

DANIELA JODORF



KASHI

CITY OF LOVE AND LIGHT

NOVEL

KASHI

City of Love and Light

Daniela Jodorf

Text

© Daniela Jodorf 2018
All rights reserved

Cover

© Daniela Jodorf
Photo top
Daniela Jodorf
Photo bottom
Valentino Funghi on Unsplash

Editing

Monika Winterstein

Publisher

Daniela Jodorf
Leonhard-Kraus-Str. 23
53604 Bad Honnef
www.daniela.jodorf.de

distributed by

epubli - a service of neopubli GmbH, Berlin

The mind veils consciousness,
and desires color the mind.



There is no danger of forgetting.
The pain of the past is still alive within us.
Its voice is constantly calling for our recognition,
but not always heard.

Part One

The Pursuit of Happiness

Prologue

Varanasi

The mist of the cold November fog touched her face softly and cooled the tip of her nose. The fire of the cremation grounds were eternally burning, sending their strange sweet smell with the morning air around the entire city. She heard the ringing of countless bells of the morning aartis, prayers conducted in homes, temples and on the banks of the Ganga at sunrise; crystal clear sounds, that touched her heart more than anything she perceived at this early hour. She allowed the sound to pierce into her heart, to resonate in its own subtle and secret frequency. Joy rose within her, the bliss of pure existence. She surrendered to this bliss that swept over her consciousness like a tidal wave and witnessed its rise and its fading when it opened the door to an even deeper realm of being: the silence of the universal soul. Pure consciousness and pure energy appeared as one in this vibrant nothingness, void of identity, of time and space. No object was able to manifest in this dimension of pre-existence, no I, no you and no that. And yet she knew that she was completely alive there, in this inner place that was no place. Beyond identification of any kind, she experienced a state of pure being, of pure subjectivity; a state beyond the mind and the senses, beyond perception and recognition. Divine consciousness embraced her and her heart was filled with love, the infinite love of life. Still, after so many years of living in the presence of the divine, a sense of gratefulness flushed through her and pulled her awareness back into the manifest world.

First, she saw her body sitting on the terrace, wrapped in a thick Kashmiri shawl. The body sat in a meditative posture facing the river. The water was calm and appeared like a crystal clear mirror. But it did not reflect her, an image of her own physical body she still witnessed with the inner eye. The mirror of the serene morning Ganga reflected the face of a pale man, looking at her with empty eyes. He was so close to her, that she was about to stretch out her hand to touch and console him. She felt his sorrow deeply, almost as if it was her own. His eyes spoke to her in the silent language of unexpressed emotions. He was confused; he did not know, where to go, what to do. He had lost his path, lost touch with divinity. Why, she asked herself. What had happened? But her thoughts disturbed the inner image and it vanished instantaneously leaving behind the memory of the face and the expression in its eyes.

In the heat of the afternoon, she walked through the crowded alleys of the old town. It was not far to her teacher's house, only a few blocks. People looked at her with a recognizing smile, greeting her with a kind "Hello". She passed the burning ghat and much to her surprise, she noticed that she always thought the same thought and felt the same emotion every single time she walked by this place. "This site is surreal", she thought." It seems to be neither heaven nor hell and yet both at the same time. It is so terrible and yet so peaceful." A cold shiver swept over her skin when she felt the grief of the people saying their last goodbye to the dead bodies chanting the ritualistic mantras and watching the flames work of transforming to ashes what used to be a living, moving sentient being.

The door of her teacher's house stood open, and she entered silently. He awaited her on the floor of his terrace with a kind smile. She sat down in the shade on her asana, a small carpet, in front of him and started to unpack her

sitar. He held his instrument on his lap and began to tune it. The first sounds were disharmonious and perfectly mirrored her emotional state. Ever since the vision of this morning meditation, she felt oddly disturbed. And her teacher knew it. He stopped and looked at her seriously.

“You don’t have to worry about him. You know that. He is safe and he will be guided!”

Chapter One

New York

The tiny moment of silence before the audience started to applaud was hard to catch, but Paul had never missed it in his entire career. Then, one or two people began to clap and only a second later the rest followed. He was tired tonight. Concentration had cost him a strong effort. Now he looked at the people in the filled Hall over critically. Yes, they appeared to be enthusiastic and the applause still grew stronger. He bowed down, playing his role perfectly. When his eyes went another round through the audience, he thought that he finally knew what had disturbed him for such a long time. They had come to see Paul Madden, the composer, the conductor, the cellist. They had come to see a name, but none of these people had come to hear his music, to listen to his language, to follow the subtle story, he had tried to tell with his orchestra. He felt empty, almost dead. A dear friend embraced him, they had worked together for many years, and the applause swelled again, not comforting Paul's sadness, but worsening it.

He almost fled when it was over. He grabbed his cello and his coat and ran off. He lived far from Carnegie Hall in Downtown Manhattan, but he did not call a cab. He had to walk down Broadway to be alone with the cold of this November night. "Why do I do this", he thought with a strong need to blame himself for his perceptions, his thoughts and his unwanted feelings. In this moment, he hated himself. He thought he had failed. If the people did not feel his music, there had to be something wrong with it. Maybe it was not deep enough, not true enough, not universal enough to be touching. He pulled the gray scarf

closer around his neck to protect himself from the icy northern wind and walked faster down south without looking left or right. His cell phone rang. It was Phil, the friend who had hugged him on stage. But Paul did not answer the call. Countless thoughts entered his mind and he had to prevent to drown in their negativity. Never had he doubted his passion and his talent like this. Music had always been the driving force of his life. It had given him energy and inspiration even in difficult times. But now was no difficult time. The difficulties were past. Now was a time of ease. But suddenly, when least expected, the source of his creative energy seemed to turn against him. He passed his apartment and walked around the next block, then another and another without a destination. His hands were frozen when he recognized a bar across the street. Blind to the outer setting he opened the door, sat on the next table and mechanically ordered an espresso. The coffee came quickly and he tried to warm his hands on the small cup when somebody approached him calmly. He looked up curiously, expecting one of his friends or colleagues, but he did not know the tall woman, who looked at him kindly. There was something very serious and urgent about her.

“Can I help you, Madame?” Paul asked politely and the woman sat next to him without being invited.

“I have to talk to you!” she said with a self-confident voice.

“Have you heard the concert?”

“The concert?” She smiled with a hint of amusement. “No!”

He was puzzled, unable to figure out, why a stranger might want to talk to him at this place and this time, yet, it was not completely unusual that people recognized and approached him.

“You don’t have to be afraid”, she said.

“Afraid?! Of you? Why would I.” He did not like the situation and tried to get up.

She grabbed his hand and almost pulled him back in his chair. "Not of me, but of your thoughts, your emotions, your experiences!"

He did not understand. "My experiences?"

"Yes, the experiences you have just run away from."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Again he thought about getting up, but somehow he could not. He was unable to move, while the woman still held his hand and looked at him with a facial expression that suggested she was delivering a highly important message.

"You are starting to doubt your life and your work."

That was true, but he had not talked about it to anybody. How did she know?

"Who are you?" he wanted to know.

"That is of no importance. What is important is that you find out who *you* are and what you truly need. You have to listen to me carefully now." The pressure of her hand got stronger and painful. "You will be flying to Berlin soon."

"No. I won't. I have several engagements in Europe next month, but not in Berlin."

"This will change. You have to believe me."

"This is ridiculous. Are you some kind of fortune teller? I will not pay you."

Her face turned angry for the first time. "I am surprised that you are such an idiot. Never mind. You will go to Berlin and you have to be very aware."

"Aware of what?"

"Of your perceptions, your feelings and surprising coincidences!"

This woman was crazy, he thought, but he finally gave in. He did not want to upset her even more. "Okay. I promise. I will try to be aware, if I go to Berlin, even though my schedule does not permit any change."

"You have to listen to your inner voice. And please, do not judge your experiences. You are safe and you will be guided."

She suddenly let go of his hand, got up and left without looking back. He was still unable to move and began to shiver. Paul called the waitress to pay. When she brought the bill, he felt the strong irresistible urge to ask her about the woman.

“Did you see the woman, who sat on my table with me?”

“No! There was nobody, Sir.”

“You mean, you have been too busy to look at my table?”

“No, Sir. There is not much going on at this time of the night. There is only you and three more guests over there.”

“You did not see a brown haired tall woman, wearing a light brown leather jacket with jeans?”

“No, Sir.”

He was shocked. Fear crept into his heart. Was he about to lose his mind?

When he opened the door to his apartment ten minutes later, he relaxed for the first time this evening. Yet, he avoided the habitual glance at his face in the mirror across the entrance door. Instead, he looked at the photography on the shelf below that showed his son and his wife. “Would this not happen, if they were still with me”, he thought with a strong sense of loss. He had to admit that he did not know. He did not know, what was wrong with him, and he did not know, what brought about this serious crisis. He took off his coat and went straight into the bathroom. After a long, hot shower he felt better. All the dark thoughts had gone, vanished without leaving the slightest trace. But he knew that they would return. It was not over yet.

The phone woke Paul early the next morning. “Yes!”

“Paul, this is Emerson.”

“Emerson, do you know what time it is?”

“I would not wake you up, if it wasn't urgent, Paul.”

“Okay. What is it?”

"I have Germany on the line. Hamburg has canceled. They have trouble with their new concert house. But Berlin is asking if you can play on the same day. This is perfect. Fantastic. Berlin. In December."

Berlin? Paul was in a state of shock. He remembered last night's encounter; the face of the stranger, her self-confidence, the urgency of her words. That was impossible.

"Paul!?"

"Yes, Emerson. Berlin. Have you talked to anybody about this before?"

"No. I told you, I just got the call!"

Paul was gasping.

"Paul! Are you there? I need your okay!"

Paul forced himself to speak. "Yes, Emerson."

"Great! This will be the greatest Christmas season ever."

Paul was unable to share Emerson's enthusiasm. Last night's fear was back; the appalling fear of losing control.

It was only six, but Paul was used to getting up early. Still, in his pajama, he took a cup of strong black tea into his study, his personal hermitage. Nobody was allowed to come in, not his ex-wife, not his son and no telephone call. Here, he felt alive and true, he was always calm and concentrated and he had never spent an hour without witnessing a new piece of art coming to life within him. He sat on his high chair, the feet still bare touching the cool wood of the floor. Taking his green soft pencil into his hand he did not have to wait for inspiration and creativity to flow onto the piece of paper in front of him. He heard the strings, the harmonies, the interplay of the instruments weaving a web of different melodies into one piece, the rise and the fall of the melody, leading to a dramatic moment of intense density with his inner ear. There was an urgency in the composition that surprised him. It was the first draft of a soundtrack for a British motion picture about Shakespeare and the minute he began, Paul could feel Shakespeare's pressing need to

express himself as the main theme of the work. The famous author had found strong words for his intense emotions – personal and universal at the same time -, and Paul did not have to do much, but convert these feelings into his own language, the language of sound.

He still loved his work. The crisis was not a crisis of ideas, a creative blockage or some stress related fatigue. He worked a lot, but not too much. The crisis, that had crept into his life gently and slowly first and then increasing in intensity and speed, was more about the way his work was received and perceived. It was less about him and more about his audience. But that made it only worse. He could have changed his attitude, or his way of working, but he was unable to change his audience. In fact, he resented his own reaction strongly. Paul felt arrogant and out of touch with the people he wrote and played for, the people, who paid for his concerts and CDs. What could he possibly do, he asked himself ashamed and desperate.

Before he left for school, he called his son in L.A. But the answering machine informed him, that he and his mother were out for the whole weekend. Kaya had a new partner in San Diego and Sean seemed to like him. Paul was not jealous. It had been hard for him to let Kaya and his son go, but that was five years ago. They wanted to stay in L.A., when he had been called to Julliard School in New York. Of course, he had had strong and offending arguments with Kaya. She had accused him of loving his work more than his family and of sacrificing his son. How could a mother think like that!? He had tried to convince her that that was not true. For Paul, it was not a choice between career and family, but a choice between ignoring that they had lost their love and admitting this painful truth; a choice between dishonesty and sincerity. For a whole year, she had refused to talk to him, but she had never withheld their son. Today he knew that he had taken

the right choice, even though he had paid for it with loneliness. Sean visited him often, but this was not enough to heal the wound of separation. He was Sean's father and as a father, he had failed, because he had left for whatever reason. There was no excuse for his absence. Kaya and he had failed as parents. Paul knew one thing for sure: a child needed to feel that its parents loved each other.

Suddenly, Paul remembered the woman, who had talked to him last night. You have to listen to your inner voice, she had told him. He had never heard this voice and seen his feelings more clearly, and he had never been this strongly aware of his failures and his guilt.

For lunch, he met Phil in a deli around the corner of Julliard. Phil waited at their favorite table in the back reading a newspaper when Paul came in.

"Hey, you look better today." Phil sounded worried.

"Something strange happened to me, Phil. I walked home last night and had a coffee in a bar in Soho when a woman approached my table and sat down."

"Ooh, that's eerie!" Phil laughed. Paul looked at him almost inflective.

"I did not know her! She spoke of some change that I was facing and that I would be traveling to Berlin soon."

"Emerson called me this morning."

"Yes, Phil. Get it now? She told me, we would have an engagement in Berlin before it was even set!"

"That *is* spooky!"

"She said many cryptic things and appeared to know everything about me. She said I should be aware of my inner voice and not to judge my future experiences."

"How can you not judge a thing like that: somebody telling you your future out of the blue?"

"When I wanted to ask the waitress if she knew that woman, she told me she had not seen anyone at my table."

Phil gave Paul a serious look. "Wow. Did you imagine all this?"

"No. She was there. I am absolutely sure. She held my hand and pushed it on the table to make me listen to her. I have felt her. I know what she smells like. I would recognize her anywhere. I have no idea, why the waitress did not see her. Her presence was strong and charismatic.

Her words were true for me. I feel this strong inner pressure, Phil. There is some sense of wrong waking up inside of me and I am trying to fight it back, to drown it, but it keeps creeping up from my subconscious mind. It's not enough to tell myself that this will pass, that it is all right. I have to do something about it, but I don't know what and how."

Phil turned pale and looked very worried now. "Why? Do you know why, Paul?"

"It has something to do with the people, our audience. I feel misunderstood, wrongly interpreted. I feel like speaking a foreign language that nobody understands."

Phil smiled again. "That is what music is, Paul, a foreign language and we are lucky and can be happy if the people, not many, but only a few, are able to understand it and maybe speak it, too."

Paul disagreed strongly. "No, Phil. That is not true, it's much too defensive. I have had moments of complete unity. The audience, the musicians and the music merged into one conscious being and they understood, without being able to speak any language. There was no need for explanation or translation. It was a transmission from heart to heart, not from mind to mind, and it was bliss; pure bliss, Phil. But I have not seen this for a very long time."

Phil pondered in silence. He spoke with a low voice again. "These moments are rare and precious. I know. When did you last experience that?"

"Two or three years ago.

Phil nodded and looked out of the window to avoid eye contact. "You are a very lucky guy, Paul. I know, I haven't told you this before. But..., I have always admired you for what you have: talent, success, love, friendship, chances... Your life has always been so full of chances, Paul. I think you are not even aware of that!"

Paul gazed onto the street. "You think, I am ungrateful?"

Phil nodded almost invisibly without turning toward his friend again.



Paul took the metro at Lincoln Center Station. The train was surprisingly empty for a Saturday in November. The Christmas shopping season had already started several weeks ago, and Paul was used to crowded trains carrying citizens and foreigners packed to the limits. Today he even caught a seat and allowed his thoughts to wander as soon as the train accelerated jerkily. Phil's surprising confession was disturbing. Paul had never thought of himself as being somehow privileged. Of course, things had worked well, but there had also been failures and frustrations, pains and sorrows, losses and regrets. Did he ask for something so outrageous, when he felt the need to be heard and understood? There was something higher within the art of music, something sacred, deep and full of meaning. For Paul, this was the essence and the purpose of his work. And whatever he did or did not accomplish in his life, did not add up to this soul of music. In fact, it did not matter in the face of this numinous quality of sound and vibration.

When he left his apartment at seven to take a cab to Lincoln Center, where he played a string concert for violoncello this evening, anxiety spread in his mind and his body. It was not stage-fright. He never felt nervous before a

performance. Paul feared the end of the concert and the reaction he would have to face.

He got through the program flawlessly. The other strings, two violins and a string bass, performed highly professional. Paul was completely in the flow and rhythm of the music, concentrated to the point. His heart was widely open when he experienced every single emotion drawn on the canvas of imagination by the strings - a full cycle of life's experiences, of happiness and pain, gain and loss, love and hate. And then, again, in the end, the magical moment of silence, when the numinous could become tangible. Could... It was for him; and also for his colleagues, he witnessed. But as he looked anxiously at the people in the audience, he did not find the recognition he was longing for so desperately. Empty eyes looked at him once again. There was no glance of wonder, neither love nor awe. Like always Paul reaped a strong, never-ending applause. But it meant nothing to him. The silence was more important, he knew, but its magic had once more been overheard.



The November passed quickly and Paul seemed to feel better; most of the time his mind was calm and serene. Only the concerts reminded him of the hidden pain that he tried to suppress as good as possible. After almost every single performance, he had to be alone to force down the sorrow that tightened his chest and made his mind swirl. What was wrong with him? Where did this pain come from? What could he do about it? Thought initiated counter-thought, all fed by the pain he did not want to acknowledge, the dejection that he craved to get rid of so strongly. But his mind was unable to come up with a relieving solution. He was stuck and he knew it.

In these moments he always remembered the woman from Soho. Sometimes he hated her for scaring him so much and worsening his pain. Sometimes he thought she was part of a nightmare that would end soon. Other times he longed to see her again, to be able to talk to her without defense and free from fear. There had been some promise in her appearance, he felt, but he was unable to grasp the meaning of it.

When he packed for the four week trip to Europe, Paul suddenly felt hope again. He went with an extremely talented orchestra that would perform at Europe's most recognized concert halls. In many of his previous trips to the old countries, the European audiences appeared to him well versed and sensitive in their perception of classical music. They seemed to understand the old masters much better than the Americans, but they approached modern composers like him much more skeptical and prejudiced. The critics, on the other hand, loved his compositions, compared him to idols like Philip Glass and Terry Riley. But he had never given much about the critic's opinion. The audience was Paul's only measure for the quality of his work.

The suitcase was packed and Paul did what he always did before he left: he called his mother in Boston.

"Hey Mom, I am leaving tomorrow!"

"Toi, toi, toi," she said meaning wish you luck. "Say 'Hello' to Berlin."

"You can come with me, I have asked you several times."

"No, Paul." She laughed. "You are the vagabond! I prefer to be at home for Christmas!"

"I promise to come to see you for your birthday. I have two months for writing and studio work only for the Shakespeare soundtrack. No concerts."

No concerts! What a relief", he thought.

"See you then, Paul!"

“See you.”

Chapter Two

New York

The concert schedule was tight, and Paul hardly had the time to breath and relax. They started off in London, flew to Milan, Vienna, Zurich and finally Berlin. The German capital was covered by a thick coat of snow when the plane from Zurich touched ground in Tegel. Paul tried to see Berlin as any other destination before, but he could not ignore the fact that it was different for him. He saw the face of the woman who had prophesied his visit in SoHo not more than a month ago in front of his inner eye. He shook his head, strongly feeling the need to get rid of this vision, but the more he resisted it, the more alive it became. Her eyes glowed with an understanding that he had never seen in anyone before. Without expressing it in words her whole appearance suggested to him that she knew. But what? What did this woman know? His future? He was unable to say why, but he sensed that she knew more than that; something deeper and more profound, some hidden secret. And as much as he vainly tried to figure out what the strange meeting that night in SoHo had really meant, he could not fight down his fears. Yes, he had feared the woman and her self-assurance. And even though she had been able to foresee his future, he distrusted her. He felt cold and unlocked his seat belt when the aircraft had finally reached its parking position. Phil looked at him and Paul smiled.

“Ready for the ice-cold eastern wind?”

“Absolutely!” Phil gave him a brave look.

After his awkward confession, Phil had been more reserved than Paul had ever known him before. Paul had tried to

cover the fissure in their inner bond with amplified friendliness. But if he was truly honest with himself, he had to admit that the gap could not be repaired. Paul did not want to judge his friend's feelings nor hurt them, but jealous admiration was a reaction he had not learned to deal with. It made him feel insecure. He had always assumed that he and Phil met as equals, but now he felt forced to realize that Phil must have had a hidden notion of inferiority from him for many, many years. Paul tried to avoid being alone with Phil now, but he was struck by a cold and stabbing pain with every act of avoidance.

The rental bus needed more than two hours to get through the heavy snowfall that had recommenced soon after they had landed to bring them to their Hotel close to Kurfürstendamm. Paul stared through the window and heard the same questions replay in his mind. Why Berlin? What is so important about this city?

He was tired and fell on his bed as soon as he had locked the door of his room. When Phil called to ask if he wanted to have dinner with him, he turned the invitation down.

"I am so tired, Phil. I have to sleep. I want to be well-rested for the rehearsal tomorrow."

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, just tired. See you at breakfast", he lied when he once again felt the pain of avoidance.

Paul stared into the darkness. He could sense that something was waiting for him here in Berlin, some important experience or some revelation. But what kind of experience? What kind of revelation? It was not his first time in Berlin. He had been here at least five or six times. Why now?

He drifted into a deep unconscious sleep, where dreams had no space to enter. Only when the city started to wake up again, his sleep became lighter and allowed subconscious images to form. Paul was used to intense

dreaming, but this morning's dream was different from anything he had ever experienced before. He saw himself in the bar in SoHo across from the clairvoyant woman again. He experienced the same situation in the dreaming state now that had actually happened in the waking state a few weeks ago. But now Paul felt much calmer, much clearer, more aware; he was able to perceive details that he had missed during the actual nightly encounter. He perceived the woman's face, her fairly tanned skin, and green eyes, the freckles on her nose and cheeks. Now, more than that night, he was aware of her beauty and a strange kind of glow that made her skin shimmer in a golden color. Paul saw her delicate fingers and felt her touch on his hands like a burning fire of energy that was almost too strong for him to bear. He re-experienced her insisting speech and while she was talking with a slight accent, which he had not noticed that night, she felt more familiar than anyone he had ever met in waking life. Not only she knew him, he suddenly realized, but he too knew her better than any person around him. Her eyes did not let go of his and she said: "You are not the man you think you are! Awake!" His heartbeat accelerated rapidly, he started sweating and a strong energetic pain ran through his spine and his legs when he woke up tossing and turning around, hitting his head on the night table.

The next minute he became freezing cold and forced himself to get up, get into the shower and let the warm water dispel the shadows of the dream. But the water could not cast the echo of the woman's intriguing voice out of his mind's ear. "Awake!" she commanded and he knew that she did not intend to wake him up from his night's sleep.

When he walked into the breakfast room, most of the orchestra members were already eating. Phil got up and waved. Paul said hello to everybody he passed by on his way to Phil's table. Some of the younger musicians must have had a late night. They looked quite tired.

“Are you ready for rehearsal in twenty minutes?” he asked with a broad smile. Most of them nodded over-ambitiously.

“You look relaxed”, Phil opened their conversation.

Paul did not show his surprise. “Yeah, I had a good, deep sleep and you?”

“Fine. Just had a sandwich and went for a walk in the snow. There is something about this town that I really love.”

“Yes, I think I know what you mean. Berlin is special.”

Paul had a French breakfast, a coffee, and a croissant only, and left the breakfast room early clapping his hands at the exit to attract everybody’s attention.

“Rehearsal begins in 10 minutes in Senator Hall. Please, be on time!”

He went straight to the hotel’s largest conference hall that Emerson had rented for two additional rehearsals before the final rehearsal in the concert house at Gendarmenmarkt. Of course, the orchestra knew its program, but it was important to practice the entire concert more than once at any new city. The musicians had to adapt to climate, atmosphere, jet lag and many other phenomena of travel. And the more time they had to fuse music and the quality of the individual environment the better. And, furthermore, it was necessary to have a daily routine, no matter where, to keep them alert and connected with the music and the conductor.

The instruments had been brought to the practice hall. Yet, Paul was alone when he entered the large room. He looked around and tried to catch the special atmosphere of the place taking a deep calm breath. The hotel was built in the twenties of the past century, a historic building with high ceilings and numerous architectural characteristics of that time. It reminded him of his apartment building in New York.

He walked over to the conductor's desk and went through the score. Every note appeared as a sound in his mind's ear the instant his eyes fell on it. He remembered the night when he had written this suite. He had gone to bed early, worried about his separation from Kaya, feeling severely injured by her emotionally. The suite played in his mind and calmed it, but at the same time his emotions - the pain and the guilt - were stirred by it and grew more agitated, indomitable. Kaya had been right. He had hurt her and Sean first, maybe irreparably. It was only equitable that he was hurt, too, by her reaction and by the effects of his own decision. When he had left L.A. for New York he did not know that he would have to pay with the cruel currency of loneliness.

The ensemble entered the hall in small chatting groups and Paul woke up from the strong memories inseparably tied to the composition. "Do you want the audience to feel your hurt", an inner voice asked him a second too late, because his entire attention was now drawn to his colleagues and the intense practice of today's rehearsal. Before he was totally consumed by the work, he only vaguely noticed his rationalization: there is no love without hurt!

The next minute he had won back full concentration on conducting. For him, the conductor was the only one in the orchestra who had walked the road outlined by the score personally. He knew every danger, every cliff, every hole. He knew each dead end and also the beautiful spots, the peaks and the climax of the journey. He had to guide the orchestra through unknown territory every time, even though the musicians had played the piece of music countless times before. They trusted him that he was able to lead them through, and he was absolutely sure that they were capable and willing to find their way and make the best out of it.

The strings had their part now and filled the entire hall with sound so rich and meaningful to him, that he could only feel and surrender to it. This was the pure beauty to him, the beauty beyond words, beyond description; the beauty of life itself, hidden in everything, every being. Paul had to fight down his tears because he was suddenly overwhelmed by the need to find this beauty in his own life, not only in music but in life itself. He swallowed strongly several times and almost lost concentration, but then other instruments echoed the theme of the strings and the emotions released him.

When he looked up, he saw an elderly man standing at the entrance. Their eyes met for an instant and even though there were more than twenty meters between them, Paul noticed that the man was moved to tears, too. But when he looked up from the score the next time the man had disappeared.

This time Paul did not dare to turn Phil's invitation for a late lunch down. They walked through the snow, warmly packed in thick coats, hats and lambskin gloves watching their breath turn into white clouds of chimerical forms.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Phil dared to ask when they sat in an Italian bar in a small side street only a few minutes later.

"Talk about what?" Paul reacted cold and defensively pretending to concentrate on the menu.

"Something is burdening you. I am afraid it is my confession that I admire you."

Paul looked out of the window not ready to lie into Phil's face, but also not willing to admit that the friend was right.

"It's not that. I told you, I am generally having a hard time."

"Because of the fortune teller!?"

"She was *not* a fortune teller." Paul almost shouted, surprised by his own emotionally strong reaction. The

waiter came to take the order, and Paul wanted to stop the conversation here, but Phil did not let him off the hook.

"I am sorry. I thought she told you, you would travel to Berlin before you even knew."

"She did, but she was not a fortune teller." Paul tried to put into words what he felt about her. "She was more like a messenger; a person who knew me, who wanted to let me know that I will be facing a major change in life."

"It's still because of the audience!?"

Paul took a deep breath. "No, Phil. And that is precisely the point, why I do not want to talk about it. Because I can not explain what I am experiencing and feeling right now. I don't even know what is wrong myself."

"Why don't you try. Sometimes that helps." Phil looked at him innocently and Paul felt that he still trusted him. He cared and he wanted to honestly help. Paul was unable to turn this empathy down.

"It is not *because* of the audience. I mean,... the audience is not the cause of my mental and emotional turmoil."

Phil nodded understandingly. Paul felt encouraged to search for words and explanations.

"The audience is more like a mirror. It is showing me that something is wrong with me. I want more or something else than I get and I don't know why!"

"Is it because of Kaya?"

"Kaya? No. That is long passed. I suffered before, when and after we split. But I think the worst is over now. That is another strange aspect of the whole story: why now? Professionally, I have the best time of my life and the private waves have calmed."

"Could it be a depression or some kind of fatigue?"

"It could. I don't know. But it doesn't feel like an illness. It feels more like an impending change."

"A change to what?"

"I wish I could grasp that, Phil. I dreamed of the woman last night and she urged me to `awake`."

Phil looked at Paul seriously. "You *are* a lucky man. But I think you have to prepare for some things that you will not like."

"I don't want changes. I like my life!"

Phil laughed. "Don't resist, Paul. Learn from your music. It keeps flowing with any change and in the end, this is what makes its wholeness, its completeness: its willingness to be anything - joy and pain, loss and gain!"



They separated in front of the restaurant because Phil needed to buy a few things at the KaDeWe department store, which was only a five-minute walk from here. Paul meandered around, not ready to return to his hotel room and still fascinated by the atmosphere of the German capital. Something drew him through the park towards the Reichstag, once again home to the German parliament since 1999 - sixty-six years after it had been destroyed by a raging fire. During the long walk, Paul allowed his thoughts to flow freely. He studied the landscape, the architecture, cars, and people when all of a sudden he heard the metallic sound of a military band in his mind. He started trembling when the inner sound of the military parade became louder and stronger, and at the same time, he caught the sound of soldiers marching lock-step. There was a dark and alarming feeling in these sounds, which grew even louder when matching images appeared in front of his mind's eye. The soldiers were dressed in brownish green uniforms, reminding him of pictures he had seen from the time of the Second World War. When he looked up within the inner space he beheld long red flags hanging from the Reichstag building, showing huge swastikas, the sign of the Nazi regime. His heart started beating as fast as this morning.

Paul was ready to panic again. The inner image suggested danger so strongly, that he actually felt threatened. He stopped and turned his sight to the outside world only, reconnecting with the current time and space. He followed the cars to assure himself that this was 2013 and not 1933. He looked at the people, walking, riding bikes, busily heading hither and thither. They were modernly dressed, using cell phones and drinking coffee. Paul stepped close to the street, waving for a cab. Luckily, after a few minutes, a taxi stopped in front of him. Only when he felt the cold black leather of the seats underneath him he was able to relax a little. But the inner images still held him captive.

In the lobby, he bumped into Phil.

“Gosh, you are totally pale. Are you okay, Paul?”

“Yes, no. I don’t know. I need to be alone!”

Phil was extremely worried but did not know what to do to calm Paul. He let him run into the elevator and helplessly watched him disappear behind its closing doors.

In his room, Paul fell in an armchair without taking his coat off. His heart was still beating fast and he could not control the images that swept over his mind, visions of Berlin more than sixty years old. He saw several places he had never been at knowing that they had existed at that time. Soldiers and girls dressed in uniforms practicing to goose-step. The entire city was colored by a dark, daunting atmosphere that swallowed any positive emotion and even action. It was like a nightmare he could not wake up from. After a while, he remembered the woman’s advice given on a cold November night in SoHo: *“You will go to Berlin and you have to be very aware of your perceptions and your feelings. You have to listen to your inner voice. And please, do not judge your experiences. You are safe and you will be guided...!”*

Paul did not feel safe, and he did not feel guided, but the woman’s voice and her words calmed him. She had warned

him. Maybe Phil was right and he was a lucky man after all. "What does this inner voice tell me by projecting these pictures", he started to ask himself, immediately gaining more distance to the horrifying scenes and more strength to face them. "It forces me to look back, to see what Berlin has once been and at the same time it allows me to see what it has become - vivid, creative, a place of unity, where East and West have reunited and at the same time a modern, cosmopolitan city." He felt the strong urge to focus on the images of the past again. The atmosphere of the years before the war, the manipulation of the people by the Nazi regime and its propaganda, the preparation and training for war and the killing of millions. He witnessed, how an inhuman ideology began to rule over the beliefs of a whole nation and destroy its sanity and reason; he saw, how it began and he could think only one thought: "Thank God I was not part of this!" With this thought, the nightmare ended abruptly.

He hid in his room until the next morning. Paul did not even go for breakfast and ordered the room-service early. Then he went for another long walk through the city. He was determined not to allow fear to reign his behavior. He wanted to face the images of his subconscious mind. But today it stayed calm. No images. No visions. He walked through the streets and tried to figure out what had triggered the sequence of scenes that he had seen with his inner eye yesterday. He even passed the same place, where it had started the day before, but his mind remained unstirred.

Before returning to the Hotel, Paul had enough time to stop at a little bar across the street for a strong, hot espresso. The bar reminded him of the place in SoHo, even though it felt and smelt much more European. He took a seat at the counter and ordered a Macchiato, when he saw a man's face in the large mirror behind the bar. Was that