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VICTIMS

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What is the difference between free will and fate? I wonder about that sometimes, and the more I look around and observe how life unfolds, the more deeply I question any difference there may be. The following are true stories, each happening within my own family. I submit them as samples of what I mean.

He was headed right for me. I was alone. He stood between me and the bright lights of a nearby hotel. Behind me was the dark span of ocean. It was late, and the highway of beach was vacant except for the two of us. I began walking normally back toward the hotel, but out of the corner of my eye I noticed his pace quicken. He was Latin appearing, muscular, like a dock worker, in tight jeans and T-shirt. Suddenly, our movements froze while time and space expanded, sending a shower of sparkles everywhere. My possible attacker and I merged. His thoughts were mine; mine were his. Yes, he wanted my purse. The money. The eyes of my mind quickly scanned every item, searching my purse for what might be of value. No, the money would be of no great loss. Yes, I could replace everything, although it would be burdensome. But wait a minute! My children's photographs. I couldn't replace them. No, I would not cooperate. Could he allow me to escape? "I just ate a heavy meal," he mumbled, "and I want an easy hit. I won't follow if you run." Just as suddenly as it had happened, time and space contracted back to normal dimensions while animated behavior resumed. I ran! Like never before. I made it to lights and people. He just stood there, staring.

Both my husband and my son went elk hunting with a friend in the high country of Idaho. This hunt was especially important, as jobs were scarce and we were broke. There wasn't enough money to buy all the groceries we needed, much less meat. The trio had to bag an elk. They had to! It would be a lean and hungry winter if they didn't. My son silently pointed to a nearby ridge. The friend saw the huge bull elk first and shot. Missed. The elk ran, toward my husband, then stopped hardly two hundred feet away. My husband took his turn. Missed. He shot again. Missed. - As

long as my husband had his gun raised, the elk never moved; not one muscle twitched. He just stood there. As my husband later told it, the moment he readied for the third and final shot, the elk calmly looked him straight in the eye. When that happened, my husband felt a strange, weightless, floating feeling come over him as if he and the elk were merging; and he distinctly heard the elk somehow say to him, "It's all right. Take all the time you need. I'll be the meat your family needs this winter." After the elk fell, the three men were beside themselves with excitement. None had ever seen anything like it. Our share of the kill was more than enough to last the winter, but the meat tasted different. It was sweeter and more delicious than we thought meat could be. We came to regard it as a sacred gift, and eating it became a communion with pure love!

Being the wife of a crop-duster pilot and the daughter of a police officer, I had occasion to be on the "front line" of countless accidents. Many of our close friends fell to earth in blazing crashes. Just before midnight, a number of years ago, two of our friends met head-on in the skies over Adrian, Oregon, sending a shower of debris exploding into a farmhouse below. Both pilots were killed, as well as the woman in the farmhouse. It was a nightmare and a tragedy, yet I suspect they all knew in advance what was coming. The reason for my suspicion is (as we learned later), each of the three had exhibited the same behavior pattern before the crash. They had each been compulsive about winding up their personal affairs, visiting all their friends and loved ones, speaking deeply and intensely to each. They had checked and rechecked their insurance coverage and debts payable, making certain their spouse knew and understood how to manage every last thing. Afterward, they would suddenly relax with a peculiar "glow" about them, as if they were ready for anything and all was right with the world. They each died forty-eight hours later. I've run across this particular behavior pattern before. It is characteristic of every pilot I've ever known who later died in an "accident" and of most people I've had contact with who died "suddenly". Because of this, I have come to suspect that all of us, at least subconsciously, know when we are going to die, and to the best of our ability we prepare ourselves and those we love.

One of our daughters was abducted from the city park by a man with rape on his mind. A contingent of police officers and I were able to track down the culprit and rescue my daughter--barely in time. When the case came to trial, I was given the opportunity to converse with the judge privately. I expressed the fact that I thought the young man wanted to be caught, as he had left a trail which could be followed, and that because of all the terror my daughter had experienced, her dreamy, nonchalant behavior was jolted into a more wide awake state, with her grades jumping from C's and D's to A's and B's. A sentence of re-training and counseling, I felt, was more fair than a prison sentence. The judge agreed, and such was given.

What constitutes a "victim," or is there any such

thing?

Is there some kind of space warp or crack in time where everything can merge and where probable alternatives are discussed or acted out before conscious choices are made?

Is there a fleeting moment where "scripts" are chosen and "roles" assigned before actual events occur?

In 1977, I physically died three times over a span of three months. Each time I had a different near-death experience. Getting well became a long struggle of pain, disappointment, depression, and dealing with the specter of possible insanity. Today, I look back and dub the experience "The Heavenly Sledge-Hammer Effect," for because of it, my entire life and all that I have ever known changed radically--for the better. What began as a horrible tragedy became an incredible blessing.

Are there really any accidents? Any victims?

Or do we somehow, always draw to us that which we most need for our greatest good?

I wonder about that...

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