

Fate Makes a Health & Welfare House Call

Written by Alex Baer

Sunday, 19 April 2015 01:01 - Last Updated Monday, 20 April 2015 11:35

Fate -- or The Universe, or The Hairy Thunderer, or Kosmic Muffin, or The Flying Spaghetti Monster, or The Formless Mystery, or Your-What-Have-You -- waited ten whole days before it dropped by to give me a little something extra to stew in my cracked, shoulder-high, neck-mounted crockpot with the rattling glass-top lid.

Frankly, I had come to lose track of Its notions of style, Its sensibilities on timing, Its fondness for the unexpected slip of a stiletto between the ribs, Its pleased sneer for the gleeful anticipation of the set-up, followed by the crack of the ambush, the deft yank on the rug, the flailing, slow-motion fall, the broken things scattering on the floor...

And the snickering, the idiotic sniggering of Its visits: You can just hear the virtual chitterings of tittering, trickster demon vapor once safely idled off course somewhere harmless and stone-bound, and now allowed -- invited! -- to play Trick-And-Treat out in the small front yard, sparsely grassy and fresh-mowed, ringed by an ancient, ramshackle white picket fence more splinters and streaks than substance, and on the other side of this closed front door, where the buzzer just sounded, are snatches of voices on the dangle and swing.

Sometimes, the ability to simply keep up with the presentation, and take it up, real time, as you go, is the whole show -- the whole point, it seems, like a convoluted test, launched and sprung the exact moment your tester has prepped you to lean the other way, to commit your balance in the opposite direction, having aimed you not toward but away.

Which is where, of course, you either laugh until you cry, or else you cry until you can slowly manage to recover a dented chuckle here, from under the phone table, or else snag a fuzz-coated chortle that fell to the floor over there...

Not being able to penetrate all the potential patterns in this dimension of existence can be a royal pain in the ass. Today pointed out that one again. It's another looping, repeated lesson that's in very high rotation this week.

Personally, I'd prefer having the ability to slide along the secret slipknot rings of synchronicity -- content to just know the issues and events in play, the reasons for them, how they all connect

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up, whether they are fair or sensible, lame or sane...

But...

Watch anything long enough and the patterns start to slip and squeak out.

Example? Deeply commit to any real and lasting change in your life, and be ready for a test at beak-and-claw level. Permanently changing your mind, to then permanently change your life -- there may be no louder demand howl of action a human can make which can instantly coax and force a passing Proctor to test the unsuspecting Student, and to test the grip, the mettle, and that student's steel.

* * * * *

Ten days ago, some bonus-round lung cancer cells found a spot in my brain to throw a small reunion -- a tumor kegger. It was just a narrow spot in the road, up there on Blood-Brain Barrier Boulevard. But the sides of the steel kegs were stacked alongside the grill work of my motor skills set, and my system sparked and shorted out for a few minutes.

It was my body's first mutiny against my Me. Yes, I guess you'd have to say it was an *out-of-body* experience, unless you have a lot of brain seizures inside *your* body, and you know the drill.

Many medical moments and *magicks* and *majiks* later, my body and I are at truce, with the radiological tanning bed and horizontal brain roaster warming up in the next room for a few rounds of Sterilize the Kegger Site.

These are interruptions that are necessary, I know -- the body has my Me hostage. I've always

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thought it was I who drove my Me around in this vehicle of meat, but I've been made, or maybe allowed, to see many things differently now. One of those things I see differently is that I am now living in two worlds -- the Surface World, where physical needs are scoured, served, and met, and the Real World, where all the precious and essential reasons for life are treasured, and closely held for immersion, exploration.

Even as I now hurriedly haggle and trade in Surface World for my Me, and for an extension of my contracted time here, my soul eyes never stray far from Real World, where my energy wants to go play, find, discover, and be. And to renew itself, drinking deeply.

Why?

My path is not to create a different world for the world to use and enjoy -- my path is to attempt to create a different path for me, in order to find that which has always vaulted and somersaulted out of reach: *Joy*. *Peace*. *Acceptance*. *Understanding*.

It is my great hope to transition well, to make bedrock changes for me and mine, and to have great piles of fun at it, during the attempt at a profound personal transition as I moved toward a trailhead we all face as we travel here. The need is an urgent and unlikely gift which came to me, wrapped around a brain seizure, silently breaking, but clearly speaking.

It is also my hope that these rambling, shambling tales of my encounters here and there, and how it is that these tangles of my thoughts try to seek new levels, test-driving relaxation padded around new contours of awareness, might even help others refresh themselves along the way. The path we all take is long and dusty, littered with hot, broken rocks, under a baking sun. Nice to come up on a cool, clean well of crystal clear water once in a while, sit in the shade a while.

So, no -- I have no hopes or interests or wants in world conquests, nor in cult cultivation, nor in religion-building nonsense, nor in carving off any of my discoveries and experiences in these journeys into an eight-digit movie-book-mug-tee-shirt-poster deal. I am simply interested in re-learning the things I already know to be absolutely true, and have hidden away from myself, then connecting up all those dots to see what changes can come -- just by knocking off decades of encrusted scale from my eyes, habits, attitudes, notions, and self-hobbled thinking.

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If you are entertained or aided, or if you are slid a side-plate of insight served with an amusing spiced wine, then I am well pleased, and look forward to our idle, friendly banter at some point on the journey when possible.

Do not think me elitist or isolationist -- I am simply not able to live your life for you, nor shape your world for you, nor know or find the answers you seek. I am confident you will find your own path, and in your own way, and in your own time -- and that it will happen exactly as it should, and when it should.

Meanwhile, there is a lot of laughing and learning to be done. If the world wishes to pay attention and adopt any of the dance steps in experiment here, well -- in my world, at least, in the Real World, there's no need for copyright attorneys, even if they are still battalion-deep financial combatants in Surface World skirmishes.

Hey -- they can sue us in one, if they like, but we can laugh and drink them under the table in the other.

But, then: Where do *you* think the learning for life might *really* be done -- in a chill, angular, rock-wall boardroom with forced parchment air and freeze-dried despair, or in an ancient wooden tavern creaking on a lovely riverside green, night flowers scenting the air, lutes and pipes playing, food roasting in hung iron pots over a small field of potted coals, while lovers dance past candles and smiles are traded in flickering firelight?

Let them march. I'd rather dance.

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... and this, of course, is exactly why the doorbell rang tonight, on the Tenth Day after Seize Your Day, as I call it, The Day When Everything Changed Forever.

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My Health & Welfare House Call had materialized, you see -- my test. I had howled into my life and promised day from night, claiming the Right of Change. Of course, the Proctors had no possible way to refuse. Two arrived. Based on the probable strength of my oath, they likely could have heard me from Alpha Centauri -- and, in fact, they may have, based on their states of dour dress and detached demeanor.

It was a breathtaking performance. Please allow me a moment to paint a few still images for you:

Two men, about 25 or 28 -- obese, American-style, dark-haired, dark complected, each with three or four days of beard growth, dressed in too-small-for-size, strident black tee-shirts and black, baggy, fluttering nylon basketball shorts sporting emblems and logos aplenty, the waistlines riding perhaps kneecap-high, if in fact that high, battered ball caps slipped backwards on top, and black, battered basketball shoes, on bottom...

And a few months rent in tattoos. Arms, legs, hands, sides of faces. Up, down, around and around. (I'm regular ex-military, not a supergrunt, but I get it: These tats are industrial-strength push-back mojo, a sort of macho, layered skin napalm treatment advertising *Be Careful Around Me and My Skin, Man* .)

Odd, though: They are interacting in a -- is that a marginally polite manner? Did I actually hear a *sir* slipped into the mix? A *ma'am*?

The effect is hypnotic and a little disorienting, but I'm tracking, I'm tracking...

The immediate impression -- *and I am here prepared to receive your sharp criticism of me as an old-fashioned country bumpkin, here in our tiny country-ish house, an aging hipster who is older than 50 but still hip to the real* -- that my Lady and I were taking a drive-by visit by a pair of gang-bangers.

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Please: We do see movies. We do understand culture has changed. Radically. We get it. No more *Leave It To Beaver*. No more *It's a Wonderful Life*.

The CEO no longer makes just 30 times your pay and lives up the street from you, but has checks totaling 3,000 times your pay, and platinum parachutes into a variety of sterile gatehouses, bunkers, vacation homes, and gated communities each night. We're in global competition now, so the American dream is over, and you will work until you drop -- not retire after 20 or even 30 years. You're up against knowledgeable workers in Indonesia and Mumbai and elsewhere, where a dollar a day holds the family starvation line at bay, and workers eagerly throw themselves into the gears of cutthroat capitalism and mind-curdling competition with you, so that they may receive the privilege of death by age 35 or 38...

This is the world now: The standard of living decision is not now made from need and from below, but from greed and from on high. And if you doubt this, consider all the messages in all media, and what the messages all share. Media is a corporate product, so the message is a corporate one -- and all the messages serve the interests of the corporations, and all the messages are for you to believe, and to buy, and to never stop, nor ever ask questions.

- It would be wonderful, I think, to find a planet where intelligence had arisen, and where harmless, kindly space teachers beamed media messages to planetary inhabitants -- messages of support, learning, consideration, caring -- just to see how that construct fared, as compared to the one here, where short term gain is indistinguishable from long term destruction, where sustainable commerce is the very last consideration, made just in time, the ultimate in efficient inventory processing, made as the last living thing being sold and eaten actually dies, thereby becoming extinct, leaving nothing more to exploit or trade or use...

But, as to your criticisms of my notions of dress when visiting neighbors, or related propriety, and so forth...

- It is just not very often -- *OK, never* -- that a Los Angeles barrio shuck-and-smolder comes to this little town, challenged in so many of its little town ways as it is, and gets a knock on the little door of this little house, seeking out my Lady and my Me.

The purpose?

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- A flicker whispers at a odd node in my mind's eye, and I process it as a tip-off to Prowling Proctors, out to stir and shake, out to scramble, scrutinize, test as hard scrabble, kick tires very hard with concrete shoes.

The purpose, as it slowly spools out, is that these are our new neighbors, at a rental house to the immediate south by two school bus lengths, across our fence.

The two men -- I will *always* say *Proctors* here, whether these two men live in those so-near-shouts away across our fence, whether for one day or for a hundred years -- want to know *where they can go shoot some guns around here.*

- They have a couple guns -- a shotgun and a pistol that they want to test out, and make sure work OK, they state.

One of the longest Kosmic Debris Mind-Boggle Pauses of any era erupts without warning, and the air hangs all around us, my Lady and my Me, out in the yard, summery air like ripped tar paper and scorched cotton soaked in kerosene, a scent of sulphur aboard, and a sound of thick kitchen matches sliding into a loose, airy focus, being slowly dragged across a rough igniter surface...

- Somewhere in my Me, a number of cams and shafts and clutches and flywheels start to ease and creak into motion -- *all ahead slow.* The conversation becomes measured and purposeful, really measured, paced like a NASCAR lap, and I am racing inside, while maintaining any illusion of a calm exterior and interaction, like a circus ringleader highly practiced in turning the attention of the crowd toward the cotton candy clowns, after having them miss seeing the twin streaks of Bengal tigers darting past a gap in the thick, red, crushed velvet curtains into the back.

Time gets spongy, sticky, uncertain. It sticks, then slips, then sticks, then skids. And slides, and slides a bit more. And there is still oxygen to breathe, and no match has taken the long and exciting journey of friendly fire from friction, not yet, and has not so far converted that match, any match, into the decimating fireball of an unforgiving moment.

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And the idea exchange is still open, and the chat -- *the chat, I suddenly realize, the chat is still a chat* -- is underway, like a loose swap meet of ideas, sharing information, considering options that have been spoken about, Q & A time slipping and sliding around in the gravel driveway.

We have talked, I find and remember in my mind, of possible shooting ranges, talked of city limit signs about a mile back down the road, talked about both firm laws and potentially outlandish suggestions from superstitious people that firearms not be discharged in a neighborhood clotted and dotted with homes, families, kids, pets, grandmas, goats, deer, and a wide zoo of other beings which may be fond of ongoing and continued motion for some time to come.

The Proctors thank us and wave, backing down the driveway, heading the 40 steps or so to their rented home, just across the fence to our south. It is an odd and awkward walk backward for them, a bit off balance, trying to say and do too much at once, and getting caught up in unpracticed body motions, fumbling toward home, loopy as ginned dragonflies, taking very few useful answers with them as they wing.

We go inside, my Lady and my Me. And we sit. And we wonder about what is really going on in this Universe, and not for the first time, not by a long shot.

The uncoiling within takes my Me some time -- most of the tight coil shakes out by the time we head into the third hour. The day's contemplating has barely begun this night. First, the unjangling of soul, then the understanding might begin, if it actually stops by to visit, asking us for tea, insisting as always on boiled eggs as it licks its fingers in anticipation of the tea-and-toast feast it'll sneak.

* * * * *

I react poorly to being forced to provide sudden oaths and participate, especially when the cultural currents are deep and stacked high with crashing drift logs, and the angry ocean tea is steeped in the twin terrors of ignorance and arrogance -- something I am shamed to say our country has pioneered as a pristine pastime since two towers fell, and the planet cracked.

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It is complicated. *Everything* is complicated anymore. On the one hand, I am feeling an old need to fill my OD green footlocker with Big Tools. On the other hand, I am changing my Me in a pledged change for a broader, wider good, while walking away from the self-inflicted darkness of mindless coma I've been growing for a decade or two of failing health, growing age, outsourced meaning, lost opportunity, financial penalty, and clinging to my attempts to wing and wrench a recovery and a repair away from a society that has almost unanimously insisted on throwing my Me away at every opportunity as my *best possible opportunity* and as my *best possible use*.

I reject this outright and after deep, long struggle. *Everyone is needed.* □ *No spare parts on Big Blue Water World.* □ *Even my Me is needed here, somewhere, somehow, for some reason -- else why am I here? □ Why are you?*

As much as I detest the knee-jerk of old boilerplate training, I detest more the mushy, infected kernel of this era's apparent truths, that standing your ground is honorable, even if you and your intentions and your heart are not. I reject that my standing down, and living reasonably, and acting cooperatively and not competitively, and blindly as reflexive, knee-jerk jungle terrors, is without honor.

I reject the command that I must go get guns so as to protect myself from the people who command themselves to go get guns to feel better about themselves and their chances. I am repulsed at the stink of the Death Cult of Country and This Foul Era, where all entertainments must -- **must, absolutely MUST** -- preside among death, death, death.

And the collisions of these ideas swirling within my Me, these and so many more, trace around my tired edges, looking for cracks of light around and beneath each exit and entrance door I encounter inside, in my hallways, in my shoulder-mounted crockpot with the slightly cracked lid, where the cancer kegger party was, not so long ago.

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It has been nearly enough hours now. Another awkward truce has been struck within my Me, ten days after my Me mutinied, bolted, and tried to shoot out into the night, alone, without me riding shotgun.

- I am trying hard to think I am not hearing any stray pops and bangs outside the house tonight -- that those sounds are just the stray cannon bursts from the prune orchards across the way, over on the next hill, trying to scare birds away from crops.

My particular truce this time out, so soon, again? This time it is consideration of the courage to disband fear, to look beneath surface, to observe and reason, to search for facts and encourage truth, to recommit to understand, to discover what is real. To change, to move toward real change, for a change -- a permanent and lasting one, or as good a chance as we get here on Mudball Earth.

For, if I have learned anything in this life, it is that Prowling Proctors always bring hidden keys with their tests -- sign of a final bargain with their most earnest candidates, to offer an ounce of salve once the drawing and quartering has been done, once the slouching in the slaughterhouse has been done.

I am now shaky, uncertain, but arrived: In Real World, one commits to look behind and past mirrors, after first looking straight into, and unblinkingly through, every single looking glass one finds, faces.

The alternative is to remain in Surface World, where towers fall, ground is stood, fear holds sway, and while ignorance and arrogance grows glossy, gossamer wings across our cold, gray graves.

There are some things even my Me will no longer do.

I am encouraged that *slaughterhouse* contains the word *laughter*.

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What to do when there's so very little left to do? □ Why, music of course: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-pHLQztzX0>

and: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBACaKI8zxc>