

The Death of Jack Elmsley

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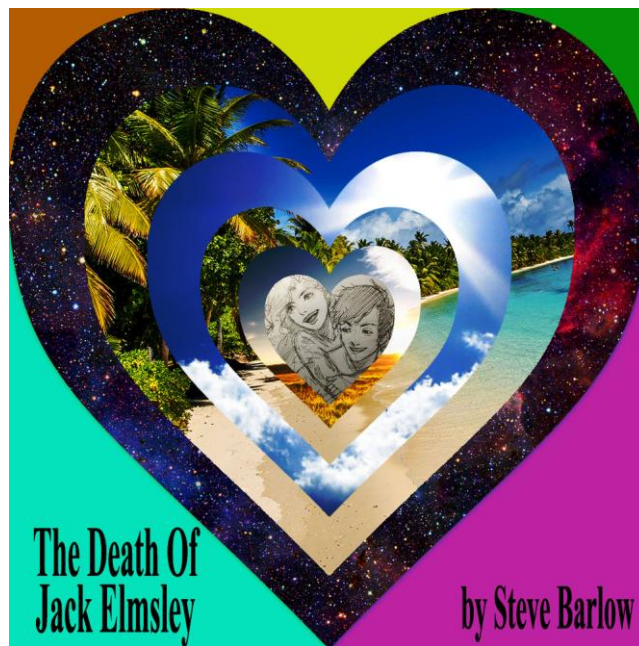
Synopsis

Jack and Ruth were married for 64 years. They were in love for 67 years. Childhood sweethearts who met at 11, a perfect wife, a perfect husband led to the perfect life. Until it stopped. The sudden passing of Ruth led to Jack losing the will to go on.

A student of dreams and an avid explorer of the dreamscape Jack believes that his only way back to Ruth must be through dreams. Are they just dreams or are they a gateway.

Authors notes:

This gentle short story looks into a lifelong love of two people filled with passion, humour and joy until the end when the desperation of one partners to get back to the other leads to a journey that starts within the mind.



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This Side

Chapter One

Jack Elmsley had led a good life, a blessed life some might say. Born into a loving family some 80 years back Jack's Father was always smiling and joking, singing merrily as he would go through his day. Jack's Mother equally vivacious and with a warmth and engaging spirit that encouraged and nurtured both Jack and his sister Jodie's development.

The family was a gregarious social one, both parents fond musicians, music always played around the home. Mum singing along to Dad as she strummed her guitar, him on the piano. They played in various bands gigging whenever possible, local festivals, some small some large. Family and friends were daily visitors to Jacks' family home, bringing their own children along to play with Jack and Jodie.

Jack grew up in an England where children could go out to play as soon as they got breakfast out of the way and return home when the street lamps came on. Property developers didn't yet exist and numerous abandon buildings, wasteland, open countryside and building sites provided a plethora for Jack and his friends to play in.

Jack was born without fear, not reckless but he'd be the first one throwing a rope over a high up tree branch and then swing across 3 meters above ground grinning from ear to ear or clambering over scaffolding on new build houses and running away from the builders who would chase after them. A mischievous inquisitive boy Jack wanted to experience everything her heard of as soon as he heard of it!



When Jack was 10 the family bought 12 acres of land in Cornwall & created a rural campsite for holiday makers to come and stay. The land was some 300 miles from their old home and everyone Jack knew left him initially sad but the whole family quickly connected with the land, with numerous nooks and crannies to explore, work to be done, clearing trees, felling bushes, raising animals, greeting campers, new rivers and lakes to explore, it became a very idyllic childhood for both children.

The family moved into 4 caravans, one each for Jack & Jody, one for their parents and one for communal. They were lined up square with all doors facing each other. A large campfire in the middle. The campsite quickly took off, a few adverts and people started phoning & booking stays. Starting with 15 grass pitches & 5 hard standing the booking enquiries quickly began to outgrow the pitches available.

They added more pitches to the site bringing it up to 40 and the pitches started filling up. They added an entertainment venue / bar which encouraged the local residents to come up. The couple on year two ran a festival event, live music all day, a bar in the field. The event was a sell out and running a 2nd one a year later they had enough money to build their own home on the land, set back & away from the campsite & bar.

Jack and Jodie both started working around the campsite, topping up their pocket money, they worked every aspect of the business from greeting guests, to cleaning and washing up, bar work and cooking. They both enjoyed the work and genuinely wanted the guests to have memorable stays.

With the gregarious and friendly nature of the family the business boomed. When Jack was 16 the family had been lucky enough to buy 25 acres of land adjoining theirs, mostly marsh / scrub land some of the land was ideal to build a rustic 10 bedroom hotel. They did so and as both children had now left school the whole family worked in the business along with numerous staff.

With all the music surrounding both children's lives it wasn't surprising that Jack took up the piano like his Father, which he learnt to a very playable standard. Jodie proffered something more unique and went for saxophone.

Jacks best friend growing up was his big sister who remained his best friend throughout his long life. The pair rarely fought. Jodie was 18 months older than Jack and had always taken her big sister role very seriously. She loved her brother's enthusiasm for life, his creative mind and his attempts to try everything, all at once! Sometimes she'd calm him down, put a stop to one of his silly ideas,

"No Jack I don't think it's a good idea if we climb our roof on the rain, let's wait till it stops," she'd say sensibly.

She looked out for him and he did so for her. Both children were popular at school and were lucky to never encounter bullying. In adult life the pair worked in harmony together when they took over the running of the hotel business as their parents retired.

Jack was blessed with a cheeky smile, good looks, the gift of the gab, a head-full of light brown hair and over the years he would grow to a height of 5' 11". Jack strolled through his childhood quite happily. Around 13 years old Jack went through a growth spurt and quickly became one of the tallest boys in his school year. Also aged 13 Jack met his bride to be, Ruth.

Jack actually met Ruth when he was 11 and the pair had been put into the same school form along with 28 other bemused kids who had all arrived on this first day of senior school. Aged 11 Jack tended to stick with his boy mates and wasn't really aware of Ruth until year 3. A new form-room, new desks to sit at found Jack sat at the desk behind Ruth and over the following terms the pair got chatting and without realising it fell into a friendship.

Around age 14 the school girls all began to start acting strangely. They started going out with boys. Ruth went out with a boy a year older than herself which didn't bother Jack, he had no feelings for girls, yet. He did however find it a bit annoying that Ruth wasn't around as much and when she split with her boyfriend after 3 weeks Jack mentioned to her that he was glad she would be around more.

A few weeks passed and one of Ruth's friends mentioned to Jack that Ruth wanted to go out with him. Jack didn't know what to make of that. They already hung out together quite a lot; he guessed kissing would come into it. That scared him, he didn't have a clue. He said nothing to Ruth but arranged to meet her at the Saturday night under 16s disco at the leisure centre as they did most Saturdays. Most of the kids in the school year went. The pair were both awkward around each other for the early part of the evening, Ruth knowing her friend had told Jack she wanted to go out with him.

Jack kind of knew what he was going to say to Ruth but he felt shy, awkward, waiting for the right moment. As soon as a slow record came on Jack ushered Ruth onto the dance floor and awkwardly put his arms around her. Ruth snuggled in.

"Kirsty said you wanted to go out with me." Jack whispered in Ruth's ear.

"I do," replied Ruth.

"Ok, what do we do now?"

Ruth looked up at Jack, a mixture of shy and awkwardness. "Er kiss?"

Jack pecked at Ruth's lips and missing he kissed her nose. Ruth took charge and guided him. The pair kissed, Jack found it strange, but very nice.

If the term soul mate can be used then Jack and Ruth were prime examples. Marrying at 16 they remained together for 64 years, until Ruth passed.

Jack focused his gaze on the photo of Ruth he was holding, he'd been day dreaming, running through his memories one last time. It had all been so good.

The pair had travelled the world, taken sailing holidays, abseiled down mountains, para-glided, built up their own family, 3 children and many more grandchildren. In all that time nothing bad had ever happened. No one had suffered any serious illnesses, no broken bones had happened, just the occasional odd cold or sore throat. Their children were all born healthy and each grew up to lead industrious loving lives. Both of Jack & Ruth's parents had lived to healthy old ages and passed peacefully.

Really, never any grief, until Ruth passed.



Chapter Two

Ruth hated her first day at senior school, it was so drab, the building was horrible, cold, un-welcoming. The walls, plain white, drab paint, some parts peeling. Perfunctory lockers in the hallway. No pictures or posters, no art, all classrooms devoid of art. Apart from the art room as she later found out.

Ruth had lined up outside form 1G. That was 1 for 1st year and G for her form tutors name, Mr Gosling. She'd walked into the building alone. Her best friend Kirsty who she had always walked to school with previously was being driven by her parents on this special first day.

As she walked through the school grounds and into the main building she noticed how small she felt, all the kids mostly much bigger than her were jostling around, pushing, shouting, making noises, the school took children from 11 to 16, Ruth was 11 but she felt like a 6 year old.

She stood in the line outside her future form room, a bell would go off shortly, until then she believed she should stay in line. Looking around she beamed as she spotted Kirsty walking hesitantly along the corridor. They'd been friends since infant school.

They hugged, both apprehensive about this new environment. A bell rang and shortly after a thin man wearing non descript glasses appeared and opened the door for form 1G. Beckoning them in the children all followed into the classroom, a fairly stark room.

A faded map of the world hung on one wall loosely stuck with peeling blue-tack, a large fitted chalkboard against the opposite side where Mr Gosling had his desk.

"Come on everyone, move in and take a desk, anywhere you want. I'll move you around later depending on how you mis-behave." Mr Gosling spoke as he moved to his desk and delved into his briefcase looking for the class register.

Ruth and Kirsty, having been at the front of the queue moved across the classroom and took the front desk next to the windows. It wasn't an inspiring view, a plain concreted courtyard, with an area that formed large steps. A tired looking fishpond that was long since devoid of all fish could be seen to the left. The rest of the class filed in choosing desks, sitting with friends wherever possible.

Mr Gosling coughed a couple of times, doing that thing all teachers do when they want the classes attention.

"Welcome form 1G. Now, don't be nervous, new school, new year, loads of new faces. Must seem very strange right now but don't worry, you'll soon settle in." He looked down at his desk, "Now let's get the register done first."

He ran through the register calling out names and marking them down until he reached the end.

"So all present and correct bar a master Jack Elmsley eh? Anybody know him?"

"I do sir." A boy dressed in an oversized grey school jumper gently prodded his arm into the air.

"Any idea where he is er?" he indicated towards the boy to reveal his name.

"Er Benny, Ben Harris. No, no idea sir."

"Well that's a lot of good eh Benny," said Mr Gosling.

A knock on the classroom door followed and without waiting for a reply the door opened and a boy clearly not wearing school uniform walked in. He looked at Mr Gosling and smiled. "Hello, is this form 1G?" He looked around and spotting Benny smiled. "Where was you, we was meant to meet at the bus top?"

"I take it your master Jack Elmsley," said Mr Gosling.

"Well you can call me master if you like, but I'd rather we had a teacher and pupil relationship." Jack smiled as he spoke, a few of the children laughed at his gag."

"I'll call you Jack, I suggest you take a seat with your friend Benny over their." Said Mr Gosling.

"Will do, yes sir," Jack spoke the words in jest and wondered over to the back of the classroom, he slid casually into the desk chair next to Benny.

Ruth looked at Jack somewhat bemused. She'd never dare speak to a teacher like that, and she was always one hundred percent with school uniform. That kid, Jack, he wasn't wearing a tie. And those looked like dark jeans he was wearing, not school trousers. "He looks like trouble", she muttered to Kirsty.

Jack was quite hard to miss in the school. Good natured he'd always volunteer for anything going; if there was a gag to make he'd be the one to shout it out. Once when he'd made a gag to many during a history lesson Jack was told to

stand outside the class for the rest of the lesson. Jack left the classroom and as the teacher continued with the lesson his back to the door Jack climbed on a locker outside & peered through the glass section at the top of the door. Looking at the class he started making silly faces, wording silly things, jumping back quickly if the history teacher looked around. Ruth got the giggles and daredn't look at his silly face.

Jack & his mates would mostly come into class last, making an entrance where possible, sometimes so over the top, grabbing his throat with his hand and pretending to strangle himself.

In the 3rd year Ruth found Jack sitting at the desk behind her at the beginning of the new year and got to know him quite a lot better. She was surprised to find he actually had a good brain although she wondered sometimes as instead of working on an essay she'd turn round to find him doodling or staring out the window. Or maybe he'd drawn a piano keyboard and he would be sliding his fingers up and down the paper as if playing.

Ruth was top of the class on most occasions, not something that she ever boasted about but she was amused when Jack slid into the chair next to her & asked if he could copy her homework. Without waiting for an answer he perused her open textbook and speed read it. "Blimey this is good," he said. "I better dumb it down a bit for me". He began writing & his elbow positioned into touching Ruth's arm. Jack seemed unaware but Ruth felt strangely drawn.

They got talking more as the terms passed by and fell into a easy friendship. Jack enjoyed Ruths company, he didn't feel the need to show off with her like he did with his mates.

Ruth being female and 6 months older was far more mature than Jack. She'd sometimes caution him for messing around too much in class, being too cheeky to teachers. Jack took her words aboard and ignored them, he found school boring.

As she hit 14 Ruth felt changes within, she fancied boys. She fancied Jack. But she couldn't tell him that. That would be way to embarrassing, what if he didn't fancy her back? She ignored her feelings but found within her own circle of friends that all the girls wanted to go out with someone.

There was a boy who was a year older than her; she'd seen him around the school since her first day. He'd always seemed nice, had a nice smile. Grant asked a friend to ask Ruth's friend to ask Ruth out. Ruth replied via the same channels, yes. She went out with him for three weeks. It was very strange, she was a young girl, living at home, going to school but now with this boy who took her to the local under 16s disco or they'd go for a walk on the beach. And he'd always kiss her, his hands increasingly wondering over her body.

She didn't like it and ended it fairly quickly; however she had discovered, what, love?

She liked it. But it shouldn't have been with Grant, it should have been with Jack. But Jack was such a donut.

Jack took school very casually. At some point during the 2nd year Jack had had enough of biology and refused to attend the lesson citing that he could foresee no possible use of biology in his future, ever, and that he would spend better time in the school library reading. It had been known by various teachers that Jack was a voracious reader and as detention or the cane were unviable options due to Jack's parents who fully supported their son, the school conceded in Jack request. Some 6 months later Jack managed to add PE to his banned lessons lists.

Ruth had been very impressed during this whole saga although she smiled when on one occasion she popped into the school library whilst Jack was reading and was amused to see his book of choice was Asterix The Gaul.

But it was getting silly for Ruth. She saw Jack every day at school, sometimes they'd do school dinners together, sometimes they bump into each other at the park, they always had loads to say to each other. Ruth wanted some kind of arrangement, like a boyfriend girlfriend thing. But she knew Jack didn't get it, yet. But he was so, cute. She used to dream of lying under a large oak tree, the sun beating down, Jack holding her.

She plucked up courage and asked Kirsty to tell Jack she wanted to go out with him. It was a decision she was very glad she made.

Chapter Three

Jodie surrounded by music as a child left school at 15 to join a jazz swing band. Her sax playing was coming on well and she had a smooth, sweet folky voice and encouraging stage presence.

The business was running perfectly, providing a far better income than had originally been hoped for by her parents when they bought it and her parents provided for her without question as Jodie travelled the country performing at festival after festival. As the band grew in fame their tours would take in Europe, Asia, the USA. Never a band that would achieve commercial success but a band that would be asked to support top line acts Jodie loved that fame never found her, she made great friends, great memories and money without fame.

Whilst on the road she never forgot to send a postcard home every Friday, or sometimes Saturday. Once every two weeks she'd find a phone box wherever she was playing and with a pile of coins ring all the way home and catching up with Mum and Dad on the phone. Her parents after many years of growing up the family business slowly began to step back & start their own worldwide travels. Jack fell into the role of managing the business and the staff which he ran with ease.

Ruth enjoyed the hotel and appreciated all that it provided for them. She'd left school with 8 CSE's, all grade one and then went onto to College where she received several O levels. Unsure of what she wanted to do with life, she tried a variety of jobs, a research student, working for the tax office, retail work in a clothes shop, all types until she fell into writing. She had been working for the local newspaper, a small little affair her role was to do everything and she found she enjoyed writing up news stories, creating content.

She gained herself a regular column in the newspaper and began to set herself work goals to get a book written and published. She achieved this after 2 years. Jack was first to read the final draft and he loved it. A romance she'd written and her husband was enamoured with his wife's writings. The book sold well and led to many more over the years.

Over time Jack extended onto the land building new cabins within the grounds. Jodie came back from her travels in her late 20s, now married and with her first born on the way she resumed working at the hotel, a routine Jack found delightful, especially as Ruth and he could travel more knowing the hotel was in safe hands.

Brother and sister worked well together and bought a 2nd hotel just 10 miles from their first. Jack loved running the businesses, the paperwork, the deals made and the guests' satisfaction. They bought a 3rd and then a 4th. Sticking at 4 hotels Jodie discouraged Jack from buying more, being too greedy. The hotels all ran at profit and gave the family tremendous financial wealth, more wasn't needed.

Jack leaned forward and placed the photo of Ruth on his bedside table. It was a year to the day that she had died. Jack wiped a tear as he switched his gaze to his bedroom mirror. The face that looked back was old, still had a good head of hair, still pretty fit and in fact for an 80 year old Jack was aging well. But he was still old. And he missed Ruth's old face, he desperately missed it.

He kicked off his slippers and pulled himself into bed pulling the quilt over himself. He stayed on his side of the bed.

He'd never been able to take over Ruth's side. He glanced one last time at the photo of Ruth on the bedside table, which also held a closed envelope. Written in his handwriting on the front it read "To you all. X"

Jack was going to die tonight. He'd had enough. Without Ruth, he'd had enough of life.

Once Jack and Ruth had started going out their families started to meet and socialise. Shared holidays, social events, Christmases. The two families became one.

The pair married when they were both 16. Both families were delighted with this, by this point Jack and Ruth had been together for 2 years and optimism abounded. They married on the land, a large event, almost a mini festival, a large majority of their school year friends invited. This was



in the days when underage drinking was somewhat more laid back and many of the kids remember the wedding party with fond affection for this first experience!

A honeymoon to Jamaica was the present given to Jack and Ruth from Jack's parents. The two flew the day after and the holiday kicked off a life's desire to travel and explore for both. With his parents alive and running the hotel Jack and Ruth had travelled and adventured the world. Memories flooded into Jack's mind of Ruth goofing around. She always goofed around, trying to make him laugh, falling into the sea for no other reason than it was funny. He blinked away another tear that was forming in the corner of his eye.

Dreams had always been important to Jack. For as long as he could remember he had always had great dream recall. First thing every morning he would relish the dream memories that would appear in his mind upon waking. He'd work the dream backwards, relish the details of it, the insanity of it, try to make meaning from it, (he never did.)

He was lucky enough to never experience nightmares. The only bad dreams he ever had occurred three times spread over many years. In each of the dream, one of his children was dead. In his head, during the dream, it was so realistic, as all dreams are. He went through the grief of losing his child, but then upon waking & realising he had been dreaming, the relief.

But other than these three dreams his other dreams were a delight. He would frequently find himself flying, well more like bouncing around, or he'd realise he was naked in the dream and feel embarrassment or he'd go off on great dream adventures with loads of random dream characters.

Around 40 Jack & Ruth discovered and embraced spiritualism and took to frequent meditation with both incorporating it into their weekly routines. Shortly after his 1st meditation Jack had his first lucid dream. He was in a regular dream and much random dream stuff was happening when Jack realised he was in his bedroom from his childhood. For some reason he questioned this and then asked himself, "am I dreaming?"

He became aware and being somewhat startled by this lucidity he startled himself awake. Jack's lucid dreams started slowly but slowly increasing in frequencies. By questioning the daftness of a dream situation Jack became lucid and with each lucid dream he learned to remain there longer, in control of the dreamscape. Sometimes the dream would take back over and Jack would lose lucidity but over time Jack was more or less able to walk straight into them from sleep with no loss of consciousness. A term he later discovered was called (W.I.L.D) Wake Into Lucid Dream.

The dreamscape to Jack was as real as the world he lived in everyday with Ruth, the memories he made whilst there stayed with him, as real as anything else he did. He watched Elvis perform, took in the Stones & the Beatles. Went on wild rollercoaster rides that would fly through the sky zooming & rushing. He chatted with insane dream characters and sometimes had such deep and profound conversations with other characters that he did wonder if they were real people also in the dreamscape.

Daytime was a delight with Ruth and the kids and the businesses to run, night times were a delight with the dreamscape to explore. Jack experimented with astral travel but came to the conclusion that lucid dreaming and astral travel are the same, just with a different perspective.

Ruth whilst interested seemed unable to lucid dream despite many attempts and various herbal supplements suggested to enable lucid dreaming. The pair flew to Brazil and took ayahuasca. For Ruth the experience was mind blowing and enlightening. For Jack, it had been like putting on a very high tech VR headset but with loads of bowel movements from both ends of his body! He found the dreamscape to be more real and more comfortable to get to.

Jack relaxed his eyes. He was sure this would work. Without Ruth, Jack was broken. He knew it and accepted it. Since Ruth's death he had barely come out of his room. Jack's daughter Penny had taken over the running of the business many years earlier but Jack had always made sure he had a few shifts behind the bar, just to stay involved and socialise. He stopped doing this when Ruth died and never resumed it again.



He started having his meals delivered to his room, stopped mixing with friends or family, preferring to sit alone in his room, alone with his memories of Ruth.

The family had tried; they constantly tried to bring their Dad back to life. They all rallied round him, consoling him and each other, trying to encourage him to come back to the world. But he wasn't interested anymore.

Jack adored his children, now all grown up. Penny was the sensible one who had taken over the running of the hotels. Trisha his youngest was frequently travelling the world, working in conservation. Always trying to save a species of animal, raising funds for charities, building animal sanctuaries.

And Tom, Tommy, he'd followed the family tradition of music and was frequently playing music or composing it for television shows. They'd all come home when Ruth had died and had stayed for as long as they could. But they had to get back to their lives, their own families, their own social circles. They kept in touch via phone and visits when possible but they all had their own lives now.

Aged 17, long before he had knowledge of lucid dreams Jack experienced a moment that had scared him quite deeply, the memory of it remained with him forever.

It was a regular night; he'd been doing the lights and sound for a band that was playing. Ruth was having a sleep over at her friends so going to bed around 1am Jack flopped into the empty bed and prepared for sleep. As he nodded off he felt a tremendous rush of vibrations from within his mind, it started intensely and quickly built up. It felt like Jack's mind was being pulled from his brain and it scared him. As the sensation grew stronger and more uncomfortable Jack attempted to roll over and open his eyes.

He found he couldn't move, the sensation grew far stronger, the vibrations screaming within his mind, Jack panicked within trying to move his body, open his eyes. The sensation of being pulled out of him-self was so intense until Jack suddenly managed to open an eye, he pushed himself up from the bed feeling he was fighting through particles of static. He opened his eyes to blackness, the sensation died and slowly the room came into a darkened view.

Years later as Jack's knowledge of dream grew he wondered if he had experienced sleep paralyses. He had no way to know. In later years he experienced sleep paralysis on 4 occasions. None of them had the sucking sensation or panic attached and Jack actually explored the sensation of this paralysis when he experienced it, being connected to his physical body but also connected to the dreamscape at the same time fascinated him.



One of Jack's first experiences within the dreamscape was the sucking vibration sensation he'd experienced at 17. During his early experiences of lucid dreaming (which will now be referred to as LD) it took Jack a while to get the hang of flying and initially he would frequently bounce around the dreamscape or crash into buildings or lamp-posts.

There was never any pain, just a weird sensation of going through particles. His 2nd or 3rd flight he started going high, loving the sensation, amazed that he was flying, higher and higher through

the clouds, a soft breeze blowing on his face. There was always so much detail within the dreams.

He marvelled as the atmosphere changed colours, slowly going to a darker much darker blue and Jack realised he was heading for space.

He then began to feel the sucking vibration sensation, this panicked him. He immediately stopped flying and tried to return to the ground, but the sensation was growing, getting stronger. Panicking he woke himself up.

Over time his confidence grew and he experimented with the boundaries of the sensation, he learnt that if he concentrated on the sensation, keeping his mind calm but aware of its existence he was able to pass through and fly into space. At other times the sensation would creep up on him if he wasn't paying attention but he always managed to push it back down.

Something about this vibration, this sensation had felt so real to him in the real world and so real to him in the dream world, he held the sensation with respect and caution.

He believed this was his way to die. He was going to let it take him.

Lying on the bed, eyes shut Jack realised he suddenly felt good. Somewhere within him he felt hope, a small little glow. He'd had such a wonderful life, was he going to have a wonderful death, at a time of his own choosing, with no pain, just give into the sensation?

He breathed deeply, in and out, five times. He ignored his thoughts letting them blow in the wind, in touch with his body via his mind he created a warm glow which he slowly ran up and down his body feeling its warmth all over. He allowed the glow to die and observed as he lost contact with his body parts, no more body, just a mind. With closed eyes he looked ahead at the speckled darkness presented to him strangely with an orange tint, complete silence around he waited for the dreamscape to open.

The Other Side
Chapter Four

"This way, try this way, it's always fun if you go this way."

Jack heard a voice, a friendly male voice, chirpy and upbeat, a strong cockney accent.

"Where'd you wanna go, where'd you wanna go. I've got up there or down here, there's a party to the left and Butlins to the right. You wanna see a show, let's see what's on. Oh look, Queen, wanna see Queen?"

Jacks vision went from total blackness to full mode as the scene unfolded around him embracing him into the dreamscape as though he'd been sucked into a television.

He was standing in what looked like the London Underground, circa quite old as quaint gas lanterns lit the walls, soft warm shadows flickering and lighting the platform. A man in a long comfortable looking coat with a pork hat bobbing around on his head was speaking.

"Ello darling, where you wanna go, Antarctica that way." The man pointed excitedly in one direction. "Moon trip that way." The man swung his other arm around now pointing to both options at the same time.

"Australia down there." The man started jumping up & down on the spot indicate downwards with his hat which bobbed wildly but managed to stay on his head.



A small elderly lady with soft white hair, neat and tidy clothes and a big smile approached the man. He leaned into her embracing her.

"Hello love, where you wanna go?" asked the man. The little old lady pulled him closer and whispered in his ear.

"You funny old thing, course you can love, coming up, you need to go that way." The man pointed in a vague direction and smiled from ear to ear as the little old lady headed off into a vague direction and faded from Jacks site.

"Hello mate, how are you, where you wanna go, where you wanna go?"

"Hello," said Jack. "I know I'm dreaming, how are you?"

"I'm good mate, I'm good, where you wanna go. I know, what about Woolworths 1956." The man pointed his arm to his left. "You'll love it there, go on, have a look."

Jack looked in the direction that the man was pointing to and observed as a small round window opened and engulfed Jack into the scene. He laughed as he noticed he was in a black and white world; stood outside a Woolworths in what he presumed was 1956.

He floated towards the door noticing that he was formless, this didn't surprise him, he was frequently formless in dreams with body parts appearing as and when required. The doors opened automatically which made Jack smile, electric doors in 1956. That was timey wimey wrong!

He floated into the store, everything and everyone in black and white, all seemed normal. He walked forward passing a record counter that had loads of 45rpm records featuring bright images of Elvis Presley, Bill Hailey and The Comments, Little Richard and a plethora of other artistes from that era. Jack laughed again as he picked up a copy of Grease the album. He casually looked around and said to the lady behind the counter.

"Wrong era again." He winked at her as he put the album back.

"Good songs though dear," replied the shop lady.

Jack continued floating, enjoying the nostalgic look of the old Woolworths store, various posters advertising old style sweets, old style household titbits all for sale at 1950s prices. He floated towards a long aisle filled with crisps, sweets, pix and mix, sticks of rock, cream cakes, Easter eggs and Christmas chocolates. A lady was rummaging through the sweets, picking up some and placing them into a bag.

"Hello Grandma, what are you doing here?" Jack asked smiling.

Jacks Grandma looked up and smiled at him. "What am I doing here, what are you doing here you cheeky little thing."

Jacks Grandma scooped him up in her arms and gave him a big hug. "Shouldn't you be at school dear?" She asked eventually letting go of him.

"I'm 80 Grandma, I don't go to school anymore."

"Well look at you, all grown up." Jack's Grandma looked him up and down proudly. "Aren't you handsome?"

Jack looked fondly on his Grandma; it had been many years since she had died, suddenly when he was 19. He'd missed her ever since.

"It's lovely to see you Grandma," he smiled.

"Well I think we're going to be seeing a lot more of each other my dear, I'm just getting the sweets. Mint imperials and Sherbets for you, Butterscotch and chocolate éclairs for me." She smiled as she resumed her task of filling up the sweet bag.

Jack remembered back to those days, he'd go round to Grandmas religiously every Tuesday after school and they'd cook and play games, watch tv together and Grandma would read him stories. And she always, always had a stocked up sweetie tin. She insisted on it.

"Right I'm off, see you Tuesday love." Jack's Grandma grabbed him and gave him another hug this time with added kisses to his face. She eventually dropped him, turned and walked away and as she did the scene faded from the black and white of Woolworths to a bright sunny field, vibrant green grass, white fluffy clouds above, a sparkling sun lighten up the colours and enhancing them all.

Jack had been here before, well not exactly here but the vibrancy of the colours, the serenity of the dreamscape.

"That was quick." The man with the cap was standing next to Jack, still grinning from ear to ear. He pulled out a tin filled with tobacco and proceeded to stand on one leg raising his other to use as a table while he rolled himself a perfect roll up cigarette.

With a flick of his wrist he flicked it into his mouth, clamped down on it with his lips and in one deft movement produced a zippo lighter from somewhere and set the roll up alight.

"Where you wanna go, where you wanna go? Have you seen the lakes to the side of the zoo, stunning?" The man continued smiling at Jack puffing on his roll up, the smoke of which Jack noticed smelt of toffee.

"I'm not sure," said Jack. "It's my last time here, probably. I was just passing through this time really."

"Last time, last time, never a last time, only a first time, I know what you need, I know what you need, you need the train of tranquillity. Over there, 2nd platform, leaving in 30 seconds or sooner if you get there sooner"

Jack laughed. The man was so engaging, he gave off such a warm reassuring persona.

"Why not eh," said Jack.

"That's the ticket," laughed the man and he held up his hand displaying a train ticket which he proffered to Jack. Jack took the ticket and was amused to note his name written on it. He put it in his shirt pocket, noting again how his body parts would appear when he needed them.

He knew he was dreaming but fully aware. He wondered for the 99th time why he still felt the need to make his body appear within dreams. With the ticket in his shirt pocket or wherever it really ended up being stored Jack found himself floating towards the train station



He floated into and through the station without thought or effort letting the dream take him forward. Taking in his surroundings he enjoyed the calmness, the peace of the dreamscape. The station was elegant and quaint, old school. Jack floated onto the station platform, towards a giant steam engine that had 2 cars attached. A big plume of smoke billowed from the giant funnel of the train billowing high into the air until it faded from view.

"All aboard, all aboard." A tall upright train guard stood by an open door of the train beckoning towards Jack.

"This way sir, this way." Jack floated towards the open doorway, onto the train and into a mostly empty carriage. He noticed what seemed to be a couple sat a few rows ahead talking quietly amongst themselves.

He glided himself into an empty chair and sat down marvelling at the sensation of sitting down despite having no body. Always so much detail. He gazed out of the window and viewed the outstanding scenery of English countryside on a full summer's day. The sun glistened on the leaves as the trees swayed gently in a soft breeze all under the bright blue sky.

The train gently began moving and Jack watched as a scenic church appeared in the distance, several cows wondering around a field eating grass. Jack laughed as one of the cows suddenly jumped over another. He loved the dreamscape.

The train picked up speed and Jack continued to be enthralled by the passing scenery, small plumes of smoke occasionally blowing past the window from the train's funnel. A small river ran parallel with the train tracks, its water dashing and running as though chasing after the train. The train passed a small thatched cottage with an elderly couple stood at the bottom of their garden holding hands and smiling and waving as the train passed.

Jack's attention turned towards an owl who had decided to fly alongside the train, flying up into the sky over the train's top and back down to the window on the other side of the carriage, as soon as Jack spotted it's new position the owl would swoop up and then down again switching window, as if playing chase with Jack.

"Is this seat taken?"

Jack turned instantly as Ruth stood next to the seat smiling.

"Ruth." Jack stared at her startled. "Ruth."

Chapter Five

During his years of lucid dreaming Ruth had never been a character who had appeared in his dreams. In fact rarely had any of his family come into his dreams. He had once created a Ruth character within a dream but it was just an empty dream character, no personality, none of Ruth's spark. He never did it again.

Ruth slid into the chair next to Jack and grabbed his hand squeezing it tight. Jack clasped her hand in return, squeezing back, his emotions welling up, was this Ruth, was it really her, or just some kind of dream character?

He leaned in to kiss her. She gently pushed him back and smiling she said.

"No kissing."

"No kissing?" Repeated Jack.

"No substance." Said Ruth cheekily.

"No substance," again repeated Jack.

"I'm sorry I left you early, so sorry." She spoke softly, her eyes glistening, alive. She looked amazing, young & beautiful, like she had when she was 25, long brown hair that tumbled around her shoulders, glinting in the bright sunlight. She bounced forward and pecked him on the lips.

"Well maybe a quick peck eh!" she smiled as the pair devoured each other with their eyes.

"Is it really you Ruth?"

"Well I think it is, but is it really you?" She smiled and bringing Jack's hand up to her face she took his index finger and slowly brought it to her mouth kissing and caressing it, she put it into her mouth and felt it with her tongue, running it over his finger.

This is so Ruth, thought Jack, the love, the little smiles, the whole thing.

Ruth returned Jack's hand back to him and said, "Well that's defiantly you, I'd know that finger anywhere."

"You're so young," said Jack.

"So are you," replied Ruth. "Look." Ruth pointed to a mirror that was now positioned directly opposite Jack; he noted his body which had now appeared again. It was him, a very young him, somewhere around 25. His beautiful wife Ruth sat next to him in a colourful summer dress, one strap casually hanging down from her shoulder.

"Are you ready?" Ruth asked.

"Ready?" said Jack.

Ruth rolled her eyes at Jack playfully. "Stop repeating everything I say wombat. Where's your ticket?"

"My ticket." Jack reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out the ticket. "Here it is."

Ruth asked. "What does it say?" As she rested her right hand on one of Jack's legs.

Jack studied the ticket and read out the words, "Jack Elmsley + 1"

"I'm your plus one." Ruth smiled squeezing Jack's thigh gently. "Where are we going?" She asked.

Jack turned the ticket over. "I don't know, it just says the train of tranquillity. No destination written here."

"Don't you think that's strange?" said Ruth.

"What, not having a destination, no, this is a dream Ruth."

Ruth shook her head. "No not the destination, the ticket, don't you think it's strange?"

Jack looked at the ticket again, both sides. He couldn't see anything strange about it, what did she mean. No hang on. He closed his eyes and re-opened them, he read the words again. He rubbed his eyes. The words were still there, saying the same thing. "*Jack Elmsley + 1 – The Train of Tranquillity.*"

"And my wonderful husband is getting it." Ruth laughed as Jack realised he was reading the words on the ticket.

Words and number didn't exist in the dreamscape. At least that had always been Jack's experience. He'd explored dream libraries in the past, all filled with books that had words that were jumbled, non sense. Look away and look back again and the mad jumble of letters or numbers would change position still all a mad unreadable jumble. Once the internet had come into play Jack discovered many other people who were able to lucid dream. It was a common agreement that letters and numbers were unreadable in the dreamscape.

"Are you ready then?" Ruth asked again looking into Jack's eyes.

"I'm ready." Jack smiled, this was it, he was passing over and Ruth was by his side.

"Off we go then," Ruth again entwined her right hand fingers into Jack's left and the couple stayed locked hands. The train picked up speed and within Jack felt the sensation begin to grow, that sensation. Slowly, no panic attached to

the feeling this time. The pair looked out of the train window and observed that the train was now travelling in the sky heading upwards and upwards.

"Can you feel it?" asked Jack.

"Like I'm being sucked out of myself?" said Ruth.

"That's it exactly. That's what I had that time when I was 17."

"Are you scared?" Ruth asked.

"No, not at all, not now, not now your here."

"Me neither," replied Ruth.

The pair continued to look out of the train window as the train passed through the clouds, climbing high like a rollercoaster climbing its first peak. Higher and higher, the tone of the sky darkening, changing to pinks and yellows, whites and blues, pinks & purple. The train flew into space and as the sun light within the train slowly subsided, small gas lanterns appeared on the carriage walls all alight and bathing the carriage in a warm orange glow of soft light.



Jack felt himself being pulled from his mind, his body, he didn't know what. He held tightly onto Ruth's hand, holding her for as long as possible, the vibrations became intense, not painful but all encompassing. He looked at Ruth and noticed he could see right through her, like a ghost. He noted the same with his own body, fading. But their hands never let go.

The forms of Jack and Ruth faded from view on the train, the couple in the front carriage had also faded some time back and the train no longer needed faded from view with the train conductor smiling and waving as if goodbye to an audience who were no longer there.

Jack then felt no emotion he had ever felt before. Such contentment.

"Can you feel that?" the words and voice of Ruth appeared within Jack's mind.

"Totally," replied Jack. "Back together."

"Forever." They spoke within their minds as one.

Images, thanks to websites.

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