

“I didn’t exactly know what it was, so I couldn’t talk about it. I’ve realized now what we are doing in the company: never-ending software versions of products people don’t really need. Making people believe they need the new version because theirs is an “old one” not valid anymore, since there is an updated version they need to have. It’s just crazy.”

“But you are so successful and you earn so much money...” She was shocked that I would be saying good-bye to that.

“I want something smaller, more human size. Something where the contact with people is really important. Money and worldly success are not my priorities now. I was contemplating the success issue this week, and I felt success is really related to one’s capacity to do what one wants. What is the use of being in a highly paid job if I am not happy and it is not what I want? I saw that this is not success. Now I want something more real, greater understanding of life for a start.”

“Something real? You have something real Jake, you have an excellent job; what more do you want to understand about life? I don’t understand.”

“I want to be with real people in a job where human contact and communication are important. Not with statistics about market share or targeting, seeing people only in terms of their spending patterns and their buying behavior, so that the company can plan new strategies to sell more and better.”

“I am totally taken by surprise Jake. I wouldn’t have imagined this.”

“I can understand. I talked to George and Mike earlier in the week; they were also taken by surprise.”

“They didn’t like it, I suppose.”

“Not at all. They did all they could to get me to stay.”

“Well, I don’t like it myself.”

“This is the reality. You have to accept it.”

“I can try, but what about us?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, we have a life we share, a position. What are we going to do now?”

“What are we going to do? What do you suggest we do?” I wanted to hear more about what she was thinking.

"I don't know Jake. Things seem so different now. How are we going to live now?"

"Well, the same at large. Do you think we have to change something?"

"I don't know. Where are you going to work?"

"I've been thinking of probably going back to designing houses as an architect again."

"But you quit years ago because there was no construction going on."

"Yeah, but we are out of that crisis now, and I've always liked that way of life. Now I feel I would like to get it going in a smaller scale, working only for private people."

"But your income is going to drop a lot until you establish yourself with some clients."

"That is not a problem. I have savings and the company will give me a very good final payment when I leave."

"I don't know Jake... What are people going to say about us?"

"Why are you concerned about people? Aren't you really concerned about why I've taken such an important step in my life?" I wanted to know what really mattered to her at that point.

"Yes, but we haven't talked about it. You haven't told me anything about what you were going to do."

"You wanted me to ask you your opinion?"

"Well, yes. Shouldn't this be a joint decision?"

"Deborah, it is my work. I am the one who is there, only I can say if I am happy in it, if I want it or not. I am not happy there anymore, and that's all there is to it. I could have told you if it hadn't happened so fast in such clear and definite way... but it is not a joint decision. If I tell you about it beforehand or if I don't, it is not going to change the outcome of it."

"I think we should have talked."

Suddenly the lights went out. Deborah held my hand firmly. Some people in the restaurant screamed. Then a moment of silence. Probably we all thought it was a birthday party and we waited for a birthday cake with candles to appear at any moment. A few moments went by but no candles, and the lights weren't coming back on either. I could feel the tension in the air increasing. It was almost pitch black since the

lights outside in the street were also gone. No emergency lights were on either. That was really strange.

"Where is the birthday cake?" Deborah said a little worried.

"I don't know. But I think there isn't one. Maybe it's a power cut, so I suppose they'll bring the candles out soon."

Some people started to talk after some moments of silence.

"Jake," Deborah said with a whispering voice, "I'm very afraid of the dark."

"There is nothing to be afraid of Deb, just relax and let's continue our conversation. You were saying that I should have told you before making a decision. Well, if I had asked you before what your opinion was, and if you would have been against it, you would have been hurt because I would have made it anyway."

"Well, I could have convinced you..."

"It is not something you can change somebody's mind about. If one is clear and true to his feelings it is not possible to influence him in such a way."

"Jake, I'm getting nervous; the light is not coming back. And where are the candles?"

Other people were getting agitated too. Some called the emergency number from their cellular phones, seeing no one was coming up with a solution. None of the waiters or even the head waiter seemed to be around. "I suppose they haven't said anything because they are trying to fix it and expect it will be okay soon." I said. We had been five minutes in the dark when a woman started screaming. Others joined her.

"Please calm down, calm down!" a man said to them. "Nothing is happening. I am sure they will fix it right away. Stay calm." They stopped screaming.

Some people got out their lighters, but had to stop using them as they were getting too hot. A man at a table nearby tried to improvise a torch with his napkin. "Okay," he said, "we have some light." The flame started getting out of control, almost setting the tablecloth on fire.

"You fool!" A man at the table beside his moved quickly towards him. "You want us to get all burnt?" he said while throwing the napkin in flames to the floor and stepping on it.

back soon.”

Mr. Karlson surely was the head waiter, and probably the man responsible for the restaurant and its management. Sirens could be heard outside. The fire brigade and an ambulance stopped outside. Some firemen came in immediately and inquired about the state of the people inside. Two doctors approached Mr. Karlson.

“What happened? Your emergency lights aren’t working?” said the chief fireman to one of the waiters.

He couldn’t answer.

“You are gonna be in trouble, you people...”

I looked towards the door to see Deborah on her way out. I walked to her. “Deborah!”

“Jake!” She jumped into my arms. “I was so scared.”

“It’s all right, it’s over.”

“When you left I didn’t know what was happening... and on my own...” she wanted some sympathy.

“I know. I’m sorry. I had to do it.”

“I know, I know...”

We walked outside. A police car had just arrived. They wanted to speak to the owners of the cars with the lights on. We stayed about twenty minutes with them to explain what had happened. They took our details and we left. I drove Deborah home. When we arrived at her house, she looked at me with sadness in her eyes.

“I love you Jake, and I am worried that our life together is going to change.”

“Just try to be relaxed about it and it will all be easier for us,” I told her.

“But I might lose you Jake, and I don’t like the thought of it.”

“Now it is time for me to listen to what my inner voice is telling me. It has an important message. We have to accept the fact that I need to make some changes in my life, and without them I won’t be happy, and neither will you.”

“Okay, if you need to change your job I’ll accept it; I’ll try not to be a problem in this.”

“I think it is good if we are open and see what this new situation brings for us, and how we should take care of things as they present

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themselves. Whatever happens will be for the best, the best for both of us.”

“Okay, we’ll do that.”

“I think it’s best to see each other over the weekend and talk. It’s been a long evening,” I said.

“Yes, I think you are right.”

We gave each other a long, silent hug. It felt as if we were holding onto something that was already slipping away from us. She kissed me and got out of the car without saying a word. Apparently I was only changing my job but I was already moving away from the life I had had until then, so some process of deep transformation had already started for me. And that was likely to affect the way I looked at our relationship and the concepts on which it was based. No doubt she sensed that, and that night I had a glimpse of the fact that we might not be as close as we thought. I drove home. I wasn’t tired so I got myself a glass of juice and sat on the porch. I thought about what had happened in the restaurant. The fact that such a situation could take place and leave a great number of people in such a distressed state, even people as close to me as Deborah, was something to contemplate. To see that when something like that happens we can, as human beings, lose our center and our calm completely.

It was really food for thought. I felt shaken by the scale of our vulnerability as human beings in certain situations, and by the very ineffective response we had when the things we took for granted most of the time, were taken away from us. I understood how much we relied on the external references and the senses, and when they were not available for some reason, how our minds lost control and were full of fear and worry. It was clear to me that I wanted to develop more that intuitive part of myself, that from my own experience, I had seen how much it helped.

“We think we are all right,” I was thinking to myself, “that we have the whole of life sorted out and under control. But so often we forget that our whole sense of security depends so much on such artificial mechanisms created by our technology, that we have forgotten how to develop our own inner stability and strength, our inner trust and knowledge, independently from the outside world. We forget that

those mechanisms can so easily go wrong and then when they do, we are faced with our insecurities, our fears, our own selves in a way that reveals how little we know about ourselves.”

I felt so glad that I had decided to leave my job. Certainly there were more important things in life than to interest people in products that weren't going to solve any deep aspect of their existence. “There is so much to discover, to find out. I need time to go deeper into things. Maybe I'll go away for a while and give myself the time to do it,” I thought. I went inside. I looked at the library wondering what I had there that could give me a clue where to go, what to do next. I picked out a book, *Return to the Sacred*. I closed my eyes and focused on that moment of my life. I opened a page and read:

*“Life and light are there.
Our work is to remove ego
or any other obstacles,
resistance, opinions, concepts,
to let them flow, to leave the
way free for divinity to show,
to manifest, for it to take us high.*

*This requires trust.
Trust is absence of fear.”*

work and day I had. "If this is how I can be after work, there is a lot I can do about improving my life," was my last thought before leaving the office.



The next day when I reached the beach there was a group of people already sitting on the sand. My new friend was one of them.

"Hello!" I said when I got near them.

"Hello!" answered everyone.

"Sit down, make yourself at home," my friend said.

I sat between a man and a woman. There were about eight or nine of us, and at that moment they were all talking in pairs. As I sat the lady beside me turned to me smiling.

"Hi, my name is Stella," she started. Her voice was warm and welcoming.

"Hi, I'm Jake," I smiled.

"How long have you known Tao-Sun?" she continued.

"You mean..." I said pointing with my eyes in the direction of my friend.

"Yes, the instructor..." she explained. His name was like his face, a synthesis of many things.

"I only met him yesterday. He was here and I started talking with him."

"Well, that's interesting..." she said mysteriously.

"Why, what makes it so?" I asked, eager to know.

"You know, things happen for a reason... no coincidences."

"You mean I was supposed to come across you all?"

"Let's say you were probably looking for something and you found us." She smiled with mischief.

I smiled amused. I looked at her. She had the most beautiful eyes. An amazing light came out of them, and while I looked at them I felt comfortable and at ease, as if bathed in some magical spell. As we

looked into each other's eyes for some moments I noticed how much she communicated with them. No words, just energy. Good vibrations and love came out of them like a laser beam.

"How about you, how long have you all been getting together here?" I asked.

"We have been learning together for about four months. We used to meet at my house in the evenings and have just started meeting here. It is the beginning a new phase."

"What have you done so far?"

"We have learned to develop our inner awareness. How energies work in ourselves, understanding them. We also learned how to tune into them. Now we are starting a deeper aspect of it all."

"All with Tao-Sun?"

"Yeah, he is well-versed in the arts and secrets of life," she said with intent and a smile. Her comment was obviously a big truth, from what I read in her inviting but deep and wise expression. I could sense in her words a taste of what was to come.

"Today we are getting to know each other," she continued. "There are some new people and some that worked with us some time ago, and want to update their knowledge with the practice."

"And the day I saw you all? Two days ago I saw a group of people; I guess it was all of you."

"We were making arrangements for the programs and sorting out the details to start the practices. Also, we took the chance to do some attention focusing, which is probably what you saw."

"Yes, that's right."

Tao-Sun was approaching us.

"How is it going?... Jake, isn't it? I think I heard your name mentioned earlier."

"Fine. Stella is filling me in with the details."

"I suppose you might be concerned about starting at this point, but do not worry about joining us now. You will be able to follow things without any problem. I am sure this is not entirely new to you."

I don't know how he knew but that was true, apart from martial arts I did some yoga and meditation years before. One felt, being with him, that he understood human nature. There were no barriers. He

could have easily been my best friend; that was the way his attitude made one feel. He was totally relaxed and natural, as if we had been talking about things for years. His attention was total when talking with anyone. He lived in the moment completely. I could really tell that.

“We will start next week, and then meet every morning here at this time,” he explained. “The practice will involve understanding the mind and body connection and how they affect each other. Becoming aware of what is happening in both of them, when it is happening. Getting ready for developing and expanding our awareness of ourselves, life and the world. All that related to energies and attitudes, and how the quality of these rule our lives. And then we’ll see if we can work some magic...”

In those few words the whole reality of the practice was contained. But I had no idea then what I was in for. I would not have imagined how in the real practice things would develop. As often in life when we have a preconceived idea of something, we miss it... even when it is before our very eyes. He smiled and moved on to talk to some other people in the group. Stella and I continued our conversation on a more mundane level about our own personal lives. What we both did and how we spent our time. I was really impressed by her. I could see she was very in tune with herself and the people around her. I sensed there was true understanding in her heart, and after my experience with Tao-Sun, I knew there was a lot I could learn there. I thought about Stella’s words... nothing is a coincidence, just what Mike and I had been talking about two days before. It was certainly true for they were the kind of people I was looking for. We all left in our own time. We had the details we needed to meet for the practices from the following week. Stella and I got up and after saying good-bye to the group, walked towards the street.

“Well it has been great meeting you, Jake. I will be very happy to be in the group with you.”

“I will too. I am sure we will enjoy working together... No coincidences, right?” I added with complicity and impressed by this encounter.

“Not a single one...” she said with mystery and smiled reassuringly.

“See you next week,” she said and left.

I went the opposite direction. As I moved along the promenade I put my hands in my pockets and noticed a small card which I took out. It was one of my business cards: “Jake Sailor, Marketing Director.” I looked at it with a smile on my face feeling I had little to do with all that. I tore the card to pieces. “Good-bye...” I said aloud, and opening my hand I let the bits scatter in the wind.



I was at the office the following day. Like all that week, I was very busy finishing things and getting everything ready before leaving the company. I had a thought, and suddenly I knew the reason why Mike and I had met.

“Mike?” I called him at his office.

“What’s up Jake?” his voice answered.

“Listen, I have come across something I know you are going to be interested in.”

“What’s that?”

“I have just met a group of people who are going to start a kind of self-knowledge practice with an instructor.”

“Really? What are they going to do?”

“I met the instructor the other day, let’s say by chance, and he invited me to meditate with him for a while. I felt really great. He has that light in his eyes that tells you he knows something you want to know, and he is really at peace with himself. He radiates that.”

“That is the kind of knowledge we want, right?”

“Yes. I also met some of the people in the group, and I tell you they are great. They are different, Mike. I am going to join them. Why don’t you come with me?”

“I will. This might be the opportunity we were looking for. When are they starting?”

“In a week.”

“Where is it going to be?”

“At the beach”

“At the beach?”

“Yes, it seems it is the right place, at seven in the morning.”

“I’ll be there. Why not, the beach is a great place for that.”

“If you go to the big tree on the cliff, you will see the group down at the beach on the left of it. Monday morning.”

“Good. Thank you, Jake. This could probably be the reason why we met.”

“Have no doubt, Mike. This is it. I’ll see you there.”

I put the phone down feeling I was going for it. The decision had been taken. I had spent enough time sitting on the fence of my inner life without venturing really far inside. I had done almost everything I had set out to do in my life, and I knew there was something else waiting for me; something more important and precious than anything else. Finding that out was going to be my priority in life from then on.

I thought how the external appearances of life had taken me subtly away from even my best intentions of looking behind the veil of daily existence. With charm and seduction had got into my head. With sweet words, beautiful colors, glitter and promises of paradises... lost and empty, had bewitched my senses to eventually take possession of the power inside me, to steer me away from my original aim: understanding the true purpose of my life. Before I knew it, I was somewhere totally different from where I had wanted to be, and had forgotten the starting point, the motivating force that had started it all. Now it was the time to go back to that power, back to my source.