

# PAST LIVES

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# 1

## THE DRIVING FORCE WAS FEAR



A few months ago I left a remark at a YouTube movie. Just to say thank you to a certain person who had uploaded a lovely Jewish Gipsy music movie.

Some days later I received an unexpected email from a Scandinavian woman named Lilly who let me know that she loved the same movie too. She watched the Klezmer music movie, read my remark and decided to contact me.

I firmly believe that coincidence is just a whisper of the universe to enable us to learn some lessons or to let us meet persons - again and again in different lifetimes - in order to finish unfinished business out of previous lifetimes, so I answered her email. Then a lot of things started to happen.

Lilly asked therapeutic advice regarding past life issues. In return for my free help she wrote two stories about what had happened to her after learning about past life memories.



**LILLY:**

The driving force was fear. I say fear but really it was shock, horror, dread and terror all rolled into one. Connected to one person, someone I had never seen before in my life, someone who just happened to walk past on that spring day. I only saw his back but the first thing I thought of, the first thing that came to my mind was, *what an incredibly evil and cruel man. I hope he never sees me, that he never talks to me because he will judge me, judge me for being Jewish and it won't end well.* And strangely, that couldn't be further from the truth. He was a nice guy, still is, and I knew that somewhere in the back of my mind, with all the fear and the dread and the horror going on, amidst all the terror, there was the tiniest voice: *this man is your friend.* But I wasn't hearing that, I couldn't, not yet. There were visions of fire that followed soon after I named him The Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse. Not because I was overly religious (though talk of the Apocalypse scares me to this day) but

simply because I'd come upon the bible quote around the same time: *and I looked and I beheld a pale horse and the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hell followed with him.* I'd heard it on a TV show, The West Wing, to be exact and there was something about the symmetry and its beauty, something that seemed appropriate when looking at a face that beautiful as it was, seemed to wear the Mask of Death.

### **Dread and terror**

I saw him again, soon after that, in the same place, just standing there, talking to friends, blond and blue-eyed as he was. And I knew then, I knew that this wasn't the first time we'd met, that there had been another life before that, a life in which there had been terror and dread, all the terror and dread in the world combined. And I had been warned against that, warned by a good friend, one who had been there as well and was no longer with me because he now lived too far away: *don't go there, stay away from that.* But I knew I would revisit it, some day, things brought it out, always had. There was the song from my childhood that I heard on the radio, although I wasn't aware I was remembering then. A song that brought out stories of camps and people being chased and experiments on children and all around us there had been death. I'd known from about the time I met my dear friend, that if I ever did go back to remembering that, I would need a strong network of friends. People who were there for me, who could catch me in my inevitable fall. Friends that made me feel safe. It would take one hell of a very strong personality (and a belief in reincarnation wouldn't hurt either, plus the power of being able to deal with that) to keep me safe, to keep me from going insane. But the people I had been thinking of, they were too far away.

## **Klezmer music**

I honestly can't remember what I was doing on that website that day or how I ended up there, some links about Klezmer music. I never remember the really significant things exactly, but there was something about gypsy music, someone left a comment, something about camps and WW II and that made me pay attention. Something about the way the message was worded, something that told me, this person, too, is your friend, this person can help. Because I knew that my fear of the man had to do with the camps, that he had been there, a guard, and me the prisoner. It was the fear that gave it away, that intense gripping fear and the fact that whenever I saw him, I had a panic attack, post traumatic stress disorder and emotional medical shock all rolled into one. I've never had that with anyone and hopefully I never will again.

So I wrote some message to Marianne, I don't remember what exactly I said, I think I asked her if she could help me with this, that there was this fear, that her message had given me some measure of hope and that I wanted to talk to her. I was actually going insane. I know testimonials and critiques are all about how wonderful the person is, but the fact is if it hadn't been for Marianne, if she hadn't helped, I'm pretty sure that I'd be in a mental hospital by now. Because one more meeting with that guy, without knowing some facts, and that would have literally been that; the things my close friends had warned me about. I remember my childhood friend writing me a letter, telling me not to even go there because her neighbour had done it and she had literally gone mental.

## **It made sense**

The first thing Marianne told me (well, after saying that she would help) was not to be afraid of the guy because in this life he couldn't hurt me anymore. Then, she mentioned

something that had never even crossed my mind: we'd had *several* lives together. I'd been so focused on that one, the one that had scared me the most, that the thought that there might be more lifetimes had never occurred to me. But it made sense, suddenly a lot of his and my actions made sense. Actually, that's a lie, *everything* suddenly made sense. Because of a few other things that Marianne said, and mainly with the reassurance that I really had no reason to be afraid of him anymore, that I didn't need to dread him, that in this life he wasn't bad, I had the courage to tell him that. It had been at the back of my mind for a while, that little voice I didn't allow myself to hear in the beginning, but which became clearer after each email I received from Marianne, that idea really, that I needed to talk to him and tell him that. I was so caught up in the fear that I didn't register on the worst day of my life, when I saw him and literally thought that the world would end, the way he looked at me and kindly asked me if I was having a meltdown. But when I ended up telling him that he scared me, the next time I saw him, I was shaking so bad, I remember holding my phone in my hand and him looking at it and I knew then, I knew with absolute finality that I had to tell him.

Most people, the few that I told this to, with the exception of Marianne and two of my best friends, they laughed. He could have done it as well, walked away. But instead he took it away, he totally took it away. He told me he knew, and the way he spoke to me later, made me realize he was trying to calm me down, that he was trying to make me laugh, turning the fear into laughter. We became really good friends, even ending up at the same New Year's Eve party together. We became fast friends within less than 24 hours. In a way, it was as if we had always known each other, which, as Marianne confirmed was really the case.

5,000 + years of anguish and being on opposite ends and never finding any peace and quiet in our lives, always kicking

the living daylight out of each other (because in several lifetimes, or at least one that I know of now that I spoke to Marianne, a life she mentioned to me, I was a pretty bad person to him as well) but knowing somehow underneath it all that deep down inside we totally had each other's backs, that we decided we were the only two people who could take on each other's karma, who could teach the other the life-lesson that we need to, needed to learn, even if he doesn't believe in reincarnation, my newfound friend. And yet, he still manages to communicate things to me all the same.

Turns out I know Marianne from at least three lifetimes as well, and I'm willing to bet that in at least one of them, he was a (big) part of it too. Funny, how I thought it was my old friends whom I needed in order to feel safe, but then it was a new one, who turned out to be an old one after all, and one who turned out to be an even older one still.

# 2

## PLUTO THE BLACK AND GREY CAT – a WW2 past life story



### LILLY:

Once upon a time there was a little girl, she lived a happy life until her parents brought her home a tiny little cat, after which the little girl became even happier. The little cat was grey and black and the little girl promptly named him Pluto. Pluto and the little girl became inseparable. Whenever she

went into the fields not far away from her house, Pluto came with her. Often, she would wrap him up in an old headscarf or an old blanket and carry him with her when she went on her long walks. Later, when Pluto had learned how to walk properly, he would follow her wherever she went. Whereas this would have bothered most people, the little girl wasn't bothered by this, on the contrary. She would talk to Pluto, knowing full well that he understood everything that she was saying, even though people and especially the grownups would tell her the contrary. Pluto was her best and only friend, her steady companion. When she lay in the fields of her peaceful village, looking at the sky above and watching the clouds change, dreaming of faraway places, she would tell Pluto all about it and she knew that her steady little companion, lying there quietly beside her, understood every word that she said, even those that weren't said. She loved the village and the peace and quiet, loved watching the farmers go through the fields with their horses and the same horses, or sometimes different ones, trot down the street later, pulling all sorts of carts.

“One day,” she told her companion, Pluto, “we will go away, far away from here and we will never come back. I love this place but it will never stay the same and soon it will change and we will go to the big city even though none of us want to go.”

### **Evil people**

The big city was a constant theme in her little mind. For although she was only eight, she knew there was a big, wide world out there, and the world was calling to her. The big city wasn't the capital of their country but in another place, somewhere out West. She had sometimes heard her parents talk about it. It was the city in which they spoke the language her father loved to speak, that he sometimes spoke when he came over on one of his visits, when he wasn't busy

composing music. The big city where people always danced, in a country she called The Big Mystery. The little girl knew of this country because that was, despite the big lovely city, where the Evil People lived. The Evil People were worse than the monsters hiding underneath her bed because the monsters were something only she could see, but even the grownups in her little world were scared of The Evil People. Sometimes, when she was supposed to be asleep, and crept close enough to the living room door, she could hear them talk in the middle of the night, and even though she only understood very little of the strange language her father and his friends had suddenly decided to speak, she could intuit the fear and the danger they felt. She was trying to figure out what it was they proposed to do amidst the drinking and occasional shouting, when she felt something rub against her feet, Pluto, her constant companion.

“Go away,” she said sternly, perhaps too sternly. But she had vowed to always protect her little cat and these new dangers her father and his friends had suddenly begun to speak of, were too abstract for her to see. All she knew from the way the men banded together and from their agitated voices, was that there was danger ahead, clear and imminent danger and she would do everything in her power to at least keep Pluto from hearing it. When she snuck into the room they both shared together, she bent down to kiss him gently on his little forehead and he turned away in his sleep.

### **Black and grey**

The following morning The Evil People came. They wore black and grey from top to bottom and they had guns, and knocked down the doors. They told the little girl and her parents, that they all had to leave, that the entire village had to leave. They could take one small piece of luggage with them and they had ten minutes to pack but they would have to leave when the Evil People came back. The men went

from house to house shouting this command. The little girl's mother quickly threw some things together and marched her family out of the house. The little girl kept clutching Pluto to her chest all the way to the village square. There they were told that they would have to march up the hill because from now on they would live in the fortress. She had seen the fortress many times and often she had told little Pluto stories of it. One day, she had said, we will all live there and then we will go to that big city in the Land of Mystery.

"You see," she said clutching little Pluto to her chest as tightly as she could without crushing him, "we're going to the fortress after all, like I told you that we would be."

Little Pluto said nothing but merely looked at her out of his big brown eyes, not wanting to show any of the fear he felt himself. He too had overheard the men talk and had heard his father (for that is how he had come to think of the little girl's family) tell him, "whatever happens, you must stay strong, you must never under any circumstances show even the slightest trace of fear." So little Pluto, because he loved the little girl more than life itself, decided that he would be brave just for her.

### **Fortress**

And it was a good thing this bravery, because the fortress was not at all how the girl had imagined it, how she had said it would be in all of her stories, each of which Pluto had understood, despite being only three years old. There were no candles shining in the windows at night and no "rooms larger than Farmer Seidl's field" as his sister (as he called her to himself) had described. But merely rows upon rows of beds with people sleeping in them and things crawling around that made you start itching and twitching. Sometimes, as the little girl had said, there was music but not everyone was allowed to listen to it and when they did,

because some sounds drifted through the walls of the entertainment venue when he and his sister walked past, they were so sad and beautiful and haunting that despite their beauty he just wanted to hurry away. Sometimes he too thought of the Big City in The Land of Mystery, from where the Evil People came, but he couldn't see the same thing that his sister could see. And the priest in the fortress, who spoke of the other Kingdom, the one they would soon see, he wasn't of much help either, though his sister seemed to like him. But he didn't or couldn't see what his sister saw in him.

The man that scared him more than the village priest, who scared them all, even though his sister was trying to hide it from him (and also, if truth be told, he from her, for he remembered his father's words every day of the week, despite not seeing his father: 'why would you give someone the satisfaction of showing them that you're scared'), showed up on a cold winter's day. Technically, and he knew that because his sister told him repeatedly, it was still fall, November was in the fall but it felt like winter, with the snow on the ground and everyone's breath visible for all and sundry to see. She agreed when he told her that and said that from now on for the two of them November would always be winter. That winter didn't start on December 21 but on November 22, the date on which the Blond Man appeared.

### **Fear: the tall blond man**

The people he and his sister shared a room with, were told to line up in front of the train station at 7 a.m. sharp. His sister, mindful of their previous expedition when they had been forced to leave their village and their homes, wrapped an old grey coat around him and told him never under any circumstances should he take it off. The Blond Man was very tall and very scary. He too, like his sister was dressed in black

but contrary to theirs, the man's clothes were warm. A gun hung from his shoulder and at his feet stood a dog, a big snarling dog. Pluto was very scared of dogs, especially big feral German Shepherds and so he retreated as far away as he could behind his sister. A man, who had been standing with them, waiting, hoping, expecting, positioned himself slightly closer to them. But it was too late, the Tall Blond Scary Man, clearly one of the Evil People, had noticed Pluto. Just as Pluto stopped marvelling at the man's quiet way of scanning the assembly (as if - Pluto thought to himself although he didn't say anything for fear of attracting the Evil Man's attention - he was looking for something, as if he's looking for me), the man turned and looked straight at the two of them. Trying to be brave, like his father had told him to be, he lifted his little chin and looked straight ahead, straight into the Evil Man's eyes. When the big man came over, he nearly died inside but despite that, he stood his ground and didn't flinch.

"You," the man barked, looking straight at Pluto. "Over there."

Over there meant by the train. As the man hadn't looked at his sister, Pluto knew that the Evil Man didn't want *her* to go. And he couldn't bear the thought of being apart from his sister, so he pretended not to hear, hoping that perhaps the man would tire of the game and walk away. Humans, aside from his sister, had strange behavioural patterns sometimes. When he had asked his older sister about that, she had merely told him that she didn't quite comprehend it yet herself but as soon as she found out, she would tell him what she knew.

But the man didn't seem to tire of the game. In fact he seemed mad because Pluto hadn't obeyed him. Pluto thought of a word he had heard his sister use the other day, something she had learned in class (for there was school there but unlike in real-life school, here they liked being in

class): *incensed*. The man strode over to them and grabbed little Pluto by the scruff of his neck, all three years of him, and unceremoniously lifted him unto the train.

Suddenly, everything seemed to happen at once. The minute the Tall Blond Evil Man grabbed Pluto, his sister threw herself at him, kicking at him and lashing out at him, her light frame and shivering body (for she was only wearing a light dress) no match against his warm clothes and protection. And yet she was beating and kicking and screaming at him to let her brother off, or at least let her go with him. Someone inside the train was trying to turn Pluto away from it but he twisted away because, hard as it was, he had to see. The Tall Blond Man easily and expertly blocked her path, not letting her anywhere near the train. His eyes, as he stared down at her were full of intense hatred, a hatred so hard that it made Pluto shrink back and cry inside. But he also wanted to let the man know that this was only one lifetime, that he was remembering it wrong, that there was and had even been more to it. But he couldn't. The Tall Blond Evil Man had taken out a riding crop and even though he could have just flung her off, making her fall to the ground, he beat the girl on the head with it repeatedly until she fell to the ground.

### **Darkness**

At this, the other man who had inched closer to them, suddenly broke away from the crowd and launched himself at the Tall Blond Man. The gun shot sounded in the courtyard, just as more of the Mystery Men slid shut the doors of the train and there was nothing else but darkness. Pluto didn't see that the Tall Blond Evil Man kicked his sister in the head as he left, believing her to be dead. Nor did he see the woman who came away from the crowd, who quietly slipped out of line when they were told that after all they were allowed to go back to their quarters, picking up his sister with gentle, tender care, carrying her back to the

quarters, nor did he know that this very same woman, because his sister was tough and resilient, managed to nurse her back to health, staying with her all through the night, administering treatment, even going so far as to risk her life by stealing some extra bandages and bread and once even some jam.

Little Pluto rattling away into the night, towards the East, wasn't aware of that and the last thing he remembered were the Tall Blond Evil Man's eyes. Because as he had lifted him up onto the train, just before he had let go of him, the man had looked into Pluto's little brown eyes as well. And there Pluto had seen, for the instance of one fraction of a nano second the sadness and sorrow and pain in the man's blue-grey eyes. As if the man had wanted to say, *sorry little buddy but it has to be. Go, go and come back to be the man that you were meant to be, go now and let your sister too go in peace.*

In writing the painful story of her past life, Lilly gave the cat an important role because it was in fact her little brother whom she was writing about.  
(c) Of stories 1 and 2: LILLY

# 3

## THE WOMAN WHO FORETOLD THE TITANIC DISASTER



In 1998, my husband and I went to the movies. We seldom do (I guess in all these married years perhaps 10 times), but there was a new movie 'Titanic' that we both wanted to see. All that publicity around the movie intrigued us a great deal. We got a bit cramped, sitting in a chair for four hours watching the movie in a Dutch theatre, but we liked it. That was all. Something stayed clear in my mind, not from the movie itself, but from the mini-movie (short) just before it. A Dutch insurance company showed a mini-movie in brown coloured shades to give an 'old' impression about the year of the sailing of the Titanic. The film shows an old Ford

automobile which is being loaded with wooden crates reading: 'breakable, be careful.' The old looking car is on its way to some place. But every now and then, the crates shake and almost fall off the car. After a turbulent ride, the Ford drives towards a big ship. The 'breakable' stuff is loaded very carefully... then: the name 'Titanic' and the name of the insurance company appear. Funny story of course: these crates will not make it without breaking because The Titanic will sink...

In December 1998, I surfed on the Internet just for fun. I seldom do, but being a past life therapist someone gave me a present: a book by Reb Gershom about past lives and the holocaust. I wanted to see if there was more info on the World Wide Web. On the Webpage of Reb Gershom, I found some links to William Barnes, the author of 'I Built the Titanic.' I was intrigued... especially when I remembered having done therapy with clients over the years in which two of them told me they have had a past life on 'The Titanic', being band members on the deck as the ship sank. They did not know each other in this life, they came to me separately to do reincarnation-therapy.

I simply had to write William Barnes. I did not really know why, but the need to write was tremendous, so I did. When he wrote something in return I was so happy that I'd finally been able to reach him... and recollections of my past life in France came up again spontaneously. Since 1991, I had not thought about that past life anymore, but now in 1998 and still in 1999 more recollections are popping up. Bits and pieces of the period 1910-1918. We all remember past lives when we *have* to remember... not any sooner....

### **Past life of a woman in France around 1910**

One morning, I read the French courant/newspaper and I see a small picture of a big ship, called 'Titanic.' Then a fear comes up in my chest and my heart pounds. "Oh, my God, this ship is going down," I think. My hands are shaking and I

have to put down the newspaper. I see images in my head of people drowning in the sea. Fear comes up and the urge to warn someone. My chest aches in pain. 'Titanic' will sink, no doubt about that!

After a few moments, things calm down. I pick up the newspaper again and read the entire article. The big ship is not ready yet. It is being built. It will sail off soon. It is such a major project that newspapers already write about it. High Society can make reservations for the maiden voyage. During the next weeks I have terrible nightmares in my sleep about drowning people who cry and shout at their moment of death. Every time a small article in the French newspaper mentions 'Titanic', I receive more detailed images in my mind of the sinking at full sea. I cannot stop what I foresee. I must warn the builder of the ship!

I try to make a long distance phone call to the ship's company and ask to talk to the man in charge. In my very best English I try to warn about the sinking of the 'Titanic'. On the other end of the line, I hear a man say: 'You crazy woman, this ship cannot sink, you are crazy!' and he hangs up on me. That night I cry myself to sleep. Why do they not believe me? All those people in danger... I feel so alone.

One day I hear people talking on the streets and in the shops of my village about the sinking of 'Titanic'. It finally happened. I knew it was going to happen. I'm happy that I was right about it, but I also feel sadness. Why wouldn't they listen to my warnings? I feel sad and guilty. If I could have warned the builder of the ship, perhaps people would not have drowned. If, if, if... If only I had been able to warn properly....

## **1999**

In my present life I was finally able to contact William Barnes in 1999. He was once Tommie Andrews, the designer of the 'Titanic'. In my past life as a French woman I did not succeed in contacting and warning him. France was too far away from

the country he lived in to communicate about my visions in my dreams.

Nowadays I live in the south of Holland near the Belgian border and William Barnes lives in the USA. There still is a big ocean between us, but we were finally able to communicate about the sinking of 'Titanic' and to talk about spiritual paths in life. A few years later William Barnes became a therapist himself.

(c) Marianne Notschaele-den Boer

# 4

## YOUR CHILDREN ARE NOT YOUR CHILDREN



*Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you yet they belong not to you.*

*You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts.*

*You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, even in your dreams.*

*You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you, for life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday.*

*You are the bows from which your children as living arrows  
are sent forth.*

*The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and  
He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift  
and far.*

*Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness; for  
even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the  
bow that is stable.*

*Kahlil Gibran.*

In his book *The Prophet*, Kahlil Gibran compares parents to the bow with which children are fired into the future. It is a metaphor that inspires reflection.

The shooting movement suggests letting go from the start, holding on is impossible. The children have a goal of their own, they leave their parents behind and they achieve what these could never have aspired to, though in the worst scenario it might only be time. The parent is the instrument, which makes the materialisation of the next generation possible.

Just as I have wondered about myself, I have often looked at my children and thought: 'Why did you come? Why to us in particular, what do you expect to learn from us, or perhaps have to work through with us?'

For in spite of all those genes and those inherited characteristics, surely it is the soul that is the real personality, which has temporarily come to live in the house called body – to be a guest in the body, as the Jewish Midrash Rabbah expresses it. I believe the soul has a choice there, for its life has a purpose each time and its close family, its race and gender, the economic – political? – circumstances, perhaps even the geographical location, play a role in this choice. We come to learn certain things, to

work through certain relationships, to make amends for things we have messed up a previous time.

That is why I believe that we do not own our children and grandchildren, that they are not at our disposal, that we cannot direct and influence their lives as we see fit, though help and advice are a different matter. What I mean here is: pressurizing them into a certain direction against their will and inclination, projecting the missed chances in our own lives onto our children, trying to continue our lives in those of our children, instead of giving them the space to arrange their own lives and the freedom to make their own mistakes.

This goes for one's own philosophy in life as well, which hypothesis goes against everything I was taught when I was young.

I was brought up in the Calvinistic-Christian belief, in the doctrine of predestination, the unconditional forgiveness of sins, the lilies of the field that do not have to worry, and heaven hereafter. At the same time this meant that those who were not chosen were destined for hell.

My mother only got to know religion as an adult and accepted the Reformed dogma's with complete conviction and with enviable joy. All that safe knowledge guided her through five very difficult years of World War II and later in life through a lingering illness.

It was a very *exclusive* religion, as I realized at a young age. We had to attend a Christian school, we were not allowed to play with Roman Catholic children (later, when we lived next-door to some, we suddenly *were* allowed to, but it could probably not have been forbidden without trouble with the neighbours), everyone who was not Reformed – or at least a Protestant – was on his way to hell.

But not us, when we died we would sing in front of God's throne for all eternity.

In his book 'The Seville Communion', the Spanish author Arturo Pérez-Reverte calls the church – which in this case is the Roman Catholic one, but the exact same thing goes for the Reformed church – *a place where rules provide most of the answers, as long as one doesn't question the basic concept.*

We of the Reformed church knew God's will, we knew all the rules and all the answers.

There was no salvation outside our interpretation of the Bible and our Heidelberg catechism, but when during WW II a difference of opinion suddenly cropped up about 'Article 31', it caused a schism in the church. All at once there was grave doubt about whether those dissenters would be allowed into heaven after all.

It never became quite clear to me who had decided on all this, how they had known what was and was not allowed, for there were rules and statements that one surely did not find in the Bible.

Who had told them how the hereafter was arranged, why was it God's will if someone got ill or if my friend lost her father? Who decided whose side God was on when two countries went to war?

And especially this Predestination thing, how could that be fair? Surely then it made no difference how you lived, for if you were chosen it would always come right anyway. But then too: if you were *not* chosen, no matter what you did, you would never belong.

My own maternal grandfather, one of the most prominent and most loved people of my first decade, someone as intelligent, educated, polite, tactful and caring as he was, but who totally rejected organized religion, was he supposed to be on his way to hell? He would have been a successful Buddhist, he kept all the rules of that doctrine, but as a Christian he failed the exclusive exams.

It was typical of the Calvinistic atmosphere in our house, that this was not open to discussion. You had to subscribe to the Reformed doctrine unconditionally and it was a life-long sorrow for my Dad that I did not.

Though I did at first of course. A child believes only too readily what his parents tell him, and when his teachers – those guru's of the first school-years – confirm it, the minister in the church preaches it week after week from his carved pulpit with the green velvet hanging, who would doubt it?

I did in the end. In spite of going to church every Sunday, sometimes even twice, in spite of promises of heaven and threats of hell. In spite of schools-with-the-Bible and lectures at youth-club and Christian novels for teenage girls, everything with which well-meaning parents try to shepherd their children in the right direction. Sheep, bleating after the bellwether, the easy way to go, no need to think, taken care of for life and bound for heaven and the eternal singing hereafter.

Let's not mention the injustices and the crimes that have been perpetrated throughout the ages in the name of that same God. By church-leaders, who incited whole nations to inquisitions and burning at stakes. As the eighteenth century savant and politician Montesquieu said: *no country has ever had so many civil wars as the Kingdom of God.*

At school they taught us about the Eighty-Year war between Spain and Holland and what the Catholics had done to the Protestants. It was supposed to serve as proof that the Protestants, and eventually their elite, the Reformed church, were in the right. They became martyrs for God, seed of the church, they went singing to their deaths, we could be proud of them. The trouble was, those Catholics maintained they acted in the name and with the blessing of the same God!

It did not get better with time, history never teaches anyone anything. In the present day people still butcher each other in the name of religion, Protestants too.

Races and ethnic groups against each other, hatred and envy, another war. You are black and I'm white, you are Jewish and I am Caucasian, you are German and I am Dutch. And the most ridiculous one: you are of mixed blood and I my blood is pure – pure, after all those ages of inter-marriage?

The less we know each other, the more scared we are and the more we hate each other.

Outward appearances, those so-called chances of birth, the place where we were born, from what class of parents and at which moment in history, are those the factors that eventually decide whether we go to heaven or not?

Black parents in darkest Africa, never heard of **the** religion, away with you to hell. Muslim parents, enemies of Christianity (but why? Don't they believe in the same God?), no heaven for you. But good Christians become missionaries, they evangelize, tell everyone about their religion, to save all those heathen hordes from hell. They have done that throughout the ages, with St. Paul leading the way.

They paved a road with dogmas for those poor lost souls, straight into heaven. If as a woman you know your place and keep silent, as St. Paul told the Corinthians, and submit to your husband, as St. Peter exhorts, or if as a slave (!) you obey your master, even if it is a bad and cruel master, you are half-way there.

If as a child you think it is not very nice of God to let some people be born as slaves, you are told to keep quiet, which in retrospect is understandable, for what meaningful answer could a Calvinist parent give to that?

And so, even as a young child one gets a feeling that the world is an unfair place, that a loving God could have organized things in a more sympathetic way, instead of

putting people onto this earth with such unequal opportunities – and so many of them without any at all.

Until you get to know other world religions and realize that not everyone in the world thinks the same way.

When I heard the word *reincarnation* for the first time, read what it meant and understood that millions of people accept that doctrine as self-evident, even centuries before Christianity arose, it was as if a missing piece fell into the puzzle. Sir Lourens van der Post puts it like this:

*I often thought that one's life is rather like the night sky: suddenly you would see a star whose light had never been visible before, not because the star had not been there, but because the light took so long to reach you.*

As far as I am concerned that doctrine explained everything I had never understood, it was a kind of spiritual home-coming.

Whether or not past lives are remembered is not important, knowing that the soul returns many times to learn its lessons is enough. *Knowing*, for 'belief is the sure knowledge of things unseen'.

This knowledge changes ones whole outlook on life and all its aspects.

It makes dying comparatively unimportant, not more than crossing a threshold to another room. It takes away the fear of it – although not the fear of possible suffering that might precede it and not the grief and the desert of loneliness when you lose a loved one. It also defines your opinion about something like suicide or active euthanasia, for suffering, pain, grief, all the things that would tempt a person to end his life, become part of life's lessons. Reincarnation is not an *easy* way to go.

It is also not a second chance, as some people scornfully say, but a task: to learn, to work out relationships, to right

wrongs that one has committed. The way the world is developing, with all those wars and ‘modern progress’, pollution and over-population, I personally don’t like the thought of having to come back.

Knowing this is a spur not to leave the world you are going to leave behind in a worse state – and preferably better – than you found it. Relationships with other people gain a whole new dimension. All of a sudden ecological and inter-personal issues become a lot more important.

Not to speak of racial matters, for the knowledge that the soul might make use of a body of a different race the next time (for surely the body is just a garment, a temporary dwelling, a vehicle for the soul), makes all those races a homogeneous whole: a variety of bodies, which by their very diversity offer the soul endless possibilities for working out its karma.

My experience with Koos/Fagan (see ‘We’ll meet again’) highlighted this in all its details for me and influenced my thinking immeasurably. For as human beings we are obliged to keep thinking, we have to keep drawing conclusions: oh, but if *this* is so, then surely *that* follows! It widens our horizon, it affects all aspects of our life and especially our attitude towards death, which loses its stigma as the-man-with-the-scythe and becomes the entrance to our true home: we are not mown down, we are *allowed* to come home, because we have fulfilled our task. What a tremendous consolation for the ones who stay behind!

The Christian Church bears a heavy burden of guilt. With the official renunciation of the doctrine of reincarnation and the adoption of the dogma ‘we only live once’, the church-fathers of the sixth century unleashed all the ‘apartheid’ of later times, of race and skin-colour, of nationality, of class and caste and even that of the sexes.

All the tolerance that should exist through the knowledge that all *souls* are equal, that race and environment are own choices, that the soul exercises its free will in each life and that previous lives are a determining factor, disappeared. Racial characteristics and social circumstances that were chosen before birth, became completely accidental – and seemingly unjust – damning or saving factors. Suddenly not the soul, but its garment became the focal point.

The disproportionate importance of the body's comfort, the accent on the maintenance of the 'house' – elevated to temple-status – instead of the health of its occupant, the soul, and the morbid inclination to try and stretch its stay in the present body at all cost and in spite of suffering, are just a few of the consequences of this new dogma. The sojourn on this earth has become all-important and the home of the soul in its proper dimension is either denied or experienced as unknown and uncertain and therefore frightening.

We don't see a person of another race, someone in difficult circumstances as someone who might be us in a next life. We think: 'There, but for the grace of God go I' and so at least it didn't happen to me.

That the soul has purposefully chosen its environment, its parents, gender and circumstances before its birth in a certain body, and that next time I might certainly – by choice – belong to that other race, with all the possible disadvantages that might bring, is not taken into consideration any more.

That certain illnesses and diseases, even genetic defects, can be traced to events in previous lives, is not taken into account and if you mention this you get strange looks. Doctors are often baffled by such ailments and the poor patient is sent from pillar to post.

The accent has come to lie on life on this earth in a body, instead of on the existence of the soul hereafter in its proper

environment, returned from exile. We shout as loud as we can about how horrible the world has become, but we mourn for years over someone who has been allowed to leave it and go home, especially if that happened at an early age. 'He still had his whole life before him!' we say, instead of rejoicing that his lesson, his banishment was so short this time.

Our values have shifted and with our perspective permanently out of balance we all miserably muddle along together.

We only live once' - 'we'll care about that if the time ever comes' - '*après nous le deluge*' - 'eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die', those are the slogans with which modern man chases his pleasures, drives away his boredom, tries to keep his dread of what comes afterwards at bay. The prayer for 'the complete forgiveness of all our sins' has given way to the one for 'the instant gratification of all our cravings'.

The media stimulate those cravings with their glorification of the here and now, suffocate us with escapism and absolve us from any duty to think for ourselves.

Everything material in this world has become so all-important, that we fight to the death for the portion we feel we have a right to. We have forgotten Jesus' words: *what good will it be to us if we gain the whole world, but lose our soul?*

We spend our days in pursuit of money and possessions, and forget to think and to take care of our personal relationships, to invest some of our humanity, as Albert Schweitzer called it. The classroom has become more important than the lessons we came to learn and to go home seems to be the last thing we want.

I don't know why I came here, but I am convinced that I knew *before* I came, that I chose my parents and environment carefully with that goal in mind and that the people around me did the same.

Fagan's words: *'It would have been too easy for me if I had stayed with you'*, were the final piece that I needed in the puzzle.

That conviction widens our perspective, it imposes a duty in respect of conduct and relationships, and it places the responsibility squarely on our shoulders. It also gives us endless food for thought.

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# 5

## WE'LL MEET AGAIN



*And let us, above all things, never forget that in due course  
the dead will come back,  
and we never know when we shall see looking out at us from  
the eyes of a little child  
a soul we have known.*

*Let us therefore, making expression for the love that now  
may have no earthly outlet,  
turn it to the endeavour of making the world  
a better place for the return of those we love.  
Dion Fortune.*

## Late 1975

We consider our family to be complete: six children, the eldest 19 and the two youngest 10 years old, so we do not exactly plan to have more. But after all this time the famous contraceptive 'loop' is suddenly found to be fallible and another baby announces its advent. The whole idea takes some getting used to, not to mention the almost-forgotten morning sickness.

What does help is the younger children's delight. Our twins see this as the fulfilment of their greatest dream: to have a child in the family younger than they are, to play doll with like their older sister used to do with them. Even the older boys, out of the house and boarding at varsity, react in a sympathetic way and suddenly treat their mother with such gracious consideration.

These are the times when a child's gender is still a complete surprise at birth, but such a new project has to have a working name, so for the time being we call 'him' Koos. Within a very short time he is fully part of the family, even though he is still hiding away in his safe dark sanctuary. Very deep inside me I can feel him make small tentative movements now and then, as if he wants to join in already. We make plans for his arrival, we all adapt to the prospect.

Then, on New Year's Eve, it all suddenly comes to an end. The well-remembered heavy feeling and the pain in my back spell nothing but trouble. In the hospital they try to save what they can with injections and pillows under my pelvis, but the loop appears to have done its deadly work after all: it is found to be twisted into the afterbirth and has fatally damaged it.

Koos is born, a 4½ months old foetus. But a boy, even I can see that. Too tiny to live, but big enough to have crept into my heart.

Early 2000.

An article in the newspaper that I skim every night suddenly catches my attention. Perhaps the pictures trap my eye: children with bandaged heads or other injuries. The piece is all about a Children's Convalescent Home in Athlone and describes their financial difficulties and especially their shortage of personnel. These children are recovering from severe burns, some have aids, alcohol-syndrome or spina bifida, it all sounds horrific. There is a telephone number at the end of it.

All at once I get the awful feeling that this is aimed at me. Awful, because I certainly do not want to get involved with anything like this.

I stuff the paper into the old-paper bag, head into the sand. But it keeps me awake that night and the next morning I cut the article out and put it away into my desk-drawer: I must not be hasty, I'll have to think this over first.

A week later I phone the number from the paper and hear myself offering my services, for what they are worth. They have a shortage of nurses and nursery-teachers, I have no training, experience or even interest in these activities. But then I have brought up six children of my own and have 12 grandchildren by now – how different can dark-skinned toddlers possibly be? And I could manage one morning a fortnight.

They ask me to come for an interview, not to see if I am suitable – they are happy with any help at all – but whether I will be scared of the mutilations, the infirmities. So on the agreed morning I go for an extensive guided tour of the place.

What I see there is terrible, more awful than one could imagine. But I notice from the first moment that these children don't see themselves as pitiful, that they take each

other as they are and play – and sometimes fight – like ordinary children. Normal souls in injured or sick bodies.

The little nursery play-school is teeming with toddlers and a couple of older children. The noise is deafening. But as I enter my eyes meet those of a little boy, who sits at a small table right at the back.

‘There you are at last,’ he seems to say wordlessly, ‘what kept you so long?’

I am drawn to him like a magnet and sit down on a small chair next to him. Straightaway he explains that he is doing sums and asks me to help him.

‘What is your name?’ I want to know. His name is Fagan and he is 9 years old. Later, on enquiry at the office, I find out that he has t.b.-meningitis and is almost cured, after which he will be allowed to go home.

I help him with the sums, more children join in, we transfer to jigsaw puzzles and suddenly I realize that being useful in this place is not all that difficult. These children only need some love and attention, some guidance when they play, someone who will wipe a snotty nose, take them onto a lap or put an arm around them.

The next time I arrive, Fagan is watching out for me. He wants to practise his multiplication tables and it keeps us busy for over an hour. Then he suddenly pushes the books aside and starts to question me about my family.

Do I have children? What are their names and ages? And what about grandchildren and how old are they? When are their birthdays, when is my birthday, where do I live? He seems insatiable for seemingly useless information.

To give a new direction to the conversation I ask him about his family and he eagerly tells me about his parents, his big and his little brother, his married sister and her baby.

He wants to become a cricket player and to please him I try to remember some famous cricket-names. ‘Later when I am famous you will hear my name and you will remember me,’

he says seriously, as if there could be no doubt about it. The whole morning the two of us sit on the floor in a corner, unaware of the racket around us.

Two weeks later he is very quiet and hardly speaks at all. When I ask what the matter is, he tells me that this week his best friend has been shot in the stomach in a cross-fire between gangsters and is now in hospital. All at once I realize that that is the environment he will soon go back to when he is cured: the Cape Flats, where his parents live. I try to comfort him, but what does one say?

Other children want some attention too, we go and play, normal life takes over again.

But the image of this child has lodged itself in my mind as if he has become part of me. A stranger, but surely I know him? How can that be?

One night while I am sleeping I am bewildered to see him next to my bed. 'Why are you here? Why did you come?' I ask.

'But don't you remember me? Don't you know I am Koos? I could not stay with you that time, it would all have been too easy for me.'

I am sobbing when I wake up and I am convinced: our souls know each other; once, for a fraction of eternity, he lived under my heart. There is no doubt about this, it was not just an ordinary dream. It confirms too much that I have always known.

It makes our parting when he goes home a few weeks later – 'Would you please read to me just one last time?' – so very hard, for I know that this time it really is forever.

I will probably never be able to grasp all the implications of our reunion. They open such a wide perspective in all directions, that comprehension is all but impossible. No

more easy 'certainties', no stifling horizons, other – much wider – responsibilities.

But I have recovered a lost pearl and I did not even realize I was looking for it.

My little *laat-lammetjie*, the tail-end of our family.

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# 6

## GOING BACK



'I will need to go back soon.'

'I know, there are some aspects you will have to work on.'

No words were spoken, but the thoughts flowed unrestrained, perfectly understood.

'It will be so hard, I'm scared of going back again. The realm of the flesh is harsh, to be locked in a body is a terrible punishment.'

'No, it is not a punishment. It is an awful inconvenience, I agree, a restraint hard to be borne, but it is an opportunity, the only way to learn our lessons, to work out relationships, to *grow* spiritually. The one growth that matters.'

'I will be so alone. I can't bear to be parted from you for so many earth-years, they seem so long while one is in a body. If you went with me again it would be bearable – I think, if you could be there to guide me again. You have so much more experience, you have been through it so many more times. And the lives we spent together were better, I didn't feel so incomplete then as when I was alone.'

'Twin souls. It is a great blessing to find your twin, but it can be so hard when our earth-lives do not overlap. Think of the connections we worked through across the aeons. How hard it was to find each other sometimes, and at other times, to be born in some close family relationship, to be together from the start.'

'It is hard to keep remembering after the first few years. Life seems to get in the way, cosmic memory fades to the background. Even meeting at last is not always recognizing at once, you know that.'

'I know, it happened so many times, but I think I will go with you for this life, be a close family-member, be there for you when you need me. Would you like me to be your older brother this time? You might be a sister. I would be there from the moment you were born, at any stage when you need me I could step in to remind you of why you have come and what you need to accomplish.'

'I need to learn about my own strength.'

'Yes, that is your most important purpose right now. All the other qualities fade to the background if you doubt your strength. You have achieved such enlightenment over the ages, yet it all stands or falls with your positive thoughts about yourself. You need to be in an environment where you need to trust in your own abilities, where you can discover that you *can* achieve all you came to do. You need to learn to make use of that which you *are*, of what you have become through all these lifetimes.'

‘Do you mean that I have to choose a difficult life?’

‘Plain sailing does not teach anyone anything. You will have to be prepared to *use* your strength, so there will have to be occasions and relationships where you need it. We will have to choose our parents with great care. Times on earth are hard enough now, but we need the right environment. I will go first, I will tell them you are coming and after your birth I will be there for you as long as we both are in that life.’

‘I think I feel a bit better about going now. I know I will get opportunities to learn the things I am going for, but I hope I will still recognize them when my cosmic memory dissolves. I wish we could remember this realm when we are in a body.’

‘But you do know that there is a reason why we don’t remember. We would spend a whole earth-life yearning for our true home, we would never get round to accomplishing anything. We would feel miserable in the restraining body, we would resent our lack of freedom, instead of learning to make the best of conditions, of relationships, of deprivation and danger.

God in His wisdom designed the wheel of life this way: each life has to feel as if it is the first and only one, and we have to decide what to do with it and how to grow spiritually. He erects a barrier between our past lives and the earth here-and-now, to allow us to concentrate on the matter in hand.

Over the ages it has become gradually harder, as life on earth has become more focused on material things, possessions, comforts, visible achievements. The spirit has been pushed to the background there and through the veil that obscures our memory, we have to try and discern what is important and what our purpose was when we came.

That will always be our biggest question: why did I come this time? Once we have figured that out, it will be easier, we can then work towards that goal. There are occasional glimpses of memory during the first few years, to help us on our way, to get us started. All you have to do is decide to use the

strengths that you have built up and the rest will fall into place. It will not be easy, but it will be rewarding and it will be good to come back here. We will draw courage from remembering that at least.'

The time and the parents were chosen. The soul who was to be the older brother was born first. During the time just before the sister was born, he tried to tell his new family about this beautiful soul that was coming to them. He tried to enlist their help from the start, to let them know exactly why she was coming, what she needed to achieve in this particular life. He assured them that he was there to help her (it was hard, being in a body, to have to think in terms of gender now), but that she would need others to guide her as well. Not to prop her up, not to take all obstacles out of her way, but to be there to catch her when she occasionally stumbled, to kiss her scratches better, as people in the flesh tend to do.

He told all of them, the parents, the grandparents, but they failed to understand him. They laughed at his language, which was one they'd never learned, or perhaps did not remember. Some took his efforts for childish babbling, others got frustrated at their own incomprehension, for they realized that he was trying to communicate. And in the end he gave up. By the time he learned to speak their language, he had forgotten what he had wanted to say.

And so he got a little sister. There were some complications at her birth, but she was determined to be born and she managed it just in time. His parents were a little anxious beforehand, they thought he might be jealous of their attention to the new baby. They need not have worried, he was delighted that she had come, that they could now get started on this life and both learn the things they needed to learn, do what they had come to do.

She was reassured to see him. During their first few years she was happy and carefree, in the safe knowledge that he was here too, her twin soul, and looking forward to her accomplishment and eventual return.

But the unavoidable happened: her perspicacity was eventually damped down by living in the flesh, cosmic memory faded and life in a body became almost unbearably hard.

The testing time to find her own strength had come, but the support of the earth-brother and of the chosen family and friends around her would always be there. It was just a matter of remembering that.

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**MARIANNE NOTSCHAELE-DEN BOER**



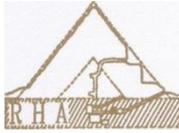
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