

Ethereal - Chapter 3

Doctor Kuval's offices were pleasingly different from the normal, sterile psychiatrist's rooms. They were decorated with an Indian influence, and had a pleasant, almost imperceptible aroma of mild incense. The front office had lounges instead of chairs, as did the doctors rooms, while the floors were covered in rich, eastern-style carpeting. Cameron found the whole experience relaxing, which he deduced was the intended effect.

As he entered the inner rooms, Doctor Kuval came forward.

"Good morning Mister Gates, I am Mahajan Kuval, welcome to my rooms."

The doctor was a slight, middle aged man with thick, black hair slightly greying at the sides, and he sported a small, Van Dyke beard on his cheerful face. He was obviously Indian and spoke with the appropriate lilt of someone from the sub continent. He extended his hand to Cameron as they met in the centre of the room and shook hands briefly as Doctor Kuval added.

"Please take a seat."

He indicated a rich, red brocade covered lounge chair, and once Cameron was comfortable, he made himself comfortable on an identical chair opposite, across a coffee table.

The doctor then came right to the point. "Doctor Bradley mentions in the letter, only that you are recovering from some severe physical injuries and have experienced a recent devastating family loss. I'm so sorry to hear that, but perhaps I can help. Do you wish to talk about this?"

They relaxed into their chairs and Cameron told him what he could remember about the accident and about the loss of his wife and only child. At Kuval's prompting he gave a summary of their happy life prior to the accident, and told him of the devastating feelings of loss he was experiencing and his despair at the certainty he felt that he would never get over it. He then finished by telling of his out of body experience at the accident site and his recent "flying" incidences.

Doctor Kuval listened silently, and when Cameron had finished, he spoke.

"You have surely been through a terrible experience, and you are correct, whatever we achieve here, you will never fully get over your devastating loss. However what we will be working towards is arriving at a place where you can feel at peace with what has happened, and be able to find comfort in the wonderful memories you must have of your family."

Cameron nodded.

"Yes Doctor, I do hope I can arrive at that place, and the out of body business and the dreams? Are these normal occurrences, or is there something else going on? Jenny said that you might be able to help to explain these things as well."

Doctor Kuval nodded his head from side to side in the Indian manner and replied.

"Yes Mister Gates, this will be a part of the process. Not many people experience these things, and if they do, such recall as you have is rare. This can be quite fortunate that you do."

The Doctor shifted forward on his chair before continuing.

"Are you a religious man Mister Gates?"

Cameron shook his head.

"Not really, I was brought up in the Catholic religion, which I think is good for setting your moral compass, but of course a lot of the stuff we are asked to believe from the bible, clashes with what I know as a scientist. So I find it hard to reconcile the two. However in light of recent events I certainly have an open mind where life after death is concerned. Science may well be able to prove that one day. Even Einstein had theories on the subject."

Kuval made some notes on his pad, and then looking back across at Cameron asked.

"Have you ever heard of a phenomenon called astral travel?"

Cameron thought for a moment then answered.

"Yes, the term is familiar but I don't know much about it. Doesn't it have something to do with the consciousness leaving your body for a short time then returning?"

"Yes. This is basically true; however it affects people in different ways. I will tell you what I have learned and experienced."

The doctor relaxed back into his chair. He seemed happy that Cameron appeared to be open to the concept.

"There are many who believe that each time we sleep, our consciousness is freed to travel on other planes of existence. They believe that we all travel when we sleep, but that most people have no memory of the journey when they awake."

He smiled across at Cameron and paused to gauge his reaction to this statement. Seeing that he still held his interest, Kuval continued on.

"There are also a few who maintain that they have mastered the ability to control this phenomenon, and can travel on the astral plane at will."

Again he paused to observe Cameron's reaction to his words. The topic of which he knew most people would find more than a little "X-File" in content.

Cameron thought about what the doctor had just said, it seemed far-fetched and a little out there but he reminded himself of the episodes he had experienced lately and asked.

"Are you one of the people who believe that we astral travel Doctor?"

Kuval clasped his hands in front of him and smiled. He was silent for a moment then answered.

"Yes Mister Gates, I am a believer. I have been studying and practicing astral travel for many years now. This would be the reason, no doubt, that Doctor Bradley sent you to me."

He smiled again and unclasped his hands, as he leaned forward in his chair and explained.

"Life after death, near death experiences, reincarnation and astral travel are experiences which are far more accepted in eastern cultures than in the west, although recorded instances of such occurrences are still comparatively rare. However my experiences of such things are first hand."

He adjusted his position in the chair and crossed his legs, bridging his hands in front of him before continuing.

"When I was a small boy, I experienced the memories of having lived another life, in a village many miles from my home. My parents were at first shocked and amazed but were none the less very believing of my recollections. We travelled to this village from my memories, and discovered that I possessed the complete memories of a small boy who had died in a farming accident many years before in the community. I recognised his parents and siblings immediately as well as his toys and other belongings of his. His family accepted me without question as their lost son, reborn."

Kuval leaned back in his chair and rested his bridged fingers across his stomach.

"Then as a boy of around 14 I found myself floating above my body one night, virtually bumping against the ceiling. I was so startled I fell and woke, but it fascinated me more than frightened me, and I remembered every detail of that event. There were of course subsequent events and I steadily learned how to control my travelling. Now through study and practice, I can travel at any time I choose."

Cameron shifted in his chair and gave himself time to take in all that Doctor Kuval had just imparted to him, weighing the information against his recent experiences. He settled then looked across at the Doctor.

"I must admit Doctor that this is all a bit difficult for me to absorb. If you had related your story to me before my accident, I probably would have dismissed it as interesting at best, and I would have sought a rational explanation, but now after my recent experiences ..."

He trailed off looking inquiringly at Kuval.

"In my opinion Mister Gates, you are most definitely experiencing astral travel or OBE as Doctor Bradley labels it. The question is, do you want to pursue it or would you rather suppress it?"

He leaned forward again and paused, but before Cameron could respond to his rhetorical question he continued.

"I can easily prescribe something for you that will give you sleep and suppress your awareness of travel. Or I can instruct you in the art of controlling your gift."

Cameron looked at the Doctor in surprise.

"My gift? I really hadn't considered it a gift."

Dr. Kuval smiled and again nodded his head from side to side.

"This is for you to decide Mr. Gates. If you see it as a burden then I will help to unburden you. But if you see it as a potential gift, as I do, I will help you to control it."

Cameron looked down at his hands as he considered, for the first time, that it could well be a gift. Since the occurrence at the scene of the accident and the subsequent advent of his strange flying episodes, and against his better scientific judgement, he harboured secret hopes that he had not lost total contact with Sally and Zane. That somehow these strange developments may give him some sort of connection with them. To the scientist in him he knew it sounded ridiculous, however through his loss and grief he would hold on to any glimmer of hope. He would pursue this phenomenon with Doctor Kuval.

"I'd like to look into it further with you Doctor. There is definitely something going on with me, and I'd like to find out more if you can help me."

Doctor Kuval unclasped his hands and stood.

"That is good Mister Gates, can you return tomorrow afternoon at 5pm? Then we can start."

Cameron stood as well and proffered his hand which Kuval shook warmly.

"Thank you Doctor. I will see you tomorrow evening then."

That night at home, Cameron at last could bring himself to watch the dvd of the funerals which his mother had left for him. She was right, it was a beautiful service, and the attendance was gratifying. It seemed that as well as his many friends and family, most of Nudgee College and QUT had turned up.

When the dvd had finished, he turned off the player and lay back on the sofa. As he had many times since returning home, he thought about the horrifying crash, then about his family in happier times, when they were still with him and his life seemed complete.

As he remembered their last vacation in the Whitsunday Islands, he smiled sadly and drifted off to sleep.

He slowly became aware of someone tugging gently at his arm. Coming to full consciousness he detected a presence beside him, a vaguely human shape but without features. The visage seemed to be floating beside him. He sensed that the shape didn't mean him harm and therefore, although he was wary, was not alarmed.

He then took stock of his surroundings and noticed that he was also floating, only inches above his inert body on the bed. He still felt no fear and was surprised at his own calmness as turned his attention to the other presence in the room.

"Who are you? Why are you here?"

The other entity spoke to him but the communication seemed to come mentally, not in spoken words.

"Please forgive my intrusion Mr. Gates, it is Mahajan Kuval. I took this liberty as a demonstration of what can be achieved."

As Cameron stared at Dr. Kuval, his featured began to appear and slowly became defined. He was so taken back by the transformation, he lost balance and fell, waking in his bed.

He sat up. *Shit, what was that? Was he dreaming or was Dr. Kuval really there?*

He rubbed his eyes with the back of his hands and looked around the room. He saw nothing out of the ordinary and relaxed back into his pillows. He pondered what had just transpired, tossing and turning for some time, finally deciding it must have been a dream, no doubt brought on by his pending session with the Doctor later that day. He rolled on his side and got comfortable once again before falling into a fitful sleep, one in which dreams found it difficult to make their presence felt.