**The Spirit and Alien Party THE STORY SO FAR**

Preamble

Hakim, my guardian avatar I manifested when I was sixteen to save me from spiritual harm, made a suggestion to me this morning, when he saw me reading about Elon Musk creating a new political party.

‘We should create one.’

He meant in the UK, where I live.

There seems to be a new trend of making new political parties. People are not at all in agreement with the existing ones. I was about to write ‘regular parties’ but Hakim was saying,

 ‘Irregular’

He’s right, I suppose, but I think it is more because people are, these days, more nuanced in their thinking; more flighty in their opinions; more able to form opinions in the dark when the light keeps going dim. In other words, easily distracted by new and shiny things or more febrile like two year-olds throwing tantrums. Not everyone, just the one’s I come across, albeit vicariously.

When Hakim said, ‘We should start one’, I think he meant; me, the human; him, the spirit avatar; and Harrari, the abandoned alien who I found in a wood a few years ago. On the face of it, we would make a good team. Unfortunately, Hakim’s principle role is to wake me up when there is a presence of psychic or spiritual threat while I am asleep. It is only recently that we actually converse. He wears this ‘stripe’ of promotion with bountiful pride. Harrari, is still young and separated from her absolutely ruthless brothers, who let it be known, held obscurrence of their presence, when they were here, to be paramount in their activities. While never violent in their actions to remain hidden, they could be. Oh yes! I have never met them but I never disrespect Harrari, let’s put it that way. She, (I think she is female) has all the capability of obscurrence, obfuscation and thought changing skills. Sadly, she doesn’t think she will be accepted back in her ‘world’ because she has gone ‘Indian’, as they used to say in the United States to mean that a white man had adopted indigenous Indian values.

What we have to remember is that I am the only one that has a visible form, or at least can maintain it. Sometimes, rarely, Harrari takes a female form, and for some reason calls herself Holly Hedges, so she COULD present as a party member if we created a new party. Ethically though, she would have to reel back her thought-changing ability. She can make people change their minds, well, desire really. I will spell it out; she is a composite of manipulation, muted ruthlessness and prescience.

But, who could be party members? We would have to gently ‘knock’ on the veil that separates us from the spirit world. Of course, there is a blending between the ‘worlds’, and our human world is suffused with what we believe is serendipity, strangeness and ‘magic’; meaning these are the things we like and we go ‘Ooh, that was fun or lucky or weird.’ There is also an aspect of the blending that we find frightening, evil, dishonest, and just plain mean. We all come across this, almost on a daily basis, even if it is a neighbour playing loud music just to spite you. (They have been infected - or you might think they are socially uneducated) To be fair though, when humans mostly enter the spirit world, and they frequently blunder in, they are, to the beings there, similar to how we view drunken teenagers with traffic cones on their heads, vomiting in people’s front gardens. We can, I think, begin to see how changing how we humans act might change the response from the warmongers in the spirit world.

So, knock, knock. Let’s say there really is a door that is the appropriate portal for diplomatic discussion. Who are we going to speak to?

 ‘What?’ a horned faerie.

 ‘Hello, so nice to finally meet you!’ a winged fairy, not unlike Tinkerbell in Peter Pan.

Or silence, just a feeling of there being something there and then a gradual forming of shape we recognise.

What we are not factoring in, though, is whether there is a democratic system in the spirit world.

**The Spirit and Alien Party - The story so far**

1

 ‘We should create our own political party’, said Hakim, ‘You know, you, me and Harrari.’

I eyed him skeptically. Harrari came to listen. Hakim went on.

‘You, of course, would be the leader.’ I felt he was trying to convince me rather than suggest but now that Harrari was here his efforts would be wasted. She quickly quashed any effect that flattery would have on me. But, for a moment, I was kind of hopeful of some kind of prominence in the world; ‘Hmm, Leader’, I thought. Okay, not!

‘Who would we have in it besides us? Humans?’ This, I knew as soon as I said it was framed completely wrong. Fortunately, Harrari and Hakim have formed a link and they smoothed it out between them. They know I am not contemptuous of humans, just a little spoilt by having two aspects, that are widely disparate but closely complimentary, to help me.

‘I know some people’. He meant spirits that belong to people. The advantage of having these spirits in the party, I knew, was that they can talk to each other without the hosts knowing what they are saying. This means that they can coax and cajole their respective hosts into making a decision but the ultimate choice always remains with the human. Humans don’t always make the right decision and they are swayed by flattery and unfounded ambition, (Hmm, Leader, I thought).

Of course, we would need votes from the nation. Harrari can make anyone think anything is a good idea and the result is that they act on a decision that she has effectively planted in their heads, but she cannot do it with millions of people by herself. She would need help from her family, but we all knew THAT wasn’t going to happen; she was marooned.

Sooner or later we were going to have to make some ‘friends’. Unfortunately, I somehow threw away the manual on ‘Entering the Spirit World (without making a mess)’, without ever having seen or owned it. I was also known for ‘crashing the party’. We would have to tread very carefully.

‘Make the introductions, Hakim.’ I said, intrigued but also mindful of burning bridges. It is after all extremely important that I maintain as neutral connection as possible with the hope of an improvement in relations.

 ‘See,’ said Harrari. ‘You are already thinking like a politician’.

I wasn’t pleased, because to a British human, that can be an insult, but I felt her soft conciliatory hand gently smoothing my thoughts. ‘Diplomatic. Okay’ It is strange to think that a ruthless killer has a soft hand. I rather think her brothers do not.

Hakim came back with the spirit of the man I met in the village shop on the 29th May. He warned us that he didn’t have long because the man was about to wake up soon, but he thought he knew someone who could help and offered his support as a firm believer that the war should stop, so we had his vote. I wasn’t really sure if he meant war or skirmishes, but I let it go; maybe something was lost in translation, telepathy from both Hakim and Harrari, who were translating for me, and the rapidly replaced words on his banner, for my benefit, was a bit much for me. Then he was gone.

We waited for a few minutes. All three of us knew that just waiting was a fool’s errand, if doing nothing even is an errand or task. I went to the shop to get bread and Baked Beans, (which aren’t really baked), because it is almost inevitable that we must interact with our own world to be open to new ‘holes’ in the veil where communication is possible. If you imagine darkness, that is not dark, and then a little hole forming that allows light through, that isn’t light, which gets bigger so a face appears, that isn’t a face, you understand how hard it is to keep an appointment that isn’t an appointment. Alternatively, we could call it coincidence or serendipity. Harrari, tells me it is alignment, which is how she is able to fill in the blanks and ‘help’ people change their minds. The prominent question was whether I should eat or wait. Slight hunger is the best state to be in for ‘meetings’ or focus. However, deliberate malnutrition is considered by the spirit world to be driving a bulldozer through the veil and it will not be met with Tinkerbell fairies; expect the angry horned faerie instead. That said, they are not nasty per se, just if you upset them. But, who knows what upsets them? My advice is ‘Best not’, whatever it is you are thinking of doing to force it.

Why buy Baked Beans? Because they are not. The best place to look for ‘communcation holes’ or portals is where there is confusion and deceit. I should like to say that every tin of Jolly Green Giant sweetcorn is a portal because it says that the grains inside are one of your five a day. No, fruit and vegetables are one of your five a day. I should like to say hang around in the sweetcorn aisle but it is just marketing, not really deceit. Baked Beans, on the other hand, used to be baked underground and still could be if one wanted to. Different kettle of fish entirely. It’s all about history and ‘is it, isn’t it?’. Certainly though, there is no magic connection caused by actually having baked beans, baked or not.

Harrari decided to chip in.

 ‘Being ‘open’ is about suspending rationale; it is about being in a liminal state of ‘maybe’. It is a balancing act between being immutable and trapped in reason on one side, and psychosis on the other; neither is the optimum state for success in either world.’

 ‘That is the rule for engineers. It doesn’t apply to scientsts.’ I said.

Hakim laughed.

 ‘Hah, I would like to meet a scientist with a spirit avatar and an alien friend.’

 ‘Quite a lot of maybe, isn’t there?’ I agreed.

We waited and I was beginning to think that politely ‘ringing the bell’ in a hope of avoiding a bellicose and belligerant horned faerie, and the super-nice, though at times spiteful, winged Tinkerbell fairy, in favour of the ‘something’ forming in the ether, might be a waste of time. But, thinking about it, expecting the spirit world to be at our beck and call is just plain arrogance.

2

Emily, in the shop, had me for a moment earlier; she was kneeling on the floor facing away from me. Is that the girl that hates me? No. Yes it is. No, it isn’t. No. I would have just left if it was; you know avoid confrontation. Harrari pointed out that the air of reason and comfortableness I felt in the shop from using heuristics was disrupted.

 ‘A good sign.’ she whispered.

We weren’t really waiting for an appearance of anything, just a sign that we were recognised.

Of course, slipping into the foyer of the spirit world as a formal guest was something none of us three knew anything about. We did know, however, that you can’t just dress up; nakedness is a thing there. By bedtime, I felt that enough weird thoughts had entered my head, which Harrari and Hakim assured me did not originate from them, that an RSVP was being acted upon.

As usual, Hakim sat at the end of my bed to wake me if I was about to be attacked, but now we agreed that he should not alert me when my neighbour’s spirit came to loom and stare at me in confusion with his clumsy questions saturating my space. He, my neighbour’s spirit, did this every night. He is a sink hole for energy. I feel sorry for him, my neighbour. There is something ‘different’ about him that makes it difficult for him to understand things and I think he is mostly harmless, so I kind of let his spirit sip a bit in the hope that one day my neighbour will gain a bit more ‘sonder’ (The realisation that other people also have their own lives, desires and needs). I will never ‘switch off’ Hakim. He must always be alert to every threat, no matter how it manifests. We don’t want a Trojan Horse or a worm to get to me while I sleep. But, I needed to stay deep asleep, so giving a free pass to my neighbour’s spirit was something we just had to plain do.

Something we hadn’t thought about was just how formal the trip would be. Before Hakim could wake me he had been given identification. Even though we had never thought that spirits carry identification because they are a hive, nonetheless, Hakim was convinced of the authenticity of the intent of the spirit guide before him. He later told me that he had felt strong, strong peace. He said he looked for barbs but could not detect any. That is his job though as Spirit Security Officer. A hat he has made slightly bigger than his head, but I am not complaining!

The sound of a 1930’s Berlin Bierkellar woman singer came to my ears. She sang with a quaver in her voice and one beat later than the accordian leading a brass band.

Ta, ta, taa, taa, taa

ta, ta, taa, taa, taa

ta, ta, taaa, taaa, taaa, taaa, taaaa

But the lyrics made no sense; something about a toad in a hole with a troll that was cold. Not at all bawdy or with any double-entendres. Hakim looked at me quizzically. I slightly shook my head thrice with raised eyebrows. Harrari had not been allowed to come with us, so I got nothing from her.

Our guide, still with no form, by now had introduced itself as Fata, which it explained was Latin for fairie. It looked at us askance out of the corner of its eyes; we felt, rather than saw it; as though checking to see if we ‘bought it’.

Seemingly led away, but more my own decision, it seems Hakim and I ‘followed’ Fata into a very large room. I began to realise why Harrari was not allowed here, when Hakim nudged me and looked at me with slightly furrowed eyebrows. I nodded. Harrari has the identical ability to lead people away from places. I started to wonder if she had learned this in the wood where I had found her when she was still very young. Hmm, it makes sense that she would not be allowed to uncover when this is being done to me by Fata. On Earth, and cut off from her alien brothers, she would have had only the human world, the fauna and flora world, AND THE SPIRIT WORLD to learn from. Hmm. Hakim seemed to agree, though with some reservation. His beard and moustache twitched.

In this room were large cabinets; in each, a different still creature.

 ‘It’s a museum’, explained Fata.

We stopped before a glass cabinet with a little man wearing green clothes and a tall crooked hat. It held a pipe and a walking stick. In the background was a representation of a rainbow.

 ‘It’s a Leprechaun’ Hakim whispered. I couldn’t help hearing the faint Irish lilt in his quiet voice. The sign at the front of the cabinet read ‘Leprechaun’ and then began to change to a non-sensical word with each letter having no bearing on any other. It continued to oscillate and flip-flop between letters until it finally entirely faded.

Othe cabinets had motionless winged fairies; dryads; gnomes; merfolk; and kelpies. We stopped before one that had a sign that said ‘Brownie’. The figure inside bore a striking resemblance to Hakim, who worriedly looked at me. Fata explained.

 ‘What you are seeing are the types of elemental creatures that humans have conjured in their heads from long ago. Humans need to anthropomorphise phenomena they do not understand. You, yourself, created Hakim based on a Brownie.’

Hakim looked displeased while I raised my eyebrows and gave a Pan Am smile. I didn’t realise I had done that but the resemblance really was uncanny, if uncanny is ever uncanny in the spirit world. It is probably just canny. My rationale was certainly suspended, but of course, it needed to be.

 ‘For millennia, we have gone along with this,’ Fata went on, ‘and sent entities into your world that are similar to human concepts. These, in the cabinets are all quite real. We had them stuffed for the museum.’

Hakim and I gasped.

 ‘You are among the first to formally request a visit or even a meeting, so we decided to make it fun.’

 ‘Don’t!’ I warned Hakim, who was about to protest. I felt that Fata was watching him, assessing and calculating. I didn’t like where this was going.

 ‘We er...We are here for a meeting’, I interjected into the mess in the air.

 ‘Already taken place. We agree to having some of our, shall we say group? Join your new political party. We only need to agree terms.’ intoned Fata enigmatically.

We were led back past the 1930s Berlin Bierkellar band to a door which Hakim and I passed through. Just before it slammed shut behind us I turned to see if I could get a glimpse, from the corner of my eye, of Fata. It bore a striking resemblance to me and had a penetrating, hard and cold stare on its, my face.

I woke up, still paralysed and cold through to my bones. After the parslysis passed, I drank coffee and jumped up and down and had a hot bath but the cold stayed in me until lunchtime, seven hours later. I needed to talk to Harrari.

3

Harrari would never be shaken by questioning. Indeed, I shouldn’t question her, ever, but I was almost insane with curiousity. How much of an alien is she?

 ‘Holly.’ I said as she materialised in her human form. Hakim sat back, pretending to smoke a non-existent pipe, I suppose a little discomfitted by seeing the stuffed Leprechaun.

 ‘Holly’, I said, I don’t understand’. She, of course, understood what I meant.

 ‘Do you think we cannot adapt, or will not adapt to our surroundings?’

 ‘Well...’

 ‘Because I am who I am, and how I am formed makes it easy for me to pick up on how things work on Earth. It is not just about imagery and representations such as humans tend to concentrate on. Filling in the gaps between now, and how then might, or could be, to engender continuity is something that all my species can do. I do not, however, use trickery, deceit or flummery such as you have just witnessed and been subjected to. Whether, they learnt it from me, or me from them, is not important. The important thing to remember is that as a human you can be manipulated and controlled. They didn’t want me there with you because I can see better than you. For me, it is stark differences. For you, it is a kaleidoscope of attractive colours.’

She was not sorry, and never would be. She had no reason to be apologetic, humble or sheepish. She had done nothing wrong. It was me who was deceitful. Merely by letting my curiousity swell to such a magnitude that I was perplexed meant that I had shown distrust. She went on:

 ‘When you were living in the wood and realised that you were disturbing the animals, I decided that I like you because you had adapted and realised how negative your actions could be. Before that, I hated you. You charged around, intent only on what was outside the wood; where you were going to be later. But you started to slow down and quietened. That is when I stopped flicking your glasses off your face. I pulled you from the ditch when you fell in and led you back to your tent in the dark. You had changed. You were thinking about the wood and your impact on it; blending in.’

 ‘I’m sorry’ It was the best I could do. But I knew that I had messed up way worse than I ever had with any living being before. She didn’t care though, she never would.

Hakim ‘finished’ his pipe and came over. Holly faded and I could only feel Harrari there instead; neutral, thank goodness.

 ‘So, are we going back? I am not comfortable giving a free pass to deceit in any form.’ asked Hakim.

Knowing that I cannot switch Hakim off, and muting him was just plain dangerous, I had to agree that another visit was essential if we were to begin to understand the extent of trickery that might emanate from any kind of union with free spirits. The idea of a union with personal spirits hosted by people did cross my mind; they are safe, but they are limited in their availability.

 ‘I suppose we will have to. But not through the front door, or let’s say, not by invite.’

I know how to gate-crash the spirit world and I know how to get a ticket as a spectator. Unfortunately, spectators don’t get to interact or ask questions. Entering a fevered state, such as I was in when I found Harrari or when my mind was troubled, but fresh with youth, when I created Hakim, is difficult to do safely. I don’t recommend ‘forcing’ anything. As I said before, expect warmonger horned faeries. Hakim, of course, came with me.

I found myself on a lane that looked down on a twee valley. I recognised it as a somewhere I used to live, but I never had. It was familiar to me. Good, I know where I am, I thought. I have made my exit point.

After casually and gently strolling along for a few minutes; Harrari’s words about not charging about clanged in my head; I came across a few thatched cottages and a lovely elderly woman outside one. She was welcoming and smiling. After a few pleasant sentences I noticed her glances at me were lasting longer and longer and were harder and harder. I felt that she was beginning to suspect that I didn’t belong there.

Some time ago, I was as skilled at lying and deception as any average person. Deceit is easy; you start by not recognising yourself or hiding what you are ashamed of; and then it goes on from there; not taking responsibility for one’s mistakes, blaming others, making up stuff, and so on. Now though, I am open. If the woman had asked me why I was there I would be compelled to speak the truth. Allowing speculation, on the other hand, is not deceit, but does have to be rectified if harm or untruths are a result of misdirection. Hakim tugged my arm and we left. I couldn’t help thinking that she was a sentry, like one might have found in Communist East Germany before The Wall came down, and she was scribbling down my details.

The lovely village ‘grew’ tall walls and then multiple churches with water-courses running between them and beneath them. These were blackened buildings, tall and imposing; not at all inviting. There would be no kindly vicar standing outside shaking hands, smiling and welcoming visitors. Instead, self-standing iron gargoyle figures, fifteen feet high, stood menacingly all around. Here, one with a sword; there, one with a scimitar. All of them were armed and black, deep black; so black that light almost did not reflect from them. A priest came to stare at me and then another.

 ‘They know we are here.’ Hakim whispered. I suppose trying to hide a Brownie in a world that would be fine pickling them was a little foolish, which is why I had covered him in a shawl over his head that reached his knees. Of course, Hakim is not a Brownie, he just looks like one. Perhaps this isn’t going to work, I thought.

We walked faster and as we were now ‘charging about’ we attracted more and more attention. Figures that I thought would be, in the human world, casual visitors to, perhaps somewhere like Windsor Castle, were here pointing at us and crowding behind us. We were close to running when after passing past over twenty church and cathedral-like buildings, mostly in shade, we left the grounds. Pursuit stopped. I had learnt something. There are either bailiwicks of concern and proprietory value, or malicious attention quickly wanes. Perhaps, my fear was enough for them. But, I also know that there are spirits that thrive on fear and engender it in the unwary. There are also spirits that feed on metabolised fear. What we know as fear is only the precursor to another feeling we don’t recognise, but that is what they want to enjoy. So, they work in pairs; two spirits feeding on the same thing really.

I, we, found ourselves on an arterial road overlooking open countryside. To one side of the road was a thirty foot wall that almost hid a town. The wall, of course, struck me as a structure that invited curiousity. What is behind it? Knowing what was behind it would, I am certain, have ended the visit. Knowing something negates that feeling of, is it, and isn’t it, and the suspension of rationale is essential for this kind of exploration. There was definitely no chance of meeting a scientist.

4

Cars passed us but I knew they might just as well be illusions. The roads emptied.

In the town, everything seemed ‘normal’, just as a human in a human world might experience an affluent town in the UK. Hakim and I ‘browsed’ the population and ‘window-shopped’ the creatures in human form, slowly and carefully so as not to attract attention. The sun shone strongly and cast shadows where they should be; but I expected that. The shadows faded away. Observation, it seemed, changed the process or the facts of the circumstances. What was actually taking place was the positive transfer effect of my past experiences was interfering with new experience. In effect, expectation overruled surprise. The similarity between the world as we know it and this spiritual world was so compelling that I inadvertently acted as though I was at home. Of course, I was, but out of phase with the physical world. Hakim and I were somewhere in England but not with any physical substance.

 ‘Pretty difficult to grasp anything isn’t? offered Hakim.

 ‘Spirit fish, it all wriggles and swims away just as understanding wades in.’ I said. Heads turned towards us. Even though Hakim and I knew that if we drew attention to ourselves more focus would be applied to identifying us, that knowledge and understanding did not, as one might expect by now, stop them looking at us or following us. So, knowing that spirits are near will not make them go away, it just makes us more attractive to them. Somehow they can pick up when we perceive them and recognise and understand what we have perceived.

Hakim swore. Most of the staring ceased and only a couple followed us up to an open cafe door. There was a smell of herbs.

 ‘Nice!’ I conceded, ‘but why?’

 ‘You are so different to them because you don’t deceive. We need to blend in, be more like them.’ It made sense but I didn’t like it, not a bit. For me, that just stank of contamination. How long would it take for the leaching of automonous deception from them to reach into me and become self-denial, the seed for open lies to the rest of the world?

We were ignored by everyone in the half-full cafe, The ‘chase’ had stopped at the door and no-one inside looked at us. It seemed that Hakim had managed to shroud us from scrutiny with his swearing. We had, of course lost something about ourselves. We were tainted.

Despite there being a sign that said ‘We Seat You’, no-one came over. This cafe had leather sofas as well as tables and chairs. One sofa was available and Hakim and I were about to sit down when we both looked at each other remembering the stuffed creatures we had seen in the museum during the formal visit. We sat at a table that butted up to another, with three men seated at it.

 ‘I don’t think we will find anything here.’ I whispered to Hakim. He agreed and we started to rise. I never saw the movement but felt a hand grasp my right wrist. It was exceedingly strong and extraordinarily real.

 ‘Sit down.’ I looked from the hand to the man’s face seated to my right at the next table. It had an intensity to it that matched memories I had of a fervour to maintain a secrecy; the teeth were clenched and the words had escaped through only a small gap formed by his lips which still retained an slightly open shape despite the sentence being finished. The recognition and understanding I had of this did nothing to reduce the strength of his hold on my wrist. Struggling would have drawn attention from the customers in the cafe, and I was powerless to escape.

 ‘Sit down!’ Strangely the other two men seemed oblivious to my dilemma and continued to ignore us and chat to one another. My captor looked away from me and rejoined the conversation with his companions.

I sat and Hakim followed suit, both of us unsure what to do. Neither of us spoke. The hand released me, but I did not move to rise again. What was different about these three men, to the other entities, was that they were trying to hide any interest they had in us.

 ‘You’re visitors.’ The voice came from a man in a blue shirt across from the man seated next to me. “You’re clumsy. Why did you bring the Brownie?’

Hakim stared at him, infuriated, and suddenly realising that we were the reciprocal to spirits in our human world so we, ourselves, had no physical substance in the spirit world, he rose and walked away from our table towards a very large plate-glass window, where there were no tables, and passed clean through it, without breaking it, to the pavement outside. I hadn’t realised we could do that. When you think about it, Hakim, as a spirit guardian, should not be able to do it. He should have mass respective to his nature. Yet, he was a manifestation of my making; in essence, a piece of me, an extension of me if you will. That is how he is infinitely and solely connected to me and my sight.

Just as in the ‘real’ world we would feel a cold breeze and say something like, ‘Someone just walked over my grave’, or we might tell someone that our ears are burning and they respond with. ‘Someone is talking about you’, when Hakim walked through a window without breaking it, although it might not always be directly noticed as such, it could be heat-haze, there was a visible ripple in the air where the window was. A lot of heads in the cafe turned towards the window, alert to anomaly. They looked searchingly around themselves and settled on me, seemingly not concerned with the three men near me. I felt I had no choice. I didn’t know these men and had no idea what they might do. All I could think about was to flee. It was what we had done in the church and catheral grounds earlier. I used the same exit as Hakim and joined him outside. Every head in the street turned towards us and I realised that we were substantially visible. It had not occurred to me that by being calm and moving slowly we were not evident to passers-by. In the real world, we do not ‘see’ anyone on our pavements in towns, even though they are there and we avoid bumping into them, If one of them was naked or shouting we would notice them as an anomaly to our past experiences. We perceive other people but do not record them for immediate or later scrutiny.

By making two anomalies in quick succession, Hakim and I became obvious targets for attention. We had become the distraction of a woman in a red dress in an environment of grey-suited men. The problem we had was that the environment we were in was not on a human level of perception. Whereas humans will just brush off a quiver of strangeness because we have no reference points, the spirits here live what we think of as weird, they breathe weird, and notice weird, and don’t forget weird. Just like we, as humans, cannot pass through walls in our solid world and they can, Hakim and I were the reciprocal to this. As spirits with hosts in the physical world, we, to the free spirits were weird, and now very visible. I remembered Harrari’s words about being clumsy and not paying attention to any inadvertent effect I might have on my environment. I wish I had remembered it before.

Pandemonium broke out. Chairs clattered to the floor as the whole cafe erupted as one with ‘bodies’ thrusting towards the door. ‘The door, not the window or wall – interesting,’ I thought. We needed to fade, but Hakim went back through the window. Scared and frustrated, I gravitated to my former type and swore, bringing up energy to my muscles to run. The cafe customers ignored me and rushed back through the door into the cafe. Hakim came out through the wall of the building next door. I couldn’t help noticing that the three men in the cafe were still seated at their table. One of them had his head in his hands, another was slowly shaking his head looking at the table. The third just stared at me, a look of patient contempt scrawled across his face.

5

In the real, human world, Holly, was answering the front door. I woke on my sofa, empty crushed beer cans all around me, and an ashtray overflowing with cigarette ends and ash. I had a hangover worse than any I could ever remember. Oh No! I don’t smoke! What happened? I thought. But beginning slowly, and then rapidly gaining pace, I realised that I do, and I drink like a fish. My memory of myself, serious about people, sober, somewhere close to sane, and on a mission, rapidly dissolved. The last thing I thought was that I really must make notes when this happens. The first note would be, where do I, me, the one I know, go? In micro-seconds the last vestiges of my life faded and I was in this new alternative one.

I reached for a full tin of beer, the last one, I noticed. Holly followed Tim, my friend and neighbour, in. Previously, Hakim would have allowed his spirit to sip a little while I slept at night, and Harrari would definitely have diverted him, as a human, away from my front door. Previously, I despised him. He, previously, was the exact opposite to me, fuzzy in logic, dishonest, and completely oblivious to himself and others around him. But not now, I was like him now.

This had happened before, at least five times. Everything was always exactly the same except for little details that each time I accepted as the correct and only reality. Somehow though, I still retained the hyper-vigilance in every instance, and anomalies presented as bright beacons that were the dots I always had to join up. Hakim was nowhere to be seen.

Holly, the alien I discovered in the wood I once lived in, in a tent, went into the kitchen.

 ‘You’re an idiot.’ Tim’s patient contempt was always annoying to me.

 ‘My hackles rose. ‘Don’t start, Tim. I am not in the mood.’

 ‘You are one hell of a clumsy fool, aren’t you?

I thought maybe he was thinking about last night. A period for which I had no memory.

 ‘Hakim is still there, you know. You have to go back. Why do you do that?’

 ‘What?’

 ‘You know what I mean.’

Realisation filtered across my mind. In times of extreme stress I live a safe alternative existence. One where I can drown in seclusion simply by reaching for a bottle or, in this case, beer. I knew I was on a mission, but really couldn’t care less about continuing it. I reached for a cigarette. Holly stopped me. My desire for it waned and I forgot I wanted to smoke.

In films, when someone with a hangover needs to be ‘sharpened up’ they are ‘forced’ to drink coffee and thrust under a cold shower. It works, but Holly can do it by herself. She knew that I had been to spiritual court, and knew I had been pierced and would have the wound of open emotion until I could please the court that I was reformed in my ways. She could sober me up, but she couldn’t remove the barb that still remained in me. I remembered now why I had gotten drunk. Some things you just can’t get away from. Smoking, though, was a mystery to me.

Tim let himself out. I didn’t notice and didn’t remember he was ever there.

I found Hakim in a souvenir shop in the same town we had been in. Well, I was attracted to his whereabouts. The spirits were ignoring him. It seems impossible to me that we could ever be separated; how the cord that binds him to me could be broken. Yet, I suppose, it never is. There is just noise in the system. Any sussuration, or the sound of the radioactive cosmos on an untuned FM radio, if it is loud enough, will drown out our special link; it will do this to any link beyond human interaction.

 ‘You look terrible.’ he whispered.

 ‘Any news?’ I asked.

He looked at me more closely. I heard him think, ‘Oh no.’

 ‘Court.’ I admitted. But he already knew. It was one of the few times he was not with me, and a rarity that there was no explanation.

 ‘Again?’ He picked up a small black figure holding a trident in one hand and a spear in the other.

I nodded. I could hear an indistinct voice that belonged to no-one, and never did, saying, ‘You’re an idiot.’ and ‘You’re one hell of a clumsy fool, aren’t you?’ Without an owner, I had to claim it as my own.

The clock on the souvenir shop wall, which when I first looked showed 06:28, now showed 05:28. It seems we were taking our own time with us. I wondered what time it was for the shop-keeper.

Many years ago, shop-keepers of small shops used to leave their shops unattended and do something out the back; the washing up, watch television, who know’s what. They would be alerted by a small bell hung above the door that rang when the door hit it as it opened. It is a friendly, and not at all invasive, sound. This souvenir shop had one. I always heard the bell as, ‘Hello, how are you shopkeeper? I have just come to browse a little.’

The bell sweetly rang. Hakim and I turned to look. What I can only describe as a crested figure filled the doorway, holding a trident in one hand and a spear in the other, just like the little figure that was still in Hakim’s hand. Like the free-standing gargoyle figures in the cathedral and church precinct, light only just managed to reflect from it. It was black, black, black; deep black with only hints of highlights.

It lowered its head to pass under the lintel above the door and stepped in, ringing the bell with its crest as it passed. Behind it, the man who had been, earlier, staring at us with patient contempt in the cafe, followed it in. He studiously ignored us. Strangely, the creature gave way to him and stepped aside. Even more strange, it did it a little clumsily, as though it had not known that someone was there and was surprised. That was when the man looked at Hakim and I. We took the hint and crept past the fairie, while it was off-balance, and out the door. What we had just witnessed was similar to me phasing out and away from Hakim, and into a temporary alternative life where Harrari was Holly carnate, and where I liked my neighbour. The sudden changing of the time displayed on the clock on the wall, a few moments ago, still made no sense to me, but I stored it as an important and relevant anomaly; another dot that would need to be joined with others. I didn’t expect that the creature would be dazed for an hour, so Hakim and I carefully, slowly, and quietly fled, while we could. We needed to regroup with Harrari, this just wasn’t working.

The village above the twee valley was still there, but finding it without going through the cathedral and church precinct and the belligerant priests proved problematic by another route. Somehow, I knew the name of the village I knew as home but had never lived in, and Hakim and I tried to follow fairy-tale-like wooden signs that pointed to different villages. Just as I started to read them and understand the words, they changed. I was tempted to ask for directions from the few loiterers we saw seated on benches with nothing to do but watch us, but eventually we got there. The lovely, elderly lady was there, unsmiling.

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Back home, no-one had cleared up in the kitchen; it was, of course, down to me. There were crushed beer cans strewn across dirty plates and cutlery. I checked to see if there was still some dregs to drink and found only sips. Among them, were empty tins that once had food in them. Co-op Baked Beans; ‘One of Your Five a Day’ was written in large letters in a banner across the ‘front’ of the tin. I hadn’t noticed that when I bought the beans days ago.

Unknown to me, I was not the same me. Despite having a vague memory of having good personal hygiene and a sharp mind, this was not me now. I always know something has happened to me; that I am not quite here; that I am somewhere else and a different ‘me’ is here, but I can never join my selves in communication. Everything I have learnt outside of normal life; the astute and perspicacious knowledge; the tenuous connections; and the reasoning, just does not get transmitted from one ‘me’ to another. A conspiracy theorist would say that the Mandela Effect kept going on and on while the scientists at Cern, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, played with particle acceleration and collisions. I know different.

Out of my group of three, Me, Hakim and Harrari, only Harrari might be aware of anything different with any degree of certainty. She didn’t enlighten me, but I did get a feeling that I was the sole instructor at a training ground for multiple versions of me.

 ‘Alignment.’ she enigmatically said.

I needed a drink. Hakim was not important to me and Harrari seemed to fade away. Very much on my own, and both liking it and hating being lonely, I slumped into an armchair, despondent.

This duality in attitude clearly needed amending. A conduit between the two needed to be made. This had to be constructed solely from my own efforts, this much I knew. Some thoughts began to coalesce. Hakim is less important, and not needed so much because I am dull; there is no bright light, or honed intent within me now. I am not attracting spiritual attention. I am average; not a threat; inconsequential in hindering spiritual changes to our world; practically blinded to malicious spiritual activity. Monsters, creatures, nasty wisps, and all, could move around without me even detecting them. Hakim, of course, would alert me, but it would only be as a series of alarm calls that I would not recognise as Hakim’s.

‘Alarm...alarm...alarm...alarm...alarm!’

I would be in a state of panic and paranoia without knowing why; never being able to rest well, waking often in the night, jumping throughout the day, and finding recovery exceedingly difficult.

Right now, I could be in a room of industrious malevolence sewing discontent and brewing stews of confusion. Realisation brought recognition. I caught a glimpse of a human-like figure from the corner of my eye. Usually, when this happens, if your turn your head you will only see what you know to be there. At home, you will see your walls; your sofa; the door to another room and whatever has the right frequency and density to be visible to eyes that have evolved to see these things. However, I had a nature to think, ‘What else?’

Frozen in motion, the figure watched me with a mishapen head and a single open eye; the other one was swollen shut. The mishaped head seemed to be so due to multiple swellings, like it had recently been fighting and lost, and then been kicked in the head, or clubbed. Although nothing materialised or ‘appeared’, five other spirits coalesced in my vision. Lesson one was now over for my new self. Now you, or I, can see better, I said to myself, meaning me in both senses.

I felt threatened and remembered the warmonger fairie, which I supposed was a representation of a soldier. I also knew that you can be compelled to just do things you would not normally do; stupid things. Thrusting my hands into a washing up bowl with a sharp kitchen knife in it, is one such event I well remember. Deliberately riding into a kerb to give way to an ambulance that wanted to overtake me while I was cycling is another crazy thing I have done. There is no reason behind my actions sometimes, and there is no protective umbrella that we can casually open as armour against directed intent to harm us. It takes a focused mind; a firm mental position; fortitude and balance to resist spiritual and psychic attack. I, however, hungover, sleep-deprived and with no guidance, panicked and sprang from my slumped repose and bolt upright to my feet. The large head of a Great Dane dog inches from my face helped me make this decision. It was clear that by completing lesson one for my new self I had illuminated myself and attracted attention. Lesson two complete. A couple of the ugliest spirits faded. I was known to them as being observant and they had been taking advantage of my weaker self and had been opportunistic. I noticed my laptop was on and the WiFi light rapidly flickering. I never leave computers unattended and definitely never connected to the internet if I am not actively using it. I pulled the battery from it and crashed the system by removing the power lead. Cold air swirled around me and a smell of vanilla cake came to my attention, then roses or lilies or something. I had smelt these before but had never been able to make any connection with anything, and still couldn’t.

Abruptly, this departure from being naturally insentient to the external exposure of supernatural phenomena passed. I was left thinking that I was mistaken. The clarity of my experience seemed inconguous with how I now felt; foolish. Then, a piece of a jigsaw fell into place. While reincarnation is a series of lives. I live parallel lives. If everyone else has parallel lives and the Spirit and Alien Party includes spirit members who do not change, such as I do sometimes, the public would be subject to entities that may be thousands of years old with all the experience of those years of observing humans and how to set traps for them. How easy it must be for the to make a husband jealous of his wife, or his brother? How easy to bend belief and sentiment? We have seen airport security heightened so much as to infuriate passengers to close insanity, because of singular, though tragic, events. How these spirits must be sure of their future successes. This realisation wasn’t a lesson for my new self; it was alignment with all my other selves. Harrari, Hakim and I could never hope to curtail these monsters by ourselves. I needed to get sober, stop smoking, call Hakim back and make myself amenable to Harrari’s sensibilities, and find the men who never moved in the cafe when all the other spirits did.

I needed a bath. While the water was running and the bath filling, I went outside and shovelled some soil from my front garden into a saucepan, filling it up. In the bathroom, I didn’t need much water for my purposes so only quarter filled the bath; I wasn’t about to get clean; I was about to get dirty. I dumped the soil into the bath, stripped, and got in, and stirred it like when someone does when they are filling the bath and kneeling in it swirling the hot and cold water around behind them and round the other side towards the taps again. The water grew browner while grit left a trace around me. I lay down and splashed water over my chest. Dipping my head beneath the water didn’t feel good but it was necessary.

I stood and examined myself in the mirror while I was still wet. ‘Yup! Right there on the right side of my neck, a crescent shaped ‘arm’ thrust in deep. It was attached to a small demonically grinning creature, about eight inches high and perched on my shoulder. I washed it with a cup of clean water and it vanished, but then reappeared, though less distinct. Apparently, it was sticky and the dirt in the water had stuck to it, as I thought it would. No-one else would have seen it though.

 ‘Gotcha!’

 ‘Crab on your back,’ observed Hakim who had returned and come to watch. I expected he would. He is only absent when I don’t care where he is. ‘Spider on your side, and something on your left knee.’

A lot of people would have wriggled and squirmed and squealed, ‘Get them off! Get then off!’ It is no use though, you can’t force them off you; they just leave an arm, head or leg, to fester deep inside you. You have to grip them firmly and apply a continuous pull, sometimes for over ten minutes and then, with a sucking pop, out they come. Except you can’t hear it. It is more of a feeling; something like snapping a tendon without the pain. They die and fade pretty quickly if you put your foot on them and hold them still so they can’t escape. Just like trying to hold onto something from a dream and bring it into our awake state, they wriggle like fish. I have seen some, on other people, when I am in my better self, that are as big as the person they are attached to. You need specialist help to get rid of them, which isn’t always available. Often they just go and leave a sword or pike in the person. These are more often than not barbed, but eventually they decay and the shards melt into the body’s system and dissipate, but not before the affected person greatly suffers. Decades can pass before the afflicted people gain sufficient positivity to protect themselves from further mass spiritual attacks. Essentially, anyone who has potential to disrupt the negative intent of spirit warmongers is a strong target for malfeasant attention.

After half an hour, Hakim and I had found all the things stuck on, and in, me and removed them. I had a memory of needing a drink and a cigarette through the horror of going ‘cold turkey’ from sudden withdrawal from both. This also meant that I was attracting a lot of spiritual attention. Harrari came and soothed my thoughts, while I lay on my bed, free from influence. I felt as though I was bereft and needing to learn to live again. My life of locked-in attitudes and reliances had stopped, but had left a vacuum. I needed a ‘reboot’ without ‘viruses’ and ‘malware’.

 ‘Alarm! Alarm!’ cried Hakim so often I could not count them. I was hoping that this ‘new alternative me’ would be exchanged for the normal me, the one I had built up over decades of honour and integrity, the ‘virus-free’ robust me, that relied on Hakim as my firewall and virus-checker. Somehow, I knew that I was hosting myself. In my tripped-out state, I couldn’t help thinking that my spirit was giving a piggy-back to another of my spirits; me carrying myself. At least I was managing to hold a concept in my head to act as a scaffold for useful thoughts. Virus, malevolent spirit; firewall, Hakim. Am I an organic computer? Where and when am I?

Morning came.

 ‘Perhaps you should call a meeting of your alternative spirits,’ Harrari silently offered me. I didn’t quite understand what she meant, even though I understood the content, but she IS prescient, or at least incredibly good at seeing more than one future; I am never sure which.

The elderly woman was in the entry-point village. This time, she was clearly frowning and visibly upset. Hakim and I, by repeatedly entering the spirit world by the same route had what might have been considered to be, in the physical world, churned it into a slightly overgrown track used by animals through trees into a sunny clearing, into a wide open tractor-tyre rutted thoroughfare that led to a muddy mess. We were noticed immediately. I knew this would happen; the mess we made and the attention that tearing the veil so rudely would bring. I expected horned faeries, but got one of the men from the cafe we had fled from the day before. He was the one who had just stared at us and said as we left, ‘You are one hell of a clumsy fool, aren’t you?’. The last time I had heard this was when Tim, the neighbour I love to hate because I find release that way and don’t need to blame myself for my own failings, had said it as my friend. He isn’t my friend; we are diametrically opposed in our thoughts and incompatible, though as someone who had been blinded by lies I had recently told myself, we, for a day, had been blended through similarity.

Aaron led us to a pub in the village, through a building throng of angry and raucous entities. Once inside, there was quiet, as though we were shielded from view and attention.

None of us ordered drinks and we sat at a table.

 ‘What do you think you are doing?’ Aaron asked as though he did not know that we were scoping the spirit world. ‘You are not making friends here.’

Still lumbered by my passenger spirit, I felt distant from the answer. I wanted to say, I don’t know. Fortunately, I managed to assemble my thoughts and bring up some energy. ‘Finding out who would be useful in a spirit and alien political party.’ As I said it I knew I, we, Hakim and I, were making a mess of things. Gatecrashing has an intent behind it that is born from deceit. Interlopers carry an invisible spirit into innocence, where once entry into the crowd is effected, an open invite for more malevolent spirits is made. Like at a teenagers party while the parents are away, there will be trouble; things will get broken and innocence lost.

Aaron gave us just sufficient information to convince us that he was some sort of observer. His role was to look for heightened activity fomenting in the spirit world that would overspill into the physical world. This happens all the time, which is why I thought about skirmishes when Hakim recently introduced Harrari and I to the spirit of the man I met in the Post Office back in late May.

Covertly, though not bringing any falsehood or obfuscation, he intimated that political parties already have free spirits in them. From his words and my earlier experience with the demons that were stuck in this alternative body brought along by the new and alternative spirit I still had, I understood his words to mean that almost everyone suffers the same malady.

 ‘You manifested a Brownie to help you. It is an avatar shaped like a representation you had of a helpful spirit-figure. Work on that.’

Of course, Hakim bristled but said nothing. The secret and silent link between us breathed the same thoughts of passivity.

Aaron left by the front door. Hakim and I knew we would never be able to use this village entry-point crossing again and went out the back door of the empty pub. Even skulking, as we did, was not right for us.

(ROGET’S THESAURUS – FATA MORGANA, VISUAL FALLACY / MIRAGE / GLOW-WORM, Italian for Morgan the Fairy)