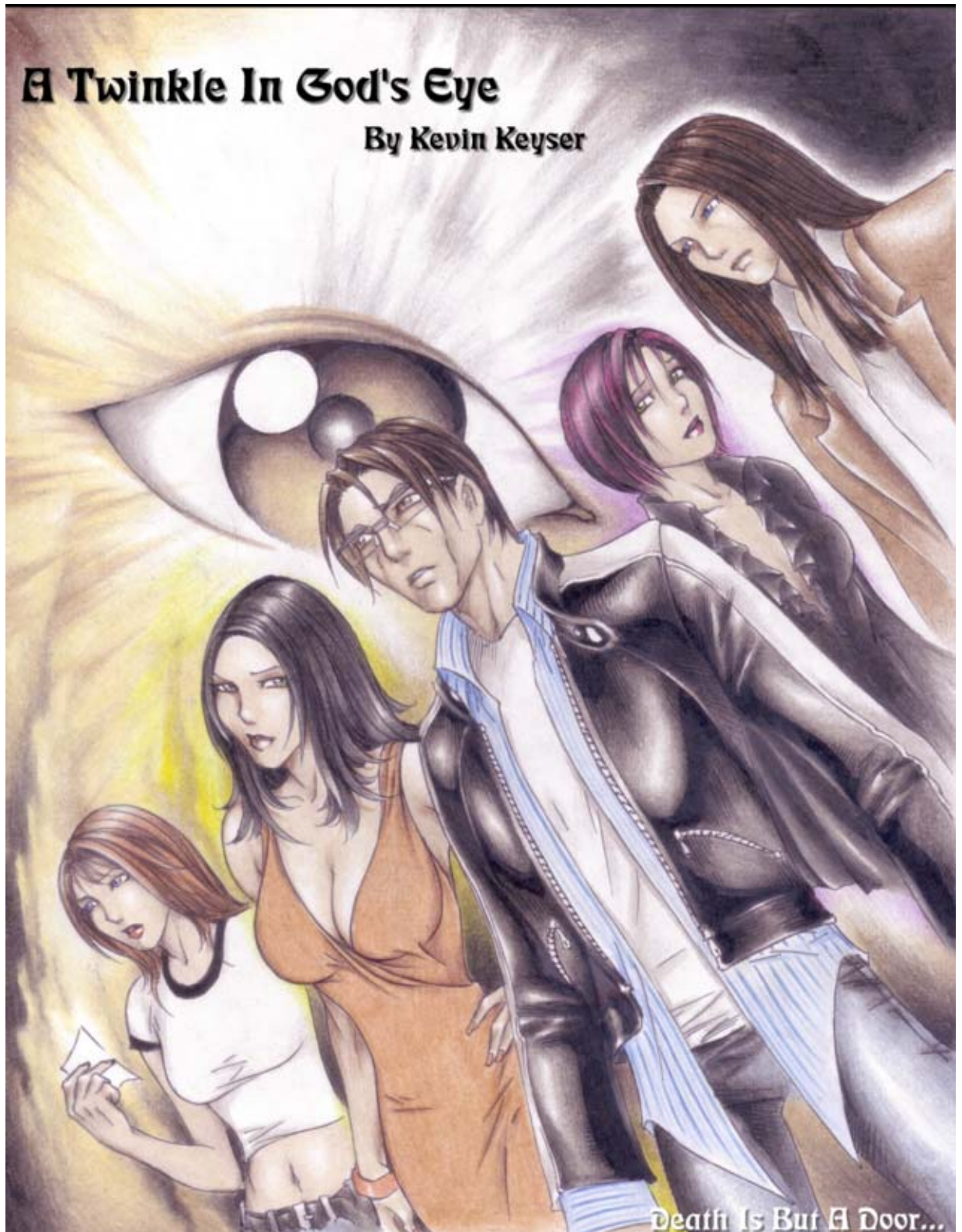


A Twinkle In God's Eye

By Kevin Keyser



Death Is But A Door...



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By

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A Taslasness Book

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Part One
Pain

"Have you ever wondered how you got to a point in to your life? How you end up in a certain situation and you had very little recollection of what got you in to this mess?"

"Weird feeling, isn't it?" A voice asks: "So what do you remember"?

"Well, I remember some things. Mostly things that lead up to that day."

"Ah, that day, yes, that started your path here all right. Say, do want to sit down a sec so we can talk about it"?

"Sure, it's not like I don't have any time anymore!" There is a chuckle and we sit on a bench.

"So tell me, what do you remember?"

"Well, her back...I definitely remember her back..."

"Hey, Pete! Where are you?"

"I'm here, Diane!" She walked in to the room, I swear in retrospect there was a spotlight on her! This particular day she was wearing a white tube top and most of her back was showing.

"Peeeeeeeete! I need help with this!" I was very eager to help Diane, I was very eager to help myself to her! She always flirted with me and we were alone here, on a blazing hot Saturday afternoon.

She needed a hand lifting one of the items we were counting out of the bin. It really wasn't that heavy, but it was awkward. We both lifted it and it shifted as we moved it. We dropped it and fell on the floor, me on top of her, my head in her stomach. We both started laughing, I moved off of her, but not too far away. She was staring me in the eyes and our lips moved together and then we moved in together. She broke off the kiss with a gasp and we rolled off each other.

We just sat there, on the floor, looking at each other, I think, in disbelief. My heart was racing. An effect of tasting such forbidden fruit! She moved close to me. My heart quickened. "I gotta go!" She picked herself up and ran out of the room. I, well, if I hadn't been in love with her before, I was now. I knew she wanted me and I knew it was impossible. Diane is married.

I tried to shake it out of my head, this feeling, as we finished the day's work. Neither of us saying another word to each other. Both of us catching our glances and looking away. If this was the worst that was to happen, I could of dealt with it. If it was the worst....

Monday morning came too quickly. What would I say to her? That's the only fear I had. As soon as I walked in I knew there was a lot more going on. Everyone became very quiet as I walked by, their eyes looking away.

"Pete! Get the fuck in my office!"

It was Jack, the foreman. I think all his veins were sticking out of his neck. I walked in the office. Diane was there crying. Then I see Alex, her husband who also worked there and he was glaring at me. The final nail in my coffin was the video security system, which was paused, showing me laying on top of Diane and we are kissing.

"Oh shit!" That was the only thing that got out my mouth before Alex's fist broke my nose. Looking much like a Jerry Springer episode there were people pulling us off of each other, a chair thrown through the shop window, and security running in the office, tasers in hand.

A taser shot makes your legs drop out from under you, just before your whole body goes numb. My head hit the desk on the way down. The last thing I remember hearing before darkness closed in was:

"All you fuckers are fired!"

I woke up in the hospital, alone with a broken nose, no job, and no friends.

Yeah, you heard that correctly, no friends. I'm really a bit of a loner. People hurt me and I closed them out. That's what makes the whole thing with Diane even stranger. Up until that weekend I could count on one hand the words we said to each other daily.

Of course I knew people, and had conversations with them but I really felt uneasy around *everyone*. I could only totally relax and let my guard down when at home with my cats. Oh, I feel sad for them, I wonder what will become of Willy and Mae, Hermes and Snout? Are they as blessed because they see or are they doomed? But I digress....

Over the next few weeks to two months I looked for work, but found only a job at the nearby convenience store that paid a fraction of what I made before. The bills began to pile up, rent was due, and I didn't have enough to pay it.

With no one to ask for help I was quickly running out of options. I decided to pawn some of my stuff. I made very little. I was very depressed, full of self hate. I didn't understand why this happened. So I thought with my dick for a moment, lots of others think with theirs and don't suffer this!

Then the weirdness started. I went for a walk because it was the one thing that didn't cost anything! This woman walked up to me and grabbed my arm.

I'm not normally against having a drop dead gorgeous red head walk up to me and grab me, but recent events left a bad taste in my mouth. "Lucky...lucky small child of innocents. She will soon be with you."

I pulled my arm away, it was tingling, it was on fire, yet it felt *good!*

"Who are you?"

But she was already walking away. She turned around and said one more thing.

"Blessed Be!"

She was out of site quickly, I didn't follow, I just went home.

As I walked through the hallway I saw a notice on my door, I knew then...I knew then the end was near. I had thirty days and then I and the cats would end up on the street.

For the next few days I tried *everything*. I even found a second job doing the dishes at the local greasy spoon. I got no sleep, except for the one morning, near the end. I fell asleep and slept through my entire shift at the convenience store. I woke up got dressed and ran down to the store. The owner took one look at me, still on my 90 day probation, and told me to get the fuck out of his store.

I had just enough money in my pocket for a bottle of whisky at the liquor store. I proceeded to get totally wasted. I woke up in my own puke, all seemed hopeless. I didn't care about the cats, I didn't want to live anymore. The kitchen knife set was right in view. I thought I would do a little dance, a knife dance.

A knife in each hand, I danced. I moved closer and closer to slashing my wrists. The knives were moving so quickly that they just flashed the light reflected from the ceiling. They flashed as I built up my courage to slash, slash my life away.

This time I did it, slash, slash, pain, and...the doorbell rang. There was no pain, no blood, no slash. How could this be? The doorbell rang again. I put the knives down, shaking my head, and opened the door.

Part Two
Pieridae

The door opened to reveal this very attractive 20-something woman. Slender build, flowing black hair, long fingers, glasses on her face. There must of been something wrong with the hall lighting because she seemed to be slightly glowing...yellow.

She smiled at me..."Hi, I'm Pieridae!"

"You're who? Purity???" I shook my head.

She laughed, "I am not pure, that's for sure!, my name is Pieridae!"

I shook my head again, "What do you want?"

"I'm your new neighbor, I was walking to my apartment when I heard you reading poetry out loud and it intrigued me, so I rang your bell."

Now I was laughing: "Poetry? You heard me reading poetry???"

"Yeah, sounded cool, **Flash, Flash, Slash, Slash, Aghhhhh!**"

I didn't know what to say. Was I talking out loud as I did it, or was it only in my mind that I slashed myself? That would explain the lack of blood and pain after the bell rang. She continued:

"You should stop by the coffee house at the corner one day, I work there in the evenings."

"Coffee House? There's a coffee house at the corner?" I shook my head again, I never saw a coffee house anywhere around here.

She smiled and turned to walked away: "See ya later Pete..."

How did she know my name, and what is she talking about? There is no coffee house around here! I put my shoes on and walked outside to the corner where I found a brick storefront with a sign hanging above it. The sign pronounced the name of the place.

"The Whey Station - Coffee and More"

I didn't remember ever seeing that before, I really didn't. The sign on the door said it would open at 6:00 PM. Guess they don't get a lot of business during the day.

I returned home, opened the sofa bed and fell in to a deep sleep.

The scream came from....somewhere, I woke up covered in sweat, and shaking. The room was blue, must be from the moon. The cats were asleep and, strangely, did not wake upon me getting up.

I walked past myself...what?! I turned back and found nothing there. The door to the bathroom was and wasn't open. I heard a laugh; a giggle and then the lights came on.

Nothing looked amiss, the bathroom door worked, and there were no more sounds. I was still trembling, but on the inside. It's hard to explain...

I took a quick shower and went down to The Whey Station. It was almost 9:00 at night, yet the place was alive with people. How did I ever miss this place? The coffee smell alone should have drifted through my windows to keep me up at night.

I opened the door and there was a whoosh of positive air pressure wanting to keep the door open. I walked in and slammed the door shut. Everyone turned and looked at me. Then I heard Pieridae's voice.

"He knows how to make an entrance, at least".

Everyone else went back to what they were doing.

"What can I get you?"

I shook my head. "I can't afford anything!"

She smiled, "Not even a bottomless cup of coffee for 99 cents?"

I looked in my pocket and found exactly 99 cents. "What a deal" I said and I handed her the money.

The place had a run down yet warm feel to it. The walls looked to be papered by some kind of red burlap. It was old and peeling back in some corners. There was a small stage with a small piano on it.

There was also a microphone stand set up on stage. People kept looking up at the stage in such a way as I gathered that something was about to happen.

On my second cup of coffee as I sat reading one of the free newspapers that were up on the rack I heard someone yell,

"He's Here..."

Some guy was walking up to the stage. He had a cup of coffee in one hand and a lit candle/holder in the other. The holder looked like one of those Victorian era candleholders, complete with finger ring.

He put both cup and candle down on the piano and started to play "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star". Everyone laughed as he tried to blow out the candle and it kept re-lighting. He finally gave up, stopped playing and extinguished the candle with his fingers. This drew a loud applause, I'm not sure because the candle was put out or because he finally stopped playing!

"Ouch!" He said, blowing on his fingers. "Well, that's a good start to the show!"

Someone yelled: "What show is that?"

He smiled: "Why that would be the: **I don't know what to name this damn poetry show, show.**"

Everyone laughed, including myself.

He then explained the rules of this show, there is a list that anyone can sign. If you get there early enough you can sign up to read poetry on the stage. You didn't get 15 minutes of fame here, only 5. But during that 5 anything goes.

A voice whispered in my ear "So what ya reading, Pete?"

I looked over to Pieridae who was sitting at the same table as I was.

I laughed: "I'm no poet!"

She looked me in the eyes, I felt my arm burning cold, nice, flame again:

"Ever tried it??"

"Well, yeah, but I wouldn't have the balls to read any of it!"

She shook her head:

"Never know if you are any good unless you read."

She got up and walked away.

For some reason I felt like I should try it at the next show, which I later found out was the next week.

A real young blond girl, wearing a wedding dress and mud boots got up to the stage and read one of the most touching poems I have ever heard. It was about a friend of hers who had died. Tears formed in my eyes, I wiped them away. Pieridae left the counter space and sat next to me again. We didn't say a word to each other, she looked in to me as if reading my thoughts, smiled, and went back to the counter.

This continued on through the night. Some of the readers had unique stage names and some used their real name. The whole evening was taken up with this strange mix of poetic styles and skill. Some of the stuff was very moving.

I hadn't known Pieridae for a whole day, yet I felt like something marvelous was about to happen, I felt like I should bring a poem to this place next week and read it, I felt like I knew Pieridae for a long time and could trust her. I wasn't worried about being evicted, I wasn't thinking of finishing the slash job on myself, I wanted more of this feeling.

It was midnight and closing time. The people filed out and Pieridae was bussing tables. I stopped to say something to her; she held her finger to her mouth.

"Shush, now! Tell me everything when you come back next week to read."

I shook my head: "How do you know that I will be back?"

She smiled a faint smile, but I swear she was glowing yellow again.

"You'll be back Pete. I know it and you know it. Now OUT! I have to clean up this mess!!".

She almost pushed me out the door, which slammed shut.

I walked back to the apartment, feeling happier than I had in quite a while. I looked back and, I'm sure it's because she had already turned off the lights, but I couldn't see the coffee shop anymore.....

Part Three
Typha

I almost didn't hear the doorbell. I was so excited about the next show, I was listening to music - **loud** and thinking of what I should do for my first "reading".

I turned down the music and opened the door. What a surprise, it was Pieridae:

"Who is that, U2?"

I remember smiling, "Yeah, **The Joshua Tree**, the song is named **In God's Country**. I have always liked it."

She just smiled and nodded her head.

"Can I invite you in?"

"No, sorry not this time, I just wanted to stop by and give you this, it was in my mailbox. It's addressed to you."

"Thanks!"

She turned to walk away, "No problem! You're coming by this week for poetry, right?"

I swear that she was glowing yellow again.

"Yes I am, but I might not be able to afford the coffee!"

Now I am sure she was glowing yellow, *bright* yellow.

"I think that you won't have a problem, Pete!"

She walked away.

"Strange woman." I whispered as I opened the envelope. There inside was a check for \$10,000.00! I couldn't believe it! Where did this come from? I read the paperwork and found it was my payout from my profit sharing plan. Since I never filled out the papers after being fired they sent it to me in a lump sum.

I was saved! I could pay the rent and all penalties before I was to be evicted.

I fell on the floor; it felt like a huge weight was lifted from my shoulders. I cried, I sobbed like a baby.

I almost ran to the bank, I deposited the check after making photo copies of it to show the landlord since it would take a week to clear. I ran to the landlord's office told him, showed him the copies. He didn't believe me, until he called the bank. After some persuading by me they told him that the check was real and they were waiting for it to clear. He had me predate a check to him, one week in the future and he canceled the eviction.

At least for a few months I was now ok. I resolved to bleed that check down to the very last red cent and to find a job.

I walked back in the apartment and instantly felt ill. I started to shake and sweat. I laid down on the bed and fell asleep.

When I woke up, it was dark out. I was still feeling ill. A voice said:

"Be careful before you drink any more of her."

I looked around and did not see anyone there. I turned on the light and it did not work. The voice, which sounded more like something growling while it talked, continued:

"She is life, you drink any more and you will not live and not die. You drink too much and you will live. Do you want to live, Pete?"

I woke up in the bright sunshine, screaming...

I sat on the side of the bed. What did all this weirdness mean? It started when that lady grabbed me and told me how lucky I was. A lot has happened since then. I wondered if she was talking about Pieridae, is she the one I should feel lucky about? What of these strange voices, dreams, and the good luck of having a check mailed to me just in a nick of time.

Perhaps, I thought, I should ask Pieridae about this. But I only just met her. I could only imagine her reaction to me telling her that I am hearing things. "Nutty as a fruitcake" she would think. No, I thought, I would keep this to myself, for now.

Perhaps, I thought, time would reveal the meaning of these things. Little did I know then the truth of the thought.

I realized that it was a day before the poetry show and I had not yet figured out what I was going to do, if anything. Then I remembered what Pieridae said to me on the day we met:

"...I was walking to my apartment when I heard you reading poetry out loud and it intrigued me...sounded cool, **Flash, Flash, Slash, Slash, Aghhhhh!**"

I took out my writing pad and started to compose.....

The next day I took a nap in the afternoon and then woke up, without incident, just as the sun set. It was refreshing to have no weirdness. I cleaned up and then walked down the street to the coffee shop.

It was already almost full. Pieridae was, obviously, very busy. She smiled at me when I walked in. I found a place to sit and Pieridae quickly took my order for a bottomless cup of coffee and a slice of blueberry cheesecake.

"Cheesecake, huh? Last of the big spenders!" She walked away. Laughing.

I then went up to the sign up sheet and nervously wrote my name in the 10:15 time slot.

I looked up after signing it and found Pieridae smiling at me, I said "wooo!" and she laughed.

I went back to my coffee and cheesecake. A short time later I heard the door open and in walked a woman. There was something very odd about her, yet this something was also very intriguing.

Pieridae looked at this newcomer and nodded her head:

"Hey Typha."

The woman looked up at her. "Pieridae, I saw more butterflies today!!!"

Pieridae laughed, the woman took a seat elsewhere and I went back to practicing how to read my poem out loud.

It seemed like I was doing this for only a minute or two, it must have been longer. The show was starting. My moment in the spotlight was just a little more than an hour away.

The candle gag must of been an on-going routine. This time it was the same candleholder, but a battery powered imitation candle was inserted in to it. The host noted, with triumph in his voice, that there will be no burnt fingers *today*.

Another cup of coffee, or two and my name was being called. Like the woman who walked in earlier I was dealing with butterflies, only these were in my stomach!

I made my way to the stage, pulled out the piece of paper with the poem on it and I read it:

"This is called Flash N' Slash

Want, Need, Love - Her.

Can't, Won't - Sin.

Blood, Ocher, Drips, Mind, Knife, Deep.

Moves, Fast.

One, Long, Streaking, Flash.

Slash, Slash.

No friend.

End."

I read it hard, I read it loud. There was emotion in my voice, tears in my eyes. I was physically shaking. At the finish I looked out to the crowd and for a second I could of heard a pin drop. Then they all started applauding and cheering, they were applauding and cheering **Me!**

Pieridae was doing the same and so was this woman called Typha. She was also glowing. Not yellow, like Pieridae, but purple. Deep and dark purple.

I went back to my table, people were high fiving me. I felt great. Pieridae brought me more coffee. She glowed yellow again, touched my arm and smiled. Let's face it, I basked in my five minutes of fame. So much that I didn't even hear the next few poets. My attention was once again drawn to the stage when Typha's name was called.

Typha must have read before because several people shouted out to her as she *flowed* to the stage. Her way of moving was not unlike a dancer. She seemed to enjoy each and every movement almost like she wanted to remember all of them.

"I saw butterflies today!" She smiled into the microphone as she spoke.

The crowd laughed. Then she became very serious and, well she was glowing purple again. She then read this piece about the personification of death. How lonely it is to be able to see the living world and not be able to interact with it.

She listed the pure joys of life that are unreachable to he who is death. Butterflies, kisses, dandelion seeds, and a host of others.

At the end, in a shaky voice, she closed the piece saying that to be death is to love, to love is to be death.

It really wasn't her writing that moved me, it was how she read the words. Intense and full of emotion. As if she actually believed that death could be a being who was always touching life but always apart from it.

I think that is what made the crowd rise up and cheer for her. I found myself with tears in my eyes. *I needed to know this woman.* She walked back to her table. Pieridae brought her some more coffee and then looked up and gave me the weirdest look. I almost heard something say in my head to stay away from Typha. Of course that made me even more intrigued with her.

Typha looked to be in her mid twenties. She acted like a 3-year-old and she acted like an old woman. I hadn't even met her and yet I felt like I **had**. VERY confusing!

The show soon ended, I looked around and couldn't see Typha anywhere. Pieridae talked to me for a while. She congratulated me on my first reading.

"So, what are you going to do next week?"

I shook my head. "I have no idea! You mean I have to do this again?!"

She laughed. "So, then, what are you doing tomorrow?"

I went back to serious mode. "Looking for a job!"

She nodded her head. "Well if you have good news come knock on my door! I'm in apartment 8. Now, OUT! You guys are pigs look at this mess!"

I walked out the door and saw Typha smoking what looked to be a clove cigarette.

"Hi."

She looked up. "Oh, um, hi there Pete!"

Wow, she remembered my name. I only remembered hers because it was so weird sounding. I made a mental note to see if I could figure out why all the new people in my life had such different sounding names.

"You're Typha, right?"

She smiled. "Currently!"

"I really liked your poem."

She took a long drag on the clove cigarette. "Liked yours too, lots."

I smiled. "It's the first poem I ever read on stage!"

She looked at the ground, shuffled her feet, "Won't be the last, but, um I got to go. See you next week, k-o?"

I shook my head. "What is K-O?"

She giggled like a little girl: "K-O is OK spelled backwards, silly!"

She started to walk away. I was about to say that I would be back next week when a car came to a quick stop, squealing it's brakes. I looked momentarily away and towards the car and then back to Typha, who wasn't there anymore...

Part Four
Choices

I remember that first interview, the one with the video store. The guy was nice enough, but I could tell that I was not what he was looking for. I was too old; he was looking for someone still in high school.

Then I walked in to the bakery, I thought that they were looking for counter help. Turns out that they were looking for a cook. I could barely cook myself supper!

Finally I walked in to the bookstore, just to sit down in the café and have a cup of coffee. After being spoiled by Pieridae's coffee I made a face at the bitterness of it, like it had been on the boil for hours. Then I overheard the manager talking to someone else. Turns out the stockman had just quit, just walked out. The manager had a problem, a whole truck to unload and no one to unload it.

I waited and waited until he started to walk away. I walked up to him, told him I overheard his conversation. I told him that I could get the truck unloaded, I was a certified forklift driver. All he had to do was give me a job. The guy was shocked, then I was. He told me that if I could get it done, then if I could get everything put where it belonged, that he would hire me on the spot. Not an easy task since I had no idea where anything went, but by asking the clerks and others I was able to figure it out. The guy was true to his word; he hired me on the spot! I had a job!! I would start the next day, work 7:30 AM until 4:30 PM. Not only did I have a job but I could still go to the coffee shop, read poetry, hang out with Pieridae and the others. This was great!

I walked back in to the apartment building, happy as a lark, if a little sore. There was music coming from Pieridae's apartment. Well, she said if I had any good news that I should knock on her door. So I did.

The door opened, she was glowing yellow again and she was smiling:

"Hey!"

"Hey, you told me to knock if I had good news."

"Do you?"

She opened the door further and motioned me in.

"I got a job!"

“Great! Sit down a second, I was exercising when you knocked, let me get cleaned up.”

It was only then I realized that she was in sweat pants and a bikini top. How I had not noticed this before, I have no clue. Pieridae was pleasant to look at, that’s for sure.

I remember slapping my own face; what was I thinking, it’s this line of thought that got me in trouble with Diane. I *could* have made myself fall to her side instead of face first on her stomach! I *let* myself fall on her. Then I kissed her...I didn’t want and yet I did want to remember it.

Pieridae walked back in the room, dressed in a white top and a light blue skirt.

“So, tell me all about your new job!”

I did, I told her of the several places I went that didn’t work out, too. She smiled:

“That’s the way it works.”

I looked at her: “The way what works?”

She moved very close to me, maybe too close. Looking me right in the eye.

“Life! There are no coincidences, everything happens for a reason. You were obviously fated to work in the bookstore, has to be.”

She was glowing yellow again. I can’t believe that I said what I said next.

“Do you like yellow?”

She smiled; she smiled a smile not unlike that of the Cheshire cat, a gleam in her eye:

“You could say that I do.”

She threw her hair back: “Let’s eat! My treat!!”

“You a poet, too, Pieridae?”

She laughed, still smiling like the Cheshire cat: “Come on, let’s go...”

We ended up in a Denny’s, of all places. Pieridae was obviously known there, because two of the wait staff greeted her by name.

I don’t remember what we ate; I do remember that Pieridae was really interested in learning about me. She wanted to know about my parents, I told her that they both died when I was in grade school, I told her about the many homes I lived in before becoming 18 years old and leaving that fucked up system.

I told her of my drifting from one place to another, never settling down, always being detached from people. After my parents died I really didn’t want to get close to anyone. First, I think because I was hurt and angry, later because it became a habit, a way of thinking that I had become accustomed to.

I couldn’t believe that I poured out to her, so easily, what amounted to my life story. After all she still was someone I only barely knew. Sometime in this conversation I realized that Pieridae had been asking so much about me that she had not said much about herself.

“So, where do you come from?”

She looked away. “You’ll never believe me!”

I laughed; “Try me!”

“Pete, it’s complicated....”

She was broken off by someone else talking:

“I learned a new word today, it’s PEEPS! Like what are you peeps doing here?!”

We both turned to see Typha standing there. She was dressed in an all black, flowing type of dress. Black lace connected the side of her dress to her arms, so when she held up both arms she looked to have black translucent wings. It was an eerie look, but at the same time beautiful.

A voice chuckles with laughter...

“Can I continue?”

“By all means, it just sounds so very much like her!”

Pieridae closed her eyes. “Hi Typha.”

“I’m so excited! All the things I’m learning!”

Without another word she sat down next to me and picked up a menu.

Pieridae looked down at her plate; “Sure Typha, you can join us!”

“I thought I did already?”

Pieridae looked at me and rolled her eyes, I just laughed.

Typha looked over the menu; “Oh, oh! I want a *Moons Over My Hammy!*”

I laughed; “That’s for breakfast.”

Typha looked pouty, “It’s always time for breakfast!”

I laughed, so did Pieridae, I think in spite of herself.

Pieridae seemed to be over her apparent anger so I turned to Typha:

“So, Typha, what are you doing here?”

“I work next door and just finished.”

“What, at the art supplies shop?”

“Yeah, I get a discount so I can afford to do cool art like stuff.”

“You an artist?”

“Some would say so – Pieridae?”

Pieridae looked at Typha, smiled.

“No, I like your stuff, you know that Typha!”

I started to pick up the conversation that was interrupted;

“So, I was asking Pieridae where she comes from, what city.”

“She told you?!! Zeke will be grumpy!”

Pieridae laughed as if a great joke had just been told. “I haven’t said a thing.”

This was getting confusing; “Who?”

“My ah, boyfriend, yeah, my boyfriend. You haven’t met him yet. I’ll bring him next reading, k-o?”

Now I was puzzled. “Where do you come from, Typha?”

She giggled; “Where or when?”

Pieridae laughed; “I guess we are both mystery women, eh Typha?”

“Oooooo I like mysteries!”

I shook my head; “Wait a minute, I get it you both come from OZ? Where are the damn flying monkeys?”

They both laughed. I looked at Typha. She seemed warm and, well.. um.. kooky. She sat next to me and actually made sounds as she ate, like the way she walked, as if she wanted to remember each and every bite.

I looked to Pieridae, shaking her head again.

“Ok, I guess I’ll find out one day!”

Pieridae just smiled and Typha, well I swear she purred!

I threw my hands up. “Ok...what’s next?”

Pieridae looked at her watch: “Well, I have to get the coffee shop ready to be opened in ‘bout an hour.”

Our eyes met, I reached over and touched Pieridae's hand; "Thank you for everything."

She grabbed my hand, I felt my arm burning with nice cold fire. Her eyes locked in to mine.

"Hey, my pleasure! Now that you have a job, the next one is on you!"

I couldn't believe myself: "Well, how about going to a movie and dinner after I get paid?"

Pieridae glowed very bright yellow: "I'd like that!"

She squeezed my hand, I had actually forgotten that I was still holding it.

I let go and knocked my drink over, the dark liquid spilling all over the table.

Typha looked up, her hand on my shoulder. In my head I heard:

"Careful, don't drink too much or too fast! You know why, right Pete?"

I remembered the voice in my apartment: "Be careful before you drink any more of her....."

I looked at Typha who was looking at me, glowing deep purple. She smiled and I felt, I'm not sure what. I guess it was like looking in to her, who was in turn looking in to me. I felt a peace, a kind of love. It's hard to explain.

A voice stops me mid sentence: "You know what it was now, right?"

"Yeah, I know what it was, we were kything, communicating without words."

"I'm sorry to interrupt, please continue."

Pieridae looked at both of us, seemed to know when this exchange of non-words was done:

"Typha, I have to get back to the shop."

Typha continued eating: “K-O! I’m not hurt if you have to go, I’ll finish up by myself.”

Pieridae smiled and I touched Typha on the shoulder as I got up to go:

“See you at the next reading?”

She looked up at me and her words were in my head again: “Yowzer! I’ll bring Zeke. TA TA for now!”

In the car I was laughing out loud.

Pieridae looked at me: “Inside joke?”

“Typha is quite a character isn’t she?”

Pieridae shook her head and smiled: “ You have no idea!”

Back at the apartment building we were about to go our separate ways, Pieridae to the coffee house and me to get some sleep for work the next day.

Pieridae was glowing yellow again. “I’ll hold you to your promise of a date.”

I was feeling all elated, I had a job and maybe more? But I also felt a warning, like a shudder. It was flirting that got me in to this mess, was it the thing that was going to get me out of it?

I laughed: “Did I promise something?”

I was surprised by what happened next.

Pieridae smiled, kissed me on the cheek.

“Yes - yes you did!”

I didn’t know what else to say, I was shocked and happy.

Pieridae turned to walk to the coffee shop. I just stood there for the longest time, watching her walk down the street and seeing her yellow glow move towards me, like smoke in the wind.....

Part Five
Decisions

Diane was brushing her brunette hair. As she looked in the mirror she thought for a second that she saw someone else. A tall, very attractive 20-something woman. Slender build, flowing black hair, long fingers, glasses on her face. She swore that the woman smiled at her. Diane shook her head, looked back to the mirror and only saw herself.

At the same time Diane started to have a very bad feeling about Pete. She thought of what happened that day, the one moment their lips touched. She ran away from him then, but the truth is that she liked it.

Her husband was a sweetheart when he wasn't drinking but those times were further and further apart. She was tired of his bullshit, tired of the fights they had, tired of the little attention he paid her, tired of the very bad or non-existent sex, and just plain tired.

Now the feeling that something was very wrong with Pete continued. She had looked up his address a while back. She found the little piece of paper it was written on. She made up her mind that she would go and check on him.

As she walked out the door a voice yelled: "Hey Di, if your going out pick up more beer! She shook her head and slammed the door....."

"Oh, that's why I dreamt of her!"

"Yes, Pete. I'm sorry I interrupted you. I thought it important you knew."

"Well, like I was saying...."

It was time for the next poetry reading. I was WAY tired, I hadn't worked in months and now I was going full speed ahead! I dosed off, but I woke up from the weirdest dream. Typha was smiling at me and there was this guy with wings. I didn't remember much more.

A chuckle again...

So I went to the coffee house, just in time for sign up. Pieridae was out of her mind busy. She smiled at me, brought a piece of cheesecake and a cup of coffee without even asking me! It was the exact thing I was going to ask for, anyways.

Typha walked in, followed by this tall guy with long black hair. He looked very familiar, like someone I just saw. At the time I couldn't place where I had seen him.

Typha plopped down next to me, the man sat across the table from her.

"Hi-ya Luv! This is Zeke."

"The man reached over to shake my hand."

"Nice to meet you."

"Hi, Zeke! Hmmm, Zeke, what's that short for?"

He smiled:

"Most people don't even know that it's short for anything! It's short for Ezekiel."

I smiled. "All you guys have such, um, interesting names!"

Typha smiled. "His daddy liked the name, isn't that right-o?"

He looked stunned. "Yes the, I mean, my father liked the name."

Typha leaned across the table and kissed him on the nose. "But we love him in spite of it!"

"Hey Zeke!" The voice was Pieridae's.

Ezekiel got up and hugged her. "And how is my Pieridae today?"

"Busy! What can I get you guys?"

They placed their orders and as she turned to walk away Ezekiel asked Pieridae something:

"Hey, Pieridae, how did your little task go earlier today?"

Pieridae turned back and smiled: "As well as can be expected!"

At the time I had no idea what they were talking about. So I decided to find out.

“So where do all of you know each other from?”

Ezekiel smiled. “Both of these gals do some part time work for me.”

I laughed. “Typha, your boyfriend is your boss?”

She turned beet red. “But, but, he’s a good boss.”

I laughed: “I’ll bet he is!”

Pieridae and Ezekiel laughed.

Typha on the other hand was still beet red: “Oh shut up!”

It was the first time I ever saw her angry.

Pieridae went back to work, Typha just sat not saying anything, she just kept looking down at the table. I touched her arm, she turned and looked at me, her eyes pointed down and all intense. Then I felt like I was hit by lightning. There was this sensation that traveled up my arm, to my spine, and up to my head. It wasn’t a bad sensation, it actually felt rather nice. Not knowing what else to do, I took a deep breath and looked her in the eyes.

I wondered, since I could hear her words in my head could she hear mine in hers? I thought on the words and then spoke them in my head; “Hey, Typha, don’t be pouty! I was just kidding.”

She smiled; “Apology excepted!”

She said the words out loud.

Ezekiel laughed and actually whacked Typha on her arm.

Typha looked pouty for a second, turned away from Ezekiel and looked at me:

“So, what ya reading?”

It was then I realized that I had left my journal at home! I was signed up in the first position on the list. It was the only slot that was open by the time I got there. Most folks do not want to read first. The show was about to start; there was no time to go get it.

“All crap, I forgot to bring it! I’m in the first slot!”

Typha smiled: “Well, I got here too late to sign up. Can I go up in your slot?”

I was relieved that I wasn’t going to be embarrassed: “Sure.”

“Great! You can help me read my poem. I was going to ask Zeke to help me with it, but he’s a shy boy and don’t like stages!”

I looked at Ezekiel: “Fine with you?”

He smiled: “Please! I’m off the hook!”

It was then that I noticed that Ezekiel also glowed. But unlike Pieridae and Typha, his glow was a bright, but translucent white. So translucent that I almost didn’t see it.

Typha handed me a piece of paper: “Here, you read the part marked Male. Ooooooo, remember to laugh manically in the first line!”

“You want me to be a ham?”

“Oink!!!”

Ezekiel shook his head and laughed. Someone at another table heard Typha’s Oink and went “Baaaa!” Someone else Mooed, someone else barked, meowed, and so on.

The host walked in, this time holding a flashlight taped to the candleholder with duct tape. He looked around and saw the whole place making like a barnyard and laughing. He turned off the flashlight and walked to the stage.

“This place is going to the animals!” Someone mooed again. “Well, now that you all have spoiled my opening, lets see who my first victim will be...”

I cringed.

“...Ahh, yes. It would be Pete”

Typha and I got up and walked to the stage; if you can call the way she moved walking! This was really the first time I had a chance to read what I was about to perform. I was still looking it over when we got up on stage.

She nudged me: “You start first, see the word **MALE?!?”**

She wanted me to be a ham, so I laughed like a madman and moved around her, making like I was menacing her:

Male:

I am monster!
Take your dreams.
Suck them dry!!

Female:

I am hope!
Take your dreams.
Heal them!!

Male:

I am darkness!
Cloud your life.
In gray!!

Female:

I am light!
Shine rays of warmth.
Brighten life!!

Male:

I am forever!
Wherever hearts beat in time with tears.
I smile!!

Female:

You are nothing!
Wither away when I shine my light.
Drive you back in to shadowlands.

Male:

Wherever the light must be the dark!
Wherever hope must be hopelessness.
Wherever you are I will be close at hand!!

Female:

And I will always be here to drive you away!
Lift hearts in that glad expectation.
Life is worth living.
Hearts are worth touching.
Dreams hold themselves true.
Monsters need no longer exist!

Note, Monster dies...fall down on stage: **MONSTER!**

So at the end I made a final growl and fell to the stage floor. The monster was dead!

The crowd went nuts, I stood up and Typha grabbed my hand and we both bowed.

Still holding my hand she bounded off the stage, almost making me fall off the thing!

“Oopsie! Ya hurt?”

“No.”

“Too bad!”

She stuck her tongue out at me!

Pieridae came to the table:

“That was great! You wrote that Pete?”

“No, it was one of Typha’s, I forgot my journal at home.”

“I see, well good job both of you.”

Pieridae gave me a quick pat on the neck, smiled at Typha and moved to another table.

I shook my head: “She’s a busy girl”

Typha, who had her face buried in the whipped cream of her shake, looked up:

“I’d say she is a busy as a butterfly!”

I laughed: “No not a butterfly, a bee. Busy as a bee.”

Typha looked all pouty: “I like **mine** better!”

Ezekiel shook his head just as someone shushed us. It seemed that we were getting a little loud.

Typha got up. “I’m going out for a smoke.” Ezekiel got up to go with her. I just sat there and then thought of something:

“Hey, Typha; you ought to watch how much you smoke, those clove cigarettes could kill you one day!”

Both Typha and Ezekiel laughed. In my head was Typha’s voice: “Don’t think so!”

I started to say in my head “Strange Girl” but I realized that she could hear it *and* that I had been saying it a lot lately!

“I thought they would never leave!”

Pieridae was sitting where Typha was only a moment ago.

“You and Typha don’t get along well, do you?”

Pieridae actually blushed!

“Is it that obvious?”

I only shook my head.

“Well her perspective on some things is totally different then mine, so sometimes we clash.”

“Sounds like you have known each other a while?”

Pieridae laughed: “You could say that we are related.”

I was surprised by this: “She’s your sister?!”

“No, but we are family, in a way....”

Someone called her name, looking for a refill or something.

I laughed: “No rest for the wicked, eh?”

“Aghhh! My feet are killing me! See ya....”

Typha walked back in, without Ezekiel.

“My boy is not the poetry type!”

Typha plopped down next to me. She was glowing purple again.

I got up the nerve to ask her about the glow all three of them had.

Pieridae - Yellow, Typha - Purple, Ezekiel – White.

She smiled and in my head I heard:

“I can’t tell you now. I promise to tell you one day, I don’t break my promises Pete!”

She rubbed my arm for a second, got up from the table and said aloud:

“I gotta go! See you later, k-o?”

“Ok, see ya later.”

As Typha got up to leave a thought struck me.

“Hey Typha!” I got up to follow her out.

She turned to look at me, smiled and we were outside.

“What’s up, Doc...um... Pete?”

“You know, since I met you guys and started hanging out here I feel more happy than I ever did before...”

Typha’s purple glow was intense, it seemed to almost wrap around me.

“...I never was this comfortable with anyone, never had any real friends, yet I feel like I have known both you and Pieridae forever. It’s so very weird. Say, I’m not going to wake up one day and realize that this is all a dream, am I?”

Typha smiled and her eyes actually welled up with tears.

“No Luv, this isn’t a dream!”

With that she kissed me on the forehead, turned and walked away....

I walked back in the coffee shop. Sat down and watched the rest of the show in silence. After it was all over, when everyone else started to funnel out, I stayed seated.

Pieridae smiled at me, waited for everyone else to leave, locked the door with me still inside and sat at the table.

“You’re awful quiet.”

I told her what I said to Typha and Typha’s reaction to it.

Pieridae smiled and I swear she got a little choked up too. She swirled her dishcloth around on the table, looking down at it.

“Pete, this is no dream. I’m as real as you are. If I wasn’t then my feet wouldn’t hurt so damn much!”

We both laughed

“Say, I get paid on Friday. Where do you want to go?”

Pieridae got up, threw the dishcloth on another table. “Someplace where someone else does all the work!”

I nodded my head: “I think I know just the place, I used to walk past it on the way to where I worked all those years. I was in there once for lunch. I think you will like it.”

She smiled. “If it doesn’t involve being on my feet, I’ll love it!”

“Do you work Saturday night?”

“Nope, the owner’s daughter works then.”

“Cool, so Saturday about 7:00?”

“Great!”

“I have no idea what movies are playing.”

Pieridae smiled: “We’ll figure it out then.”

I nodded my head: “Hey, Pieridae, who is the owner?”

“Oh, he’s the host of the poetry show!”

I nodded my head: “I got to get some sleep, I work tomorrow!”

“Oh, poor baby! Thought you wanted to get a job!”

I smiled “Sure did! It just takes a while getting used to working again,”

We got up and moved towards the door. She opened it and I walked out in to a rainstorm.

Pieridae laughed: “Walk between the raindrops, Pete!”

I laughed as she closed the door behind me: “See you Saturday!”

I ran to the apartment. As I got to the door there was a flash of lightening. I thought that there was someone in the doorway, some one with wings! There was another flash; I looked again, saw nothing, and decided that it must have been my imagination. A tired mind that had been through quite a bit of late.

I walked into the apartment, fell down on my bed, nearly crushing Mae the cat and fell in to a deep sleep.

I remember dreaming about Diane, she was looking for me. I remember thinking at the time that it was so lifelike. Little did I know that she actually was looking for me at the same ‘time’ I was dreaming.

The rest of the week went without incident. I got more used to what I was doing at the bookstore, I saw Pieridae once in the hall. We talked for a second or two and went on our way. There would be plenty of time to talk on Saturday.

Saturday came a lot sooner then it should have! It seemed that the days sped up until that day. Then the hours moved slowly until 7:00 when I knocked on her door:

“Just a minute!”

I heard the sound of high heels clacking back and forth and finally to the door.

Pieridae was dressed in a long form fitting black dress that had little glass beads on its surface. The result was stunning; she shimmered like a beautiful black diamond.

“Hey! You’re just on time.”

I smiled; “Well, it’s a long walk!”

We both laughed.

“You’re beautiful!” I couldn’t believe that I actually said that. Pieridae smiled and we were out the door before I was all the way in!

Funny thing is I remember we went to a movie, but I don’t remember what it was! I remember the walk to the restaurant, though. We were both singing a song, I guess it was from the movie. We ended up at the Quintessence restaurant.

Quintessence was this small out of the way place that I went to once for lunch. Poised right next to the railroad tracks it wasn’t a quiet place but it had a nice “Down-To-Earth” feeling to it.

We sat in the back corner; it was the only table that was open. As we looked over the menu, a jazz band took to the stage and started playing their first set.

Cool jazz played as we ate, talked, laughed. Pieridae was really enjoying herself. She was on her second drink, a blue..um, something.

“It’s so nice to have a night off! You have no idea how long it’s been since I could enjoy myself!”

I laughed; “But you love the coffee house!”

“Yeah, but it gets old and my feet hurt!”

I shook my head and made like I was talking to her feet; “Well, no hurting tonight!”

She laughed so hard I thought she was going to bust a gut.

I touched her hand, she held it and stroked it with her other hand. The rest of the night just blended in to one soft and happy memory. Next thing I knew they were closing the place. I swear, it felt like only moments went by but it was 2:00 AM!

Quintessence was only about a mile from the apartment building so since we both had a little too much to drink we decided to walk back and pick up her car in the morning.

She decided to run the last block:

“Catch me if you can!”

I took up the challenge. I ran my ass off, caught her just as we got to the door of the building.

I touched the door first; “I win!”

“No you don’t!”

“Yes, I do! I touched the door!”

“Ok, you win! Want your prize?”

Without waiting for me to say anything she kissed me. Then she ran up the stairs. My heart was beating hard and it wasn’t from the run!

We got to her apartment.

“Ok, well good night, then!”

“Don’t you want to come in and rest before the long trip home?!”

I laughed: “Ok”

Pieridae put on some music and sat down next to me on the couch.

“That was fun! Let’s do this again!”

All I did was shake my head. I really liked Pieridae; I thought she was beautiful, I thought she had all the qualities of someone I would want to be with. I looked forward to seeing her as often as possible.

I had been alone so long. Then I became infatuated with Diane for, what, years? I finally acted on it, with terrible results.

Did I want to risk things going very wrong again?

I wanted to take things slow, but they were happening quickly. Pieridae looked me right in the eyes, her face only inches from mine. She smiled, her bright yellow glow wrapping around me and going *in* me, I think.

I ran my hand through her long hair. She touched my face and then her lips touched mine.

She moved into me, her mouth rising to meet mine as our lips touched over and over again.

We did this for quite some time. Then she laughed, got up and undid the straps on her dress and let it fall to the floor.

“I think I like you, yes I do!”

I still didn't know what my next move would be. My God she was beautiful, though.

She sat down, turned her back to me and asked me to un-strap her bra.

I just sat there.

“Come on, got cold feet?”

“Pieridae, you are the most beautiful woman I have ever known.”

“I know! So, un-do the strap already!!”

“I can't.”

She turned to face me.

“Why!?”

I knew why, but I didn’t know how to say it.

“I don’t know.”

“Drink my love, Pete. I’ll give this only to you.”

I remembered the voice again: “Be careful before you drink any more of her.....”

Now I was confused and frightened.

“Pieridae, I’ve told you about Diane and everything that happened from that. I want to take this slow, I don’t want to hurt you, or myself!”

She smiled, her hand rubbing my arm.

“You won’t hurt me, Pete. You’re a good man, a man who just has had no experience with love. You’ve locked your heart away, let me be the key that opens it!”

I took her hand in mine; “I really want to know you, everything about you. I want to share things with you that I never have shared with anyone.”

She kissed me; “There is nothing more to know. I want to give this part of myself to you. Please let me give this to you. My love is life, Pete. Drink my love, drink your life. If you can’t do this I understand, but there will never be another time that we can be together.”

I looked at her. Most men would have taken her at the first opportunity. Most men would have let her go the day after. I wanted to do neither. What I wanted seemed as distant as Pluto and as close as her breasts.

I kissed her on the forehead, touched her hair and got up.

She still didn’t look angry. She didn’t look upset. She just smiled at me.

“You’ve decided, then...”

“I’m sorry Pieridae.”

“So am I, Pete. I wish I could have given you more.”

Her yellow glow stopped as I turned to walk out the door.

As the door shut I felt something that I hadn't felt since I met her. I felt alone, empty. Had I just made the biggest mistake of my life?

“Pete, I need to stop you now.”

“Ok.”

“I want to show you what happened as you walked out the door to Pieridae's apartment. Look in my eyes, Pete.”

“Oh, I'm dizzy!”

“It will pass.”

“I see you and Typha...”

Typha was standing next to Ezekiel and they were both looking in to a globe of white light that was coming out of his hand, which he was holding out from his body.

In the globe of white light I saw me leaving Pieridae's apartment. Typha rested her head on Ezekiel's shoulder. She was crying, she looked up to Ezekiel who took the same hand that was projecting the globe of white light and pointed down.

Typha disappeared and then she was on the street my apartment building was on. She was again dressed in that dress that made her look to have black translucent wings.

Then I saw Diane, who was just about two blocks from my apartment building. Typha turned transparent and walked next to Diane. Diane didn't see her. Typha bowed her head and blew on Diane's hand. The piece of paper that Diane was holding flew out of her hand and in to Typha's. Diane looked frantically for it and couldn't find it. She looked in the street and on the grass. Finally she gave up. She looked around as if she was trying to remember what was written on the piece of paper. She walked right past my apartment building and out of view.

Typha, still translucent, spread her “wings” and looked to be crying again. She held up the piece of paper, and it flamed in her hand. She brushed the cinders from her hand and disappeared.

“Why was Typha crying?”

“It hurts her each time she has to do it.”

“How many times would that be?”

“Does it matter?”

“I suppose not.”

“It’s one of the reasons she made her decision, Pete.”

“I figured. So can I continue with the story?”

“By all means!”

I went to bed, had no dreams, woke up and went to work. Several days went by, I walked past Pieridae’s apartment on the way to or from work, hoping to see her. She was never around. I called her a couple times and the phone just rang and rang. I decided that she was just pissed at me and I would see her at the next poetry reading.

The day of the next reading I had to work late. A last minute shipment of some hot selling books came in and they wanted them put on the shelves for the next morning.

I got home as fast as possible, showered, grabbed my journal and was out the door. As I walked in the coffee shop I saw Typha and Ezekiel sitting at a table. I didn’t see Pieridae anywhere; I decided that she had to be in the back room. I joined Typha and Ezekiel and looked around nervously to see Pieridae.

Typha smiled and Ezekiel greeted me with what seemed to be his normal cool reserved self.

I heard Typha’s words in my head: “Hey, Pete! I need to talk to you about.....”

She was interrupted by someone speaking to me. I turned and saw the owner's daughter standing next to the table.

"Can I take your order?"

My heart was racing, I swear that Typha cringed.

"Um, where's Pieridae?"

"Oh, she quit two days ago."

"She quit?!"

Typha reached for my hand, but I was already up and running back to the apartment building.

I ran through the door and up the stairs.

I found Pieridae's door unlocked. I opened it and I walked in. The apartment was empty! There was no trace of her, nothing left.

I paced around the apartment. I was full of sadness and anger. I was trembling.

"My God, my God, what have I done!"

Typha walked in the room.

"She had to go, Pete."

I turned to Typha.

"It's my fault! I hurt her, I drove her away!"

"No, Luv, it's not your fault. It was just time for her to go!"

I got angry, I swore, I kicked the wall, I slammed the bedroom door.

Typha just stood there looking stoic and glowing a deep dark purple.

"I had been so happy and now it's all ending!"

Typha took me in her arms, her purple glow encircling me. I felt a warmth, a comfort, a love.

“No, Pete, it’s not ending: It’s beginning!”

I started to sob like a two year old, my forehead on Typha’s shoulder.

“You’re not going to leave too, are you?”

“No, Luv. You’re stuck with me and Ezekiel for as long as you want!”

She continued to hold me as I cried and let all my grief out. All of it, not only my loss of Pieridae, but everything else. Typha brushed my hair with her hand. Kissed me on the head; “Shush, shush, now. It’s going to be alright! I promise you, Pete, it’s going to be alright.....”

Part Six
Transformations

"I'm tired of it, Zeke. I want to know these new things that I see; I want to be part of them. So much has changed since my last time. K-o?"

"You want to go?"

Typha rested her head on Ezekiel's shoulder. He stroked her hair. She looked up to him and smiled.

"For a while, maybe. It would be nice to take a vacation for one or two, ya know?"

"I know it's hard on you, Typha. You give so much of yourself."

"Love hurts, k-o? I can't help but love."

"Don't cry!"

Typha kicked the ground. Then the ground turned to sand, then it turned to a lush lawn. She sat on a tree stump, which became the lower part of a column, like the ones in Greek or Roman ruins.

"I'll miss you Zeke! I'll miss everything. But I have to go, I have to be!"

"I know, we've been through this before Typha."

"Can I still have my job back after vacation?"

"You know that it will always be waiting for you when you return."

"K-o, when I finish with Pete I'll go on vacation!"

"Ah, Pete. How is he doing?"

"He's, well, he's Pete!"

Ezekiel laughed; "Are you hoping that he will return during your vacation?"

"Well, I....Look a duck!"

Ezekiel turned, he realized that there was nothing there, he shook his head, started to laugh very hard, turned back, and Typha was gone....

“So that’s when she told you?”

The white globe of light that Ezekiel was projecting from his hand disappeared.

“In words, but she had been restless for a while.”

“She can really come back at any time?”

“Of course, as can all of you.”

“So, I can...”

“Pete, before you ask me anymore. It’s important that you finish your story first, Ok?”

“Don’t you mean, k-o?”

Ezekiel laughed, shook his head; “She’s wearing off on you!”

Ok, so you remember that Pieridae left?”

“I was there!”

“Yeah, you were....”

I didn’t feel like doing anything the next day, but I got up anyway and went to work. Then the next day came and I did the same, then the next day, and so on. Gradually I felt less sad and more inclined to do something besides work and sleep.

Typha was a big help, she even cooked dinner one night and brought it to my apartment. She was concerned that I had not been eating. After tasting her food, well...I didn’t want to eat! She was obviously trying very hard to help me, to be a friend so I ate it and said it was good.

Then there was the time she invited me over to have dinner with her and Ezekiel....

“Say, how do I talk in past tense about you when I’m telling this story too you?”

“You’re doing fine, Pete.”

“Ok, so any way’s....”

I had never been to Typha’s house before. I can’t believe how big the place was! How could she afford such a place working in an art supply shop?! There were statues and folk art all in the yard. I could tell most of the art was hers. I don’t know how I knew, I just did. There were whirligigs of all types painted in bright, almost fluorescent, colors. She had statues of angels, demons, and animals. Ivy had grown on many statues, but not the one in the middle of the yard. It was a statue of an angel, his wings outstretched, a butterfly on his left hand and what looked to be a cattail plant in his right. It was odd, but for some reason it struck me as being familiar and quite beautiful.

I knocked on the door, I heard Typha’s gliding walk as she came to the door.

“It’s the Pete man!”

She hugged me; “Let me show you around the house.”

We toured the house and then Ezekiel showed up with dinner. Two shopping bags full of those little White Castle hamburgers! Typha laughed, kissed him, shrugged: “He knows my cooking!”

Later in the night we sat around the table playing some weird card game. Typha had just won for the third time! She turned to me as Ezekiel shuffled the cards.

“You ever going back to poetry?”

I looked down at the table; “Why, the place makes me sad.”

“Lots of things make me sad; I still do them, though!”

“It will feel strange without her being there.”

“But, your poetry was good. You should go read again, k-o?”

“Typha, you know that I was falling in love with her, right?”

Typha almost spat out her drink: “DUH!!”

“Then she’s gone, like magic.”

“So, write about it!”

“About her leaving?”

“About her, what you felt for her.”

“I’d bawl on stage!”

“Maybe you should!”

“Ok, not this week, but next...k-o?”

Typha laughed her ass off!

“But, but...you stole my line!”

Almost two weeks went by. The reading was in two days; I sat in my easy chair staring at my blank journal. Snout, the cat rubbed up on my foot, jumped on the chair and head butted my open journal, knocking it out of my hands.

“Oh, Snout! Look what you’ve done! I was writing so much, too!” The cat rubbed up against my arm and purred. I bent over to pick up the journal. I felt Typha; “Write what you know, Pete.” I turned to see if she was at the door or something. She was nowhere to be found.

It was the first time I realized that this kything thing could work at a distance.

“Space is an illusion, Pete!”

I jumped, startled at hearing her again. I thought on the words I wanted to say and said them in my head: “Is love an illusion, too, Typha?”

For a long moment I heard and felt nothing. Then the doorbell rang. It was Typha. I opened the door: “Funny, I was just thinking of you!”

Typha smiled and walked in; “Know what?”

“What?”

“I was just thinking of you too!”

She glowed purple again.

“Can you tell me about the colors yet?”

In my head I heard: “You’re not ready yet. I will tell you when you are ready!”

“When will I be ready?”

Out loud Typha yells, “When you go ding!”

“I’m not a timer!”

“Obviously, you haven’t gone ding yet!”

This exchange continued on for a while, then I changed the subject; “So, what brings you to my neck of the woods, just passing through?”

Typha’s purple glow wrapped around me. She spoke out loud: “Love isn’t an illusion, Pete.”

I sat down on the easy chair, picked up my journal and looked at the blank page in front of me.

“How do you speak to me in my head?”

“Same as how you speak in my head!”

“That’s not an answer!”

“K-o, everything is connected. Trees, plants, rocks, animals, humans, water. All the way up to God, his angels and guides.”

I laughed: “I’m connected to a piece of plywood!?”

“Yuppers!”

“I was kidding!”

“I’m not!”

“That still doesn’t explain how you speak to me in my head.”

“Ohhhh, well, ever play with two cans with string connected to each other and held taut?”

“Yeah, even I had a childhood!”

“You speak into the one side, the string vibrates, and you hear it on the other side, right-o?”

“Yeah.”

“K-o, so we do the same thing. We vibrate our “string”, we talk to each other, we *kythe*”

“Kythe?”

“It’s the name for this kind of talking.”

“Whatever!”

I threw up my hands and changed the subject:

“So, what are you doing here, Typha.”

“You know why, silly Pete!”

“I’ll be there, I don’t break my promises, either!”

In my head I heard: “K-o! Write what you feel, Pete. Believe in what you feel!”

Typha smiled and walked out the door.

So, what do I feel? Everything that happened since I tried to slice myself was unbelievable. Yet it was real. Pieridae at my door just as I was ready to end it all, her instant and obvious fondness for me, the feelings she stirred in me. I never felt these things before, not like this and not this strong.

Was magic real? Did God send her to me just as I was about to end my life? She showed up and seemed to enchant me from the first moment.

All of the sudden, I had an idea for a poem. I started to write on the blank page.

Two days later I got out of work on time, went home and showered. I grabbed my journal and walked to the coffee shop. For the longest time I stood outside, building up the courage to walk in. Finally someone tapped me on the back:

“Boo!”

Without turning I said in my head: “Hey Typha!”

Then I turned to see her standing there, glowing purple.

“Let’s go in!”

I opened the door and hesitated. She literally pushed me inside.

We sat down at a table. I looked around then back to Typha: “Where’s Ezekiel?”

“Told you, Zeke doesn’t like poetry.”

“Then why does he come at all.”

“Duh! He doesn’t like poetry, but he does like me!”

She stuck her tongue out at me just as the owner’s daughter walked to take our order.

Shortly after that the signup list was out, Typha signed up, then I did. She smiled at me and eyed my journal: “Ooooo, it’s a good poem Pete, I can feel it!”

I said nothing because the host was walking in. This time he had a tiki torch, unlit, wedged in the candleholder. He carried the thing by the tiki torch and pretended to light it.

His daughter threw a glass of water on him and the lighter!

“Dad! You’re not burning the place down!”

The place went nuts! I was ready to roll on the floor with laughter. Typha was laughing so hard she was crying.

We sat there and listened to the people read. Typha was called first. I don't remember what she read. A couple of readers later it was my turn. I was shaky walking up to the stage. I took deep breaths, adjusted the microphone and read the poem:

Enchantress

It flows through you.

This thing, this energy.

Shining like some light.

Drawing me close.

Like moths to the flame.

Calling me with some hidden spell.

Oh - you are magic!

Invoke your calling, summon wind, rain, and fire.

Enchant me.....

I got a good round of applause, walked back to the table. Typha high fived me:

“See, that wasn't hard! “

“It's what she was, Typha, an enchantress!”

I felt the tears start to well up in my eyes. I fought the urge to cry.

Typha looked at me:

“Awww!”

She took my hand and held it. Her purple glow wrapping around me. Again, I felt a warmth, a love, a deep and true peace. I was no longer sad and we sat there like that until the show was over.

“Next week, Pete?”

“Yeah, I’ll be here!”

She smiled and as she turned to walk away I heard in my head: “I know you will!”

The weeks seemed to blend in to one. I would call Typha from time to time, just to talk. I would see her and sometimes Ezekiel at poetry. I started to make friends with others there. I learned that the owner’s daughter actually had a name! Her name was Janice; her father’s name was Zako.

Before you knew it many of the poets were my friends. What a strange and wonderful group they were! Like I said before, many of them used stage names when reading. One guy called himself “The Elusive Hobo”, another called himself “Maddog”, and a woman I got to know called herself “Alice, one card shy”. Turns out this was an obscure reference to the book “Alice in Wonderland” and a music video by Tom Petty.

We would all read and listen to poetry. Then we would walk down to the Quintessence restaurant. They had a separate bar there. I would stay up the entire night debating whatever topics were current with these people. The day after I was always dragging at work, sometimes I didn’t have any sleep at all.

It was worth it, though. For the first time in my life I felt like I had found a home, a place where I had many friends, a place that I was comfortable in.

The days, weeks, months and years seemed to fly by. In what seemed like no time, three years went by.

During this time I would see Typha now and then outside of the reading. We would go on little outings to the zoo, a faire, a museum, and the like. Sometimes Ezekiel would come with, but most of the time it was Typha and I.

I liked spending time with Typha. She made me feel happy, made me feel loved and accepted. Over the years we grew very close. Typha was my best friend....

“Pete - she still is, you know.”

“I know, I know. Damn these tears! I’m so weak.”

“No Pete, expressing deep emotion is not a weakness, it’s a strength!”

“I know, I just love her so much, what she did for me and what we shared together. I...I can’t hold back these damn tears.... You see, for years, for most of my life, I always thought that love was only one kind. The thrashing about in bed kind. Typha taught me that love was multifaceted. I never thought that I could feel as close to someone as I did to Typha and not be her bed partner. Oh, let’s face it; I never thought that I could feel that close to anyone! Yet, I did and we were. I finally thought of myself as someone who could be loved, I guess at that point I finally started loving someone else. I finally started loving myself.”

“Do you understand how you coming to that conclusion allowed you to move on?”

“I think so.”

“Good! Well continue with your story. You have a lot more to tell!”

“Yeah, I do. Well I remember this one time....”

...Typha walked in wearing what seemed to be a dress entirely made of flowers! I went to touch one, to see if they were real:

“Hand’s off my petals, boy!”

I withdrew my hand and started to laugh!

“That’s better! No one but Zeke can touch my petals!”

She laughed.

I made a pouty face.

She rolled her eyes: *“Well, ok, you can touch this one.”*

She pulled one off the dress and handed it to me. It was fabric.

“Did you make this?”

“No! Silly Pete, the dress came like this.”

“Who makes a dress like this?”

“Someone with a **lot** of time on his or her hands!”

We laughed together, in my head I heard:

“Wore it for you! Knew you would like it!”

I touched her hand, stroked it and said out loud:

“I know!”

Janice came to the table.

“Hey, guys!”

We both greeted her.

“Say Typha, I need to ask you something.”

This was unusual. Why was Janice not taking orders on poetry night? She seemed a little sad, too.

“You’re related to Pieridae, right?”

Typha kept looking at her milkshake twirling the straw around. I just looked away.

“Yup.”

“You ever hear from her?”

“Nope.”

“We need to contact her before the end of the month, she has back pay still waiting and we, we need to close the books. Any ideas how to get a hold of her?”

Typha and I had been over this many times already, so I knew what her next response would be.

“Nope.”

“Well, if you do see her let her know I need to talk to her, ok?”

“K-o!”

Janice laughed: “Well, dad needs me on stage.”

This stood out. Janice did not like going on stage. Yet she joined her father in the aisle and they walked to the stage. There was no candlestick holder and both of them seemed to be on the melancholy side.

Zako took the microphone:

“Well, folks I have an announcement to make...”

The room held it’s collective breath.

“...The Whey Station is going to close at the end of the month. We have been offered a good amount of money from developers who want to build condominiums here. Since I’m not getting any younger I decided to accept the offer. Our last day is two weeks from today...”

He continued on talking for quite some time. Telling us how painful the decision was and he recounted his memories of the place. After hearing this, everything else he said turned to a huge blur.

I just sat there looking at the stage. Typha was stunned too, she looked at me, saw the tears welling up in my eyes and tears came to her eyes too. Our hands touched and she said no words, either out loud or in my head.

As the reading continued, the poets all expressed the loss they were already feeling, even though the place had two weeks left. I went up, read my poem and made no comment about the closing. I had bawled my eyes out from time to time on that little stage; I didn’t feel like doing it then. I knew I would on the last night.

Halfway through the reading Typha got up to go for a smoke. I went with her.

We walked down the street a bit, she lit up one of her famous clove cigarettes, and inhaled, deeply.

I was still upset but she seemed to be ok:

“All things end, Luv.”

“I know, I just didn’t think this would!”

“Neither did I, that means it’s time for…”

“Time for what?”

She didn’t answer me, tears started to form in her eyes. I touched her arm: “Well, we can find a new place to hang out.”

She didn’t say anything, she just smiled at me and we walked back in side. There at the table was Ezekiel. I had no clue how he got in there without us seeing him. Typha ran up to him and they kissed. I sat down and shook his hand.

“You hear this place is closing?”

He nodded at me. “Yes, I knew yesterday. I ran in to Zako and he told me.”

Typha looked angry: “Why didn’t you tell me?!”

“Typha, he made me promise not to.”

Typha turned her back on him and listened to the poetry.

“It’s not over yet, Typha. There’s still a long way to go.”

I looked at both of them: “It closes at the end of the month, that’s only two weeks!”

Typha looked at me, her purple glow wrapping around me. Neither of them said anything for a long while. Then in my head she said: “Sorry, I’m a spaz! We’ll find another place, k-o?”

All three of us finished off the evening in silence. We listened and watched. Typha resting her head on Ezekiel's shoulder, occasionally playing with his long hair. Me, I just sat in a stunned stupor.

The next week was bizarre; we all knew that it was the last time a normal poetry reading would be done. We all knew that the last show would be filled with people from the past and perhaps even the press.

This night was ours alone, and we made it so. Typha performed a new piece. It was the hierarchy of guides and angels in heaven.

"I know what an angel is, but this is the second time you have talked about guides. What is a guide?"

Typha looked at Ezekiel, whose white glow became brighter. He smiled at her, nodded his head. Typha's purple glow became intense and light:

"K-o, a guide is a soul who has elected to help others. A guide has to have lived lots and lots of lifetimes so they have experience with things, so they can help others."

"Is a guide an angel?"

"No, but they work with them for the better good."

"Sounds like a job description!"

Ezekiel laughed: "Could be!"

"So guides are the souls of people who can never be re-born?"

Typha's purple glow became intensely dark: "No. They can come back to Earth whenever they want to. They almost have to, things on the Earth change so much with the passing of years and they have to know about these things before they can help others."

"How do you know all this?"

Typha laughed: "Silly Pete! How many times have you been to my house?"

I shrugged: "Lots?"

"Right-o! All those times you never noticed that I have two rooms filled with bookcases and books?"

"Yeah, I remember thinking that you lived in a library! But what does that have to do with angels and guides?"

Typha shook her head: "Duh! I read a lot!"

With that she smacked me in the head with her journal!

I laughed: "They have books about this stuff?"

Typha just looked at me, shook her head and turned to Ezekiel: "He's hopeless!"

"Hey, don't bring me in to this!"

Typha laughed and started sucking on her milkshake.

Ezekiel shook his head: "Pete, she reads several books ongoing. I'll find one in the bathroom, a page bent for marking, one in the bedroom, and one in the garage. Who reads in the garage?!"

Typha stuck her tongue out at him. He had obviously anticipated this as he had an open sugar packet in his hand. He actually dumped the whole thing on her tongue! Typha tried to say yuck, but it came out more like phuck, which sounded a whole lot like another word. Zako was on stage introducing the next reader while all this was going on. Typha was a little loud when she said it. Zako stopped and just stared at Typha. The whole room went completely silent:

"Not tonight, I have a headache!"

The whole room burst out in laughter, Ezekiel and I included. Typha, well she was beet red. She got up from the table, looked at him and then back to us:

"Fine! Just wait, you, you... boys!"

She walked out and slammed the door.

Zako, who was still on stage, actually barked: "Someone's sleeping in the dog house tonight!"

Ezekiel laughed and the show continued. This actually lifted the mood in the place, everyone feeling bad that the coffee shop was closing. Eventually Ezekiel got up from the table: "Better see if she's ok..."

He left and I sat there alone for several readers, or like about half an hour. I got up and went outside and saw Typha standing alone smoking one of her clove cigarettes:

"Bout time you came out."

"I'm sorry for laughing Typha, but you have to admit that it was funny!"

She put the cigarette out on the ground and kicked the butt at me: "Guess so."

"Where's Ezekiel?"

"Had to go."

In my head I thought of the words I wanted to say: "Come on Typha, there's only one more reading and then the place will be closed. Don't be mad."

She looked at me and smiled: "I want another milkshake, I saw Janice clear off the table."

"I'll get you another one, ok?"

She smiled at me and in my head I heard: "K-o! I wasn't mad, just embarrassed. Nice to know you care."

I gave her a hug and she held on to me longer than I expected: "You know I care! You're awesome, Typha!" I kissed her on the forehead.

She smiled: "Milkshake! Milkshake! Milkshake!"

We went back in, I bought her a milkshake and we sat and listened to the rest of the show. Afterwards, we went to the Quintessence restaurant and joined “The Elusive Hobo”, a lady who called herself “Shamrock”, “Maddog”, and several other regulars:

“We should do something, man. Close it off with a with a boom, no whimpers!”

It was the poet who called himself “The Elusive Hobo”.

I was nursing my second beer: “What you thinking of?”

“Something with candles, we blow them out in the end.”

Typha smiled: “Ooo, Ooo! How about we all go up on stage with lit candles, we read a line or two of our memories of the place and when we finish we blow our candle out and bow our head. Then when the last candle is put out, we all walk off stage holding hands?”

All of us at the table just sat wordless looking at her for a moment then “The Elusive Hobo” raised his drink: “To my lady Typha!”

We all raised our drinks and then started to brainstorm what memories we would share....

It seemed like that week went by in a breath. It seemed like we were just there the day before but a week had passed and this was the end.

I walked in the place and found our little group all seated at the large corner table. Ezekiel and Typha were sitting at the one side and an empty chair was waiting for me next to Typha. I went to sit down but Typha got up and hugged me:

“This is going to be hard for all of us, no crying, k-o?”

“I know, Ty, it will be ok.”

Ezekiel was drinking his lemonade as usual:

“I hear you are all burning the place down with candles tonight!”

Maddog heard this and started to sing: “Fire, dun-de-dun, you’re going to burn....!”

We all laughed.

In no time Zako walked up to the stage. He was dressed in a tux! He was carrying the candleholder and in it a golden candle, burning brightly.

“Well, this is it, folks....”

He stood there and recounted his memories of the place, how Janice was born in its first year of operation, how his wife died a year later. He shared his memories of this and that and was up there for quite a while. I don't think there was a dry eye in the house as he finished off:

“The rest of this evening is yours, the readers, the poets who have shared with us your spirits as you have read your words.”

I looked to Typha, who had a tear in her eye: “Thought you said no crying, Luv?”

In my head came the reply as she smiled: “So, I lied, k-o?!”

I touched her arm and felt her warmth, her love. I just sat there and listened to the rest of the readers.

In no time it was near the end of the evening. We had all signed up in the second to last slot and our time was at hand. We all made our way to the little stage, candles lit. Typha started:

“Here I met new friends, no not friends, more then friends, here I met *family*.”

She blew out the candle, bowed her head.

It was Maddog's turn next then Shamrock's, then mine:

“I was broken when I walked through that door. Three years later I still have a long way to go but I couldn't have gotten this far without all of you. In to the night of this day I do not say good-bye, but thank you, oh GOD, thank you!

I blew out the candle and bowed my head. I took Typha's hand in mine and tried very hard not to cry. She was in my head:

“No crying! I’m going to bawl if you keep it up!”

She squeezed my hand as I heard her hold back a snuffle.

“The Elusive Hobo” was the last to read. He put his candle on the piano; spread his hands as if embracing the entire audience. He said only one word:

“Family!”

He held his arms out like that for a while and then slowly retracted his hands until his arms were wrapped around himself as if he was holding each and everyone. Then he picked up his candle and blew it out.

We all turned and followed him, hand in hand off the stage. The room was silent as we walked off the stage and then everyone stood and gave us an emotional standing ovation.

We all made our way back to the table and sat down silently as Zako was introducing the final reader, someone we never heard of. He introduced someone called “Infinity.”

We all looked around wondering who this was and why they were the last reader. A shocked hush fell as Janice walked up to the stage.

“I call myself Infinity because there are no endings, no exits, no tears. Remember as do I. Live *well* live *happy*. My mother named me after Roman god Janus, the god of gates and doors, beginnings and endings.

So this door is closing, another will open! I will remember all of you....”

She started to cry.

“...and everything with a light heart. No good byes, just see you later!”

None of us had realized that the candle Zako carried up to the stage was still lit and on the back shelf. Janice reached for it and blew it out. We all got up and applauded her, gave her a standing ovation. Then we all moved up to her and there was a mass of group hugs, tears, and laughter.

We stayed like that for hours and then slowly the group dispersed.

Typha came up to me and smiled:

“That’s all folks!”

I smiled: “Yup, guess it is.”

“Oooooo, Zeke is bringing White Castles over for dinner next week instead of poetry, come by the house, k-o?”

I nodded my head: “Wouldn’t miss it for the world!”

“K-o, see you then!”

She walked away; I didn’t see Ezekiel with her or anywhere around. I assumed that he left earlier. I walked back home just as the sun was rising. It was the first time that I called in sick....

So the next week I showed up at Typha’s house, then the week after and so on. I found out that they had other friends outside of poetry. Gradually, over the weeks, months, and years that seemed to pass by so quickly some of these folks became my friends too.

I found that I began to make friends outside of Typha and Ezekiel. I found that I no longer felt like such an outsider, I actually laughed often and with others. It’s amazing to think that I wanted, all those years ago, to end my life. Look what I would have missed!

In the time that swiftly moved, as I made all these new friends there was Typha. Like a pillar, like a rock she was the un-moving center, the one who was the first to get called with whatever news impacted my life. I realized that this was not a one sided thing, that she also turned to me for big stuff.

I had just moved to my new apartment a week before. Typha, Ezekiel, a couple of our mutual friends, and a couple of guys from my work helped me move.

I was unpacking boxes in the kitchen and I felt Typha. The doorbell rang:

“Hey Typha, I was just thinking of you!”

She glided in, not saying a word and sat down on the one chair that did not have boxes on it.

“What’s wrong Typha?”

She kicked the crumpled up newspaper that I had just taken out of the boxes.

“Typha who?”

I shook my head: “What are you talking about?”

“Well, we’ve decided to do it.”

“Do what?”

“In three months, k-o!”

“In three months, what!?”

“I’ll be Mrs. Typha!”

I gave her a hug “Wow, congratulations!”

“Mike is going to do a sunrise ceremony at the beach.”

Mike was a minister friend of ours. Typha and Ezekiel had known him for years and introduced him to me. He was fun, a minister with a sense of humor and way about him that spoke to much underneath.

“That’s great! He is the perfect man for the job.”

Typha leaned her head so her forehead touched mine.

“It’s scary.”

I laughed: “Ah! You two have been in love for years, way before we met!”

“Still scary, though!”

“Do you know where the reception will be?”

“We’ll have it at the house.”

“No White Castles, though?!”

She whacked me in the head: “Duh! It’ll be catered!”

I laughed: “What can I do to help?”

“Let’s go shopping!”

“Huh?”

“I have no clue how to use those scanner thingies they give you when you make up your wedding registry!”

“Oh, I use those all the time on the job.”

“Awesome! Let’s shop!”

With that we walked outside into a cool spring evening and went on the first of several trips to all the local stores. We built one hell of a registry!

In no time Typha and Ezekiel were standing on the beach. The sun was rising and Mike joined them in to matrimony. Typha wore a pure white wedding dress, long and flowing. Ezekiel wore a pure white suite, white pants, white shirt, and a blue tie.

Then came the party, I should say the party that never ended!

“But you know that already!”

“I was there, Pete!”

“Exactly, so why am I telling this to you?”

“Because this is your story, Pete, not mime!”

“Ok, so like I was saying....”

It must have ended around 4 or 5 am, I took a cab home and walked in the new apartment. It was a little lonely now that Snout and Mae had passed on. The two of them in just a few months. It's like they had to be with each other, even in death. As if on cue, Hermes and Willy both walked into the kitchen. No doubt wanting to be fed. Still, they were a comfort. I opened a can of cat food for each of them and they were happy.....

.....It seemed like time had sped up some how. Because I remember standing in the same kitchen years later, when I was preparing to move out. Hermes and Willy were long gone and I was cat-less.

"You ready old man?"

Typha giggled like a 2 year old.

"You ain't so young anymore either dearie!"

Typha walked in, no longer a glide but a walk. She was in her sixty's now. She still acted the same as when we met, as quirky and kooky as ever. She just had more wrinkles and pounds!

I was just over 75. I was moving to the retirement community in town. The years of loading and unloading boxes had taken their toll on my back and knees. It was difficult to walk.

I started to get emotional. Typha walked up to me.

"Hey old man! Don't go to pieces on me!!"

"Sorry, it's just I spent so many years here."

"Many more to come at the new place!"

"Yeah, playing shuffleboard no doubt!"

Typha laughed: "Ever think of taking up knitting?"

"Very funny!"

“Oooo, Oooo, how about craft projects? Wood toys with wheels? Oh, how about wood walking sticks?!”

“Now listen you!”

“It’ll be fine Pete!”

“I know, Ty. Thanks for helping me.”

“Hey, what are friends for?”

“Well, I’d have to rent a car or walk to the place without you driving me!”

Ezekiel walked in:

“That’s ok Pete, we’ve both seen the way you drive!”

We all walked out, Typha on my right side, her arm around me. Ezekiel on my left, his arm around both of us.

I remember looking back, feeling sad but also feeling excited at the prospect of something new.

The drive was a short one. Before you knew it we were walking in to the lobby of the place. There, in the lobby, was Minister Mike and all my remaining friends!

“Hey! No one told me that this was a party!”

“We all sat in the cafeteria for hours. All my friends, all drinking coffee and reminiscing about things back in the “day”. Then everyone but Typha left and we were sitting upstairs in my new “apartment”.

Typha was helping me with some last minute things. She sat next to me on the bed as I folded my shirts and put them in the dresser drawer:

“You’ll be ok, Pete. I promise!”

“Ah! You never told me about the colors, Typha. You promised about that!”

She glowed purple: “It’s not time yet, Luv. Soon, though and I will.”

I threw the shirt at the dresser's mirror: "Whatever!!"

"You're more wrinkled than normal when you're mad!"

We laughed; she put her arm around me.

"Really, really, Pete! It'll be alright!"

"I know!"

"Will you be by for dinner on Sunday?"

"Yup, I'll take the bus."

"We could pick..."

"Nope, I'll take the bus!"

Typha laughed: "You're getting wrinkly again!"

She walked out of the room.

For several more years I took the bus to Typha and Ezekiel's house. Then it became difficult for me to move very much. So they came to me, every other week.

Then I fell ill, it doesn't matter what had me in its grips. I knew the end was near. I wasn't afraid like I thought I would be. I was just tired.

I remember lying in the bed, I was so tired. Typha quickly walked in and took my hand:

"Don't be afraid, Pete, God loves you!"

It was so difficult to talk but I managed it: "r-ead th-at in your books Typha?"

She squeezed my hand: "Pete, I know it!"

I looked up and saw someone else in the room.

Pieridae stood before me, looking as she did all those years ago except she had wings, beautiful multi colored monarch butterfly wings.

“I see Pieridae!”

“I know Pete!!”

I looked back to Typha, the room going dim:

“I love you Ty, always remember that.”

She squeezed my hand again: “I love you too, Pete. Always know that!”

I couldn’t say anything more. I just made a gurgling sound.

“Are you ready to go?”

In my head I said “Yes.”

Typha stood up, holding my hand and crying:

“I love you, old man!”

She pulled my hand and I moved, I moved out of myself!”

We were standing in my old kitchen. The one I thought I sliced myself in so many years ago. Typha was holding my hand. She was as I first met her, young and beautiful. She was wearing that dress with the “wings” again.

I saw Mae the cat scurry past and her feet were red!

I looked back towards where she came from and I saw myself on the floor in a pool of blood.

I moved back but Typha still had my hand in hers.

“Hush, hush, *love*. I’ll explain everything to you now!”

“I’m dead!”

“Yes, Pete, you’re dead!”

She hugged me and I felt her!

“How can I feel you if I’m dead!”

“Silly, Pete! Just because you’re dead doesn’t mean you can’t feel anything!”

I looked at her. Typha’s purple glow surrounded me and as always comforted me. I started to cry.

“Shhh, Shhh, now! Listen to me Pete. We need to talk, and we have all the time in the universe! I’ll answer all your questions and I’ll be here with you, always.”

She put her hand on my chest, by my heart.

I looked at her: “Who are you really, Typha? An angel?”

“No Luv, I’m not an angel, I’m a guide.”

“Thought you said you knew about Guides and Angels from reading a lot?!”

She giggled: “You wouldn’t have believed me if I told you!”

“Guess not. So I did kill myself all that time ago?”

“Yes, and all that time, all those years happened in only moments. The minutes it took for you to die.”

“Why?”

“Because God loves you, Pete! That’s why!!”

I sat down on the chair and wondered how I just did that.

Typha was kything with me, she said in my head: “The will is bottomless. What you think is what you are! If you want to sit on a chair, you can. If you want to sit on a tree branch, a Roman column, or anything else – you can!”

“But, I swear that years and years went by! How could this be?!”

“Time is fictional, Pete. A whole lifetime can take place in moments. All this happened during a twinkle in God’s eye, a moment everlasting.”

“So, am I going to hell?”

Typha laughed so hard I thought she was going to bust a gut: “No Luv! There is no hell!”

“But I killed myself.”

She rubbed my arm: “Yes you did Pete, that’s why we were sent to you.”

“You and Ezekiel?”

“Nope, just Pieridae, and I!”

“Pieridae? Pieridae’s a guide?”

“Getting smarter since you died old man!”

“Is Ezekiel a guide too?”

“Nope, again! Ezekiel’s an angel”

“No shit?”

“Yuck!”

“Seriously, he’s an angel?”

“Yeppers! He’s the angel of death and transformations.”

“Why, Typha?”

“Because!”

“That’s no answer!”

“Told you already, God loves you!”

"I don't understand."

"God loves all his children, Pete. She wants you to grow; he wants you to be happy. You wanted to leave the living world, but you had never had a connection with it. How can you know what life was if you never lived it? How could you ever know what love is unless you felt it?"

"But Typha, I love you, I love Ezekiel, I love Pieridae, Mike, and all the guys from the old coffee house!"

"But you didn't, not at the start. So what changed Pete?"

I shrugged: "I don't know?"

In my head I heard: "Yes you do Pete, think!"

"Well, I became more comfortable with people. Having you and Ezekiel around and being so nice to me all the time."

I laughed: "I met more people when I was dying than I did when I was alive!"

"And?"

"Well, I laughed more! I felt good about myself and...oh my God! That's when I started to love myself, Typha! I remember looking in the mirror thinking that I wasn't half bad. I remember laughing. I remember it felt like some huge weight was lifted from my shoulders."

Typha hugged me: "A huge weight was lifted off your soul that day, Pete."

I looked at Typha's face, lost myself in her green eyes: "Then what was Pieridae all about? Why did she leave? All these, um, years later I still miss her!"

"Pieridae is the guide to life, Pete. Through her you could have stayed alive. All you had to do was love her."

"But I did love her!"

“You thought you did, but you still hadn’t fallen in love with yourself yet. That’s why you left, Pete! You couldn’t fathom that someone else could love you. It all seemed impossible to you.”

“How could she have kept me alive?”

“Drinking her love is drinking life. But you can only drink love if you can give it and you couldn’t then.”

“Drinking love? I remember a voice warning me not to drink too much of her or I would live! It was a creepy growling voice.”

Typha smiled and then talked in the same creepy growling voice: “That would have been me!”

I stepped back: “That was you!”

“Yeppers! You had to know, but I couldn’t tell you directly, it’s against the rules. Hence the voice!”

“What do you mean by Drink her?”

“Everything has energy, Pete. Sometimes you can see it.”

“Is this when you explain the glows to me?”

“They’re not glows, silly! They’re auras!”

“And everyone has them?”

“Every thing – Pete! Ok, I promised to explain this to you, so listen up!”

“Finally!”

Typha smiled, reached over and slapped me gently on the head:

“Whenever there is an interaction between beings; people, animals, plants, whatever – there is an exchange of energy between them. Most of the time this exchange is beneficial. Like the words people talk, this aura, this energy convey’s different meanings.”

“So what does Pieridae’s yellow, um, aura, mean?”

“Pieridae’s yellow aura means persuasion, life, and learning.”

“Persuasion?”

“Yeppers! She was trying to convince you to live by showing her that you could love.”

“What about your purple aura?”

Typha blushed:

“Well.... psychic powers, protection, devotion, and intuition.”

“Ah, psychic powers! Hence the kything!”

She nodded, still blushing a bit.

“All this time you were protecting me, weren’t you?”

She looked up at the, cloud thing or whatever it was above us, and whistled!

“Devotion, yeah. It’s you Typha!”

She kissed me on the forehead and was silent.

“If Pieridae is the guide to life then you must be the guide to death?”

“There is no death, silly Pete! I’m the guide to rebirth!”

I smiled: “I see... Oh, so what does Ezekiel’s translucent white aura mean?”

“Well, Purity...”

Typha started to laugh, shaking her head.

“...Um, God, spirit, new beginnings, truth, wholeness, strengthening.”

“I see, so he works for God?”

“We all do, even you – silly Pete!”

“That’s why nothing seemed to phase him, he is strength!”

Typha laughed: “Baby!”

“So by loving Pieridae I could have lived?”

“Yep, but you weren’t ready for it. You had to learn.”

“What would have happened?”

“I can only tell you that you would have been no better off. You might have proved that you could love but you still wouldn’t have had much of a life.”

“So Pieridae could have given me my life back, as is, but you gave me a life to look back on?”

“You understand!”

“I think so.”

I could think of nothing more to do than to take her in my arms and kiss her on the forehead. We held each other quite some time. I felt her love wrap around me.

She purred like a kitten:

“Told you it was going to be alright, didn’t I old man?”

“You never broke your promise, Ty!”

“She purred again, then let go:” Oooo, look who’s here!”

I turned around and there stood Pieridae.

I ran to her: “Pieridae!”

She smiled and we kissed:

“Missed you Pete!”

“I’m sorry I left, I’m sorry I hurt you!!!”

“Pete, I wasn’t hurt! I knew you had to learn more and I couldn’t teach these things to you. I had done all I could, my job was finished, and I had to go.”

She kissed me again, I wiped her tears away.

“Never saw you cry before!”

“First time for everything!”

“Nah, she’s a softy.”

It was Ezekiel. He was floating down from the cloud like thing above us. His huge white wings slowly flapping as he came near.

“Hey, Zeke!”

I grabbed his hand. He smiled:

“Welcome home Pete!”

Pieridae walked over to Typha and they hugged each other:

“Hey, Typha!”

“Hay’s for horses!”

Pieridae shook her head: “Still the same Typha!”

“Oh, you love me, admit it Pieridae!”

They actually got in to a tickle fight!

Ezekiel shook his head: “They’ve been this way for eons! Neither one of them will ever grow up!”

He flapped his wings and wind blew on them: "Girls! We have business to attend to!"

Typha looked all pouty: "You're no fun, Zeke!"

Pieridae laughed: "That's not what you told me before, Ty..."

Typha blushed: "Shut u-p!"

Ezekiel laughed: "And what were you saying, Typha?"

She walked up to him: "I love your wings, baby!"

They kissed.

Pieridae walked up to me: "Hey, how'd you like dying?"

I laughed: "It's tiring!"

She kissed me: "You have a lot of choices to make, Pete. Ezekiel will explain more to you."

"What choices? I'm dead?!"

"Well, like what do you want to do now?"

"What can I do, I'm dead?"

She kissed me again.

"Does this feel dead to you?"

"No, it feels good!"

"Nothing is ever dead, Pete! You have to decide if you want to go to heaven or if you want to go back to Life, to be reborn!"

"Really? I can go back?!"

Ezekiel walked up to us, touched Pieridae on the shoulder.

“Ezekiel will tell you more. Remember, Pete, I am and will always be here for you.”

Like Typha had before, she touched my chest near my heart. She kissed me and then faded out to nothingness.

“Pieridae was right, Pete. You have some decisions to make.”

“I can go back to Earth?”

“If you want to, you can be reborn with your current soul.”

“Current soul?”

Typha walked up to both of us:

“You can decide to go back to Earth as is, just in a new body, a new life.”

Ezekiel nodded his head in agreement: “Or you can decide to go back to heaven and join with all the other souls there.”

“Join with them?”

Typha rubbed my arm: “Yeppers! If you choose that route you lose your individuality, but you gain so much more!”

Ezekiel smiled: “If you come back to heaven you will find the parts of your soul that were left behind when you decided to leave for Earth and become Pete!”

It was all so very confusing to me: “But I won’t be me anymore?”

Ezekiel nodded his head: “No Pete, you become the universe!”

Typha walked up to Ezekiel: “Let me show him, Zeke.”

“Are you ready, my Typha?”

“Been ready, Zeke!”

I shook my head: “What are you talking about?”

Typha walked up to me, took my hands in hers: I'm going on vacation!"

"Huh?"

"I want to go back to Earth, to be born - for a life or two, so many things have changed and I want to learn all about them!"

"You're leaving?!"

"Hey! I've been doing this for thousands of years, I deserve a break!"

"But I love you Typha! You can't leave!"

"Come find me then!"

Ezekiel touched me on the shoulder: "What you had together, here in this place in-between, you can have again if you decide to go back and find her."

"How can you let her go, Ezekiel?"

He walked over to Typha and kissed her. "Because I love her and I know that she will be back and a better guide for it!"

Typha smiled: "Ooooo, I can finally learn what a DVD is!"

I laughed: "Ty, it's a movie!"

"A what??"

I shook my head: "You are hopeless!"

"I need to go and learn so I can come back and teach, silly Pete!"

"I really can come and find you?"

"If you want, but first you have to tell Ezekiel all about your life. Tell him everything, Pete. Tell him all the pain, all the happiness, and tell him about what happened since you met us."

"But he already knows that part!"

“You have to tell him, Pete! Don’t leave anything out!”

“Oh, I get it! This is when my life flashes before my eyes!”

Typha smiled: “You are getting smarter since you died!”

I looked at Ezekiel: “Does Pieridae ever take vacations?”

Ezekiel smiled: “Her or someone like her will find you this coming life, Pete. If you decide to go back.”

“Why now?”

“Because you will take back to Earth what you learned here and apply it in life!”

Typha looked up at Ezekiel: “She never takes vacations!”

“Not true, Typha! Last one she took was during that world war they had.”

I crooked my head: “Which one?”

Typha looked quizzical “There’s been more than one?”

Ezekiel and I just shook our heads.

Typha laughed: “See! I need to go on vacation, K-o?!”

Ezekiel took her in his wings: “You ready to go now, my Typha?”

“Yeppers!”

They kissed and Typha walked to me: “Bye, Pete! I’ll see you again, either here or on Earth. I will always be a part of you.”

I took her hands in mine: “As I always want to be a part of you!”

Tears started to form in her eyes. I wiped them away as she backed up and smiled: “Ok, Zeke, I’m ready!”

A circle formed around her, multicolored energy swirled and glittered. She giggled:

“Bye bye!”

She was gone.

“I still feel her!”

“Of course you do, Pete! She will always be with you!!”

“So what now, Zeke?”

“Tell me your story Pete....”

"...And that ends it Zeke. My story is told!"

"Do you know what you want to do now?"

"I want to go back and find Typha, I want to live like I could have and didn't. I want to still be me, even if it's me with a different name!"

"Are you ready to go now?"

"Yes, er..wait a second."

"For what?"

"Two things: Do I get to meet God?"

"Look around you, Pete. In this place in-between, in heaven, and on Earth everything is God. His hand touches all, Her smile is the sun, His love - his love is everywhere!"

"I'm not sure I understand."

"You will Pete! It's something you should work on during your new life. So, what's the second thing?"

"I want to shake you hand, Zeke and thank you for your friendship!"

"Pete, like Typha and Pieridae I will always be with you, as will God!"

"Then I'm ready, Zeke!"

"Until we meet again, Pete!...."

Epilogue

From the journal of life kept by archangel Michael, otherwise known as minister Mike, friend of Ezekiel, Typha, and Pete:

So Ezekiel sent Pete on his way. He laughed and danced as the birthing energy formed around him. I think he has learned and will not require future intervention.

After Pete moved on Pieridae flew to Ezekiel on her butterfly wings. Why she likes those things instead of our normal issue wings, I'll never know....

"Hey, Zeke!"

"Hey Pieridae!"

Pieridae smiled: "They gone?"

"They just left."

"What's on your mind, Zeke?"

"You think he will find her?"

Pieridae sniffled, brushed back a tear: "Yeah, he will."

Ezekiel laughed: "You are such a softy!"

Pieridae smiled: "Who's taking Typha's place during her vacation?"

"A new guide, I'll introduce you to her once I remember her name!"

"Awww, you miss Typha already, don't you?"

Ezekiel smiled: "Not much gets past you, does it Pieridae?!"

Pieridae put her wing around him: "Never has, never will!"

They both laughed.

Pieridae smiled as she tickled his face with her wing: "So, ya big lug, who's next?"

Ezekiel looked at his scroll: "Well, there's this interesting case in...."

Acknowledgements

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Laura Gross – Back cover photograph.

Who Is Kevin James Keyser?

Kevin has been writing since the early 1970's.

Kevin is the founder of the Amateur Recording Association (ARA) of Chicago an entertainment group that produced plays, audio plays, and films in the period between 1974 and 1986.

Kevin published "The Poets Corner", a monthly poetry newsletter, from 1987 - 1999. The Poets Corner is widely credited with being the first non-technical e-zine to arise during the infancy of BBSing and the Internet.

Kevin published "The Write Time", a regular newsletter about the written and spoken word from 1999 - 2000.

Kevin is a performance poet, performing on stage at a variety of spoken word venues including two performances at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Kevin has hosted poetry readings at:

- The Sun Cafe (Regular Host)
- No Exit Cafe (Guest Host)
- Cafe Aloha (Guest Host)

Television appearances:

- Songsation (1998)
- Strictline (2000)

Radio appearances:

- David Rubin, Cafe Aloha on WZRD (1998)
- Wordslingers On WLUW (2000)

Films include:

- "Search'n": A film short. "Search'n took everyday scenes and placed them to music. Shot on glorious super 8mm film and synchronized to a cassette audio track. (1977)
- "A Touch Of Magic" Experimental animation storyboard. The adventures of Juniper the elf as she helps Santa bring Christmas Joy. (1978)

Videos include:

- The Final Chop: Experimental computer animation. We follow the exploits of Horance the Turkey a day before Thanksgiving. (198?)

Original Audio plays Include:

- E.D. In the year of 1973 (Pilot to The H.S. Series)
- The H.S. series (1974 –1977)
- Lonely Is The Hunter (1978)
- The Minstrel Man (1978)
- H.S. - The Metamorphosis (1979)
- The Co Ho Show (1977 – 1979)
- Radio WCLD (A.K.A. Jane Byrne and the Salt Truck Triumph!) (1979)
- Move'n On! (1979 – 1980)

Short Stories Include:

- The Trilogy (1982)
- Specter (1991)
- Trilogy's End (1995)
- Questing The Prize (1999)

Novella's Include:

- Love - The Many Eyed Beast (1988)
- A Twinkle In God's Eye (2006)

Plays Include:

- The Anatomy Of A Disk Jockey (1976)
- The Mystery Of HIM (1977)
- Trilogy's End (1997)

Audio Productions Include:

- H.S. The Special Tapes (1977)
- Moments Of Life (198?)
- Questing The Prize (2000)
- The River - Spoken Word on CD (2002)

Current Projects:

- A Twinkle In God's Eye, a Novella (2006)

Future Projects:

- Awakings – A Short Story
- Web Of Eye's – A Short Story
- The Golden Corpuscle - A Novel!

Inspirations, Sources, and Related Material

Books:

- A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle
- A Wind in the Door by Madeleine L'Engle
- A Swiftly Tilting Planet by Madeleine L'Engle
- Way of the Peaceful Warrior by Dan Millman
- Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah by Richard Bach

Movies:

- What Dreams May Come
- The Stairway To Heaven, A Matter of Life and Death
- Made In Heaven
- Gotham
- Ah! My Goddess!

Television:

- Casper The Friendly Ghost – HarveyToons
- St. Elsewhere (Primarily the last episode of the series.)
- Touched by an Angel (Yes, I know...so sweet it will rot your teeth out! Neither the less it was an influence.)
- Wendy The Good Little Witch - HarveyToons

Places:

- The No Exit Cafe, Gallery
- Heartland Café
- Denny's - 4824 N. River RD, Schiller Park, IL 60176 US

Spiritual:

- The Gospel of Thomas - Phrase 22:

Metaphysical:

- Aura Color Interpretation
- Kirlian Photography
- Angel Names

Web Sites:

- Wikipedia
- Google
- Encyclopedia Mythica Mythology, Folklore, and Legends

Web Comics:

- Strings Of Fate by Jen Wang

By the Author:

- Enchantress, 1996
- Flash N' Slash, 1996
- Moments and Regrets, 1998
- Portent End, 2005
- The End Of Things, 1989
- The Monster I Fight, 1999
- The Monster Vanquished, 1997
- Words To Twilight, 1996
- Mysteries - A Journey Through The Third Realm, 1998

*FIN!