

FISH
On a
BICYCLE



...evolution of a bottom-feeder

Kerry Bunnard

FISH ON A BICYCLE

... evolution of a bottom-feeder

A spiritual memoir

by

Kerry Bunnard



Strategic Book Group

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to the awakening Spirit in all of us.

Thanks to Lucille Blanton for showing me
the way back to my heart.

Special thanks to Karuna Gatton who's love, guidance and
friendship made this possible. Her integrity and grace are rare and
precious gifts she shares unconditionally.

I would like to thank the Shamanic community in Eugene, Oregon
for their mentoring and for nurturing my growth in the early days of
my spiritual training and education.

I would also like to thank Jan Harris and the SRT community
for their love, support and wisdom. They filled my need for further
enlightenment.

Love and gratitude to my wife and daughters, whose love and
support are constant.

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Preface

The following is a true account, my own story. I have been convinced that it must be shared as it happened not only to legitimize the extraordinary events that transpired but to honor those who assisted me along the way.

The purpose of sharing my story is to pique the interest of those of you who are curious or ready to discover your own truths, find your own path, your own understanding and relationship to the Source whether it be referred to as God, Spirit, Allah, Jehovah or All That Is.

This story is for those of you who may desire to live and create from your hearts, where our highest thoughts and actions originate.

If you are seeking a closer relationship with God, a oneness that is personal and yours alone, yet universal at its core, come with me. I have something to share with you.

The time is ripe. We are entering the Age of Aquarius, our vibrations are rising and the veils are thinning. Connecting with Spirit and our own spiritual consciousness has never been easier.

You can make this connection, too.

Spirit may even seek you out, or as in my case put you in a position to wake up and pay attention.

This book is my gift to the awakening Spirit in all of us.

Introduction

I was trained as a fiction writer and prefer “stories” to biographies. However, the spiritual autobiography I have written here is more fantastic than anything I could have made up.

I had initially written this account in third-person narrative to protect my privacy and any inference of ego. Unlike religion, I did not want the messenger confused with the message. However, I was convinced by my editors that this experience and the insights and benefits derived from it are more powerful if told exactly as they unfolded.

A spiritual journey is as personal and individual as we are. Buying into conclusions and myths handed down from generation to generation is, in my opinion, merely indoctrination. We can, however, learn from the experiences of others. It gives us a place to begin.

I grew up in working class America, spending the first twelve years of my life in a small Oregon community amongst family and friends where most of us belonged to the same church if not the same religion.

This exposed me to a specific cultural and social interpretation, an ideology that “this is our story and our truth and everyone who doesn’t believe as we do are wrong.” Going to church every Sunday was part of the fabric of community, part and parcel of everything I learned about my place in the world. Our beliefs and orientations were reinforced by regular repetition and specific ceremony of our story, as was normal.

Although this gave me a secure sense of identity, of belonging and

safety, I never felt comfortable with a spiritual philosophy that I felt was based on guilt and fear.

I couldn't buy into a philosophy that told me that if we bought into our particular brand of dogma we would gain our reward in Heaven and avoid burning in Hell like those who were evil, or simply believed differently than we did.

To me this never rang true. It just wasn't logical. How could I have been so fortunate to have been born into the correct religion and others, born into another culture, historical philosophy or geography, be destined to pay for their differences in the most terrible way? To me, it was easier to believe in Santa Claus. All I knew was that I could not find a true spiritual connection in my own culture where a vengeful God ruled.

As I grew up and began to think for myself the inconsistencies of religion and everyday life became more and more apparent and I continued to question the philosophy of the very culture that had nurtured yet indoctrinated me. I could not share this due to the blasphemy it provoked to those in control. So, I learned to push it from my mind leaving only boredom and disinterest in its wake.

At twelve years of age my father was promoted from labor to management which forced us to move away from our community leaving behind our relatives, neighborhood and our religious community, as well.

Our safety net was now gone and we were forced to adjust without the support system that had helped maintain our identity. At first we tried other churches in other towns and states as my father continued to climb the corporate ladder but it wasn't the same and we eventually quit trying to find a new church or religious outlet. Although we all felt we had lost something, I believe only my mother truly missed our Sunday ritual.

I was relieved. There was absolutely nothing I missed about the religious experience.

From my own life experiences, education and media exposure; I felt that religion was, in fact, one of the major causes of strife, war and general disharmony in the world.

However, years later, as an adult with children and a stake in the world I began to feel like there was something missing in my life. I had a wonderful family, a great job and plenty of friends, but I was miserable. I felt angry and empty and had nowhere to turn.

I never once considered going back to church. Religion was a non issue and never an option for me as I continued to equate it with the boring and threatening experience of my youth.

No matter if you called it God or Spirit or whatever I was painfully aware of Its absence in my life. My soul cried out for a connection and although I knew I couldn't find it within my own culture I knew I needed to find it somewhere besides the late night shows on Historical Jesus that I had begun watching with renewed interest.

Just prior to my 43rd birthday I had an epiphany. Although I was not consciously searching for Spirit, Spirit came to me in a most unusual way.

I didn't need to have a true near-death experience like Dannion Brinkley author of "Saved by the Light" or Betty J. Eadie who wrote "Embraced by the Light," but these were books that did pique my interest, giving me more insight than the Bible or its metaphors ever did.

I discovered that we are all "spiritual beings sharing a physical existence" while incarnated here on earth. I was able to discover my own truth, in my own way. I discovered a unique way to truly know God through my own unique lens and my own unique soul; through my immortal soul's Native American soul perspective.

It is my hope that my own story will inspire you to discover your own connection, your own truths. I hope to inspire you to think for yourself, to seek independence from the dogma and approval of man made organizations or any judge outside of yourself.

There are no coincidences. You've picked up this book for a reason. Spirit may already be leading you to your own truths.

Jump in, the water's fine.

Prologue

Spawn from Light

He stood before God basking in the light of unconditional love that emanated directly from the Source. It filled him, surrounded him and held him in its embrace.

This light was of the purest love imaginable. Its spectrum included the primary colors of compassion, forgiveness, tolerance and understanding. It permeated the entire celestial realm, pulsating throughout his soul and the others he met in this place of wonder and grace. It burned brightly in all of them, revealing their true essence, who and what they were despite the masks they wore each lifetime. Masks that hid the oneness they shared collectively as beings of light, beings of God. He was honored to bring this light with him, glowing through what was to be.

He had finished the period of rest following his former incarnation and subsequent life review. Then, he allowed himself the time and care to deal with his own judgment, gleaning the lessons of his latest encounter on earth, enabling him to understand, appreciate and ultimately forgive both himself and others for what had taken place.

He had willingly participated and assisted in the education and remembrance of other souls he'd agreed to help and serve until his return sequence was near. Finally, spending his energies on his own preparation, he reviewed the lessons he'd need to learn and the trials he'd need to overcome in this one last emergence into the physical realm.

Those tasks completed, he was recharged and ready for his next phase of service. It was an undertaking he had agreed to honor for the

purpose it was to serve, individually and collectively, clear and worthy in its conception.

His goal was to get it right this time, to merge with the light of God while walking the earth, to become fully integrated with his multidimensional soul, ending this cycle of reincarnation once and for all. This was to be the last pearl in the string.

As he stood at the precipice of birth he was at peace, confident that the challenge before him was attainable.

He acknowledged and accepted the pain he would endure, taking him to the very depths of his soul; pain that would enlighten him and set him free, giving him the opportunity to complete his mission. He also looked forward to the love he would experience and share with others this lifetime in the search for perfection within.

He vowed to remember who he was, encouraged by the connection to the past that he was allowed to bring with him, truly sacred power he'd earned from sacrifices endured in previous lifetimes that would enable him to prevail in this one.

He was entering into a culture of which he had no previous experience, to be other than what he had been, yet a descendant from a previous lifetime that would serve him well.

He completed the final run through, reviewing his mission and his coordinates with the help of his guardians, councils and guides whose purpose it was to assist him as he made his way through physical life one last time. They'd be watching out for him, to nurture and assist him as he had done for them on their own missions, tests and journeys into the physical realm. They were his pod, his tribe, part of the soul group he was a part of regardless of which situation or lifetime they encountered or whose turn it was in the barrel.

Countdown...the universe was aligned correctly. All of the planets were sliding into place, an alignment that would give him the characteristics necessary to learn and remember, eventually removing the veils that would soon cover his memory and disguise his purpose.

Every detail, from the place, time and date of his birth to his family-to-be was set. His appointments were in place, prearranged and agreed upon with other souls for the best timing and result. It was time to go.

He was going to get it right this time.
This was his last thought as he entered the birth canal.

Part I: The Catch

Swimming Upstream

November 14, 1997

5:00 am.

I stood in the shower consumed by the sensations from the night before, afraid that if I opened my eyes too quickly I'd still be at the strip club, this time naked myself with a bar of soap in my hand instead of a beer. The hot water felt good as it cascaded over my head and down my body but I knew it was only temporary relief.

The throbbing ache that had started behind my eyes began to spread towards my temples and the top of my head like tentacles, alive, digging in just under my scalp like a multi-fingered vise. I was certain that if I initiated any quick movement or unsolicited sound above a whisper my skull would explode into a million pieces.

The loud rock and roll music from the night before was still trapped in my head, replaying over and over like a gum commercial that you can't block out. Only this was much worse, almost three dimensional, mixed with loud drunken laughter and the smell of stale beer that clung to my consciousness giving it a much darker texture.

I had awakened from my fitful sleep startled and disoriented, mumbling an apology to my wife as I rolled out of bed, sure that anyone in close proximity could hear the party still going on inside my head. It had felt heavy and awkward, like a giant conch shell wobbling on my

shoulders where loud barroom noise escaped my upturned ear instead of the rumble of the sea.

“What a price to pay,” I thought, acknowledging the hangover that was beginning to hit full stride. I stood under the nozzle motionless, allowing the cocoon of hot water to engulf me as I tried to clear my head.

Experience told me that although I’d feel close to normal by the time I got up to the sales meeting in Portland, the drive back to Eugene at the end of the day would be brutal. I’d be wiped out by then. It was one-hundred miles of freeway, each way, which seemed to take twenty hours instead of two whenever I drove it in this condition.

“At least I’ve got a couple of hours to get myself together,” I thought as I fumbled the soap, losing it at the last second much to my dismay. I cringed as it banged off of the shower floor, exploding in my ears like a gunshot.

I grabbed my head with both hands, certain that it was going to come apart if I didn’t physically hold it together. The pain was intolerable, like an ice pick had been shoved into the center of the brain itself. When the agony subsided enough for me to move again I warily kicked the soap closer so I could easily pick it up.

As I was bending forward, reaching for it carefully still mindful of the throbbing pain, I felt the pressure in my head shift. Suddenly a high ringing accompanied the thumping base still thudding away in my head as blinding spots and flashes now replaced my normal vision. I could actually feel my head changing shape, like it was imploding, caving in around my sinuses. The pain became unbearable as I continued to lower myself towards the security of the shower floor, no longer able to stand.

I leaned back against the shower stall and grimly held on, fighting to stay conscious. Blackness continued to close in, taking me almost completely under as my vision narrowed to just a pinprick of light that seemed to be coming from a long way off. It was like looking down the barrel of a gun.

It literally felt like I had shrunk into my feet, losing my body altogether. I’d never felt anything like this before and could actually see this aberration in my mind’s eye. I fought hard to stay conscious as I clasped my knees to my chest and waited for these sensations to pass.

Eventually the train-wreck inside my head subsided and my vision began to clear. The high ringing in my ears eased off as the familiar dull pounding took over once more. Still dizzy, I carefully raised to full height, placing myself directly under the steady spray until I was sure I could continue to stand without falling over.

“Like surfacing from a deep sea dive,” I thought, still struggling to stay conscious.

I willed myself to stay upright, unable to remember ever feeling quite this badly before, hangover or not. I swallowed several times fighting back the nausea that had now overtaken me and began to wonder just how bad this was going to get.

Panicked that I was about to black out standing up, I quickly turned the water temperature all the way down giving my body the cold shock it needed to regain full consciousness. I stood under the icy spray as the nausea abated remaining motionless until I was sure I had my balance back. I blinked my eyes several times trying to regain my normal vision as the spots and flashes slowly receded, finally disappearing altogether.

I continued to breathe deeply and deliberately for what seemed like forever, eventually returning the water to a warmer setting to still my chattering teeth.

My legs wobbled beneath me as I washed my body by rote, careful to stand as upright as possible. I did not want to relive that kind of pain and disorientation again. I’d never felt anything like that before and it scared me a little.

“This must be the mother of all hangovers,” I thought, trying to focus my thoughts on what had taken place last night.

As I replayed the business discussion from the night before in my mind, I was unable to separate it from the X-rated action that had surrounded us. It was all one big nasty blur.

I was worried that I was becoming desensitized to naked women as much as I frequented the strip clubs lately. I felt as phony as the smiles, tans and breasts I encountered on a regular basis, enjoying none of it.

I got into corporate sales for the money and I knew that going into it. I had readily accepted the sacrifice when I started. I had worked other jobs and couldn’t come close to the salary I was making in outside sales,

but I regretted the time away from my wife and two daughters whom I loved more than life itself.

“Some trade off,” I thought. I held my head directly under the spray, prolonging my shower as I tried to focus on my life as it had become. I wasn’t sure how much longer I could keep this up.

“There has to be more to life than this,” I thought for the thousandth time as I rinsed myself off, my eyes glazing over as I watched the last of the soap swirl down the drain.

“What a wuss,” I thought. “I should be happy...shouldn’t I?”

All my friends and relatives thought I had hit the jackpot. They saw me as a lucky guy with a great paying job, a nice little family and a new house in suburbia to come home to every night.

“What more could you want?” I asked myself. “If it was supposed to be fun they wouldn’t call it work, would they? So, what’s the problem? Most people would kill for this job, right?” But I felt that all I was doing was smiling my ass off all day, putting up with morons and jerks for that all-important paycheck. No wonder I felt like I needed a shower by the end of the day, too.

I mulled this over once again trying to rationalize my existence but was unable to shake the loathing I felt not only for my job, but myself as well. I felt like a phony, an overpriced clown.

“But what can I do?” I wondered. “I have responsibilities.”

I reminded myself that the drinking was nothing new. I’d used alcohol to get to get to sleep for years, fighting the insomnia that had haunted me as far back as I could remember.

Even as a child I’d occasionally needed “help” to get to sleep. The doctors would try this then that, one pill making me sick another producing the opposite effect it was designed to, leaving me speeding and shaking like a junky.

My mother had to regularly pry me out of bed every morning, just about the time I was finally sleeping deeply. Grumpy, moody and cranky were all terms my family used to describe my temperament while growing up but I truly couldn’t help it.

I’d sit down at the breakfast table, still tired and bleary eyed, unable and unwilling to talk, and then catch hell for my lousy attitude. This,

compounded with my allergies and sinus problems, made me unable to communicate anything other than irritation most mornings, especially when needed about it.

In high school I'd discovered sex and alcohol which took the edge off my anxiety a little, giving me enough relief or release to overcome my inability to drop off to sleep. But this created a whole new set of problems as I took everything to the extreme, ruining relationships due to my obsessive behavior. By the time I was in college marijuana had made an appearance in my life. I was resistant at first, because it was a "drug," but so was alcohol. Everyone else was doing it...so, why not? It worked. I'd finally found something that would not only induce sleep or a compatible state, but it was also something that took the edge off my hard-ass demeanor.

However, now that I was a husband, father and respected businessman buying and smoking pot was a risky proposition and a rare indulgence. So, alcohol remained my usual poison when sleep wouldn't come. It worked but made me feel weak and I despised myself for it.

Now in my forties, I couldn't rebound from the inevitable hangover like I could in my teens or twenties, or even in my thirties for that matter. Yet, I performed my job at a very high level as I continued to participate in these regular customer entertainments, dutiful and engaging as expected, always the life of the party. I still couldn't help but feel I was abusing my very soul.

There were some days following a night out with a customer where I couldn't function until late the next morning. I would stumble into work at 7:00 a.m., quickly get my paperwork out of the way then go park my car somewhere, take a mid morning nap, reviving myself enough to get through the rest of the day. I was usually productive but the guilt that surrounded this behavior left me feeling worse than the hangover itself.

I realized that the customer entertainments that my company required put me right back in the same old trap, life of the party at night then overcoming a hangover while functioning on little quality sleep the following day. I couldn't seem to quit drinking entirely and still do the customer functions. I just couldn't fake it sober. Sometimes that was the

only thing that got me through the long evenings of lousy jokes, lousy company and those lousy strip bars.

What had I become? Dr Jekyll, life of the party at night and Mr. Hyde, hide until your eyes clear, the next day. It seemed to work, though. I was “the best there is” at my job. My supervisors would introduce me that way and my customers confirmed it. I regularly won bids, made quotas and consistently earned bonuses and raises year in and year out, continuing to grow my territory and my reputation for success.

Lately I felt that doing my job, even the daily calls, was like pulling an elephant through a knot-hole. I found myself doing little more than going through the motions day after day with nothing to look forward to on the weekends except more entertaining and very little family time.

“I don’t know how much longer I can keep this up.” I thought again, turning the water temperature all the way down one last time, finally able to move without flirting with unconsciousness.

I shut off the water and grabbed a towel, feeling slightly better than I had before. I tried to push the clutter and depression from my mind and concentrate on what I had to do today. My head felt a little less fragile now, the music inside a little less intrusive. I felt almost human.

I glanced at the clock and realized that everything that had happened during my shower had only consumed about twenty minutes. It seemed like an hour or more had passed. Time was funny that way. If you were enjoying yourself minutes slipped by like seconds and conversely, if you had an episode like I just had, minutes could seem like hours.

As I continued to dry myself off I surveyed the bathroom and noticed that everything seemed to have a deeper, denser texture to it, kind of like old wood as opposed to paneling. The walls, the patterns on the floor tiles, even the light fixtures seemed more detailed than usual. The colors and surfaces were more rich and vivid and the flaws stood out like neon signs. When I looked down at my own body my skin seemed more porous and three dimensional, as well.

I stepped up to the mirror and saw that my reflection seemed sharper, my tan more yellow and ghastly than before, the hairs on my body and the whiskers on my face seemed individual, more defined than usual.

This was weird. I never saw things clearer or sharper when I was

hung over or inebriated. Things were always fuzzy, more out of focus the morning after not crystal clear like they were this particular morning.

“What the...?” I wondered for just an instant as fear crept up out of nowhere.

I looked at myself closely in the mirror; all of a sudden a thought slammed into my head like a bullet, a true physical sensation that actually seemed to clear my head a little. I recognized it immediately.

Maybe this was the day my pain would finally end. Maybe this was the day when that long drive to the sales meeting would be my last. Maybe this clarity was what everyone saw their last day on the planet.

“Yes,” I thought, as the realization hit home, “maybe this is what happens to a soldier who knows he’s going to ‘get it’ in combat.”

I’d read stories of survivors whose buddy in the next foxhole had “just known” he was going to die in the upcoming battle, and did. Maybe this is how everything looks to a guy who knows his number is up. Maybe this is what your senses do on your last day. Like people dying of a lingering illness who feel better and are more clear-headed just before they pass on.

“Whoa, where did that come from?” I wondered, only fooling myself for a second as I reflected on the dark fantasy I’d been having with increased regularity.

Over the last year or so every time I took that long drive to Portland for one of these meetings a part of me actually fantasized that it would be my last. A part of me would secretly hope that I’d become the victim of one of those accidents I’d come upon almost every time I’d made that drive, releasing me from the pain that consumed me, solving the problem of living a lie every day to fulfill my responsibilities.

“A death wish?” I asked myself, musing as I continued to look around, noticing again how differently my perceptions were this morning. No, not quite, but it was a feeling I’d had that had increased in its intensity over the last year or so. I knew on some level that this charade couldn’t go on forever. Some day my pain had to end.

As I continued to examine myself in the mirror, I couldn’t deny what was going on. I actually felt a premonition. I’d had them before.

Yes, it was clear now. I was certain I was going to meet my end today.

“Maybe the misery will be over soon,” I thought. It was like I had known this day was coming and now that it was here, I really wasn’t that surprised. I wasn’t even surprised that I wasn’t surprised. It felt like destiny.

A sense of doom and inevitability settled over me. At some level it felt appropriate and I was relieved, at another level I was very sad and very bitter.

I continued to look directly into my swollen eyes and couldn’t help but grin at my knee-jerk dramatics. Was I serious? The Kerry I saw in the mirror, the joker, the clown, couldn’t believe that I would even consider the possibility that something this weird and prophetic could be going on. Yet, at the same time another, deeper part of me knew that it was a dark fantasy I’d had for months and was certain that it was now unfolding.

“What the hell had happened to me in the shower?” I wondered, noticing again how differently and clearly everything appeared. Not only did I suddenly find myself with superior eyesight after my morning shower, I seemed to have developed superior insight, as well. I was naked, unmasked, seeing myself clearly like never before and once more found that my life was unacceptable to me. It was so obvious. I couldn’t live with failure. Death was my only escape.

“Is this what it’s come down to?” I wondered. “Is this my reward for playing the game so well? Is this what I get for living a lie all these years? Is there no other option?”

I felt completely lost, like I had wasted my life and was now getting out the only way I could, the only way that was left open to me. What a gyp.

“But, there has to be more to life than this,” I thought again in desperation, as I continued to examine my reflection through the bloody eyes that stared back at me in the bathroom mirror.

“What...God?” I barked a laugh, loud and coarse in the early morning silence. The sound of it spooked me and I abruptly stopped as the echo reverberated around the master bathroom. The eerie, hollow silence left in its wake was somehow even more unnerving.

I thought of the bumper sticker I had seen back in college that

seemed to sum up my feelings regarding that subject: “A Man Without God Is Like A Fish Without A Bicycle”.

“How perfect,” I’d thought then as now, the fish being the universal Christian symbol for man. God could be anything that didn’t fit, why not a bicycle? As far as I was concerned they were mutually exclusive.

“Does the Pope shit in the woods? Is the bear Catholic?” I laughed to myself recalling other religious jokes and bumper stickers me and my room-mate had shared.

But one thing was undeniable, then as now. I seriously doubted that there really was a God at all.

Well, not the God I’d learned of in Sunday school, anyway. Then again, was it God or was it religion I objected to so strongly? Was there a difference?

I shook this off, seeing no benefit in pursuing these thoughts. I wasn’t going to go down that particular road, not today.

The thought that I couldn’t escape, still bubbling up somewhere deep inside me, was that I had always felt that there had to be a reason I was on the planet. It wasn’t just my ego talking; it was something deeper than that. That somehow I had a mission or purpose that surely this wasn’t all there was to life, my life. But wouldn’t this purpose have shown itself by now? After all, I was going to be forty-three in just a few days. That was pretty damned old as far as I was concerned. I had no answers and could see no way out. My disappointment was deep and all consuming.

“If there is a God, if this is His plan, He can kiss my ass!” I thought, trying to shake off the feeling of doom that continued to surround me.

I felt myself shudder at this blasphemy as I tried to think of something, anything else to occupy my mind as I scraped the foam from my face with unsteady hands then quickly dried my hair.

I dressed slowly and quietly in the walk-in closet so I wouldn’t wake my wife who still had a few hours until she had to get up and go to her part time job. “Must be nice,” I thought bitterly.

Her disinterest in the intimacy that we used to share hurt me deeply, especially when I felt like I was giving everything I had for her and the kids, sacrificing my happiness for theirs. She obviously didn’t want me

in that way any longer and I had too much pride to beg her for the closeness we once shared, even when I so desperately needed the reassurance it brought me.

I leaned over and kissed her on the forehead and she mumbled a goodbye in return. Despite the feelings of rejection, I still loved her very much. She was my “babe” and I knew that she loved me, showing it in many other ways. I closed the master bedroom door behind me and quietly walked down the hall towards my daughters’ rooms.

They were my pride and joy. They were what I had lived for the last few years. I could actually feel the ache in my heart as I stood in their doorways, in turn, watching them sleep peacefully, wanting to tell them goodbye just in case. I would really miss them. I loved them so much.

It hurt when I caught myself losing my temper with them over little things, letting my frustrations or the stress of my job get in the way of the patience and understanding they needed from me. This realization, especially in the midst of an angry reaction, only caused more anger to rise to the surface making the situation even worse. Talk about a vicious cycle.

So, I’d spend most of my time, on the job and at home, pretending to be someone I wasn’t. I faked happiness, living on the edge with my anger and frustration just below the surface, numbing my pain with alcohol so I could get some sleep, some release. It was an existence I could hardly stand. I wasn’t hiding it very well and was at a loss for answers.

I hated how my life had become.

I blinked back the tears that stung my eyes, feeling the ache at the back of my throat as I swallowed the emotions that threatened to overtake me as I observed their peaceful repose.

I softly blew them a kiss and continued down the hallway, through the foyer and out into the early morning darkness.

I closed the front door behind me with a sense of finality, wondering if I would ever see them again. I checked the locks and rattled the knob to make sure our house was shut tight, satisfied that I had left my family safe and secure.

I turned and walked to my car, consciously taking the time to look

around and notice every detail about our home, reflecting on the good I had built upon a foundation of uncertainty and despair. I was ashamed of myself for being so weak as to long for death over this existence. There had to be something I could do. Something that could help me overcome the helpless, hopeless feelings I'd had of late. But what, I didn't know.

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