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member/admin



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February, 2001. Abadiana, Brazil, some two hours west of the capital city of Brasilia, in central Brazil. A simple little trip became quite the incredible journey. I started this narrative while I was still in Brazil and tried many times, back in Chicago, to throw my notes away and cross it off my list. Finally, I came to wonder if the writing of this story wasn't somehow connected to my process of healing and clearing. I've written it down here and finished it, just in case. I hope you'll see something in it for yourself.

INVISIBLE JOURNEY

The last thing I packed this trip was the case for my glasses, which hasn't left the top drawer of my dresser in the five or six years that I've owned them. This pair is actually the latest in a long line that runs back to my freshman year of high school, 22 years ago. I really didn't know why I should be bringing this case to Brazil. Nor did I understand why, given that I had 24 hours of air travel this trip, I was not bringing any reading material at all. And so, from the beginning, this trip made no sense.

I didn't really know why I was going at all, but had known I was going from the moment I heard about it. When people asked about it, I made some noises about my friend with the very rare and supposedly incurable lung disease, that (we think) she had healed yesterday, on stage, here in Brazil. I said I was going to support her healing. I also knew that I was going to get some rest and sometimes I mentioned that, too. But mostly, I didn't know.

It would have been easy to say I was going to get my back healed. Some three years ago I fell (well, stepped off of, really, but that's another story) off of a small cliff, at the easternmost edge of Canada, in the middle of the night. My back had yet to feel 'normal' again since then. But it wasn't any kind of real handicap, no chronic pain, strings of doctor visits, etc. The place I'm in tonight however, here in Brazil, is full of people with real stuff going on... tumors and crutches, twisted limbs, wheelchairs ragged from use in rural Brazil. There are also all kinds of invisible burdens... addictions, depressions, possessions, and dreams gone wrong. And somehow I've known all along that my back is not the real reason for my coming here.

Even so, when it came time to choose something to ask 'the entity' (incorporated or embodied by the man they call Joao de Deus, John of God) for healing, to write a question or an intention on a small slip of paper, to carry the slip through the long queue that wound from the main 'chapel' through one 'current room' (meditation space) and into the main 'current room,' for translation and presentation to 'the entity' -- I still didn't know -- so I asked about my back injury, for healing of that. The 'current rooms' are where the healing energy is maintained by a group of 'mediums,' experienced meditators who pray and preach in support of healings. I got through the

first room, into the second and came face-to-face with Joao Texeria, Joao de Deus, miracle man, and more. These are not titles he asked for, but he's got a roomful of crutches, chairs, and other supports tossed away by cripples of all sorts who've come and found healing in his presence.

"Go sit on the bench (in the main current room) and receive energy for your healing," was the answer I got translated back into English, as I was ushered to a seat on one of the slightly padded wooden benches. And that was it. "Go meditate. Receive energy. Pray." So I did. And the queue continued to flow through the room. Some dispatched to the benches, others to the pharmacy for herbs, others told to return for surgery. Later that morning my eyes were snapped open from their meditative rest by a man's crutch slammed to the concrete floor. He walked to a bench, wobbling, surprised, but under his own power, presumably to receive more energy for walking.

The next morning we gathered again. I came early to get a front row seat for Maureen's surgery, "visible surgery," for her lung disease, to be done on stage (really just a small raised platform) in the main chapel area. Not long after I got there the man how lost the crutch the day before walked in, limping still, but well past his wobble and surprise. He wasn't unique in this crowd, as others seemed to be making progress, as well.

After a sort of warm-up talk, in Portuguese, Joao emerged from the current rooms. My friend Maureen followed him out onto the stage. He began in Portuguese. She stood with her back against the wall, eyes closed, right hand held over her lungs and heart, the area to be healed. She was the picture of ecstasy. She looked thrilled, even with her eyes closed, and even though she already knew that Joao was about to jam an eight-inch surgical steel tweezers (a hemastat, surgical clamp) up her nose and into the center of her skull. No joke. She knew. Had seen it done already, too. And a few minutes later, Joao made some heaving and sucking sounds, a pneumatic sort of vomiting in reverse, 'incorporating' one of the 30+ healing entities (Ignatius of Loyola, for example) that use his body to do their healing work for the people who flock to him in this place.

When he started with Maureen, he pulled her shirt up to her shoulders and proceeded to knead, almost grind her torso with his hands, working down each side of her body simultaneously, from shoulder to pelvis, her back pinned to the wall. He stepped away for a moment, swirling a bit like a magician. Her bare breasts peeked out at the crowd of 150 or 200.

Then, with all the power and flash of a big alpha-male lion attacking, he grabbed stepped back toward her, grabbing the hemastat, all eight inches of surgical steel, and literally rammed it up into her right nostril. As he stepped away from her, nothing of the hemastat was left to see, on the outside of her head, except the last inch or so where it had little loops for fingers to hold it.

The energy of that big-cat move had lifted her to her tip-toes, pinning her against the wall, now several inches above where she'd been before. She still looked ecstatic and happy. And a moment later it was all over. He stepped back toward her. Pulled the hemastat out and tossed it on a tray. Did another round of kneading. She later said it felt like he was squeezing the disease right out of her. He pulled her shirt back down. They brought a wire patio chair for her to sit in as they carried her out to the recovery room, still beaming. Really. That 'spiritual anesthetic' seems (by all accounts) to about the best high anyone could ever want.

Then the rest of us got into our queues again, to take our ailments and worries before the entity, working through the body of Joao. I took four pictures of my family, all of whom were prescribed a month of herbs. My brother Mark got an "X" on his picture, though, which means he should come to Brazil for healing. Mark, the ironman triathlete and regular marathon runner. Go figure. Looking around this place, it's clear that the illness and sufferings that bring people here aren't all as visible as twisted limbs. Joao looked at each of my pictures, scribbling prescriptions. When Mark's came up, it was instant, like Maureen's steel up the nose, a flash of the ballpoint pen: X... carved into the back of the kodacolor paper. There was no doubting or mistaking it. Mark was supposed to come.

I'd been mulling my stories looking for what it was that I wanted to know. Divorce was done, no questions there. Work has been shifting in some big ways for the last year or two. Still, it seemed too simple, too much to hope for really, to walk up and ask him to tell me my life's purpose, so I could just get on with it. Sort of seemed like cheating. So I rolled around specific questions, specific kinds of work, the book I was writing, open space facilitation, my consulting work. I mulled more generally, too, through clarity, compassion, power and strength, and fearlessness. What did I really

want to know? ...or be? What did I really dare to find out?

I'm living in a 'posada' here, a small compound where 15-20 of us stay in a number of separate rooms, around a kitchen and small, walled courtyard. One of our housemates here asked for about marriage to the man she is travelling with, the man she was 90% sure that she would marry, only to have the union nixed by the entity. She cried for a day and a half and warned me that I'd better be ready for the truth about whatever I asked. The entities, like computers, never lie. And the don't sugar coat it. Better be ready for cold steel up the nose or the cold hard truth.

By lunchtime on Friday, my third full day, after five sessions at the Casa, where the healings take place, I still don't know why I'm here. Maureen and her partner, Zelle, and some others leave tomorrow. So I ask Maureen to tell me today what she would tell me next Wednesday, if she were going to be here then. (The healings only happen Wednesday, Thursday and Friday each week.) She's a little bit of a mystic, herself, you see, and I know she'll tell me whatever truth she knows. Still I'm surprised by her utter lack of hesitation, and between bites of lunch, simply: "Get your eyes fixed."

Another housemate, an 80+ year old french lady, is here with her two sons. She has a brain tumor that her sons have not told her is cancer. She's had one surgery, but apparently they were not able to get all of the cancer out. Until this morning, she did not walk without her aluminum crutch. At meals these last few days with her English-speaking son, we'd heard of her struggles with the prospect of giving up her 'stick.' "I don't want him to take my stick unless he fixes my head," she tells him. Apparently the brain troubles are close to one or both ears, affecting her balance. How often, I thought, we cling to our crutches. And me, here now, with no visible crutches, but still I must be clinging to something. I puzzled. Could I ask for help in removing or relinquishing 'invisible' crutches? I went to lunch that day, Friday, pondering the nature of invisible crutches, after seeing Mme. Cecile wobbling carefully around the Casa that morning, without her crutch.

At lunch then, with Maureen and Zelle, the conversation had turned earlier to eyesight and eye healings. I'm pretty sure I started it. I didn't know where it was leading, or did eye? We talked about visible eye surgery, specifically. "Now that's intense," I said. To which Zelle responded calmly, "It's just scraping your eye with a kitchen knife."

"You have not changed my mind!" I laughed back. And he hadn't. But the proverbial slippery slope had been greased. This exchange, my ponderings about invisible (see-through, if you will) crutches, and all the way back to my bringing the case for my glasses... it all seemed to lead up to Maureen's instructions to "Get your eyes fixed." When I asked her why I should do that, she quipped, "...because of all the things that you love to do but don't, because of your glasses." In an instant I remembered them, mostly water sports, and other things that I shied away from because I'm so lost without my glasses. And so I did, in that moment, decide to do my eyes. I went to my room, took out the case, and put my glasses inside.

That afternoon, Friday, I got into queues at the Casa carrying a small slip of white paper, on which I'd written my wish, with a nod to my tibetan teachers: "I want to see the world as it really is, without my glasses." When I reached the front of the line, surgery was 'scheduled' for the following Wednesday, but I never put my glasses back on, not even to navigate through the giant Sao Paulo airport, on my way home.

I'd heard the story of another guy who'd had visible eye surgery. Similar to me, he'd actually come to translate a friends request, not for himself, or so he thought. When they got to the front of the line, the entity had asked him if he wanted to see without his glasses. I guess he said yes, because the entity pulled his glasses from his face, tossed them to the floor and stepped on them. He grabbed his kitchen knife and pushed this guy's head back, scraping each eye carefully with the serated blade. He told him that his vision would improve in 21 days. A powerful and hopeful declaration, though obviously still open to interpretation... and confirmation.

When I asked about how long eye-healing took, I was told by others who'd been around the Casa for years, that it could happen instantly or could take as long as six months. "Everyone is different," they said, but I set my hopes on 21 days, knowing my work calendar could accommodate that time without my glasses. This I could do, and then I will see. Another housemate, Peter, from Malta, had had the hemastat-up-the-nose for a hernia issue. He'd come to support his wife's healing, but knew he had this one relatively minor problem, himself. When I asked him why he chose visible surgery with the steel up the nose, instead of the invisible, sit and meditate on the bench sort of surgery, he said that he didn't think he'd believe that anything had happened if it wasn't visible. Now me, I took my glasses off on Friday

and left them off, thinking that my eyes just might get better by Wednesday, just from hanging out in the energy of the whole place.

In some subtle ways, the healing did start right away. My vision was about 20/800. Not horrible in the grand scheme of things, but bad enough that anything and everything beyond 6 inches, literally 6 inches, from my face, was hopelessly blurry. The trail up to the crystal falls we visited, the foods on the buffet table, the expressions on people's faces, the intentions of all the stray dogs along the roads we walked to the Casa, all the lettering on street signs, and even familiar things, like my clothes scattered on the extra bed in my sleeping room, were all hopelessly blurred into one giant puzzle.

"I want to see the world as it really is, without my glasses." Want to see people and everything else clearly without filtering it through my own lenses, biases. I want to see the truth." That is what I wrote in this journal, which I started on that first night without my glasses, when I realized the magnitude of the journey I'd begun, even before I'd had any eye surgeries.

"Already I'm learning about compassion as I'm forced to ask for help all the time. Am already seeing that rest is possible as I ask others to move at my pace rather than always stretching, pushing, contracting to keep pace with them. I'm missing details that just don't matter, that just can't be seen. It's just not possible to look out for others now. My shoulders are lighter. My back is easier. My eyes idle more and let my neck rest more loosely. My head floats easier. And still, I worry a bit. 'Just scrape your eye with a kitchen knife.' Yikes! Maureen and Peter and Zelle are encouraging me to have visible eye surgery and I am considering it. But what role do my own concerns play in the reality I'm making here? [The classic buddhist story, remember my wish and my nod to my tibetan teachers, says that] reality is emptiness. Does that mean that I've asked for blindness? Is that the answer? Is that where my true learning lies? Should I look into these fears or look away? I've got 5 days to remember that I really do WANT to SEE, that I love light and color and smiles and eyes, mine and yours. Already I'm getting the sense that I will never look at eyes quite the same way again.

Cheryl, another friend along on this trip, offered me a piece of Trident gum today. I had bought some at the airport on the way down, as well. It is one of the little things I associate with my grandma, my mom's mom, who was blind for three months, mysteriously, right after my mom was born. Is she here now with me? When I bought my new laptop computer last year, I said often that it would be 'my last computer.' What did I mean? I said I wanted to see reality clearly, as it truly is, but I don't want to gaze into emptiness for the next how many years! I lay down to sleep at night, close my eyes and go nowhere. I think about the possibility and acceptance of being blind. I panic and my eyes pop open -- and the room is pitch black. Shit! Four hours, six hours, eight hours of nothing but darkness! All wasted time! I want to see light and color and faces and green stuff and signs and buidings... before it's all gone! Sleep and morning come after what seems like forever. Aaaaahhhhhhhh...the edge again, for sure, totally HO. HO!"

[This message has been edited by mherman (edited 06-28-2001).]

sduros
member

 posted 06-27-2001 01:36 PM    

so ...
what happens next? what about maureen? go on. go on...!

mherman
member/admin

 posted 06-28-2001 01:20 PM    

EXPECTING NOTHING

Not long after I arrived in Brazil, I heard the story of Martin, the proprietor of our posada and also an important figure in the daily operations of the Casa where the healings took place. Some others who'd been there already for some time had said that Martin had recently begun to incorporate an entity, like Joao. According to the story, he did this totally unconsciously and involuntarily, so much so that only a few months earlier he had made empassioned claims to those staying in his posada that this was, in fact, not happening. They all knew that it was true, or so I was told, because his eyes would get very blue and he becomes very direct, almost gruff, in his dealings with people when he was 'in entity.'

By the time I heard this story, I had already experienced this directness and seen his blue eyes, which got to be a sort of neon blue, like Paul Newman crossed with the

blazing green eyes of the old Incredible Hulk TV series with Bill Bixby. When I heard this story, I thought, "Yeah, right, you mean his eyes get 'blue-er,'" because they were REALLY blue when he'd been so direct with me. It was a good story, but I really didn't know what to make of it. The next morning, however, he came over to say hello as we were sitting waiting for things to get started at the Casa. When I checked out his eyes, I discovered the deepest, darkest Argentinian brown eyes I think I've ever seen. I believe the technical term is "Yikes!"

This happened the day before I asked to see the world as it really is, without my glasses. It was one of the direct experiences I had that made me believe that this shift was possible. Knowing it was possible, however, and actually expecting it to happen are two very separate perspectives. Many things are possible, but expectations are the more rational and refined notions around which we actually plan our days and build our lives. So I knew this was possible AND had no idea what to expect when the day for my surgery finally arrived.

"Are you going to have visible or invisible surgery?" asked Martin, with brown eyes and warm voice, on that Wednesday morning. I needed to tell him because he needed to tell the entity for me, translating my request into Portuguese. I must have looked a bit troubled. By now, I was sure that visible surgery would make me blind. I didn't know how much my own beliefs and fears might factor into the outcome. Does God give us what we want? ...what we ask for? ...what we expect? Not sure at all I really wanted to know just then. Yes, I must have looked more than just a little troubled by this decision. "Visible or invisible... makes no difference..." I heard him saying, warmly, "...same thing... the results are the same... it just depends on what you want..."

If I ask him to scrape my eyes with a kitchen knife, and I go blind, then it's my own damn fault. It was easy to imagine absolutely no sympathy, little support and a whole lot of wondering about my sanity for a long, dark time to come. I was pretty sure that I could never find enough compassion to forgive myself for that one. If on the other hand, I opted for invisible, non-contact surgery and I still went blind, this would be totally unexpected, if he actually blinded me from across the room, without even touching me. If that happened then that would be its own sort of miracle and somehow what really needed to happen in the grand plan of the universe. Or so I reasoned it out. "Invisible, yes, I better have invisible." He nodded, wrote it down, smiled and went away. I didn't see him again until I got into the room for surgery.

When the time came, they called us into a queue and led us to the surgery room. There were perhaps two dozen of us, told to sit down on the benches in the room there. Martin came and told me to cover my eyes with my right hand and pray. My faith would heal me. (Oh, sure, no pressure at all!) I'd been told that another person felt some sensations during invisible eye surgery. "That's interesting," I thought, but I didn't expect to feel anything. Wrong again.

The Portuguese prayers started soon enough and almost immediately I felt a clean dashed line cut across the back of my left eye. As unmistakably as if I were to scrape a sharp pin across the soft skin just under the outside of your eye, but this was done with something VERY sharp. One line, left to right, across the back of my left eye, and a moment later another across the back of my right eye. And another on the right. And another on the right. All the way across. And then a bunch of zig-zagging, back and forth, up and down just the right side of the back of my right eye. It felt like cutting and stitching. Little one-eighth inch dashes cut and stitched across the back of my eye.

Of course, you say, it felt like cutting and stitching, because they said it was surgery. Well, sure, but why so much in my right eye and so little in my left? The prescriptions are identical, -5.25 in both eyes. In other words, this is definitely NOT what I would expect or imagine. I'm into symmetry! It still sort of bugs me that they didn't even do it out in there. (grin)

Just about the time I thought that I couldn't possibly hold my hand up over my eyes any longer, I heard English words announcing it was over. Time to get out. I opened my eyes half hoping that all would be crystal, but no. Grab my shoes, go outside, wait for the next instructions. Bright. Really Bright. Still not sure what happened. Something's different, fuzzy, gauzy even, but inside my eyes somehow, and yet no difference that I can SEE. I pick up my herbal prescription and go home and spend the day in bed, resting as instructed.

I'm beat, but can't explain why. Really does feel like I've been hit by a truck. Everything aches. The next morning, I still feel like crap, but I drag myself up to the Casa, about a half-mile walk. It is Thursday now, my second to last day to be here at

the Casa. I go before the entity and ask for whatever final healing I need for my back, my eyes and my heart. The answer is more surgery, to be done that afternoon. This could get to be a very long day.

After lunch I go back to the Casa, get in the surgery line and end up sitting in the same place on the same bench. Martin comes to me. "You have visible or invisible?" he says, "...same results... both are just as good..." To which I reply, "I'll have invisible," but somehow continue on, "...but I will have visible surgery if the entity thinks that that would be better for me." Yikes, again! And then relief, "Okay, you have invisible." And he's gone.

I cover my eyes. The Portuguese praying begins. The first surgery must have taken twenty minutes. This one is over in about four minutes. Nothing in my left eye. A couple of those long dashed lines in my right. AND, a good two thirds of all that achey, gooey, crappy feeling is almost instantly swept out of all my cells. I leave feeling quite a bit better than I had just 10 minutes ago. I get another herbal prescription and walk home, quietly, carefully, slowly. My eyes are as gauzy as ever on the insides, but no clearer on the outsides. I am in too deep to be skeptical, so I am hopeful. And tired.

I spend most of that night back and forth to the bathroom. Let's just say neon orange and leave it at that. I remember that Maureen had had a similar experience after a healing in Chicago. I take the orange as a good thing, a sign of detoxification, purging, healing. I lay in bed between runs to the bathroom. I open my heart. I chant mantra. I hum aaaahhhh's through my tired body. And strangely enough, I don't really worry. For all the aching and commotion, the night is somehow peaceful.

By morning I am drained and rest in my room. I can't go to the Casa until 24 hours after surgery. That's the rule. Too open and too many bad energies being pulled out of people there. Don't want anything sneaking in while the soul's door is still open. I rest in my room and go back after lunch. It is my last chance to go before the entity. No time left for surgeries. I am just a few months beyond the legal conclusion of my divorce. I am considering plans to finish my ten year run as a self-employed organization development consultant. Oh yes, and I've just had two surgeries on my eyes and who knows what else. Certainly in all of this there is a question for the entity. Finally I settle on two.

"Should I be doing different work from what I have been doing?" Martin translates my question for the entity, listens to the answer and then turns back to me. I am expecting to be told that I'm a dummy for doing the wrong work for so long. I'm willing to hear this because I'm hoping that in the process of telling me I'm way off base, he'll get sort of carried away and maybe let slip some clue about what I should REALLY be doing with my life. The answer is a complete surprise: "He says that you should keep doing what you have been doing... and that he is going to help you." Martin looks genuinely impressed, which I take as a good sign. The good news is that I'm apparently on the right track. The bad news is that there is no escape.

My second question is about my glasses: "How long will it take for my eyes to get better, to see?" Martin tells me that everyone is different and there is no telling how long it will take. "Everyone is different," he says, implying that the entity is not likely to give me a date. "But I need my glasses to work, to drive, to--" He interrupts, "So you ask if you should wear your glasses anymore." Later on, he translates the entity's answer: "He says you should not wear your glasses, that you are not going to need them." Well, need is a relative thing. It doesn't take me too many days to quip, ever so respectfully, "If he really wants to help my work, he could start by fixing my eyes!" (grin)

Somehow I make it home without my glasses. I keep them with me, but never put them on. It takes me forever to find my gate in Sao Paulo, one of the worlds larger and busier airports. I'm not able to ask direction because I can't see well enough to pick out the obvious English speakers in the crowd, and can't explain the magnitude of my confusion to anyone else. I'm not even sure I could explain it in English, really. On my last flight, from Dallas to Chicago, I give it a try. There's almost nobody on the plane. Just me and a woman in the whole back section and she's very afraid of flying. I figure this crazy story of mine is a fine distraction. She's grateful and genuinely interested, but by the time we land, I'm not sure if the flight or my story scares her more.



THINGS KEEP HAPPENING

The first week home is a blur, of course. I have to learn my way around my own house. I'm unable to use the computer at all. Too much to see. There is all the post-vacation (though I'm not sure this qualifies as a vacation!) cleaning up to do. Piles of junk mail, email, phone calls, and the like. I'm in it up to my eyeballs, for sure. On top of it all, there is the stock market to deal with.

In the months leading up to this trip, I have been more than a little active in the stock market, the NASDAQ, to be specific. At the same time, I have been doing a practice given to me by one of my teachers, practicing holding the market and all of its participants in my heart, wishing them calmer, less volatile times. It has been a time of epic volatility in the market, especially in tech stocks. In the weeks just before leaving for Brazil, I have developed some ability to 'sense' what is currently happening in the market, to calibrate my 'sense' of how the 'being' that is all of us in the market feels with the actual value of the NASDAQ composite index. It's not so much a future thing as a present-moment thing, not my influencing it from a distance as much as my observing and experiencing it.

While I'm in Brazil, I am very aware of the market plunging, down on almost all ten trading days I was gone. By my last night, I was more than a bit anxious about how far it had fallen and what I would have to deal with in my account when I got home. I'd seen no newspapers and had not heard any numbers. On that last Thursday night, I dreamed I was reading the newspaper. In the middle of the page was a little box, the number 2117 in big type. I knew that it was the answer to my question. It was the value of the NASDAQ index. What I didn't know until Saturday, when I got to the airport, is that I had dreamed Thursday night about where the index closed on FRIDAY afternoon. If that isn't 'yikes!' enough, I realized some weeks after I'd been stumbling around home without my glasses, that the chorus of earnings warnings and reports coming from Wall Street all echoed the same excuse for the steep market declines: a lack of VISIBILITY. It gave me cold chills. And by then, I'd almost gotten used to that sort of thing.

As I said earlier, the first week home was a whole lot of doing nothing. Really wiped out, my digestive system still recovering from its neon orange detoxification, my eyes learning their way around the apartment. The biggest surprises came at the time of my "8-day reviews," when the entities come to check on you after surgery and take out your stitches. The 8th-day ritual called for me to dress my bed in white, dress myself in white (as is the custom when visiting the Casa), and place a candle and a glass of water next to my bed. The story is that the entities come in the middle of the night, remove the stitches and bless the water, then you drink the water in the morning. So who am I to argue with this?

On the evening of the seventh day after my first surgery, I go to the local grocery store and get what I call an "Ave Maria" candle, in the Mexican foods section, which I think is really amusing, but doesn't seem to surprise anyone else. It's one of the big ones in the glass tube, because I really don't want to torch my bed in this process. I put it with my glass of water, put on my white sheets and clothes and go to bed. Just to be sure, I write a short note asking for continued healing and support and leave that for the entities as well. Don't want any questions about the goal here anymore. By now, enlightenment is taking a back seat to 20/20 driving vision. I am dutiful but not without my doubts.

In the morning I am shocked to discover that most of the gauzy sensations in my eyes that have been having a somewhat restrictive effect on their range and rate of motion is actually cleared away. I can't see any better, but the sensation of my eyes is undeniably shifted back toward 'normal.' I drink the water in celebration... and get out my copy of the I Ching, an ancient Chinese oracle process done with coins and hexagrams. I figure the only way to decipher one mystical process is with another, equally mystical one.

I ask the I Ching, "What is happening with my eyes, and what can I do to help this process along?" The answer I received back was to... "practice waiting, confident patience, calm abiding, steadiness, equanimity." An additional 'changing line' comment that said, "There is nothing you can do about waiting in intensely unpleasant circumstances. If you notice the movement of the divine, you can invite the angel to enter and the situation will resolve." Another translation of the same said, "Three unknown visitors are coming... they will open the way..."

Since I'd had surgeries on consecutive days, I had my 8th-day reviews on consecutive nights. And, since my second surgery had been given in response to my request for help with back, eyes and heart, I figured this all meant that there were three entities

coming to resolve my situation. That night, I put out three glasses of water and went eagerly to bed, feeling a little like a kid on Christmas eve, but this time with visions of three wise men dancing in my head!

I awoke at 5:30am and was surprised that the last bit of gauzy sensation is still hanging around in my right eye, no change from the night before. Finally this healing game is running out of gas, I decide on my way back from the bathroom. So I go to back to sleep and wake again at 7:00 -- and it's gone, the gauzy fuzzy stuff inside has indeed been 'removed.' All day, as I talk with friends on the phone, I say over and over again, "I can't explain it, I just keep expecting nothing to happen, and stuff keeps happening."

Three days later I begin working on the computer again. And three days after that, I've competed work on an entire new 'e-book,' my Invitation Resources Collection, and totally recast the michaelherman.com website to accommodate it. In another week, I've completed the Evolution at Work 'e-book' that I've been really stuck on for the last year or more. The speed and ease of progress literally make my head spin. I do seem to be getting help with this work, even though when I first get back on the computer I do much of my work in 28- and sometimes 36-point fonts! Interestingly enough, the new graphic on the michaelherman.com homepage looks an awful lot like the crystal formations found all over in that part of Brazil.

And that's pretty much how it goes for the next two and a half months. I go through the motions, wearing my glasses only to drive, craning my neck and irradiating my eyes just inches from my laptop screen in order to get any work done. I am surprised to discover that it is easier to work at the computer than to talk on the phone -- seeing is apparently much more than just what meets the eye. Soon my newest glasses feel too strong even for occasional use, so I resort to an older prescription. For a long time I tell friends that based on that old prescription, I estimated that I was perhaps 10-15% improved, but now I seem to be stuck there for weeks and weeks.

At some point I seem to notice that I am beginning to see my neighborhood again. The streets seem more familiar. I am able to notice and recognize cars AS cars, without really looking at them and thinking about it. Seems crazy, perhaps, but seeing is really three things: taking in the light image, determining what it is, and finally linking it to other things seen before. It seems that I've had to rewire the whole system from both ends. The progress on this was slow and hard to measure, hence my sense of having plateaued for a long time. When the sense of isolation got to be more than I thought I could stand, I'd think of my grandma in her three months of blindness and also of one of my teachers who spent eleven years in a cave by himself, in northern India, until he attained enlightenment in this lifetime.

Early on, I also got ahold of a copy of Aldous Huxley's, "The Art of Seeing." Turns out Huxley was nearly blinded by a childhood disease at age sixteen. He encountered an eye doctor named Bates who was working along the same lines as Sister Kenney was with polio patients, Alexander with the spine and others with other anatomy. They all were experimenting with helping the body heal itself, removing restraints, like leg braces and eyeglasses, so that the body could be re-educated and returned to full function. The Bates Method helped Huxley learn to see again and is the subject of his book. I read through it and got a better understanding of what seeing and vision healing are all about, physically. I also learned of a technique called 'palming,' that helps rest the eyes. From time to time, over these last several months, when my eyes get very tired, I hedge my bets on the entities and do a little palming.

Mostly, however, I have been waiting and trusting. I came home with three months of herbs to take, which I took rather religiously. I wanted to do everything I could to help this process happen. When I got down to just three more weeks of herbs left, I began to worry that I would finish them without any definitive signs of improvement. I had come to what I started to call "the end of the fuzz and the end of the fringe at the end of my rope." This just couldn't go on like this. And then it didn't.

I looked out one morning at neighborhood, from my home on the 11th floor. The houses with spindled deck railings that I'd been trying see for weeks, the trees all turned green and full since I got home, the Days Inn billboard painted on the side of the hotel about four blocks away... AND I COULD READ THE BILLBOARD! "Don't blink!" I screamed inside. I don't know if my heart stopped or raced, but soon I realized that I wasn't breathing. When I took a breath, I forgot to not blink. And then it was all fuzz again. No words. No spindles. No leaves. Poof. Poof. Poof. Blink. Fuzz. Blink. Fuzz. Blink. Fuzz. Fuzz. Fuzz. Fuzz. Fuzz.....

That happened several times that first day, May 20th, three months exactly from the day I arrived in Brazil. That's a long time without specs. But now there was real hope, if

these moments of clarity would just start to pile up. And that is just what seems to be happening over the last several weeks.

The herbs ran out three weeks later and I swore off my glasses. This is starting to gain steam and I don't want to slow it down. I'm walking more and reading like crazy, about seeing, dying, evil, Jesus' secret teachings, intuition, nutrition and mysticism... and reading the Sun Times at the local sandwich joint. I'm taking rides from friends, taking the CTA trains and buses, and taking a pass on the things I just can't get to. The same day that the herbs ran out, my friend Pamela invited me to go swimming in her pool. Interesting timing, if you recall that the water is a place I'd given up, over the years, as my vision got worse and my glasses got more expensive. And still there is a long way to go. Some days it seems unthinkable to actually reach 20/20. Then it all pops clear again, for just a blink or two, reminding me that these eyes are indeed capable of real clarity.

Mostly it feels like I've got a bad set of wiper blades, that if I could just string together a handful of REALLY good blinks, the whole scene would come clear. I begin to understand why visible surgery works. I want to scrape my own eyes with a kitchen knife. I tell friends that if Joao showed up here now, I would ask for visible surgery and get it over with. Since he's not coming, and I'm not going back anytime soon, I dive into a 10-day juice fast and cleansing program that is supposed to clear up the fluids of body. I ask the I Ching what the result will be and it says "stripping away." I am encouraged and follow the program religiously for 11 days (see the fasting topic at <http://notebook.michaelherman.com>). The film begins to clear.

Slowly, slowly the fuzziness is becoming watery. I'm starting to see multiple images, perhaps six or seven at once, like a bad TV shadowing problem. I'm learning to focus again. I'm learning that grabbing and straining don't work, that if I relax, the images will come to me. I'm finding that sometimes I know what a sign says, even though at THIS moment I cannot see it clearly. It's as if enough clear frames have come in to allow knowing, even if they're not coming in right this moment. It's been a remarkable month since that first billboard sighting. I hope and believe it will continue.

Can't begin to say what I'm finding about the rest of my question, the part about seeing the world as it really is. For now, I think my friend Gabriela Ender summed it up well in an email from Berlin, "...seeing in being is a holy thing...to see the inside and to see the outside..." And I think Martin was right, "Visible, invisible... they work the same. Both are good."

mherman
member/admin



posted 06-28-2001 01:41 PM



TO BE CONTINUED

...whenever it continues, which is only fair:

In my work, I use a process called Open Space Technology, which allows us to convene groups as large as several hundred people, bring them together for as much as two or three days, and allow them to self-organize into high work, high play and high learning, with absolutely no pre-determined agenda. When they first hear about this, most managers are sure that these results are totally impossible. This is not far from my own initial reaction to the prospect of Joao's healing. For me, the journey of these last many months is not so much about getting rid of my glasses or healing my eyes, which just weren't THAT bad to start out with (in light of a blind guy just scaling Mt. Everest). This journey is about my being in the midst of a process that I have no way to explain, even to myself, and still trusting that it can work out as desired.

As my eyesight improves, my story provides more and more tangible encouragement for others because it helps us believe that the seemingly impossible can and does happen. When my friend Maureen left Brazil, she went back to work in Scotland, had a number of small health-related incidents. Some might have called them detox or healing symptoms, but between those incidents and a lot of work to do, she began to doubt that healing was possible for her lungs. Eventually, she even stopped taking her herbal prescriptions. The day that those billboard letters first came clear, however, I jumped on the phone to Scotland, leaving a voicemail message. Hours later I got an email back: "I went straight to the kitchen and took my herbs!" was Maureen's reply.

This journey is all about my practicing and experiencing the chaos and uncertainty, shifting and learning, that I am continually inviting others to enter into... and all of the large and small ripples that come out of that. My own return to 20/20 vision is only important in that it makes these other, really important, stories that much clearer, that much more real, that much more possible. So I do hope it works, do think it will, AND really do NOT know when or why or how...

Special thanks to Tom, Andy, Louise, Jennifer, Juliet, Melissa, Katie, Peter, Brian, Pamela, Sandy, Amy, Mom and Dad, for their unique and careful contributions to my sanity and well-being in these last many months of waiting and watching.

[This message has been edited by mherman (edited 06-28-2001).]

mherman
member/admin



posted 02-21-2002 07:25 PM



ONE YEAR LATER

If I am remembering my dates correctly, it was just about one year ago today that I arrived in Brazil and almost eight months since I last reported here on this story. Seems the whole world is new, and as of sometime next week, so will be the lenses in my glasses. Let me explain...

Joao de Deus told me not to wear my glasses and I did go without them, almost totally, for about six months. In August, I went to a conference and met many online friends for the first time, face-to-face. And I wanted to see their faces. Right after that, I did a 5-day retreat. Again, I wanted to see the faces of friends from all over the world. So I used my glasses perhaps 50% of the time.

That retreat ended on September 9th and then the whole world changed on the 11th, which made for plenty of uncertainty, even WITH my glasses on. Since then, I've worn them almost always, like before. But I have worn my old prescription, because my last one was too strong to wear.

Before my trips, I was often seeing flashes of clarity, reading license plates on cars from thirty and forty feet away, for fleeting moments. This convinced me that my eyes really are capable of 20/20 vision. I have come to consider my current deviation from 20/20 a temporary condition and suspect that my vision may continue to improve slowly over time.

My prescription a year ago was -5.25/-5.50 (L/R). Last week I was tested at -4.50/-5.00. Also, I have always been right-eye dominant, but became left-eye dominant without my glasses, which my doctor says is impossible. (go figure.) But now I am left-eye dominant even with my glasses. I feel like I think differently, literally feels like I process information differently with this different view. Feels like I now have two views, two choices for how to relate to what I'm seeing.

Having been wearing my 10-year-old frames for the last six months, I also am less concerned than ever with my appearance wearing glasses. I prefer a bigger, less trendy, more functional lens, though I've stopped just short of having my new lenses made to fit my big, old frames. I like the idea of having those stay as is, so I can come back to this reduced prescription whenever I feel like it.

A bit of news about my work, too. Recall that Joao did tell me that he was going to help me in my work. Then right after I got back, I'd been able to do much writing and other work and seemed to find new energy for the work I'd been doing. As of now, my work seems to be in full bloom. Won't say, 'cause don't know, more than this, but business IS blooming.

Don't know any more about how this all works than when I started. I'm seeing a bit better, work is all new, my confidence in my previously injured back has returned (though my back-healing journey did come to include a chiropractor and a yoga practice). Spirit guided or no? Hard to say. And while I will pick up new glasses next week and continue to wear them all day, every day... there are those times when I just go off without them... just because I now know I can.

[This message has been edited by mherman (edited 02-21-2002).]

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