

# *Deep Waters*

by Marc Boulais

Several years ago when my daughter, Danielle, was a teenager, our family was experiencing some very “deep waters.” Danielle had run away, and for over a month, we didn’t know her whereabouts. Then one Friday night, I received a call from the detective assigned to the case, saying that a young girl had been spotted under a bridge in a small mining town in the hills of southern Kentucky called Upton. They were following up with the local authorities and would call me with any developing news. I had just spent the better half of the afternoon posting flyers with a picture of Danielle, with information about her age, 14, her weight, and her hazel eyes. The flyer included the pathetic sentence that no parent wants to see, “Have you seen our daughter?”

Late that night after having difficulty falling asleep, I fell into a profound “Wizard of Oz” type of dream. In my dream, I was driving through the small towns of Kentucky in the middle of the night, stopping at the one-stop burger and gas stations, all the time getting deeper and deeper into the mountains in the coal mining areas, but having no luck on finding the small town of Upton. Come morning by chance, I pulled into a larger town that seemed to be a more important, centrally-located business and residential area of the region. I spotted a small public park with many benches and a large fountain with a Confederate soldier on a horse with water spewing out of the horse’s mouth.

I was so exhausted from my night search that I lay down on the bench to get some rest and renew my strength so I could begin my search again. I was half asleep and groggy between the two worlds of sleep and wakefulness when about 8:00 a.m. it appeared the Confederate on the horse had come alive and was sitting on the bench with me. He looked like Robert E. Lee with a white beard and a winter hat pulled over his full head of hair, as it was in chilly, middle October. His deep, sparkling blue eyes had the mischievous look of a child who was playing hooky from school and held some hidden secret.

As I became more fully awake we began the first of many conversations. I told him I was on a mission to find my runaway daughter and I was looking for the small town of Upton, Kentucky. He shook his head and told me he did not know the town, but not to worry. “Worry,” he said, “is a byproduct of the ego’s desire to control all things, both understood and not understood.” He continued, “People who are ego-driven leave a spiritual odor that makes them hard to be around. Choose to replace your fear with trust,” he said with a twinkle in his eyes.

He went on to tell me he was a part-time, semi-retired professor at a nearby college who loved the interchange with aspiring young minds and taught several night classes. I asked him what he was doing on a bench so early on a brisk October morning and he replied, “I love to observe people going to their work to see if they are following their bliss or are just large gerbils running hopelessly on the treadmill of life.”

“How can you tell this so early in the morning?” I asked him. During this time many people stopped to say, “Good morning, Professor” and I deduced he was both popular as an instructor and well-known, having taught several generations in the city. He answered, “Watch the next person I say good morning to and observe that person’s smile.”

I noticed he was doing this to every passerby like he was the Mayor or practicing for the local Wal-Mart greeter job. After a few more people passed by, I commented, “It looks like everyone is quite happy to see you as you greet them and they smile back like Christmas is coming and you’re Santa Claus.”

“Ah,” he told me, “You are looking but not seeing; you are focusing on the surface of appearances while I am looking into other people’s souls by the light I see in their eyes. The joy in one’s soul brims over into the eyes like pasta bubbling on the stove.”

I observed the next few people much more closely as he smiled that mischievous smile and greeted them with, “Good morning.”

As the people went past, they spoke in varying monotones of certainty. “Have a great day. Everything’s fine,” they said, as if they were wind-up dolls or mannequins with pull-strings.

I could see very little light in their eyes and I began to feel a burden for them. He told me that the whole human race is living under a master illusion that has enslaved the entire world. He explained that the illusion is so subtle few people see it or are aware of it, because it appears to be a good like a mirage in the desert when people are dying of thirst.

I was becoming more awake and had the sense to ask him, “What is the master illusion that makes the world a giant insane asylum?”

With a look of glee in his eyes he explained, “The master illusion is that you can find happiness by getting. Everything is slanted to that desire, all pleasure for its own sake, all greed for power or control or possessions or security, to obsessive desire to find love or things to fill the illusion of want. All advertising and greed in the corporate climb feed this illusion like rats that are fed grain on the treadmill.”

“Come with me,” he told me. “We’ll go for a walk and I’ll show you something interesting.” We took a stroll through the neighborhood and I felt great comfort to be in the company of such a wise soul. I saw fewer and fewer people as it was mid-morning, and all the exhausted parents were working on the treadmill of life trying to provide all things that bring happiness, even though it was crushing their spirits to keep running. “Look around you at all the beautiful homes,” he said. “What do they have in common?”

I looked up and around. “They are all flying beautiful flags that are blowing nicely in the brisk wind,” I said.

“Yes, but what do you notice about them? Be aware,” he insisted. “that is the first characteristic of an alive person... awareness.”

I said it was interesting that there were no American flags, state flags, or University of Kentucky flags, but they were all quite colorful blowing in the breeze.

"You are starting to wake up. Be observant," he said. "What do you see on the flag at this house?"

"It looks like a raft going down a river with oars coming out the side," I replied.

"Yes," he answered. "The man is a junior accountant but his bliss is to have a business with tourists rafting down the river." At the next house was a flag with a guitar and drum set; the man worked at a local factory but loved music and wanted to entertain people, but was trapped with mortgage and credit card debts. The next home had a flag with coffee cups and books on the flag and was owned by a woman who wanted to have a small coffee shop and bookstore with Mozart and Beethoven symphonies playing in the background as a way of reaching out to people. On and on he described how each flag was an outlet for a desperate inner expression of people's repressed desires to follow their bliss.

I decided it was time for the critical question. "So all the world is searching for happiness by mostly beating up other people emotionally or brutally in the workplace or home to find happiness that does not exist?"

He stopped walking and looked me in the eye, undoubtedly to see if I was alive or not and shouted out, "*All babies Buddha babies.*"

I stopped in my tracks and said, "What about the babies? You're losing me. Please explain on a lower level so I can understand."

"*All babies Buddha babies* means all are entitled to find enlightenment and true happiness in this life," he said. "Happiness is not a matter of acquiring more things or people, but an awareness to let go of everything you think you need to be happy." He went on to explain that most people are worms crawling on the earth, begging for fickle approval and a desire to melt anonymously into a crowd just to belong. He continued, "When you let go of all your programmed desire for happiness, your balloon of awareness begins to rise and you see all things differently, from the aspect of freedom. As you rise in freedom you become more aware of the happiness that has been inside you all along. Think of the couple who live in a log cabin in Alaska, where it is dark and cold for many winter months. The windows of their cabin become covered in smoke, soot, and grease and it remains dark inside the cabin in the middle of spring. The light is shining brightly but they live in the darkness of illusions. *Clean the windows!*" he exclaimed. "*Let the light shine in!*"

He continued, "When you find your freedom and happiness, you can rise to the joy of bliss."

"How," I asked, "can anyone rise that high on his own power?"

"No one can rise that high on his own power, but God's love is the wind that is looking for souls to lift up," he replied. "Each day is a choice," he said. "In your first morning prayer say, 'Create in me a new heart, O Lord, that I may love unconditionally and forgive absolutely. As you rise in consciousness you will begin to see the unity and sacredness of all life, just as astronauts in space see no boundaries between people.'"

To summarize, I said, "So we are born happy but fill our souls' windows full of the junk of the world of illusion and desire and it's a matter of detaching from these false illusions and following our bliss in loving and forgiving others?"

"The Kingdom of God is all around," he assured me, "but few see it. *Wake up!*"

We had walked for quite awhile and it was later in the day. I couldn't believe how time had flown. I was like a sponge soaking up this man's wisdom and was so mesmerized I nearly forgot my mission to find my daughter as we returned to the fountain with the Robert E. Lee horse spewing water.

We sat on the bench for a few minutes and I had a feeling he was going to watch the poor rats come back from work, heading home to gaze at their bliss flying from the flagpoles, but instead he said, "It's time to go home. I have classes to teach and you have a bus to catch." He put his hand on my knee and gave a little squeeze, saying, "Close your eyes and say this mantra over and over until the bus arrives. You'll know when it is here." He told me to breathe in deeply like I was pulling the Universe into my lungs, and as I breathe out say, "The Father and I are One." He told me to continue this practice until I felt inner peace and in perfect accord with God, the love vibration of the Universe.

As I boarded the steps to get into the bus, I realized my friend, my guardian angel, my Buddha had gone, but I knew my place was to be on this bus. As I stood before the bus driver to put some change in for the fare, he slowly shook his head and said, "This bus does not take a money fare." He then reached into a pocket over his heart and pulled out a round wafer that looked like a combination of communion and papyrus, about 5 or 6 inches round.

He handed me the disc. As he opened his jacket, I could see a wince of pain in his eyes as it looked like he had pricked deeply into his side or heart with what looked like a sharp quill used to write in the old days. He said, "Write down your deepest fear and give it to me. Your deepest fear is your admission to this bus." I stopped for a second as the pain began to be pulled from my heart's deepest secret. Tears welled in my eyes as I began to write and I could see tears well in his deep, gray, all-knowing eyes, also, as if he knew exactly what I was going to write.

Slowly I wrote these lines, appearing in faint blood ink, blinking the tears away:

***My deepest fear is to be called in the middle of some cold winter night to drive to an unknown city in a faraway place, cold and alone, and scared to death to identify the body of an unknown child who is in a morgue or hospital.***

As I handed this wafer to the bus driver and he tucked it into his pocket over his heart, I could see his eyes were filled with compassion and love for me and I could feel this heartbreaking burden he scoured from the depths of my heart. I looked up for the destination of the bus above his head and all it said was "AMAZING GRACE."

As I took a couple of steps, I saw the bus was overflowing and there was no place to sit. I turned back to the driver and he said, "Yes, we are quite full, but I have saved you a seat in Section J, Aisle 3, Seat 16. You will be sitting next to a beautiful child I picked up early this morning under a bridge in Upton, Kentucky."

My heart was uplifted in gratitude and anticipation as he reached into his pocket and pulled out another written wafer. The words looked like they were written in dried blood, also. "This was the fear she gave for her bus fare," he told me:

***My worst fear is: If only you knew where I have been and what I have seen and done and who I am, you could never find anything to love in me.***

"My child," the bus driver said he had told her, "I know where you have been, for I was beside you the whole time with my angels surrounding and protecting you from all harm; and I know the things you have done to dull the pain of your inner demons from which I have set you free; but most of all, I know who you are: my beloved Danielle."

by Marc R. Boulais 10-1-10

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## **EPILOGUE:**

After my daughter Danielle's eighth arrest for breaking the rules of house confinement, I went to visit her on Christmas Eve at a local juvenile detention center. We were in a small room with a large picture window and it began to snow quite heavily, with flakes the size of quarters swirling in a free fall of freedom. I could feel Danielle's pain that evening, as I was soon to go out into the beautiful evening and taste the snowflakes on my tongue, while she must spend the night behind bars. As Danielle explained to me later, this moment behind bars was an epiphany in her life. She said God put these words into her consciousness: "I have set before you life and death. Choose life."

She was given the chance to "choose life," as she was subsequently sent to a local girls' school to continue her education under supervised conditions. Danielle went on to finish in the senior class, top ten of her local high school, and then following graduation, attended a prestigious college where she made the dean's list with straight A's. Danielle finished with a degree in psychology, securing a full-time job in Montana and will eventually work with troubled children.

Just before Danielle graduated, I had a vision during meditation of her walking down a dirt road with her backpack on, seeing messages on the telephone poles every half mile or so that would guide her on her path. I wrote down each of these messages and put them into a prayer.

The title of the above story, "Deep Waters," comes from the prayer I wrote for Danielle, titled: **A Father's Prayer**. The specific line from **A Father's Prayer** that inspired the story reads: "*May your prayers leave a cloud of incense rising behind you, for the angels to find you when you go through the deep waters of life.*" While this prayer was written last spring for my 22-year-old college graduate, my spirit has continually prompted me to write this story - the vivid dream I had when Danielle was a 14-year-old, troubled teenager and all our family entered deep waters.