

***This is the revised version***

# **DFE – Dark Force Entity**

**A Novel**

**by T. J. Palmer**



Cover illustration: *Vampire's Kiss* by Boris Vallego

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## Synopsis

*Dark Force Entity* tells the story of how James Parker, a spiritual healer, part-time hypnotherapist and truck driver encounters dark forces and the spirit entities that influence human beings. Following a lifetime of failed relationships and career misadventures, James Parker embarks upon a new career as a hypnotherapist, using his knowledge and natural healing skills to bring relief to the suffering. When he meets Marie, he finds what he believes to be a woman with whom he can reconcile his past failures and become what he always wanted to be – a family man. His compassion and vulnerability lead him to discover a realm of human experience that openly challenges the modern secular world-view of materialistic determinism. His journey of discovery as a spiritual healer takes him through mystical experiences as a hermit in the mountains of Crete to the romantic Bay of Naples where he encounters the Divine in human nature and to the high passes of the Swiss Alps where he first encounters the demonic. James breaks the code of ethics of professional therapists and enters into an emotional and physical relationship with Marie. This brings his hard-won therapy career to an end and he commits himself in total to Marie as her partner and applies all his skill and knowledge to helping her overcome the consequences of earlier abandonment and childhood trauma. James fathers a son for Marie, a son she had yearned for since she had three daughters and is devastated when she betrays his trust in her and she rejects him. With his career and professional relationships in tatters James retreats in order to find answers for Marie's actions.

What James Parker ultimately discovers is that several worlds exist in parallel – the world created by each of us from within our own minds, the co-created world of the greater social collective and the two worlds of the transcendent – good and evil as they are experienced and denied by ordinary people in their daily lives.

Inspired by true events taken from case notes, this story explores the fuzzy and confusing relationship between mental illness and the influences of an unseen world of spirits and demons. What James discovers is the evidence for the existence of unseen spiritual domains that affect us all for good and for ill. This is a story of how deeply-rooted scepticism is challenged and overcome by experiences that are ultimately foolish to deny. A novel of powerful emotions and moral purpose, DFE is a story that explores the paradoxes of love and betrayal, trust and distrust, fear and courage, disbelief and denial.

The characters are fictitious and any resemblance to real personalities is purely coincidental.

'I see a deep, deep pool. It's dark.  
 It's so deep if I fell I don't know if I'd ever reach the bottom.  
 There's a long fat snake in this pool hiding, waiting to get me.  
 It's so long and it's ugly.  
 I'm naked and alone on the surface.  
 There are huge cliffs and mountains completely surrounding me.  
 I know humans are there but they're hiding. Watching me die.  
 I've been in here a long time, but you knew that didn't you?  
 The only way out is down.  
 To look him in the eye.  
 Are you down there? Are you waiting for me?  
 When I dive down I'm going to find you and wring your neck.  
 Are you in the pool with me?  
 Where are you?  
 Who are you?  
 Are you taking me to the snake?  
 What will you do if I ask you not to save me?  
 What will you do if I try to kill you?  
 What will you do if I refuse to go with you?  
 I'm so tired, I expect you'll do what you want.'

### Acknowledgements

It is estimated that about 10% of therapists who have a personal relationship with their patients commit suicide because of their failure to treat them with genuine human love. This book is dedicated to all those therapists, doctors and healers who suffered that terrible fate. I extend my grateful thanks to those therapists who, through lack of knowledge, and naïveté were unable to help their suffering patients until they discovered an alternate reality. I thank them for their honesty and integrity. I also extend my thanks to those pioneers of spirit release therapy who published their findings and their successes in the treatment of spirit possession and for their contribution in lighting the way forward for all psychiatry and medicine in the modern world of science and technology.

I further extend my grateful thanks to all those patients who, through disbelief and misguided attempts at treatment by mental health services were destined to suffer for so long. All shall remain nameless and anonymous because of the stigma associated with mental health issues and the persistence of medical science and society at large to view spirituality with disdain and incredulity.

My very special thanks to the founders and members of the British Association for Spirit Release and their supporters for their knowledge and unending desire to educate us all. Special thanks to members of those Spiritualist Churches where mediums conveyed messages to those who are willing to listen and in particular to those who asked specific questions in the search for truth and enlightenment. And special thanks to those nurses, therapists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners who remain anonymous for fear of being exposed for their beliefs. May they continue to work for the common good with discretion and confidentiality. I sincerely hope that this narrative will inspire others to recognise the Light and contribute to changing values and treatment methods for those who suffer at the whims of the Dark side of reality.

Special thanks go to .....for proof reading the manuscript and to ..... for suggestions on themes and presentation.

## **Preface**

Disbelief in the Dark is no defence from it.

One day, at some time in the future, institutionalised ignorance will be a thing of the past. Until that day arrives the mentally ill will continue to be treated according to the misguided beliefs of those who put themselves in positions of power.

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# Chapter 1

## James Parker and the Seven-Year Cycle

*It's going to be a warm one*, thought James Parker as he parked the truck and walked to his car for the journey home.

It was 5.30 a.m. on a bright August morning in the Year of our Lord 2000, and he had just finished his night's work, from Rochester up to Birmingham and back with a 40-foot overnight parcel trailer. The drive home would take him forty-five minutes, then he would have enough time to have a spot of breakfast, bathe and shave, and get his notes ready for the morning's work at the clinic and the hospital. Clinic started at 8.45 with the first patient arriving at 9. He would see three patients and then get to the hospital by 12.30 where he was conducting a research project for his doctorate. He would finish at the hospital by about 2 and go straight home to bed before getting up again at 5.30, eat and head up to Rochester for another night trunk to Birmingham.

James Parker had an honours degree in psychology, was a certified hypnotherapist, was researching for his PhD, and he drove trucks. A strange mix of professional activities you may say, but the hypnotherapy didn't provide enough for a living yet and the research was costing him his own money until he could get a grant, so he had to drive trucks to make ends meet. He was 53 years old, divorced and lived alone in a one-bed ground floor flat. He lived only for his work as a therapist and his objective to be awarded his doctorate. He worked nights for a driver agency usually from Monday to Friday, but sometimes at weekends, and had nights off prior to attending the clinic as and when required by his friend and colleague Dr Samuel Weston. He did his practical research at the hospital on Fridays and Saturdays again with Dr Weston. The rest of his time was his own to sleep, read and write up his clinical and research notes, punctuated with a couple of pints at his local pub after church, and Sunday lunch with his daughter and her family. Apart from a sporadic and sometimes intrusive love life in the form of Penny, his life was pretty routine, and to most who weren't interested in psychology, perhaps a little dull and boring. That was all there was to know about Mr James Parker, but it hadn't always been as dull and routine as that, and it was about to change again. Over the coming months James Parker's life was about to be turned upside down.

James left the yard and headed down Blue Bell Hill towards the motorway. Traffic was already starting to thicken on the M20 on its way to London, but James was going the other way; in the opposite direction. *Going against the flow*, he reflected, was something he had done in the past, or so it seemed.

*There's going with the flow, and then there's running with the herd*, he reminded himself as he approached the speed limit with nothing to get in the way. He wasn't running with the herd. That was going the other way. But where was the flow taking him? His thoughts began to wander as he dropped the car into high gear and his mind drifted into neutral. He was in highway hypnosis. A natural state often experienced by long distance drivers when the conscious mind drifts off into a kind of day dream whilst the subconscious goes onto automatic pilot and takes control of the driving. The idea of going with the flow took him into a reverie of other times and other places.

He had been a truck driver after he came out of the army, then progressed to transport manager and eventually to transport consultant. He had also been an entertainment promoter, an advertising agent, a conference and exhibition organiser, and a hermit living in the mountains of Crete. His adventures and experiences had been wide and varied; from being acknowledged by his peers to being thrown into an Arab jail and deported. He had been a consultant for the United Nations in Africa and had worked as a waiter in a Greek taverna. Now he was a hypnotherapist and student researcher. His experiences had changed dramatically every seven years or so, give or take six months either way, through a series of cycles. There had been high points and low points to each cycle, and there were crisis points too. One thing remained constant though. He could always earn a living by truck driving. This was the common thread and his security.

He had been twenty-eight years old and driving a truck across the Saudi Arabian desert when this realisation of seven-year cycles occurred to him. It had been an interesting observation and he had

concluded that he was being influenced by a naturally recurring cycle that he had no control over. James needed to understand how it worked and whether it was controllable or predictable. These were the same questions that philosophers, scientists, historians and economists had been attempting to answer for centuries. James Parker was none of these. He was an ordinary man trying to do his best to make his way in the world without the benefits of a formal academic background or financial independence. He didn't know it at the time, but he was following a path of discovery that was not designed by him. He had identified several types of cycle. There was a physical one, an emotional one, a mental one and a creative one. He had also identified in the world around him a political one and an economic one. He even took the time to read into the past and actually identified a shape to history in the form of cycles in the rise and fall of civilisations and empires. He identified that each cycle had a peak and a trough, and a critical point that heralded a change from one cycle to another. He arrived at the tentative conclusion that everything that could be observed or experienced could be understood by seeing it as part of this universal cycle of events. For James' own personal experiences, each cycle had limits and boundaries that confined their influence to within James's capacity to accommodate their effects physically, mentally and emotionally. He saw natural progression and personal development as 'going with the flow' of the naturally recurring cycle. But there was another cycle of influence that was still a mystery to him, and he often found himself musing as to its nature and its influence, not only on his own life changes, but on his understanding of the world he found himself in. He was to learn that this cycle was the one that stretched boundaries, and even went beyond them.

By the time he had reached the Ashford exit James had been reminded what it felt like to run outside of the main herd, influenced by his own cyclic changes and going with the flow. There didn't seem to be any stability or predictability, but amid the apparent chaos there was definitely a pattern. He just wanted to know where it was headed.

He was gaining on a convoy of heavy trucks on their way to the channel tunnel and the ferry ports, trundling along at a governed speed of 56 miles an hour, nose to tail like a herd of elephants. His conscious awareness took over once again from his automatic pilot as he checked his right rear-view mirror and indicated to pass them. He checked his speedometer to register that he was still cruising at exactly 70 mph.

James arrived home at 06.15 and let himself in with the anticipation of a relaxing soak in the bath. The moment he was inside the door he switched on the radio tuned into Classic FM, turned on the bath water and put the kettle on. He stripped off while the kettle boiled, adjusted the bath temperature, made his mug of tea and took it with him to the bathroom. He stepped into the bath and sat down to sip his tea. This was his time: Time to let the dust of the road wash away and listen to a nice piece of classical music - heaven. But the reverie that was started on the motorway by his thoughts of going with the flow was still only just below the surface. The strains of *Pachelbel's Canon in D* drifted into the bath room and he slipped down into the warm soapy water to make the mental transition from truck driver to healer.

Each seven-year cycle that James Parker experienced brought him to greater heights of success and then into greater depths of despair. As he was getting older, the roller coaster was getting rougher and wilder. He thought that maturity was supposed to bring wisdom and success, but all he could see was that he was being thrown from one crisis to another - from the heights of achievement to the depths of failure. During one such cycle, between 1985 and 1991 his computer exhibitions business collapsed and he lost his soul partner, the beloved Julia. Escaping to a simple life in Crete seemed idyllic at the time. He found space to breathe, and to stand back to see the bigger picture, and he discovered a peace within himself that he had never known before. He had learned the true value of isolation and tranquillity. He lived the life of a hermit in the mountains and people would come to him with their problems, locals and tourists alike. Without any form of teaching or training from an adept or master of any kind, James Parker was a natural comfort to his fellow humans in trouble. What he hadn't realised at the time was that with each cycle, as he traversed its peak and trough, his trials and tribulations became harder and his failures were to become more traumatic. Each time he traversed the critical point of a cycle the emotional energy created became greater and greater. As his own emotional pain increased with each revolution, so his compassion and empathy for others increased in equal measure. The more pain he experienced so the stronger he became. Just as a Samurai sword is heated and beaten a thousand times to give it its strength and its edge, so James Parker was being beaten and tempered in preparation for something yet to come.

His studies, research and efforts to establish a viable hypnotherapy practice bring him to this day in August 2000, and he thinks that by now he knows where he is headed. His friends and family think his life is routine and uneventful. But he is on the cusp of another cycle, and this one will take him further and deeper than ever before. This one will take him to the edge - and beyond. This one is the boundary breaker.

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Yes, he thought as he climbed out of his car at the clinic car park, *it is definitely a warm one*. James arrived at the clinic at five minutes to nine with just enough time to take off his jacket and wash his hands when the receptionist announced to him on the internal telephone that his first patient had arrived.

Amanda Fernandez was huge. James could find no other way to describe the frame of the 25-year-old woman who waddled into his consulting room. She was six foot six tall and so obese that he didn't dare risk putting her on the scales. He had visions of the chair collapsing under her huge bulk as she accepted his invitation to sit down. Under the enormous face he could see that she was really a very beautiful young woman and she spoke with a delicate child-like voice that did not fit the frame she filled. It was obvious why she was referred to him, but he had to stick to the protocols as he took down her basic details for the record.

'What can I do for you Amanda?' he asked.

'I'm fat,' she said tearfully. 'You name it and I have tried it. Diets don't work, exercise doesn't work, and psychotherapy doesn't work. I have even had my jaws wired together to stop me eating, but absolutely nothing works. I am at my wits end and I don't know what else to do. You are the last resort. Can you help me?'

It was a plea from the depths of her soul and it touched him. He felt her pain and anguish as he began to explain the procedures he used.

'Before I can answer that question we have to see how well you are able to go into an altered state of consciousness. That's a trance,' he explained. 'Then we have to see how well you respond to suggestions. If you are a good subject for hypnosis then rather than give you direct suggestions to lose weight we have to find out the cause of your obesity. But before we begin can you tell me why you think you are overweight?'

She misinterpreted his question and replied, 'Look at me. I'm huge. Nobody should be this big. I feel like a freak. I have difficulty doing everything; getting dressed, moving around, even cleaning myself.' She began to get tearful so he stopped her.

'I'm sorry,' he said. 'What I meant was, what do you think is the *cause* of your overweight?'

'I really don't know', she replied. 'I have always been fat. I mean I have never been anything other than fat. My earliest memories as a child are of being bigger than anyone else at school. My mum says I was born fat. How can I possibly know what caused that?' He detected a note of annoyance with him in the tone of her voice.

He was anxious that he should immediately restore rapport between them in order to proceed. Without rapport there can be no chance of success with hypnosis. So, he quickly explained, 'The reason I ask this question is because we have two minds; the conscious one that we are using now to have this discussion and an unconscious one that is beyond our awareness. When I ask a question like the one I just asked you, I am asking the conscious mind. But when I ask the unconscious mind the same question we should get a different answer.'

She listened with intense interest and he went on, 'We use our conscious mind to analyse things, solve problems and make decisions, but the unconscious part of our mind works in a different way. It stores information and controls things that are beyond our conscious awareness. For example; you don't have to think about breathing or heartbeat or putting one foot in front of the other when you walk. Do you?' She relaxed as he spoke and listened with intense interest. He had already started the trance induction process and as he spoke the tone of his voice changed imperceptibly to a gentler, soothing one.

'No,' she replied.

He had the attention of her unconscious mind as he suggested to her, 'The ability to go into trance depends on how well you are able to relax.' She nodded, and in a short time he had succeeded in inducing a good level of trance. Then he brought her back to full conscious awareness and asked her how she felt. James had developed a method of trance induction, through much practice and trial and error that incorporated both direct and subliminal suggestions of peace and tranquillity. The induction

itself was of enormous therapeutic benefit to all his clients, and for some of them just learning how to do it for themselves was enough to help them deal with the everyday stresses of modern living.

As Amanda emerged from her trance her face was transformed into one of experiential delight. 'I feel absolutely wonderful,' she said.

'That's what it feels like to be hypnotised,' he told her. 'You respond very well. Now let's see if your unconscious mind has the answers we are looking for.'

Amanda slipped beautifully back into trance and James began his investigation; 'I am speaking to your unconscious mind Amanda. Your unconscious mind has much more knowledge than your conscious awareness has and is much wiser. It knows all there is to know about you. I don't want you to look for answers - they will just come. What we need to know originates beyond your conscious memory, so it would be futile to try and remember - just let it come. On the count of three you will find yourself in another time and another place. You will find yourself in the time and place where the cause of the problem originated - one, two, three - you are there.' He gave her a moment to adjust to her experience and then asked, 'Can you tell me where you are?'

'No,' she replied in a faraway little voice.

'What can you see?' he asked.

'Nothing,' she replied.

'OK, then tell me what you are experiencing.'

'It's dark,' she said, 'and warm, and cosy. I like it here.'

She had regressed and was in her mother's womb. Now he needed to know what caused the obesity. 'Something caused the problem here Amanda. What was it?' he asked, and she began to cry. It was a silent cry, but the tears flooded down her cheeks as her huge frame began to quiver with silent deep sobbing. 'Can you tell me why you are crying Amanda? What is it that is disturbing you?' he asked.

'I don't know,' she said as her sobbing continued, 'but I feel so empty.'

'Do you know what is causing this empty feeling?' He prompted.

'No,' she said as the tears flowed fast down her cheeks into big wet patches growing on her blouse. He had reached a dead end for now and after calming her down and bringing her back to a state of relaxed tranquillity again, he brought her out of the trance.

Something had seriously disturbed Amanda when she was being carried in her mother's womb, but with an undeveloped intellect the unborn child was unable to interpret the meaning or the significance of the experience. He needed to know what happened, so when she had recovered to full consciousness he asked her, 'When your mother was pregnant with you do you have any ideas about what she was experiencing?'

'I have never known my grandmother because she died when my mum was pregnant with me,' she said. Straight away James knew the answer.

'And tell me this; what kind of birth did you have, was it easy or difficult?'

'Oh, apparently it was terrible. My mum had a terrible time. I was two weeks late and very big. I even had a full head of hair and long nails on my fingers and toes.'

Now James had the full picture. The emptiness that Amanda experienced as an unborn child was the grief that her mother experienced with the loss of her own mother. Because mother and child share the same emotions during pregnancy, what the mother feels so does the child feel. With this knowledge, James reintroduced Amanda back into trance for the resolution of the problem. Because the unborn child has no understanding of its experience in the womb the resolution technique involves a dialogue between the unborn child and the adult that it has subsequently grown into. It's as if a voice talks to the child to explain to it why it feels the way it does. James reflected on why it is so important for mothers to talk to their unborn children.

During this dialogue between the unborn Amanda and the grown-up one it emerged that the unborn one was reluctant to emerge from her mother's womb at the appointed time because she didn't want to come out into a world where there was so much emotional pain and emptiness. She stubbornly stayed there using all the mother's resources to feed on until she grew hair and nails and the nutrition supplied by the mother ran out. Amanda was born feeling both empty from her mother's grief and starving through lack of nourishment. She was born big because she was late and she spent the whole of her life trying to fill the nagging emptiness by eating. Amanda's problem was thus solved with satisfaction. About three months later Amanda invited James to her wedding. She was able to get into the wedding dress that was her dream.

James's next case that same day was Deborah Collins. She had been diagnosed with a disease of the nervous system called Dystonia and Doctor Western had referred her for hypnosis to help her come to terms with the disease emotionally. This was Deborah's second visit. During the first one, seven days previous, James had introduced her to her trance and had taught her how to do it herself. Then he had taught her how to detect the precursory sensations that precipitate an attack. The effects of her condition meant that she had involuntary spasms that resemble a seizure, but the spasms were confined to the right side of her body and she didn't lose consciousness as one did with other conditions like epilepsy. He taught her to recognise the onset of an attack and to go into a trance to escape it. She also learned how to hold off an attack until she was in a position to go into trance, for example if she were driving or socialising with her friends.

'Hello Deborah,' he greeted her, as he offered her a chair. 'Come and sit down and tell me how you have been getting along since last week.'

'It's quite amazing,' she said. 'Not only can I escape from the attacks, but they are less frequent and milder. I feel as if I have control over them.'

'Good. And how do you feel about that?'

'That's what it's all about isn't it? Control I mean. We all need to be in control of our lives, and when something like this happens we lose it.'

'Yes,' he said. 'It's all about control. We all have the gift of free will, but when we get sick our free will is compromised. It's frustrating and can be very upsetting. Our aim is to regain control so that we can exercise our own free will again.'

As he spoke to her a part of his mind was reflecting on the concept of free will as a God-given gift to human beings. He was being reminded that first and foremost he was a spiritual healer. His gift for healing had been discovered whilst living in Crete, but he tended to forget this because of his academic and scientific education. But his education in the arts of healing had begun with the discovery that he could remove physical pain simply by putting his hand over the affected part. His experiences in Crete had enabled him to progress from simple things like headaches and insect bites, and as he developed his skills he found himself treating more serious conditions like chronic back pain and even multiple sclerosis. By going to university, he learned how the mind affects emotions and set off on the new path of healing these facets. As Deborah was talking he reminded himself of his physical healing abilities, and on an inspirational impulse said to her, 'I want to try something if it's OK with you. I am going to stand behind you and I don't want you to go into trance, OK?'

'OK,' she said, as James rose from his chair and stood behind her.

'Now,' he said. 'Let's see if we can detect the point of origin of these attacks. Where do you think they originate from?'

'I don't know,' she replied.

'Last week we learned that the first signs of an attack were detected with a small tremor in the top of the right arm – right?'

'Yes,' she answered.

'Then it spread down the arm and up to the neck and face?'

'Yes.'

Deborah's attacks not only took control of her arm so that it went rigid and waved about and contracted the muscles in the right side of her neck to twist her head to one side in a painful contortion. But the most distressing feature of them was that they also contorted the right side of her face into a grimace resembling a gargoyle. She lost control of her mouth and dribbled. Coupled with the contorting of her neck and the waving of her right arm, her right cheek slapped against her teeth like a dog's when it shakes its head.

James placed the palm of his left hand about an inch from the nape of Deborah's neck and asked her to focus her attention on the top of her right arm, and then said, 'You have learned how to control an attack – right?'

'Yes,' she said.

'So, if you had an attack now you would be confident about your ability to control it – right?'

'Yes,' she replied.

'Good, I am going to invite an attack if that's OK with you. By doing this we may be able to detect where it originates. Ready?'

'Ready.'

'Now tell me what you experience.'

'I feel a little twitch in my right shoulder blade,' she said. He moved his hand over the spot.

'Tell me what's happening?' He asked. There was a pause and a mild tremor passed down her arm and up her neck. Tell me what's happening.' He repeated.

'I don't like to say,' she said. 'I feel silly.' He was intrigued.

'Please don't be afraid to tell me what you are experiencing. Go on,' he urged her.

She had to force herself to say the words, 'It's really weird.'

'What's weird?' he asked.

'Well,' she began tentatively. 'It's like something horrible is coming away. It's black ... like .... like. No, I can't say. It's silly.'

'Never mind,' said James. 'Go on. Tell me what you see.'

'It's like black bats coming out,' she said.

'Let it happen. Just allow yourself to relax and let it happen. When we experience something unpleasant we tend to go tense. Just relax and let it find its own way. By deciding to relax when you experience discomfort is another way of being in control. Let the negativity go and release it out of your body,' prompted James. He waited until the weird sensations had finished, removed his hand from its position over her shoulder blade and resumed his seat in front of her. 'How do you feel?' He asked.

Deborah was in a state of amazement and she was trying to understand what had happened. In answer to his question she asked him, 'What was that?'

James didn't fully understand himself. He had never experienced anything quite like it before, but he had to give her some kind of explanation. 'Well,' he began. 'All disease can be viewed as negative energy. Our perceptions of negative energy can take various forms depending on how our imagination works. Imagination is a very powerful aid in overcoming disease and distress, and what you did was to use your own imagination to visualise the negative energy that is causing your condition.'

It was a satisfactory explanation, he thought, and one he could accept himself. But was it the right one? This was a precursor of what was to come, and the transition from one cycle to another had begun. But James didn't know that just yet.

## Chapter 2

### Love for Julia

Shortly after Deborah had left the clinic, the receptionist brought James a mug of hot coffee and the news that his third patient hadn't shown. This is what troubled him most about trying to develop a hypnotherapy practise and earn a living from it.

Sometimes a patient failed to turn up for an initial appointment and at other times they failed to maintain a prescribed course of treatment. He thought it was probably due to the fact that the local Health Authority didn't make financial provision for hypnotherapy as a prescribed treatment and patients had to dip into their own pockets. People had become so used to the fact that medical treatments were provided free of charge on the NHS that they couldn't come to terms with having to pay for it themselves. In addition to this, James's geographical location was not particularly affluent and the marketing potential to the well off and open-minded section of the local community was very limited. Even referrals from a general practitioner like Samuel Weston who strongly advocated complementary therapies were not enough to enable James to conduct more than two half-day clinics per week. And when two or three of those referred failed to show - well it was a bit of an uphill struggle.

James sipped his coffee and started to write up Deborah Collins' notes. It was not a requirement for him to keep patient records for Dr Weston because technically they were his own clients when the doctor referred them on, and the treatment they received from him was not required in the official patient notes for the surgery. But he liked to keep his own paperwork up to date and report patients' progress to the doctor. He pondered on how to present Deborah's experience, bearing in mind the unusual description she had given. He decided to present it the way it was without making any comments or assumptions on what he witnessed. But it made him think....

The absence of his third patient and the thoughts that had occurred to him during Deborah's session gave James the opportunity to reflect back on his therapy career roots.

Some pretty weird things had happened in the beginning. They seemed weird then, but as James experienced more and more in those early-days things seemed less weird. Just after he had returned from a consultancy project in Sudan, someone had told him that he was a healer. 'No', he had replied with incredulity. 'I'm a business man.'

'Well you will be then,' came the reply. The person who had told him this asked him to sit down whilst she placed her hand behind the nape of his neck, just as he had done with Deborah Collins. Almost immediately he felt a burning on the back of his neck, just like an infrared heat-ray lamp. It was so intense that he moved his head away from her hand sharply.

'Just as I thought,' she said. 'You are a conduit for healing energy, and because you don't need to receive it yourself you are repelling mine. The two positive energies coming together are creating the heat.' He didn't know what to think. Part of him wanted to scoff and brush it aside, but another part of him was intrigued. After all, there needed to be some explanation as to why his arthritis had never bothered him. He had been medically discharged from the Army after only seven years' service and told that he would be crippled and in a wheelchair by the time he reached the age of forty. He knew that the arthritis existed because the medical examinations to justify his army pension confirmed that he had it, but he felt no pain or discomfort at all.

James spent that weekend with Julia and decided on an experiment. He asked her to sit on a chair and then placed his hand behind her neck, just as the healer had done with him. Immediately Julia jumped and arched her back.

'What the hell was that?' she exclaimed.

'What was what?' he asked her.

'What did you do to me?'

'I didn't do anything,' he said. 'I didn't even touch you.'

'Well something did,' she said. 'It felt like an electric shock down my spine.'

'Did it hurt then?' he asked.

'No,' she said. 'It was so unexpected and strange, but very nice. Can you do it again?' She asked him. He asked her why and she told him it felt a bit like an orgasm, but in her back.

Later that evening he gave her a similar sensation, but this time it wasn't caused by his hand and the sensation wasn't in her back.

Julia's father had passed on some years earlier and now her mother was failing fast with diabetes and an amputated leg. She needed a lot of emotional support at this time and she began to develop minor aches and pains. James wanted to find ways to help her relax and deal with her anxieties. She was a willing subject as he experimented with this new and mysterious energy that flowed through him. On one occasion she went into a very deep form of relaxation that she found extremely pleasant, and as she emerged from a trance-like state she commented, 'You hypnotised me.'

'No, I didn't,' he said. 'I never said a word. I don't know anything about hypnosis.'

Julia was convinced that she experienced something out of the ordinary and took it upon herself to go to the local library. She brought James two books on the subject of hypnosis and handed them to James. He read them with interest and after discussing Julia's experience with her he arrived at the conclusion that she had been under the influence of a hypnotic trance. He had hypnotised her without realising it, and what was even more intriguing was that he could do it without talking.

Julia had been James' dream come true. They were about the same age and had come from very similar backgrounds in the South London of the fifties with both their fathers being bookie's runners. They were introduced to each other by mutual friends and clicked immediately. She was divorced with two teenagers living with her in the family home. They spent alternate weekends together. He would spend a weekend with her and the following week she could escape the kids and relax with James. Julia had been living a somewhat lonely and isolated existence until James came along. He lived in a charming 200-year-old cottage in a quiet backwater in the middle of town right next to an old fashioned traditional village-type pub. All at once Julia had someone to care for her and she joined him in his active social life in his local community.

One day he asked her what her idea of paradise was, and when she told him he took her there - to Southern Turkey, with its miles of golden sands and stunning sunsets. She had never been abroad before and between them they experienced their first romantic fantasy. James had worked hard for the past seven years building a successful consultancy and exhibition business and meeting Julia put the icing on the cake. He was a truly happy and contented man.

Shortly after meeting Julia, James had been selected to go to Africa on a consultancy project for the United Nations. He missed Julia terribly and couldn't wait to get home to her, but when he did finally arrive home he found a 15% interest rate, his house had negative equity and an economy in freefall. His business went into liquidation and he had to go back to square one to find a means of earning a bread and butter income.

This couldn't have happened at a more inconvenient time for James and Julia's blossoming love. Julia's mother died, and at this time when economic chaos ruled and James needed time to regain a sense of direction, she needed all the emotional support he could give. James' entire world was collapsing like a house of cards and he felt an immediate need to do something, but he had no idea what to do. Two major calamities; the loss of his business and Julia's loss of her mother were a bit too much. James knew that sooner rather than later he would lose his lovely home when the mortgage company came to repossess his house. As if in another world of his own creation James bought a van, packed a sleeping bag and his guitar and headed south as far as he could go - to the Greek Island of Crete. It seemed like a very callous thing to do when Julia needed him most, but he was not a callous man and he loved Julia deeply. He had been rendered helpless by external events and it was as if he was being driven by a compulsion - not to escape, but to find something. Or was he being drawn to the island for some reason that was beyond his conscious awareness?

These events had heralded a dramatic and traumatic shift from one cycle to another.

It was when James was on his way to Crete that the next strange experience occurred in relation to the mysterious energy that passed through him. He was on the ferry from Ancona to Patras, sitting in the coffee lounge with his guitar when a Greek crewmember came and sat at his table. The man looked around him furtively as he asked James if he could sit there. James asked him why he seemed so nervous and he told James that he wasn't really allowed to sit with passengers, but he needed a break from the engine room.

The crewman told James that he liked to play the guitar too and asked if he could try his. James handed the sailor the instrument and he began to finger a chord with his left hand. He winced with pain and put the guitar down.

'What's the matter?' asked James.

'My hand hurts,' replied the crewman. 'I trapped it in a machine a few moments ago below in the engine room. That's why I came up here.'

*Another opportunity for an experiment*, thought James. He asked the crewman to close his eyes so he couldn't see what he was about to do, and to lay his hand on the table. The crewman looked at him puzzled. 'Go on,' prompted James. 'I won't touch you, I promise.' He gave an encouraging smile to the crewman who obliged by putting his hand on the table and trustingly closed his eyes. James placed his hand hovering over the crewman's. After just a few moments he opened his eyes and raised his damaged hand in front of his face. He turned it around then looked straight at James.

'How did you do that?' he demanded.

'Do what?' enquired James.

'The pain has gone. How did you do that?' he repeated. James didn't know how he did it and told the crewman so.

'It's a mystery to me,' he said to the crewman. 'But its good isn't it?'

James sipped his coffee as he pondered these early experiences. There was a link between the healing energy that moved through him and the altered state of consciousness known as trance. Some things happened all by themselves without any intervention or suggestion from James. All he had to do was establish the link between himself and the patient and the energy that flowed through him did the healing. James speculated that consciousness and imagination had something to do with it as well, but it was only speculation. *What is the actual nature of consciousness?* He mused. It would be a very long time, many years in fact before James could finally make the connection, but it was at this point that his education was to begin.

Musing on these memories in the consulting room after Deborah Collins had left, he was still in the dark about such things. His coffee had gone cold and he glanced at the clock on the wall. It was 11.45. He thought he may as well get off over to the hospital for his research, even though it was a little early.

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As well as being an independent GP and owner of the clinic where James practised, Samuel Weston was also an endoscopy surgeon at the local hospital. James had known him since his very first year at college when he was taking his entrance exams for university. Because James only had one GCE 'o' level and his army certificate of education (ACE) he needed to take the equivalent of A-levels in biology, psychology, sociology, English, maths, I.T. and counselling at the regional technical college. Part of this preliminary education was to have practical work experience. Dr Weston kindly agreed to accommodate James and allowed him to participate in every single patient consultation for a week, provided they had the patient's consent. James was given the opportunity to demonstrate his healing and hypnotherapeutic abilities there and then. Up until that time he had only been given the opportunity to develop his skills with willing friends and family, except of course for his previous experiences without supervision or training in Crete. Dr Weston, although trained in the use of hypnosis himself never had the time to fit its use into his overburdened schedule. He therefore welcomed the opportunity to see how it could work for those patients that he would have used it on himself if he had the time.

Dr Weston placed his trust in James and together they witnessed some truly remarkable results. With his confidence in James's abilities well established, Samuel Weston had no reservations in offering him the use of a consulting room for rent at £20 per half day and referring those patients with chronic physical or emotional disorders to him. All during the following three years whilst James studied for his degree in psychology he attended the clinic and administered to the doctor's patients. A solid and reliable relationship built between them based on mutual trust and respect.

In James' final year at university he had to complete a research project. Dr Weston had been experimenting with the use of acupuncture as an alternative to diazepam sedation for his endoscopy examinations. An endoscope is an instrument with a small camera lens on the end of a flexible tube that is passed into a patient's digestive system to look for diseases. An upper endoscopy looked at the oesophagus and stomach by being swallowed by the patient, and a lower sigmoidoscopy looked into the bowel via the anal opening. These minor procedures could be conducted whilst the patient was wide-awake and not sedated, but it was extremely unpleasant for some and impossible for many. Therefore, to administer the tranquilliser diazepam was the accepted procedure. James and Dr Weston had often discussed the possibility of using hypnosis as another alternative for patients to choose from,

and as a final-year research project for James' degree, the doctor agreed to allow him to conduct a clinical trial.

This initial trial was a success. James got a good mark for his final year and he and Dr Weston had their research findings published in a medical journal. The publishing of the findings was a real bonus for James. It meant that he had contributed to medical science before even being awarded a doctorate. His confidence in his own abilities together with the trust and support from Dr Weston enabled James to apply for his doctorate at London University and they continued with the project.

James arrived at the hospital half an hour early. The two endoscopy-unit nurses were there busily making their preparation for the arrival of the doctor and their first patient.

'Good morning ladies,' said James as he walked into the outer preparation room and removed his jacket.

Two female voices in unison responded from inside the operating theatre, 'Hello James, you're early.'

'I had a no-show at the clinic,' he replied. 'Fancy a cuppa?'

'Ooooh yes pleeaase,' came the harmonious reply.

He always made them a mug of hot tea. It saved them the trouble of having to do it themselves when they needed to concentrate on making sure everything was ready. Dr Weston was prone to arrive in a bit of a rush. He would sweep into the unit, shedding his coat as he came, and like a whirlwind arrive in the theatre ready for action and expecting everything to be on the ball and primed. Having someone else make the tea was a welcome relief to the nurses.

James poked his head round the door of the theatre where they were busy. 'How many today?' he asked.

'Six upper and three lower,' came the reply from Sue, the unit staff nurse and senior of the two.

'I'll get the forms through to sister and put the kettle on then,' he said to her.

'Good man,' she said and carried on with her preparations.

James went to the copy room and copied nine complete sets of the trial forms, one for each patient and made his way to the day-ward where there was a little kitchen on the side. He put the kettle on and stepped onto the ward. 'Fancy a cup of tea sister? Kettle's on.'

'Yes please. Got your forms with you?'

'Yep. Here they are.' He offered them to the ward sister as he entered the ward and she put the patients' names and dates of birth in the appropriate place and returned them to him. There were half a dozen people sitting along the wall of the entrance on the other side of the ward from where he entered. They all looked anxious and tired, and when he entered the ward they lifted their gaze towards him with the premature belief that he was the one who was about to stick something down them or up them, as the case may be.

'This is Mr. Parker,' announced the ward sister before any further misconceptions could develop in their minds. 'He is doing some research with the doctor and he has a form for you to look at.'

'Good morning all,' James greeted cheerily as he crossed the ward towards them. 'I would like you to read this please. It is an invitation to participate in a clinical trial we are conducting on the quality of patient care in this unit. You will see that you have a choice of how you can reduce any potential discomfort during your medical examination. You can have the procedure with sedation, acupuncture, or hypnosis, or if you prefer with nothing at all. It's entirely up to you.' he continued as he handed out the forms.

'Let me know which of them choose hypnosis,' he said to the sister as he passed her the remaining forms for those still to arrive and made his way back to the boiling kettle.

Only one of the nine patients had opted for hypnosis for his upper gastrointestinal endoscopy examination. James introduced him into trance and gave him direct suggestions:

'You are aware of everything going on around you. You hear what the doctor and the nurses ask you to do without any reservations. You are in good hands and you are able to relax completely. You are able to swallow easily and without any discomfort. Nothing disturbs you. When you hear the word 'calm' you are completely calm and relaxed. You are aware of the instrument and you feel no discomfort. The word '*calm*' is a command to your entire nervous system to become just that - *caaaalm*. Every time to hear the word calm you become more and more calm and nothing disturbs you. When you are touched on the forehead like this,' James touched his forehead, 'you go into a deep, deep state of relaxation and nothing bothers you. On the count of five you return to full waking consciousness feeling perfectly fine and normal in every way, one, two, three, four, five - eyes open and wide awake.'

James gave the patient time to recover to his normal waking consciousness and then brushed his finger across his forehead. The patient dropped straight into a deep trance. He had confirmed that the patient had accepted his suggestions and would be fine. After bringing the patient back to normal awareness James reassured him and left to return to the operating theatre.

Dr Weston was in the middle of an upper tract examination as James entered. He looked up, peering over his instrument and asked James, 'All OK?'

'Yes,' said James. 'He'll be fine.'

When Dr Weston had finished his examination of the patient on the operating table he handed the endoscope to Carol, the junior nurse, for cleaning whilst Sue, the staff nurse tended to the patient who was slowly coming out of her drugged state. He and James retired to the preparation room adjacent to the operating theatre, and he began recording his findings for the patient's GP. James waited patiently for him to finish. This was about the only time he had a chance to talk to Samuel. He was always rushing around between his surgery, the hospital and visiting his patients, and he never had the time for formal meetings. James had to time it right in order to get Samuel's attention if he wanted to discuss anything of importance. 'Any news yet on the funding of this research?' he asked.

'I have had a letter from the hospital's administration, but I haven't had a chance to read it yet,' Dr Weston replied. 'Remind me before we leave and we'll see what they say. Is your hypnosis man ready?'

'Yes,' replied James. 'Do you want him now?'

'Yes please. Get sister to wheel him in.'

James went to the ward and asked the ward sister to bring the patient, a man in his mid-fifties, and she escorted him from the day-ward with his clinical notes to the prep-room. Dr Weston introduced himself to the patient and asked him to sign the procedure consent form and the research consent form, then led the way to the operating table. The patient then came under the care of Sue, the staff nurse, and she asked him to lie down on the table. Like most patients he was nervous, and the ward sister would have recorded the levels of anxiety prior to the examination in the day ward. Sue reassured the patient as she clipped the oximetre cable to his right index finger. 'This tells us how much oxygen is entering your blood,' she told him. 'And it tells us about your heart rate. OK?'

The patient nodded and allowed Sue to adjust the oximetre cable so it didn't get in the way. Doctor Weston waited, instrument in hand, until Sue had finished settling the patient and smiled at him.

'Are you ready?' he asked, and the patient nodded.

'Ready as I'll ever be I suppose.'

Both he and Dr Weston looked at James in anticipation. James stepped forward and stroked the man's forehead. The patient's eyes closed and he drifted off into his tranquil world. James nodded to the doctor who then asked the patient to swallow as the instrument was placed at the back of his throat.

'Just swallow as if you are drinking a cup of tea,' said the doctor, and the man swallowed the instrument.

James picked up his clipboard with the patient's data form and began making his recordings; start time, oxygen saturation levels, heart rate, ease of intubation, etc. As the instrument passed down towards the stomach, the patient's heart rate started to rise and he became fidgety. There was always a danger that a reflex action by the patient could cause him to try and pull the instrument from his mouth and jump up off the table. Everyone was attuned to this possibility and their senses picked up the slightest degree of distress. Sue was at the patient's head, holding it at the right angle for the instrument and to reassure him, whilst Carol was attending to the doctor's future needs with biopsy sampling equipment standing by.

The patient's heart rate rose to 100 beats per minute and Sue spoke to the patient, 'It's all OK, you are doing very well. Just relax.' The heart rate rose to 105, 110. 'He's getting very agitated,' she said, and Doctor Weston stopped looking down the eyepiece.

He looked at James and asked, 'Is he OK?'

James had been waiting for Sue to use the cue word 'calm' in her reassurances to the patient, but she hadn't said it so far. The heart rate rose to 117 beats per minute and the alarm sounded.

'Tell the patient to be calm,' James whispered into Sue's ear.

'Be calm, it's all right, just relax,' she said to him. Immediately the patient's heart rate dropped like a stone to read 90 beats per minute and stayed there. Sue's jaw dropped open and her eyes popped as she saw the reading on the heart rate monitor and the patient's head became heavy in her hands. 'Bloody

hell!' she exclaimed. 'I have never seen anything like it.' Doctor Weston resumed his examination to completion.

When the whole list of patients had been completed and all the instruments had been put into sterilisation they all retired to the prep-room for a cup of tea. This was the time when they could relax and enjoy a bit of friendly banter. Sue commented, 'Did you see that heart rate drop? I couldn't believe it.'

'That's the power of direct suggestion,' said James. 'I gave the patient what's known as a post-hypnotic cue. When the cue, which was the word *calm*, was given then he responded to it immediately.'

'Amazing,' said Sue. 'Absolutely amazing.'

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The nurses finished their tea and returned to the endoscopy unit to finish putting away the equipment. Dr Weston opened his briefcase and withdrew a letter. James waited patiently. He had waited patiently for a very long time. Since the very first trial for his finals at university had been completed two years previously, they had improved and enhanced their methods to arrive at a very high degree of accuracy in recording data for the project. In the meantime, James had passed two interviews with *London University* and had secured approval and supervision with a senior hypnotist for his PhD and had been offered a post-graduate research place. His acceptance by *London University* was one of those very rare peak experiences that one has in one's life. The last one James had was when he was appointed by the *United Nations* to go to the Sudan in 1990. At that time, he couldn't reconcile the fact that the peak experience of going to the Sudan was immediately followed by the total collapse of his entire world.

James's objective in gaining his doctorate depended on two things; a grant to cover his living expenses and tuition supervision fees and agreement from the local area health authority for him to use their patients and their hospital resources. The letter that Dr Weston opened was from the administrator of the clinical effectiveness department, in response to James's submission of the pilot study report and a request for support for the project. Without this support there would be no research, no *London University* and no doctorate.

All correspondence regarding the project was channelled through Dr Weston's practice where it was less likely to get lost in the system than at the hospital. Dr Weston read the letter aloud:

'Dear Mr. Parker,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your report, which I found heavy reading. I would like to see an executive summary written in plain English. I think it would be worthwhile summarising the very clear outcomes you found from your research. It is always better if someone like me can immediately switch to a bulleted list of results / recommendations / outcomes.

I wish you well in the future and hope you achieve your ambitions.

Yours sincerely'

Without actually saying a clear and categorical 'no' to James's request, the last sentence said it all. James and Samuel looked at each other in disbelief.

'That is a very rude letter,' said Samuel.

'The NHS is full of very rude people,' said James. Although his objective was to be a doctor of psychology, he had no intention to be a part of the NHS. He despised the bureaucracy and the internal politics. James empathised with all those caring professionals, the doctors, nurses and consultants whose mission in life was to heal the sick but were forced to submit to political and financial pressures from above. He had been passed from pillar to post in his attempts to get his project approved for his doctorate, and he had found to his amazement that trying to find a way through the bureaucratic maze was much, much harder than doing the actual research itself. And it was making him tired.

'What do you suggest we do now?' he asked Samuel.

Dr Weston hunched his shoulders, turned down the corners of his mouth and spread his hands in a 'how do I know?' sort of gesture. James sat with his elbows on his knees and although his eyes pointed towards a spot on the floor, they weren't focused on anything. He began to feel a futility for all the hard work he had put in since 1994 when he first enrolled for his studies to become recognised for his

natural healing abilities. It was now 2000. Six years of mental torture and patience had just been dismissed by the ignorance of a hospital administrator.

## Chapter 3

### A Very Special Gift

That night, as James drove up to Birmingham he tried hard to check his frustration and his anger. Here he was; still driving a truck for a living at the age of 53 after having been through all those other changes and challenges. He was an experienced transport manager and consultant, he had a natural leaning towards helping his fellow man with sickness and he had the ability to go the full distance and get his PhD. He had knowledge, experience and an understanding of the world that was beyond the normal everyday imagination of the majority of his fellow drivers. Yet here he was still doing what he was doing to earn a living when he had been only twenty-two years old. He felt deeply embittered at the waste and the futility of it all, and he resented having to continue with driving trucks for a living. He knew he was worth more than that, and he decided that he was not going to be a truck driver all his life. After all, it wasn't through the lack of trying, or a lack of ability that kept bringing him back. He began to feel that time was running short and he could feel the anger rising from the pit of his stomach to his chest. He breathed deeply to disperse the energy around his body and decided he couldn't give up now. This avenue may be closed but there had to be another one.

There was absolutely no way he was going to do this for the rest of his life. He aimed the truck forwards along the M6, brought his mind back to conscious awareness from automatic pilot and handed the problem over to his sub-conscious to solve for him. He listened to the music on the radio and identified the piece playing – Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity from the Planets by Gustav Holst. *Must be the evening concert*, he thought. *Shit, I've missed Mars and Venus*. He settled down to listen to the rest of the suite, and by the time he reached his destination at 11 p.m. he was back into relaxed mode as a professional truck driver.

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Under normal circumstances, James would have attended the endoscopy unit at the hospital for his research at 10 p.m. on Saturday morning. But with the news that the project wasn't being supported there didn't seem any point. It was a pity because over the past three years he had become a part of the endoscopy unit team and everyone knew and accepted him as part of the team. All the nurses, who took turns in the endoscopy unit, together with all the nurses whose shifts changed on the day-ward, and even the senior consultant surgeon came to know James well. The research programme had actually become a habit, not just for James but all the others as well.

At first it had been very hard for any of the nurses to accept changes in their routines by having to take readings, issue forms and record extra information for James's project. It had been an exercise in patience and diplomacy, as well as practical application of some psychological techniques that he had learned in how to encourage others to respond to change. Eventually all the nurses had relinquished their resistance to change and had accepted requests from James to help him with his research. The fact that the senior consultant surgeon and the senior ward sister supported his work must have had a lot to do with their acceptance and compliance. However, as time marched on they all enjoyed working with James and they all came to like having him as part of their team. He was tempted to carry on as part of the habit, a bit like the man who retired from work but still left the house every day to go to work because he couldn't get out of the habit. Not going to the hospital every Saturday and letting his research project go was going to be a wrench. On the other hand, he could have a lie in on Saturday and surface from the Land of Nod when his system had rested enough. There was no doubt about it; James was beginning to get very, very tired with the kind of tiredness that makes one weary.

The weariness was still with him when he awoke at midday the next day. Normally he would have been at the hospital now and would have spent the afternoon entering the data from the past two days and looking at the statistical significance and interpretations of the findings. But today James had time to himself. It seemed very strange to him. His research project had been his creation, like a baby of his own, and it was going to die. He dragged himself from his bed to put the kettle on and run a bath, as he wondered what he would do with the empty time that the research had occupied.

He made his tea and sat in the bath. Then it hit him like a punch in the guts. He had never had the time to grieve the loss of his beloved Julia because he had been swept along firstly by the force of events in Crete, then his focus on his studies at university and then the research. These activities had taken up all of his time and energy for the past seven years, and suddenly, with the loss of his research there was a void. There was an emptiness that triggered the deep emotional loss that he had not had the time to express when he discovered that Julia had married someone else. But the time had now come to let go of all that emotional energy. He released it there and then, in private and in full – and his heart broke.

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James Parker did not like loose ends, so that afternoon he entered the last batch of data from the last day and looked at it. Then he closed the file and put it away in his filing cabinet as he considered the possibility of going out for a breath of air. Just then he caught a glimpse of Penny as she passed the window and knocked the front door.

Penny always swept in like a storm force wind and gushed around the place with incessant chatter. She was a very attractive woman and looked a lot younger than her age, which was the same age as James. They had met at church when James had returned from Crete and when Julia and he had finally gone their separate ways. Penny had stepped into the physical space that Julia had vacated, but she had never taken Julia's place in James's affections. In fact, James's relationship with Penny had always been a bit of a game, with his capture being the objective and Penny being the huntress. With Penny he was always on the defensive.

She had been fun to be with at the start, but James had soon realised that Penny was a drain on his energy and his time. He actually called her a 'time-thief' at one point and demanded that she give him space to breathe. For six years now, James had been trying to get Penny to take another direction and let him go his own way, but she just simply refused to listen.

After the events of the past couple of days, Penny demanding his time and energy was the last thing James needed, but he always found it near impossible to be rude to her and ask her to go away – no matter how hard he tried. On those rare occasions when his frustration pushed him into it she would just brush it off anyway and say, 'You know you don't mean it.'

James was a very good hypnotist and a very understanding and empathic therapist, and he had used his skills often in an attempt to get to the bottom of Penny's emotional drives and needs. He would get so far and then he would realise that she was only playing a game with him. He never openly challenged her fraudulent posturing directly but allowed her the freedom to continue to protect her vulnerability in this way. However, on one occasion he did catch her off her guard and he asked her what she was most afraid of. She gave some plausible answer, as we all do in response to such a question, but James knew that it was not a truthful answer. But his strategy was to set a trap, and she walked right into it. 'What are you most afraid of?' she had suddenly asked him.

'Do you really want to know?' He asked her. 'Are you sure you really want to know what I am afraid of?' he repeated. Penny knew by his tone and his sincerity that what she would get from him was the truth. She knew that James was as honest about his emotions as any man she had ever met. This was part of the attraction. With James Parker what you saw was what you got.

'Yes,' she replied. 'Tell me.'

He hesitated. She had walked right into the trap he had set for her and now he was about to spring it on her. 'What I am most afraid of,' he began with some trepidation, 'Is that when the time comes for you and I to go our separate ways – you will not have the resources you will need in order to deal with it.'

He felt awful as he watched her face crumble before his very eyes. This was why it had taken so long for him to get his message across to her that he saw no future in them as a pair. He hated the idea of causing pain to anyone. He had hated being a witness to Julia's pain when her mother had died, and he had hated himself for not being able to comfort her at that time. The very idea that his going to Crete when she needed him most had caused her pain was too much for him to contemplate. He despised the very idea that he could be a cause of pain to anyone with such vulnerabilities. He despised himself now because he had made Penny cry. But it was the price he had to pay for making her hear the truth. Too many people live a lie and pretend to be in relationships that are not meant to be in.

By her response to his statement of what he feared most, James knew what Penny feared most – being alone. The idea was such anathema that it was not acceptable to her. She therefore recovered

her composure, ignored the fact that her vulnerability had been exposed, and carried on as if nothing had happened. ‘What shall we do tonight?’ she asked him with a saucy smile and batted her eyelids. He hated it when she did that. It was contrived and unnatural. Penny was wearing her mask again, but a time was rapidly approaching that would rip that mask from her face and another side of Penny would be exposed to James that he had never dreamed existed.

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‘Are you all right?’ asked Penny when she detected that James wasn’t quite himself.

James drew on his inner reserves and replied, ‘Oh I’m OK. A bit disappointed that’s all. The hospital administration is not supporting my research and I’m feeling a bit low.’ She sympathised with him, knowing how hard he had worked.

‘Why don’t we go to the pub and relax a bit?’ she said. ‘It’ll do you good to unwind.’ He didn’t really fancy the idea, but it did make sense. So that’s what they did.

The next few days slipped by with James trying come to terms with the idea that he had lost his opportunity to go to London University for his PhD. But there was no way he was going to give up and settle for driving to Birmingham and back every night for the rest of his working life. As he headed on up the M1 his thoughts wandered to a case he was dealing with that intrigued him, and that he needed to find a solution for.

Sarah was in her mid-thirties and in her second marriage. She had one daughter from her previous marriage and she suffered from chronic depression. James had learned that it saves a lot of time if an investigation into the cause of a problem is embarked upon as quickly as possible rather than going into a detailed history first and then trying to work out what the problem is from the history. James had found through experience that the direct route to the cause of a problem was always through the subconscious, but with Sarah this had not been possible. He just could not get her into an altered state and he could not get her to relax. He had tried every technique known to him to get her into a trance but without any success, and he had run out of ideas.

Driving long distances at night was the ideal job for thinking or studying. As a young man with a family, when James had wanted to progress from driving to transport management, he had to sit a series of five examinations over a two-year period. But because he used his driving time for mental revision he was able to pass all exams within six months. The ability to focus one’s attention on a problem whilst the subconscious drove the truck was a trick that James had been using for a very long time, and it was very useful. When James pointed the truck in the right direction for his destination, his mind wandered the highways and byways of hidden consciousness to learn other things. But when the solution to a problem was not forthcoming then he would turn the procedure around. He would return his conscious awareness to the road and let his unconscious processes provide him with an answer to his question. The question usually had to be a specific one, but often an inspired thought or a piece of new information would pop into his mind without any kind of prompting on his part. James had come to regard this ability as a very special gift that had been given to him and he valued it greatly.

The receiving of this gift had been one of the most significant and far reaching experiences that James had in Crete. He had been driving his van up the mountainside to his campsite. As he was driving along a thought came into his mind. It was his name – James. It wasn’t a voice talking to him – it was just a thought. It wasn’t like being called by name by someone. No – it was just a name. Not his name, but just a name. James.

He arrived at his remote campsite in the mountains by a bubbling stream shaded by wild figs, olive and lime trees. He parked his van as close as he could get to his camp and walked the rest of the way, over an ancient Roman bridge into his sanctuary. The tranquillity of this place was palpable, and the moment anyone stepped across the old Roman Bridge they became aware of a kind of enchantment. It was indeed enchanted, but James had only recently arrived here and he was still not aware of the significance of the place. He could smell the wild herbs and hear the loud chorus of the cicadas as he approached his tent, and an irresistible impulse gripped him. He went to his tent and rummaged around his bags until he found what he was looking for – a book that was given to him as a gift from a very special friend, Renate who lived in Germany. He had stopped off on his way from England to Crete just to say hello, and she had given him this gift. It was very special to her and she wanted him to have it. It was her Bible, and it had notes written in the margins and verses marked out in highlighter all the way through it. Renate hadn’t just read this Bible, she had studied it.

Renate had wanted James to pray with her before he continued his journey, but not being a religious man, he declined the offer. He didn't realise it at the time, but his decline to pray with her had hurt her deeply. She cared for James. They had been friends for many years and he had rescued her from her deep grief when her husband had died suddenly. She had given him her most treasured possession and asked her God to guide him and keep him safe on his journey. James had no idea what was going through Renate's mind or what she was feeling. In his naiveté he accepted the gift just to please her and continued his journey in total and complete ignorance. A man lost and trying to find his way with no idea where he was going. In the picture-book language of the ancient Tarot, he was The Fool – innocent, naïve and very vulnerable.

James found Renate's gift to him and it fell open in his hands at the *Book of James*. He couldn't believe his eyes as they fixed on the page and read the title and the name in large black print, 'THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES'. He recovered his senses and began to read the part that had been highlighted in yellow marker:

5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given to him.

6. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord (James, 1:5-6).

James was stunned. He sank onto his haunches and stared at the page in front of him, not knowing what to do or think.

He had been asking himself since arriving in Crete, *What the bloody hell am I doing here?* He had left his beloved Julia to grieve for her mother alone, and here he was living in paradise with no responsibilities and nothing to do. He had completely lost all sense of direction, and now this. *What is going on here?* He asked himself out loud. In so doing, he had spoken a question. He had asked for wisdom. And now he was being told how to ask. His spiritual awakening was about to begin. He was blind and in the dark, and his journey had begun. He just hadn't been consciously aware of it.

By the time James came face to face once again with Sarah he still hadn't received an answer to his question, *how do I get this woman into trance?* His skills were being tested and he didn't have the answers – yet. So, he began his enquiry by interviewing her about what troubled her. He learned that she'd had a stillbirth, some sixteen years earlier. At the recollection of this event in her past Sarah broke into tears. She still hadn't come to terms with this loss and it was still affecting her deeply. James was not a psychotherapist or a professional bereavement counsellor, so he didn't feel qualified to deal with this situation, but something was urging him to prompt her further. He was pressing on a boundary out of curiosity more than anything else and wanted to know why this woman was so troubled after such a long time.

'Tell me,' he began. 'How did you feel at the time about the loss of your baby?' She stopped crying and he watched her face go stony. She sat upright in the chair and straightened her back.

'I was angry,' she said as she stared unblinking at an imaginary spot in front of her.

'With whom?' asked James.

'With *HIM!* He should have *known!*' She spat it with a venom that caused James to be quite taken aback.

'With whom? Who should have known what?' He asked her.

'The doctor of course,' she replied as if it was obvious who she should be angry with. 'He should have known there was a risk. I had pleurisy and he should have known it and he should have taken precautions. But he didn't and my baby died.'

James looked at Sara and watched her cold, emotionless face. He didn't know what to say next. Sara continued in a new matter-of-fact tone of voice. 'He had to suffer too. It was his entire fault and I wanted him to know what it feels like. So, I wished the same thing to happen to him. His wife was having a baby too. And she lost hers just like I did. Now he knew how it felt.'

James was having a little trouble believing what he was hearing. He heard himself say, 'Did that make it alright then?'

'No,' said Sarah. 'After all, it wasn't his wife's fault was it? It was *his* fault, and something should have happened to *him* – not to her. He should have lost an eye or a leg or something.'

James sat in stunned silence. He couldn't believe what he was hearing, and he couldn't believe the coldness with which she said it. It was like another person sitting there. One minute he had been talking to a woman who was expressing a powerful emotion, and the next he sat opposite a cold and unfeeling one.

James's questions had led to other questions and he began to realise that he was entering into an arena that he was not at all familiar with. It was time for some research reading before he could understand the processes that were at work with Sarah. Her coldness was one thing. A cold and unfeeling façade was often a mask to hide real feelings that were too strong or too painful to deal with in the open, and he could understand the reason for her depression. That was caused by anger that still hadn't been resolved and satisfactorily expressed. But what troubled him most was the simple fact that Sarah had wished something towards another person and that wish had come true. This was outside of anything he had read in the realms of psychotherapy and psychology. This was the stuff of curses. But this was not fantasy or fiction. What James had witnessed was a normal human being who had been through a traumatic and emotional experience, and through a need for revenge, she had cursed someone and caused another family severe harm, even to the death of a child.

Some very serious research reading was called for, but where was James to start? He remembered being told at school by one of his teachers, a Mr. Van Heerden from South Africa, that curses and black magic only work if you believed in such things. Van Heerden had said that it was the *belief* that was the power behind the curse. In modern medicine and psychology this belief is what has become known as the placebo effect and is always acknowledged and taken into account in clinical trials to test medical remedies. There is no doubt that beliefs are a very powerful form of influence on human behaviour. But no, not in this case. The doctor's wife who lost her baby had had no contact with Sara and could not possibly have known of any thought or feeling that Sarah was having at the time. There was another explanation; and it was not coincidence. There were two principals that James had to investigate in order to get to the truth of this, firstly the nature of evil, and secondly the power of a directed thought. But surely this was in the realm of science fiction or fantasy. *Wasn't it?*

The first book that James came across in his search for an answer to this puzzle was written by an American psychiatrist by the name of M. Scott Peck. It was entitled *The Road Less Travelled* and set out to explore the relationships between human love, traditional values and spiritual growth. This was the first book that James had discovered where at last a scientifically trained psychiatrist was actually acknowledging the spiritual dimension of human experience.

The act of willing the death of a child, as witnessed by James during his interview with Sara, was judged by himself to be evil, and M Scott Peck had something to say about evil:

Because most of us have been graced by an almost instinctive sense of horror at the outrageousness of evil, when we recognise its presence, our own personalities are honed by the awareness of its existence. Our consciousness of it is a signal to purify ourselves. It was evil, for instance, that raised Christ to the cross, thereby enabling us to see him from afar. Our personal involvement in the fight against evil in the world is one of the ways we grow.<sup>1</sup>

On reading this passage, James was transported back to Crete. He had no conscious awareness of what he was experiencing at that time, but since he had returned and had been educated in the science of psychology, and had gone into therapeutic practice, all the experiences he'd had in Crete were beginning to make sense, albeit very slowly as time passed by. In the beginning he had been shown how to relieve physical pain simply by placing his hand over the affected part. The pain disappeared without his knowing how or why. Then he had progressed to understanding emotional pain, more through his own experiences than anything he had learned at university. Now it seemed as if he were being taken to a new dimension – into the darker workings of the human spirit. His experience with Sara triggered his recall of some of his Cretan experiences as his mind wandered back to that time and place:

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She had been like a light in the dark, a beacon of friendship on a strange and foreign shore. Sophia was Greek but had been married to an American and had lived in America for some years. On her divorce

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<sup>1</sup> {Peck 1978:299}

she had decided to return to Greece; not to her home in the Peloponnese, but for some obscure reason to Crete. A very attractive 50 something, she had made James welcome at the small taverna in the village in the mountains where he had found his peaceful little campsite. Sophia always had a smile on her face and a friendly welcome for all who passed through the village and stopped at the taverna.

Sophia and James soon became friends and with his van he had helped her with the tasks of collecting stores for the taverna from the town down the mountain on the coast seven kilometres away. Their friendship was strictly platonic. He was still in love with, and very attached to Julia back home in the UK, but Sophia saw in James someone she could trust.

Time passed in the idyllic village up in the mountains, and James became known to all thirty-five of the villagers whose homes were scattered and hidden amongst the olive and orange groves, and he came to hear the local news and gossip of the village. The local people did not like Sophia. She presented herself as a Catholic whereas the locals were all Greek Orthodox. She painted her face with makeup and made herself look attractive to the men, whilst at the same time she wore a full-length black cape and a huge crucifix hanging from her neck. When she went to the church in the town on the coast she would make an open exhibition of herself by walking down the main isle and in front of the entire congregation she would prostrate herself in the shape of a cross in front of the altar. The local people did not like this at all and they were suspicious of her.

James was warned by people to be careful whom he associated with and taking their advice he kept his distance from this woman as far as was practical.

The locals' distrust of the Sophia woman grew until she was eventually thrown out of the village. She came to James' campsite and asked if she could stay with him. He'd had many visitors and guests stay with him at his enchanted campsite, some of them had been young women who had been left destitute by unscrupulous or alcoholic boyfriends. He had helped them and treated them with respect and when they had recovered sufficiently he helped them on their way. There was one such young woman called Anna that he was caring for at the time. But he was reluctant to accommodate the evicted Sophia, so he asked his friend Manolis in the town if he could recommend a place for her to stay. Manolis not only found her a place to stay but also gave her a job in his harbour-side cafe so that she could pay the rent.

James was making preparations to return to England to sort out some of his unfinished business affairs, and to see Julia again. He agreed to take Anna with him because she had been left stranded by her boyfriend without any money and she had no way of getting home. Another Englishman, Dave, who had come to live in Crete with his wife and two children also wanted to return to the UK to collect his car and drive it back to Crete. They were planning their journey at Manolis café when Sophia came and sat with them.

'Oh, are you going to England then?' she asked.

'Yes,' replied James. 'Just for a visit. I have some business to attend to, David here wants to collect a car and Anna needs a lift home as she has no money.'

'Would you have enough room for me then?' asked Sophia. 'I have to get back to the States to collect my divorce settlement and I don't have enough money to fly from here to Athens, and then to London for the connection to America. Can I come with you?' she pleaded.

James and the other two; David and Anna, all looked at each other. Then James looked up to see Manolis beckon him from inside the kitchen. James excused himself and left the table to go to see what Manolis wanted. 'What is it?' he asked.

'If she wants to go to America then you take her. We need to get this woman out of here.' said Manolis.

'Why? What for? Is there a problem Manolis?'

'Yes, there is,' came the reply. 'She isn't trusted here. She is telling people that the villagers on the mountain tried to kill her and threw her out of the village with violence. She goes around showing everyone her bruises, and then there's the business with the children.'

'What business - with what children?' asked James with a rising degree of concern. 'Manolis what are you talking about?'

'She offers to look after children when their parents are busy, but they have learned that she is trying to change their religious beliefs. You know the people here are very strict Orthodox and they don't like the idea of someone trying to teach them different. You have to get her out of here before they do something to her.'

James got the message. He went back to the table and sat down. The other two looked at him and David said, 'What did Manolis want?'

James didn't answer, but turned to Sophia and said, 'You want to go to England with us?' He looked at the other two in turn. He had asked the question as if to say to them that he had already made up his mind to take her. Before she could answer he said, 'OK, we leave on Tuesday morning early. We have to catch the ferry from Chania to Piraeus. It's a five-day journey to England. Pack only what you will need and keep it light.'

