, he simply was in enjoyment of his own piece of the cosmos.

Warm to hot days his universe alive with a billowing signs of thriving, to this time of activity, watching differing cloud formations of storms, clearing beautiful skies, gentle summer breezes, his old oak tree out in the full expansive grandeur of every leaf showing its magnificent self.

Summer time also brought a lot more people activity, using wide open spaces, or walking passed his back gate.

Richard would be standing there gazing at the going's on, unconcerned people could view him looking at them.

It was a lovely time of year that encouraged people to get outdoors and enjoy the days, a splending time of nights hot enough to be taking a pleasing walk.

Life was fulfilling itself, before a closing of hot days and nights, crumpled, under oncoming weight of an autumn approaching, with the initial signs of its changing presence being felt in cooling temperatures, with a tinge of sadness.

Autumn of its own wonderful time still very warmish days, began falling leaves, dappled in all colours to tantalise eyes in special shades of magic, some plants in lateness of their blossoming, countryside's mystique slowly changing, reading for dreariness of creeping bone chilling freezing.

Cooler spaces becoming chilled without the full sun finding them, in longer shadows of autumn, an earlier eerie grey darkness, descending on each day towards a bleakness of winter, some people found most disconcerting.

Having to put on an extra piece of garment to ward off the biting chill, watching countryside slowly shut down.

Everything like it was in robot mode, doing things so automatically to nature's invoice.

Chilly nights warmed by his open fireplace, Richard tossing another piece of wood on the low embers, watching sparkles of flame lick the new piece of wood.

Dick liked winter best, it suited his character, bitter, cold, freezing, devoid of nearly any growing, exactly to his inner feelings, he gave up trying to outgrow, knowing that he was beaten, what is in your makeup, is in your makeup.

Richard liked how winter coated the land in a cold blanket of a dismal white splendour, of days fluffy snowing, covering houses ghostly white, hot coloured smoke rising up from chimneys, mixing with the air.

Air conditioners vented sounds of their motors almost silent, frosty ices settled on the back of cattle hairs, melting to the dawn of a winter's day given enough heat, belching steam from their nostrils, frozen water in bowls.

Automobiles exhausting hot gasses, the river frozen solid allowing skating, walking across the water beneath, a person's breath exhaled in heat quickly condensed into tiny droplets of steam.

Hurly-burly of life didn't pause or cease because of winter in city life, it just continued on uninterrupted, hardly noticing the dire greyish of nature, slowly telltale signs in reaching for spring, a little way off, began to materialize, to begin the immemorial process of seasonal change.

Dick supposed to himself sometimes, it was his own therapy, standing at his gate each day, a way of turning his head off from the requirements he placed on himself, the company pressure on himself.

Pressure of his elevated position, with his promotion, bringing added responsibilities, Richard came to realization he was extremely fortunate, he could release the pressure by being out walking around his couple of acres.

Dick came to be thankful no more development was undertaken of the surrounding land, he became very used to admiring the sights, he understood what Glory had said to him the first time they had met, he was in agreement with her, about further development.

Dick now never scared of any storm he encountered, since his own death defying tangle with lightening, having a new invigoration for storms, able to appreciate beauty of nature's violence in a storm, unleashing ferocity of a storm against the ground.

Although he was too old to get wet, Richard did like to feel softness of gentle raindrops falling on his face, when he tilted his head backwards to let the rain caress his face.

Standing out in the rain sometimes till he was soaked, like he was reliving a younger experience of himself, loving the exhilarating feeling.

It is amazing how a tiny couple of acres, with so little space, is crammed full of a universe of things, so much so, to be discovered, if only one looks.

Soft misty rain began wetting the atmosphere of air, raindrops fell on everything, an old oak tree listening to the gentle sounds of the soft raindrops upon its leaves, became heavier in a chorus of sending a goodbye.

The old gate held out as long as it could, but finally succumbing to the weight of falling heavy rain, breaking up apart, its old rotten boards of design, crashing the old gate to the ground in spent usefulness.

Raining came to visit Dick, smiling enderlessly in his bed, only thing was Richard could neither hear, nor feel, the rain, rain he loved to have gently caressing upon his tired worn face, knowing he would be joining Aleen for ever.

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Rain is the gentle story of a man finding peace of life, on his few acres of land, with home, old wooden gate under a large deciduous oak tree, at the back of his acreage.

His boundary of land ends at the furthest point of residential housing development, giving him splendour of viewing natural, unspoiled, grassy countryside.

From his back fence, a gate under cover of a really big tree, growing his property, Richard Harkey did also.

Finding tranquil time needed, to contemplate the beauty of elements, as well as finding himself in nature.

Keegan.

