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Endings and Beyond: A Prelude to a Rendezvous with Oneness

With a heart-wrenching last glance in the rear view mirror, I watched Asheville, North Carolina slowly vanish into the mountain mists of the Great Smokies—together with everything I once owned. The war was over. The grueling ordeal of going down for the third time, day-in and day-out, had finally come to an end. In the aftermath, with a bewildering combination of stunned disbelief and quiet resignation, I surrendered the fight, and simply let it all go.

The final downfall of life as I'd known it, and the sense of unending struggle that had given it definition, came swift and sure at the tail end of 1997. Despite several heroic, last-ditch attempts to avoid the inevitable, and wrench myself free from a whirlpool of circumstances that was spiraling what I thought of as "my life" straight down the drain, in the end, destiny wasn't taking "no" for an answer. Wipeout!

The devastating loss of my lovely home, my business, and my life savings to a bankruptcy I'd resisted until the bitter end had been the final blow. In the wake of a nightmare of corporate piracy on the part of trusted employees, the sweet success of my blossoming little jewelry company, Earthstar, had trickled down to a few bins of findings and beads, tucked protectively into a U-Haul trailing behind me. The few remains of a lifetime's belongings that had escaped the auction block were abandoned to a storage unit I would not reopen for eight years. That's all that was left of the aberration I once believed was my dream.

By the time the *coup de grace* hit, I was already disconnected from many of the material frames of reference that traditionally give an identity some structure. There was virtually nothing left of a sense of self, framed externally, that I could hang my hat on. No more home. No more marriage. No kids in the nest. No living family. No more career. And, virtually no possessions. Even though I'd given it all I had to give, when the tally was in, it was all gone. Unintentionally, I'd succeeded in severing all ties with the past and hadn't an inkling about a future. I was a human compass suddenly devoid

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of magnetic north. But, there I was, “true-grit,” still strapped in behind the wheel, locked on automatic-pilot, heading south.

It was hard to reconcile the fact that despite a mega-dose of talent, drive, and hard work, I now had absolutely nothing to show for a half-century of living. It would not dawn on me for awhile yet that these were the perfect conditions under which to set off on the journey of a lifetime—the spiritual journey. I was still completely focused in the material world, still reeling from a long string of heart-breaking losses, the most devastating of which had been the recent passing of every single member of my childhood family from terminal illness—my parents, my brother, my grandparents, my aunts and uncles, one after the other. By then, my 25-year marriage was long since history and my three children were all grown up and leading independent lives. The bankruptcy was the icing on the cake. Finally, I’d been stripped of absolutely everything.

Years before, I’d transcribed a profound teaching: “Before a skyscraper can be built, you have to level the ground.” In retrospect, I began to see that this was exactly what had happened. It was time to start another chapter in my life story—one that began with a blank page.

By the time I’d left Asheville behind, a tenacious sense of self had managed to survive a relentless onslaught of devastating happenings and learned to thrive in an air of perpetual crisis. It was an unyielding string of calamities that systematically eroded the sense of identity I’d carefully constructed over a lifetime. The dismantling of the linear identity, I would later come to understand, was a classic step on the path of *spiritual emergence* that would pave the way for the Presence of the *Self*, slated to emerge from within.

Mine had become the identity of a *survivor*, however, one I deluded myself into believing was undaunted by life’s tragedies. I’d become a seasoned warrior in an endless battle. And, by then, I was so punchy from the setbacks, so conditioned to braving disappointment, and so numbed to the rawness of life’s wounds that they barely elicited a response. The possibility of life beyond struggle never even crossed my mind. I’d become so good at internalizing and repressing the emotions which normally might have been stimulated to the surface that they became disengaged and went unexpressed. Years later, I’d come to see, in retrospect, how the stage had been set for an *experiential* foray into the teachings of Oneness—teachings that were yet to come.

It was a few days past New Year, 1998, when life as I’d known it had officially disappeared in the rear view mirror, but that final blow had been a long time coming. Professionally, all my attempts to create a sense of identity from the arena of achievement that so many of us pursue had been

systematically quashed, over the years. One by one, a string of promising careers in several different countries had been developed successfully and then reluctantly abandoned, as I continued to sacrifice my own dreams and ambitions to the whims of my husband's corporate world, while his career kept us hopping back and forth across the Atlantic, with three kids in tow.

Years later, in the wake of all those losses, I'd forfeited my prized songwriter's contract with a major Nashville music publisher in light of a pressing need to return north, where family members had fallen gravely ill. Now, here I was, turning my back on Asheville, acting out the life-theme of leaving it all behind, yet again. But, this time, I was setting off to start from scratch, totally alone and empty-handed

It was a time of feeling engulfed in the shadow of all the trappings of identity I'd worn over the years and had mistaken for *myself*. By then, after 11 years of living in Europe, my heart housed a woman without a country, who felt no less alien in her own land than anywhere else in the world. Yet, the sense of disconnectedness went deeper than a choice of which political borders to claim as my own. The wedge between the worldly accessories of identity and the formless Divine Essence stirring within was being driven right to my very core. I was in free fall.

The miles melted together into a mindless blur as I drove away. Stoically, I began extracting myself from the breathtaking Asheville mountain vistas I'd known and loved for five whole years—longer than I'd lived anywhere else in my entire adult life. As each nondescript Interstate highway merged seamlessly into the deepening shadow of the one before, I tried to coolly distance myself from all that was familiar. Yet, mile by mile, a relentless program of mental flashbacks continued to play the devastating details of a life in ruins—looped for instant replay—inside my head. I watched the graphic, internal imagery of the past as it blended in with the soulless scenery whizzing by outside—and I felt absolutely nothing. I was numb.

What was the point of all the struggle? I asked myself. Here I was, a perfectly nice, kind-hearted, spiritual person, being chewed up and spit out, over and over again, by a material world where I felt like I just didn't belong anymore. Nothing was working. What was I doing wrong? Was there any way off this merry-go-round I thought of as "my life"? Questions! And more questions! I was sick and tired of my own endless, painfully earnest questions. I was ready for answers.

The thing I hadn't come to terms with yet was that I already had them. I had already manifested an entire compendium of answers—a wealth of timeless Divine wisdom, transcribed by my very own hand, a decade before. The only thing I hadn't done, up to that point, was own up to the truth of

it. I had done all the work—and at the same time, I'd quietly cowered in denial of the precious Divine connection that was at the very core of it. In the habitual guise of polite conversation, I'd avoided the entire subject of what I knew I was able to do as effortlessly as the breath that flowed in and out of me.

Maybe the time had come to shift gears, a fleeting thought interjected. That symbolism was so obvious it was ridiculous, my automatic mental censor retorted. Maybe it was actually time to stop hedging my bets, my mind continued its monologue without missing a beat. Maybe it was time to stop trying to appear "normal," by whitewashing the spiritual identity that was trying so desperately to come out of hiding. Maybe it was time to give up on the idea of fitting into a world I honestly couldn't relate to. Maybe it was time to own up to the truth of what was really going on with me. Let people think whatever they want to think. Not my problem. What a revelation!

The truth of the matter was that at the eleventh hour, just before leaving Asheville, I'd rediscovered the book of Divine teachings that I'd received, transcribed, and then sheepishly tucked away in a drawer ten years before. After re-reading a few pages, something inside me knew that its moment had arrived. There was no getting around it. The manuscript simply *had* to be published. Entitled *The Calling*, it was a wealth of Divine wisdom received from Amitabh, "God of Infinite Light," a channeled Divine Presence revealed to me as an aspect of God The Father, who had been my first real spiritual teacher.

The dilemma of what name to put on the book cover for myself, as author, had continued to plague me. Drawing a blank, for all sorts of reasons, I'd kept sweeping the issue—and the manuscript that went with it—under the rug. "What's in a name?" Regardless, which one should it be? Over the years, the surname of my birth had become the surname of my husband, which in turn, years later, had been adapted to a name I used professionally—one that was easier to pronounce and spell. Eventually, I'd made that professional name official. Now, I could no longer identify with any of it. Wriggling out of my own identity, like the great shedding of an outgrown skin, I literally cringed at the very thought of putting any of those names on a book of Divine teachings.

Who *am* I? I'd started to wonder. Clearly, there was more to that question than the dilemma of which label to place on myself and print on the cover of a book. But, how *much* more there was to that question I hadn't even begun to imagine.

At the same time, for nearly 20 years, there had been a mysterious name that continued to nudge me in meditation and in dream state. The name was

“Rasha.” I wasn’t sure what it signified, thinking at first that it might be the name of a spirit guide or higher self. Ultimately, the channeled guidance I’d received was that this was my own spiritual name, and that the choice of whether or not to use it was one that I might wish to make, someday. It wasn’t until years later that I learned the Sanskrit derivation of the name, which is a diminutive of the word “rasa,” or its meaning: “Divine Essence in form.” All I knew was I couldn’t get it out of my mind.

The minivan I was driving crossed the Florida border hours before dawn. It was so enveloped in the steamy cocktail of rain and mist it was hard to tell the road in front of me from the oblivion around it. I could have been anywhere. On impulse, I pulled into a truck stop. Inside, as if on cue, I noticed a strange vending machine I’d never seen before or since, half hidden in a corner. It printed business cards. Twenty cards for a dollar. Without hesitating, I pulled out four quarters, plunked them in the slot, and typed out a single word. Out came 20 cards. All that appeared on them was “Rasha.” No title. No address. No phone number. Just . . . “Rasha.” I smiled to myself. It felt so strangely right to have committed the name to writing. And, in that moment, for a dollar, I birthed myself into the hands of destiny.

In that life-altering moment, I claimed myself. I made an unspoken commitment of the heart to an identity that was cut loose from any sense of the past. And, at the same time, I opened the gates of possibility with an instinctive sense of blind faith. Standing in the rain, in the middle of nowhere, somewhere in the dead of night, clutching 20 crisp white cards, I took my tentative first step into the *Eternal Now*. South Florida awaited me, as I headed out into the night. And, as destiny would have it, so did a rendezvous with Oneness.



