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**THE TALE OF THE COMET, A LOVE STORY
WITH CONTEMPLATIONS ON LOVE, DEATH AND HEALING**



BY AMELIA SHEA

**Cover art: Original Art by Andy Curran
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**"To move
Frantic, like comets to our bliss,
Forgetting that we always miss,
And so to seek and fly the sun,
By turns, around which love should run."⁰
Gerard Manley Hopkins**

INTENTION

Dear Wesley,

It has been barely a month since you passed on. Since you went over the threshold so to speak. To a room where I can no longer see you with my earthly eyes. No longer touch your hair or hear the softness which was your voice. However, you have been in touch with me. In other ways, I wonder if our new form of communication is as unfamiliar to you as it is to me. I speculate as much.

I have been thinking about our time together. It's story, the story, mystics tell me you and I and a host of spirits shall write together.

At first when we started cooking I thought we would write a book of our recipes. A book which captured the joy, the sensuality which we shared in those warm fragrant kitchens. A book which showed my love of kibitzing with you on the subject of spices, of ingredients, of combinations. A book which illustrated your reverential approach to food; the respect you had for the life force in vegetables, fruits, sauces. The life force which tied our culinary creations to everything living; gardens, farms, sunlight, rain.

But along the way, so much more went on.

I know the importance of setting my intention. So let's do it this way. I'd like to present our story in its abundance. With clarity and precision. The mystics say I have a message of love to deliver to the world. Let's make it in a form that is readily comprehensible to people; full of the inspiration, delight and wonder which was so often present. Documenting the dark side, the shadow side as well.

I'd like the language of the book to be crystalline, clear in its simplicity, like the first ice cold morning of the season before anyone has arisen. Just you and me and the glittering branches, the rainbow explosions in the sparkling grass. In the presence of Mystery. Quietly alive for those who don't sleep.

I'll try to stand out of the way in the co-creative process. You must help me understand what was important and why. It's hard for me to see that clearly myself. I'm counting on you to show me the way, as only you can.

With love,
your Suzanna

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Occultists say it is karmic. Love at first sight. That's why it's important to approach it with great care, great love, great patience. It's a mystery stream. And you are invited to dive in.

I had no idea what was awaiting me that frigid day as I drove to your apartment. I did have the consensus reality idea of course, the societal explanation for my actions. I was going to meet you with my friend Alexis. We would take a walk up to the dam. So that you would feel comfortable calling me for the various errands which needed doing in your life, cooking, doctors' appointments, shopping.

There was a blinding brightness to that New Year's Eve. It was probably five degrees. The midwinter sun was hitting the crusty snow with a Siberian whiteness. I pulled up to your apartment. It was in an area of small houses set in close proximity to the dam.

I waited in the car fully expecting to be invited in. Suddenly the door swung open and there you were, tall and lanky. You moved gracefully, like a dancer, closing the door behind you. In your hands you held a brilliantly colored kite, its slender tail trailing behind you. You were dressed in faded jeans, a royal blue jacket and a fuzzy brown hat. The top of the hat was a bear's head. Synthetic of course.

I introduced myself. Told you that I liked your hat. Your face lit up as you laughed. You said that a friend had given it to you. So that you could go bear headed this winter. You did not look at all ill.

Under your jacket you wore a colorful hand knitted sweater. I was wearing a similar one. I mentioned as much. You smiled politely, a bit distant. Alexis arrived with her daughter and her black lab. We headed up to the dam.

I was trying to keep up with you, to converse with you, but you were jaunty. Energetic. Buoyant. Staying strides ahead of us. Up the steep hill. On this frigid day.

At the top of the hill there was an expansive view of the meandering river with the purple blue mountains beyond. There, where the land drops off sharply, you took off running. Down the hill. Up the hill. Midnight, the black lab in tow. Barking. The kite tugging, flapping, flashing its colors: blue, green, yellow, red. Your laughter coming to us in echoes. You slowing with the kite in its tangled predicaments. You patient, persevering. Your joy in the day. Your contagious joy.

Alexis and I could take no more of the frigid air and headed back to the car. You, Naomi and the dog joined us soon thereafter. We decided to go downtown to have some soup at the new café. When we arrived I realized that I had left my wallet in my car back at the dam.

"Oh God, I forgot my wallet. I don't have any money with me."

"Don't worry," you said the warmth of your smile buttressing me, "I just got my social security check. I have plenty of money. I'll buy you lunch."

We ordered tomato cheddar soup. Silently, like a priest you crossed yourself and whispered a quiet verse before you began.

How "our beginnings never know our ends," **T.S. Eliot wrote.**

MEDICAL MISADVENTURES

In the warmth of the café when you did go bareheaded, the scars from the recent brain surgeries were startling. Wide crimson bands crossed the left side of your head. Where it had been shaved, your hair was starting to reappear in gray spikes. You were thin, but with an inherent strength. Wiry.

You relayed for us a brief summary of your medical journey. It had commenced several years earlier with excruciating headaches. There had been several misdiagnoses along the way. Resolution came when the first of several seizures landed you by ambulance at Mary Hitchcock Hospital in Dartmouth, and the CAT scans revealed a rare form of fast moving brain cancer. The doctors called it "incurable, terminal." There was nothing you could do about it, they said. You were going to die within nine months.

They had recommended brain surgery to try to retard the growth of the tumor. You had gone along with it. Twice. They had also recommended radiation. You had gone through over half the treatment, seventeen doses, when they said it was having no effect at all. At this point you decided to stop. They did not agree. There were arguments back and forth. You saying why should you continue if it was having no effect other than the obvious deterioration of your health. They, angered at what appeared to be your impudence, your flying in the face of authority, insisted you were making a serious mistake to discontinue the treatments.

You however did not choose to share their view of the terminal diagnosis. You, like so many others who regarded illness as a spiritual journey, were determined to heal yourself. You embarked on regimes of your own, sweat lodges, Chinese herbs, shark cartilage, tinctures, kombucha tea, meditation, yoga, prayer. You learned to recognize the symptoms of an oncoming seizure and to control it with rhythmical breathing. For the headaches you said the answer was endorphins. A morning spent crying would almost always ensure release.

"And pot!" you said brightening. Sometimes your daughter or a friend in New York would bring brownies laced with marihuana.

FIRE ENERGY

The children and I were living then in a big farm house out in the country.

It was cold there when you and I arrived. You offered to light a fire in the woodstove. I explained that we had ceased burning wood after a chimney fire had broken out on a sub-zero night. At that time we had been ordered by the fire chief to stop using the stove due to the perilous condition of the chimney. The following summer Allen, our landlord, had made some efforts to repair the system and had assured us that it was safe. I could not bring myself to trust that opinion.

"Kind of jerryrigged," you said as you cocked your head looking at the stovepipes, "but I think it will be fine."

Your brother, a glass blower, had a stove just like it in his barn studio, you said. You had used it many times. You would light a very small fire, you assured me, and stand right next to it supervising.

"Right here," you said smiling as you jumped and landed loudly by the wood stove.

You built an orderly fire from logs and branches stacked in the barn.

"I can bring some really good kindling from Andrew's shop," you said. Andrew was your friend, an artist who had taught you Japanese woodworking. You worked with him occasionally.

Nervous though I was, nothing happened other than the hum of the smoke in the chimney, the crackling of the logs, the gradual familiar warming of the house.

"I am scrap wood thrown in your fire
and quickly reduced to smoke,"² wrote the Sufi poet.

DR. SOUNDHEIM

You moved here, you said, to be close to your small daughters and close to Dr. Soundheim. Dr. Soundheim, or Richard as we called him, practiced Anthroposophical medicine, a form of healing developed by Austrian philosopher, Rudolf Steiner. Steiner's work is based on a world view that integrates the ideas of reincarnation and karma. He emphasized the importance of working with the spiritual and emotional realms as well as the physical.

Dr. Soundheim had recently become your physician. Like you in some ways, he was quiet, unassuming, contemplative. I had known him for some time as he was our doctor as well. I had sat often in his office as he listened patiently while one of my children spoke of their pains, their adversities. He did not seem at all concerned with projecting an image of authority.

Clearly he was not fearful at the prospect of your mortality, neither fearful nor desperate nor controlling. He was Charon. A fellow traveler on your journey. Paddling the boat across the transitional waters of the underworld.