

THE ARK

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The only point in being a prophet is the knowledge that somewhere, someone, something believes your prophecy.

Birds are esteemed prophets among birds and trees and other living things. Very few men have looked upon birds as anything but tinkling cymbals in the prophecy line. So when the birds left Costa Rica, only the trees and certain worms and insects made meaningful note of the fact.

The trees with regret, for they knew what was coming. The insects and worms celebrated their final victory over the enemy, not realizing the enemy was approaching on wings without feathers — and those not made by man, either.

Finally, the OAS (Organization of American States) stepped in and evacuated Costa Rica. By that time, the trees were beyond caring and the ground was too hot to contain any visible animal environments.

It was at the height of the Costa Rican relocation problem, that a Pan Am pilot, named Powderbuck, got off course and reported land some 500 miles northeast of Devil's Island.

This stood the whole world on its head because instantly, at the same moment, said land appeared on relay satellite world-wide television.

There it was, an unmistakable 300 mile long and up to 5 mile wide smudge of land where yesterday, had been just the sea. And not a tidal protest anywhere.

The nearest governments rushed to activate their military and scientific reconnaissance, but were frozen to immobility by the possible outside interpretation of their acts.

Not so, the public of the world. Anyone who had sea or air craft powerful enough, or close enough, headed in the direction of the newly born land.

Without traffic control, there were accidents in the air and on the sea. For those who made their destination, the sight of the land looked like a gigantic black stomach turned inside out. With its deep sea forest dying in the sun and its deep sea creatures gasping and flapping along the drying slime, sliding back to the sea. It formed its own barricade.

Not one of the curious flew over the land. No one interviewed could give a reason why. As a news story, the appearance of the land was a colossal bust. Even the most verbal governments were silent.

On the same day, all the birds left the island of Martinique flying due east. Those from the north end of the island made a wide arc around Mt. Pelee. Of the persons who observed this, one or two vaguely recalled some Virginia sensitive's prediction in the thirties, that three months after the birds left Martinique, the planet would gasp in cataclysm.

Being sober men and highly salaried, they didn't ponder this publicly. Every government thankfully involved itself in local emergencies and disasters.

So the jurisdictional problem of Pos eye donia (Poseidonia) went to the United Nations and was tabled.

(Some reporter had brushed the cobwebs off the Atlantis legend of Poseidon and the name had stuck).

The fact that the ocean lines of the world were quietly and steadily rising, went almost unmentioned upon.

Newscasters mentioned it in passing. If anyone noted the rhythmically visible breathing of volcanoes long thought to be extinct, that notation never reached the headlines.

Any possible connection between these events and the mounting statistics of drownings, floods, landslides, disappearances, and earth tremors, was not editorialized. There was neither space nor time.

So, it was no surprise (people were beyond that simple and ingenuous emotion) when the warning sirens, public and secret, sheared the world in half on a glorious May morning three months later.

Mrs. Richard (Marian) Forkauer, of Chevy Chase, Maryland, attractive, forty, Phi Beta Kappa, simply stopped thinking — her hand poised over the letter she was writing to her congressman on the subject of civil rights for disaster victims.

Her nine year old son John, I.Q. 210, for what it's worth, put down his slide rule and in one continuous motion, took the left hand of Moamee (Moami), the Ambassador of Pakistan's youngest daughter and his teammate at the school black board. The words free and clear in his mind were, "Come. Follow the light. Bring as many as you can."

Richard Forkauer, bending over a teletype in the News Service Press Room, felt rather than heard, his son's urgency.

In Kansas City, Missouri, Leah Millstein, widow, working mother, with one eye on the clock, was

watching her three children scatter two blocks away with their friends from school, when the sirens moved her from the 6th floor apartment window to the wall where her late husband's picture hung. She was conscious of nothing but her older son Peter's voice, calm and sure, "There's nothing to fear, Mother. I see the light. Just follow me."

In Glendale, California, filled with earnest, sincere, loving hate, Elna Olsen, 75, was laboriously writing an anonymous postcard to the Glendale School Board. Her husband Harold, had finished his assignment of five anonymous postcards and was peacefully reading of the moral, spiritual and political unfitness of the President of the United States in Human Events.

Of late, the postcards had been harder for Elna to write. Her performance of this duty was often interrupted these days by the scripture verse, "Perfect love casteth out fear." The words made absolutely no sense to her, but they kept coming into her mind.

When the sirens sounded, Harold Olsen lifted his head and eyed her with the triumphant look of a man vindicated. Surely at last, this was Armageddon and at any moment now, he would be caught up into the arms of Christ. He had worn the same look and had been cradled in the same anticipation when World War I was declared; the stock market crashed; World War II was declared; the first hydrogen bomb began rearranging Earth's magnetic field; and the Democrats came to power in 1960.

Elna, who had braced herself on all sides with fear against the day of the communists coming, found herself filled with unreasonable joy and the wild thought, "Now, they're here, I don't have to be afraid anymore." A thin pencil beam of light in her mind and the tiny voice of a rejected child calling, "Come. Follow the light. It isn't far and I will help you."

In the garden of a modest cottage in suburban Auckland, New Zealand, a retired Maw or ee (Maori) teacher suddenly found herself surrounded by hundreds of Maoris, all smiling. Here and there she recognized the features of children she and her husband had taught in the North Island mountains for forty years. The arms of the Maoris were filled with plants and flowers. All around them were communities of animals and birds. All orderly. All expectant. An old Maori stepped toward her and put out his hand, "The children say we are to follow the light. Teacher, you are the light. We follow you."

In Soul (Seoul), Korea, twelve year old Wu Jung Sook pressed the tips of her fingers into the letter in her hands. How could she bear to part with it, even to comfort the young mother whose child had come and would not breathe. This was the last of her treasured possessions, the letters, fifty-five of them written to her when she was nine and ten years old, by the American Foster Mother.

There had been money and vitamins and clothing too, but it was the letters that took her from terror to love. They spoke of simple things, the beauty of a spider's web in the corner of a room. And everyone has spiders.

It was the genius of love to be whatever we needed it to be, a ladder for climbing to our highest

dreams, a bridge where people who were thousands of miles apart could meet, a road from which we can never get lost.

At first, Jung Sook buried the letters so that no one could take them away from her just as the men out of the north had taken her father. But, in her tenth year, when she began reading the translations for herself, she was stirred with desire to share them.

Day after day, her sister lay on the family's one mat, suffering. This, the sister did silently, not wishing to crowd the already overcrowded room with the noise of her pain. It came from fear in her heart though it manifested as rheumatism in her bones.

One day, Jung Sook saw a spider spinning its web in the place where the two doors forming the room's south wall, had warped apart. Feeling that she was too young to tell her sister what to do, she ran and dug up the letter about the beauty of the spider's web and read it out loud. The words, so familiar to her mind, hesitated on her tongue, for she had not said them before. Then, they tumbled out into the room and began weaving darkness into light.

The silent wake of the sister's suffering, long an accompaniment to all their lives, now had a counterpoint of joy. A spider no bigger than an uncooked grain of rice had six hundred spinning tubes. Shocked with wonder, the sister silenced even her silent pain and began to get well.

It was the letters that rebuilt the heart of Jung Sook, slowly, patiently. It was the spider and its web that rebuilt the heart of her sister and when she walked, healing came to the heart of their mother. Finally, because the letters were shared, even given away, hope began healing an entire community on a waterless, plantless, scar of a hillside slum, above the city of Seoul.

The letter in her hands puzzled Jung Sook. It wasn't the last letter she'd received before they stopped coming altogether, but it was the one she could never give away.

"Nothing is ever lost," the letter read, "nothing we truly do — nothing we truly are, is ever lost. The little wild plant you brought down from the high hills that didn't live in your coffee can, is alive and blooming somewhere else, though perhaps not as a flower, but for other eyes than yours. Your laughter, when you saw the baby spider caught up by its mother's legs and kept from falling, is a gift already received by some child halfway around the world. When you thanked your mother for being brave, you made every mother's heart throughout the Universe, a little braver. These are ribbons of light joining us together."

Jung Sook no longer had to read the letter, each word of it lived in her heart, but still she could not bear to part with it even to the young mother whose child had come and would not breathe. Could the baby be breathing somewhere else?

Enveloped in a shock of light, Jung Sook never heard the sirens. Their sound registered where she had been.

In London, a three year old namesake, hearing the high iridescent sounds, put out her hands and

cried, "I catch light!" And throwing herself into her great-grandmother's lap, they were gone.

The human link between John Forkauer, Peter Millstein, Elna Olsen, the Maori teacher, the Korean child and the London three year old, sat on the sandy bank of a river in a sheltered valley five thousand miles to the west.

Undergoing one of her periods of self-questioning and doubt, what, if anything, was she accomplishing?

How could she know if this Experiment in Love worked? Was it an Experiment in Love or an Experiment in Delusion? Pioneer or fool or both?

Could it be true, that as we now see color, we will see thought?

Could it be true, on levels of consciousness our eyes are not vibrating fast enough to see in that, - still to us, unstable dimension, space-time? Or, that thought is as tangible, weighable, measurable and usable as the substances that we now give to height, weight, depth and frame?

For two years, Veronica, whose last name is unimportant, had sent out the same thought to the same six persons at the same time each day. She saw the space-time as a flight pattern corridor she had established for her use — the transit of thought. But did these thoughts arrive? And arriving, did they make any difference in the lives of John and Peter and the others?

John and Peter were the sons of old friends. She had known them since their birth, the emotional bond to them was strong and protective. The bond to Elna Olsen, the mother who could not be a mother, forged in fear and hatred and telepathically crippling, was the most difficult part of the experiment. The one that remained mechanical until forgiveness was added as solvent.

The London namesake and the Maori teacher were the easiest. Into Veronica's mind flashed — or did she flash into a larger Mind stream? She wasn't sure which or if there were other alternatives, for memory is a continuous living fact, not a trunk in our mental attic. Is it because we assume memory is past and that it adapts to pastness?

Now, her mind vividly registered the wispy little tourist, wearing John-the Baptist sandals, who stopped her on the village street to ask the way to the Old Spanish Mission.

Again, Veronica was flooded with warmth, as she had been on the day of the original question. Again, she registered a radiance? A substance? A field arcing out to about three feet around the stranger who was not a stranger and who came home with her to dinner and left behind a gentle quietness and blessing that filled the house for two days.

When the Maori teacher was recalled in the house, the small rooms seemed larger, more porous as if some connective substance, some river of kinship, of communication flowed in and out of the walls. If she was recalled on the river bank, as now, Veronica felt herself expand and embrace New Zealand and a life she had never known. Or had not known, she knew? It was these sparsely

worded after-questions that pierced her plodding.

With the Korean foster-child, she felt a sense of urgency, a need to lift. But this came from her own regret, and perhaps guilt, that she hadn't been able to keep up the monthly payments, even though she was assured the child and family would receive help as long as they had need. Circumstances were beyond her control.

Every time Veronica came to that phrase in her mind, she tripped over some half-awakened perception. Are circumstances ever beyond control once one has come down out of the trees of believing that Life is an alien force to be battled? And that one has started to build the first primitive shelter out of the concept that Life is an impartial force serving our choices?

Every time she considered abandoning the experiment, she had also to consider that even if her thoughts were not received and brought about no change at that end, she was changed. There was a firmness in her now where she could sit and refresh. A place from which she spoke with certainty when she was there. She never felt alone any more — as she had all her life, felt so acutely alone. She seldom felt fear and she accepted as fact — there is nothing to fear in all the Universe.

But the habit of fear is one of the most deeply ingrained human reflexes, and sometimes while reading the evening newspaper, she filled with sadness, and isn't sadness a by-product of fear?

It isn't enough to have come down physically out of the trees and out of the caves of this planet, she thought to herself. We must come down out of the trees and out of the caves of our thought — our tertiary (tertiary) thought. How can we do this? Is this experiment a primitive, fumbling way? Well, I've started it, I might as well stick with it at least a while longer. So here goes.

Closing her eyes and moving to the place of certainty within her, Veronica put gentle, simple words upon a lift of tongue and gave them unselfconsciously to the air:

Perfect love casteth out fear from me and from these whom I name:

I love you John Forkauer. We are One.

I love you Peter Millstein. We are One.

I love you Elna Olsen. We are One.

The specifically expressed loving thought went out to the retired Maori teacher halfway again around the world where she sat thinking of her husband and the children they had taught and loved together. It encircled the child on the Korean hillside. It skipped lightly through the completely open mind of the namesake in London.

And now the simple ending line of the daily formula: We love you Planet Earth for we are One.

Always, when these words were spoken, the blood in her veins stilled to listening. There were no boundaries of flesh or stone, of leaf or even word. Then, into this listening, the planet made reply. The breath of God danced through the leaves, the fluid of God sang between the river banks, the

life of God soared on wings, and the great voice of God spoke from every fleshed and furred and feathered throat.

The pioneer opened her eyes aware of a subtle change within herself. On some level, the self-questioning was answered, or set aside. Her doubts were gone. These after-effects would carry her for several hours, sometimes into tomorrow's lab work on the river bank. Again and again, she pondered the melting, the dissolving that took place in each of her sessions.

It was not only that the self-conscious, or the consciousness-of-self, dissolved barriers, but space-time itself, dissolved. She felt, closeness—hereness—thereness to each of the six persons in her experiment.

This carried over into every aspect of Veronica's life. If someone mentioned that he had just been to London, there was the immediate kinship with London, although she had never been there. Now, when she looked at the small camera snap of Wu Jung Sook, the whole Korean hillside, or rather the essence of the hillside, took form or feeling or form-feeling in her mind.

During a televised Korean student disturbance, she felt physically jostled and literally tossed about on wave after wave of berserk emotion. In desperation, as she watched a policeman clubbing a student about the head, she cried out, "I love you both." The place of certainty surrounded her. Her heart resumed its normal rhythm. The tension went out of her body. The sharp black tightness let go of her forehead. Was the place of certainty around her then? As well as within her?

In some curious way, Veronica no longer "saw" people or animals. She "felt" them. Each person, each animal seemed to live also in a field outside its body. The house of flesh was not the boundary of the be-ing.

Sometimes, when the body seemed to be so at variance with the field, she felt pain, she felt the flesh to be an assertion of what wasn't really so. The body, in voice and carriage, might project importance, but the field was buzzing with fear. Sometimes, this buzzing field was visual. The words "grainy" —"bristling" came into her mind.

But, this was tricky. It was such an unknown area that she peered into it rather than walked into it.

She sometimes wondered if the first people to register color felt as wary? It was something to explore. She felt that she needed different sensory equipment than what she had now.

There were times when the field was tactilely tangible. For a fleeting second, her fingers might acknowledge an edge of it, or it registered in her as spirals of light or coils of warmth or the decal edge of pain.

Veronica jotted down reactions and incidents in her notebook; the four large dogs jumping and chasing each other in a residential inter-section and the tangible field of happiness that they were creating. She had walked into that one and they accepted her as one of themselves. Had she

sensed herself as a dog?

And then, the physical environment disappeared. She was in a meadow. How could she be in a meadow on a makadam road surrounded by houses? A meadow of happiness?

Relaxation went all through her body, especially through the forefront of her mind watching the two very small boys playing some secret game of delight with their paper cups of dry breakfast food. The field of laughter swirled around them with its pinpoints of blue light winking in and out.

Were laughter and happiness places? Could they be created permanently — consciously built as man builds a house for himself? As man cleared the physical wilderness and built himself shelter against the elements, could he build an emotional, a spiritual shelter?

As man chooses where to live geographically, can he choose where to live in his emotions? His thought? Can he choose to create a shelter of happiness, of laughter? Are these his living shelters from the hail of self-scorn, the tidal waves of depression, the twisters of his guilt?

Is man being pushed from his physical apparatus into some finer substance where the very necessities of life are different and created with different tools to serve different purposes?

These were places without words and to put them into words, was to distort them, cramp them. There is a higher language than words, but one must use words to get there. One must also know when to make the break with words, when to thank them and let them go. Much as man put down stone and picked up steel, so must man put down logic and pick up perception. Words are the tools of the four dimensions, but already man enters a fifth dimension.

If he listens for words in this dimension, he listens in the wrong language. If he relies on words here, he loses his way. It is the difference between a trim, painted sign saying “Destination 4 miles” and a subtle wind against your back as long as you move in the right direction. What is this higher language without words? —Love?”

How often Veronica had read, “God is love” and pondered it. Where had she first encountered the concept that only love can change the world and believed it on some, then, secret level of her being? When had she first accepted as practical, tangible laws, that thought is faster than light? That love is more powerful than any form of energy allowing itself to be discovered by man?

And then she felt her mind plunge, upward and outward.

All across the planet, tides of conflict rose, ebbed and rose again. Great storms of protest lashed the hearts and minds of even Earth’s most experienced peoples. The wrecks and ruins of carefully constructed thoughts blocked and obstructed the vast thoroughfares of national and individual minds. Everywhere, thoughts isolated into rigid molds of science or religion, sex or race were shaken to their very foundations, cracked open and crumbled, for everywhere the One Mind surged in a new tide of growth through the ruins of the thoughts of man.

Everything had grown to be too much and too many. Each drawer of human knowledge divided and became two drawers and divided again and again until all knowledge was fragmented. Here and there, fragments were raised up for some part of the mass to see and worship. Clothed with a separate language, a separate discipline, priests and vestals were anointed and a clique of worshippers attracted and rewarded.

What could she do? Unspecialized, Unbelieving, Unconvinced. Veronica's mind tensed against cluttering, Shrank from ugliness and Stumbled against the gathering speed of division and sub-division and broke itself. Out of the mending came a simple thought — if God is Love, whatever God is and whatever Love is, let's experiment with that.

Then came a thought so simple, it almost went through her mind unchallenged; to say silently within her mind — and mean it in her heart — “I love you” to everyone she saw and every person who entered her thought. This was a simple beginning. So simple and so difficult, that she kept it secret. (It was months before she was able to remember to apply it for even one hour).

And after all, what was so unusual about this experiment? Wasn't every religion, every government, the planting of every seed, the dusting of every crop, the painting of every picture, the writing of every criticism, the living of every life, every spoken word including “Hi” “How are you?” “I am fine.” — an experiment in love? Had these failed? Or were they prelude? Was love an energy that could be harnessed and used? Or, was it that Love, the great Power of the Universe, was waiting for us to say — Here we are. Harness us and use us!

Veronica sat still, feeling herself as an atom with the sand atoms of the river bank, letting what unknown energies pass through her, while her mind roamed these spaces between spaces. Areas without form, between feeling and thought, between love and its infinite variety, between the bird and its song. Almost lost, these were now the new continents of the mind.

Over these, she made her way, sometimes incautious, sometimes, almost blind. How could man be freed from his self-assumed burden of hate? How could it be proved that all effects are the results of love?

War is the result of love if enough persons in a nation love the instruments and implements of war enough to give up all else to make them and serve them. When we love to kill, that is what we do best. And then, all our protests are inverted bragging.

It was love that split the atom, man's love of knowledge. And it is love then, that will make the atom whole again, man's love of light.

How simple to experiment with love. One didn't need machinery, or grants or appropriations, or the approval of one's government, or to compete with anyone else, or to sell anyone else on the idea. Here, indeed, all human beings are equal.

Anyone can experiment with love. It is so simple, this energy, this power.

It is the last advance of man, for when man knows how to use the power of love, or let himself be used by love, he is no longer man but that which staggers the imagination. And he calls this new self which he already is and yet hardly dares aspire to — Angel, Prince of Peace, Mighty Counselor, Wonderful.

The sirens brought Veronica to her feet. And now, she was in a clearing. All around her, people poured through into the clearing. Poured through what?

A huge doorway took shape.

As the last two people came through, reluctantly, the doorway disappeared. The words Emergency First Aid Station came on in her mind and winked out. Now, she saw men and women in white, wearing armbands. She couldn't make out the insignia. The white clothes were soft and casually tailored. Veronica thought of country houses and summer homes.

These men and women directed the people to spread out in the clearing, or paused to comfort those who looked dazed and bewildered. But how could this be an Emergency First Aid Station when there were no ambulances, no First Aid buildings or tents, no medical equipment?

The vague boundaries of the clearing came into focus. Veronica felt trees. Yes, of course, the clearing was surrounded by trees and she heard birds. She could now make out paths, bordered with ferns and flowers, winding into the woods. The clearing was filled with the healing smells and sounds of a spring morning.

The people were in groups. Some large, some small. Those with armbands directed everyone toward the center where Veronica stood. A small boy led the group now closest to her. Her heart leapt in recognition. It was John Forkauer.

She didn't know the exquisite little girl he had by the hand. Behind him came his parents, Richard and Marian Forkauer. She was dazed, he alert and wary. Following them, a grandparent, and after him, moving along just above the ground, a fish bowl with two small gold fish. An excited grey poodle jumped, ran and barked circles around them all.

Swiftly, Veronica's eyes picked out the leader of each group. Her eyes confirmed what her mind already told her. Each group was led by one of the persons in her experiment.

The retired New Zealand teacher led the largest group including men, women, children, animals and plants. Her people smiled and waved and the children began to play. With great certainty, the animals grouped themselves to graze or rest and many of the plants and flowers were already rooting themselves in the new environment.

The next largest group was led by a small Oriental girl holding a letter, fast in her hands. Many of the people following her were dazed and bewildered and wandered away from the others. The men and women in white, comforted each one and whatever they said, diminished bewilderment,

for every person returned undirected to the group.

Peter Millstein was a shepherd circling his flock, trying to keep the children from frolicking off in all directions. He'd brought all those that his eyes recorded on the street when the sirens sounded. Leah, his mother, stopped one of the women in white and Veronica heard her ask, "Please could you tell me the time?" "Oh, yes," came the answer, "It's Now." And Leah's relieved reply, "Oh, isn't that wonderful! Then I do have time to enjoy this."

A laughing, dancing three-year old pulled her great-grandmother down into a private universe of golden buttercups.

The last couple through the door, the reluctant ones, were Harold and Elna Olsen. He was the reluctant one and she struggled to tug him deeper into the clearing. But still, he held back, his eyes blank, his voice unclothed, "You've made me miss Him, Elna. He was coming to catch me up and you've made me miss Him."

The siren's sound had meant but one thing to Richard Forkauer — doomsday buttons pressed on both sides of the world. He looked at his family and gave a mindless thanks for their escape. Escape into what? The place looked natural enough with its trees and birds and flowers. In fact, it looked too natural — whatever he meant by that. There was something missing here.

This fact gave his highly critical mind a small security from which to operate. He began probing the vacuum with his thought. His eyes sought out the eyes of the civilized-looking persons in the clearing. Their eyes met his directly, questioning. His mind cautiously concluded the missing factor — there was no fear here. Bewilderment, yes, but no fear. "So much for total terror," he said to himself, "it has a constructive function after all."

"There is something missing here and you've named it — fear. But there is also something present here. Name that, before you ascribe the absence of fear to total terror."

Richard Forkauer hadn't seen the man in white come up to him. He knew that he hadn't spoken his thought aloud. Yet, it was answered audibly by a man who looked like an ordinary human being. The insignia on the armband made no sense to him but he couldn't stop looking at it. As he looked at the royal blue fleur-de-lis on the shining yellow-gold field, Richard Forkauer felt something inside him and around him, dissolve.

Simply, and really wishing to know, he heard himself ask, "What is present here?"

"That is for you to find out."

The answer, this time, was in his own mind. The man with the armband was gone.

For a brief instant, Richard Forkauer was nineteen years old. He stood on a platform speaking out of his impassioned, but untested belief in pacifism.

And then, he was running, falling and running again, stabbing his way up a beach in hell, the real enemy in his heart, its instrument in his hands, bayonet attached.

And then, he was in the clearing again and all around him was an insistence that he could almost see. Knowing that the two incidents were important to his being here, wherever “here” was, and in that, was the key to what he must find out for himself.

Veronica was still standing in the center of the clearing, her thought active. “If this is an Emergency First Aid Station, then there must be some kind of organization here. Some kind of processing. We should be told where we are and what we’re to do. Surely, there is someone in charge.”

The feeling of the clearing changed. It became brisk, matter-of-fact. Veronica saw the men and women in white, now seated at large round tables with twenty to twenty-five people from the groups to each table. Each had a sheet of paper and a pencil in front of them. Each one was asked to give their name and declare what they had brought with them. This resulted in confusion as most had brought nothing but the clothes they had on or what was in their hands at the time the sirens had sounded.

Richard Forkauer hesitated over declaring his wallet full of credit cards and some travelers cheques, surmising correctly that everything was to be pooled for the common use. John Forkauer tentatively placed his fish bowl on the table. Wu Jung Sook found that the letter would not let go of her fingers.

Now, the woman in white came toward Veronica. “We’re so pleased you made it through.” The woman spoke to her warmly. “From our count, you brought 2,341 men, women and children, 852 animals and 110 kinds of plant life through with you. You’re right, we must get organized.”

Veronica stared.

“There is much to do, to explain. But it would be better if I said this to everyone.”

The woman turned from Veronica and spoke clearly, without effort, across the clearing. “Welcome.”

There was immediate silence and those who had been standing at the table, sat down. “Will all the helpers please stand.” Unselfconsciously, all the children stood.

“Are all the helpers standing?” the woman insisted.

Elna Olsen and the retired Maori teacher got timidly to their feet. “This includes you too,” the woman turned briefly to Veronica and then back toward the tables.

“Each of you has done well. We congratulate you. We love you. We are One. Thank you for standing.”

The children sat down. She gracefully inclined her head toward Elna Olsen and the retired Maori teacher. They sat down.

“You are all here because — well, our Coordinator will tell you why you are here. As to where you are, by the latitudes and longitudes with which you are familiar, you are somewhere above the Canadian Rockies. There are many of these Emergency Stations. They are not dissimilar to the Red Cross First Aid Stations you know so well. They have another point in common in they are all staffed by volunteers. In this sense, each of you is a volunteer because you chose to come through. However reluctantly.” She smiled in the direction of Harold Olsen.

“You see, you couldn’t be here otherwise. The choice is always yours. The way of its realization belongs to the Universe — or as you were taught to say, ‘God.’

“Your questions will be answered by our Coordinator who is personally welcoming, all those coming through to these Emergency Stations. In the meantime, let us clear up any confusion about what you have brought with you. Here, we deal only with realities. So when we ask you to declare what you have brought with you, we mean your true belongings — courage, loyalty, compassion, faith, love, laughter, joy, genius, patience.”

Into the stunned silence, the woman in white placed these gentle, gentle words, “Nothing outside of you ever belongs to you. If conditions are right, you can use such things, but you can never own them. Your true possessions are what you yourself have built out of the materials and tools of your own experience. These operate under all conditions. They can never be destroyed — only buried, hidden, unrecognized, but always yours.”

Looking across to Wu Jung Sook, she continued, “You are the living letter.” And the letter that Wu Jung Sook could not bear to give away, the letter that would not let go of her fingers, disappeared.

Richard Forkauer’s wallet, the papers and pencils, every material object placed on the tables, disappeared. Freed of the fish bowl and water, John Forkauer’s two small gold fish swam up and away and out across the clearing while every eye followed them, the children’s, with delight.

The round tables and the chairs disappeared. All were sitting on the softly grassed slope of a natural amphitheater.

“While we wait for our Coordinator,” the woman in white continued, you might give some thought as to what you have built together as a family unit, or group and what you have developed as an individual. When we have this information we will be able to assign you to emergency work here.”

“Not all arrived as richly purposed as others. For example, those whose special possession is courage, will be placed as teachers of courage. Another One came with you whose special gift is laughter.” As she waved toward the London namesake. “This is a possession we rate very highly. You may have brought more courage, more laughter with you than you know. But you can only use what you can recognize. There are Orientation classes.”

As the woman in white was speaking, Veronica saw a man enter the clearing. Buoyantly, joyously, He moved down the slope toward the center where she and the woman in white stood.

The children suddenly focused inward and then sprang to their feet, their faces radiant. Parents and adults tried to get them to sit down. The children remained standing quietly and with determination.

The man was tall and slender. With laughter in every line of his face and wearing the same armband as the men and women in white, He reached the center.

To cover their confusion and embarrassment as much as anything, the people started to applaud. The man turned to face them, smiling.

They applauded even more strongly, reassured and quickened by the happiness in His face. For silence, he held up his hands.

The silence was sudden, crashing. Can those be nail prints in His hands?

As one, the people came to their feet, their breath caught in a mighty inrush of love and recognition.

He stood lightly, His eyes giving their gift of radiant love to every eye and to every heart. And into every mind, with the voice of His welcome clothed in golden laughter, He said, "Hello!"

My Love and Peace Be With You In This Place, For In My Father's House Are Many Mansions:
"Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear - if it were not so, I would have told you."

Evelyn Nolt