

Path of the Winged Heart

Brian Joseph

Maria sank down into her living room chair. It had been a long day. She closed her eyes and replayed the events of the last few days. There had been another encounter with one of the crippled hearts. When she was done replaying the events of the past few days her thoughts drifted back to her first encounter with a crippled heart. It had been 30 years ago when she was 15 years old.

Sally had seemed like a friend, at least on the surface. She appeared to be kind and considerate. It took time to really get to know her. Sally was not who she seemed to be. Initially the crippled hearts that Maria had encountered had not been obvious. They were hidden. Hidden behind masks of make believe. Sally was the first person to befriend Maria after her family had moved to the area. She had known Sally for about a year. That had seemed like a long time. She thought back to the day that she really came to know Sally.

It was in the fall and she had stopped at Sally's house about an hour after school. They were sitting in Sally's room listening to music when Sally told her she had a surprise. Sally reached under her bed and pulled out a large laundry bag. She opened it and slid it off of a pay phone. Sally told Maria how she had noticed it was loose the night before when she used it and she had returned today with a crowbar to pry it off. Sally slid it back in the pillow case, put it under the bed, and told her that she was going to take it to the garage and bust it open the next day when she would have more time before her parents got home from work.

Maria's expression and comment that Sally was crazy to do such a thing was met by Sally telling her that she was being a 'goody two shoes'. Maria had told Sally that she wanted no part of it. Maria was heading out the door when Sally's mother came home. Two hours later Maria heard knocks on her door. It was a police officer. Sally's mother had found the phone. Sally had told her mother that she had been watching T.V. when Maria came to the house with the pay phone in the laundry bag promising to come back and pick it up the next day.

Maria told the police officer the truth. He took notes and told her that it would be investigated. The next day it was all over school that Maria had stolen a pay phone, had taken it to Sally's house, and when she had gotten caught had blamed Sally. Maria told her version of the events to a few people who seemed to believe her but the general buzz about school was that she had tried to save her own neck by getting Sally in trouble.

Justice had been served in the end, but it had taken four months. All throughout those four months and even after Sally continued to blame Maria. What had saved her were the words of Mrs. Contega the old woman who liked to sit on her front steps and chain smoke while she watched the goings on in the neighborhood. Mrs. Contega had

seen Sally enter the house with the laundry bag and also seen Maria come by empty handed. Sally was put on juvenile probation, ordered to pay restitution and to do 50 hours of community service.

The following summer Maria and her parents traveled to San Francisco. It was 1977 and there was a ten year anniversary celebration of the Summer of Love. Maria's parents were freshmen students at Berkeley in 1962 when Maria was born. It was an unplanned and unexpected pregnancy but both of her parents had managed to complete college. After graduating they spent the summer of 67 in the Haight-Ashbury district with 5 year old Maria in tow. Maria had remembered it as being like a circus and it had changed a lot in ten years but so had she. It was during this trip in 1977 that she had first heard the term "crippled heart." Her parents had heard that their former Guru of sorts was camping at a rural farm about an hour north of San Francisco and they decided to go see him. Maria had remembered Vee. He laughed a lot and used to call her Magic Maria.

Vee had remembered her too. When they arrived at the farm Vee hugged her mother and father then looked at her, held his hand low and said, "I knew that you were magic. You have gone from this to this small to this tall", he said as he motioned low and high with his hand. There were others who had come to see Vee. They sat around in a circle outside, reminisced and told stories. Then Vee gave one of his talks. Maria looked around and noticed tears streaking down some cheeks. Vee could do that. He could touch people in a way that could move them between laughter and tears. After his talk Vee retreated to a cabin and several people lined up to see him one by one. Maria asked her parents what the people lining up were doing and her mother explained that each of them had a question for Vee or were seeking guidance about something.

Maria got on line. She had waited for almost an hour. When she entered the cabin Guru Vee was seated on the floor on a large pillow cushion. There was a small round table with three candles burning. On the other side of the table, directly across from Vee there was another pillow cushion. Vee held out his hand towards the empty cushion. Maria told him of her experience with Sally. Vee listened with an intense smile on his face, interrupting only once after she had told him of Sally spreading the lie at school. Then he had said, "Mark Twain said that a lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes."

When she had finished her story Vee had asked, "And your question?" Maria blurted out, "How can someone be like that?" Vee stared at her and said, "You have had an encounter with a crippled heart. Hearts become crippled through injury." Vee had gone on to explain that these injuries are usually inflicted by other crippled hearts and that during an encounter with a crippled heart that one must exercise caution so as not to also become crippled. He had talked about crippled hearts and hearts that walk,

saying that each could influence the other during situational encounters. A crippled heart might help to cripple a heart that walked if the encounter was not handled correctly and mirroring occurred. A heart that walked that made it through the encounter without mirroring was a heart that was strengthened.

Maria remembered the words that Vee had spoken that day. "The heart that uses encounters with crippled hearts to its own advantage can reach a point where it no longer walks." He had reached for a small back pack that was beside the pillow he was sitting on. He opened a side pocket, fished around inside, pulled out something small, and passed it to her across the table. She held it in her hand and looked down at it. It was a golden winged heart. The wingspan made it slightly smaller than a penny. And it was about the same thickness. She had gone to pass it back to him and Vee had said, "It is yours." Vee told her that a winged heart could see through the masks of the crippled hearts. This gave the winged heart a decisive advantage in all encounters. "A winged heart can help the lame to walk." He reached across the table and put his hand on the front of her head and whispered, "Teach your heart to fly."

She had gotten up to leave but Vee said, "Wait." She sat back down. He fished around in the large compartment of the back pack and pulled out a small cassette player that he placed on the table. He fished around some more and pulled out 4 or 5 cassette tapes. He kept one out and threw the others back in the back-pack. He opened the cassette case and passed the empty case to her. It was John Lennon's *Imagine*. Vee searched for a song on the tape. That was the first time that she had heard *Crippled Inside*.

Maria spent the night in a cabin with her mother and father. She told them of her conversation with Vee. She thought that there was some kind of significance in the coincidence of Guru Vee having both the winged heart and a tape with a song that was related to the nature of their conversation.

The following morning people gathered at scattered picnic tables that were loaded with fruit. Vee came to sit at the table where Maria and her parents were sitting. Her parents and Vee talked about old times and what they had been doing for the last 10 years. Vee looked at Maria and said, "Raising a flower." Her father told Vee of Maria's wondering about the coincidence of his having the winged heart and a tape with a song that related to what she had talked to him about. Vee reached for his back pack beside the table. He unzipped a small compartment and placed 7 or 8 winged hearts on the palm of his hand. Then he went into another compartment and pulled out 6 or 7 cassette tapes. They were all Beatles and Lennon. "I'm listening to Lennon a lot recently. My friend Gabe has been discussing his lyrics with me."

After breakfast about 30 people gathered in a large circle in an open field and Vee gave one of his talks. She had remembered being at similar events when she was younger. Vee looked at her and said, "I am inspired to speak of the heart." Vee said that the heart was part the apparatus of perception and that some day science would come to understand this. He said that the brain receives what the eye sends to it and

that the brain hears what the ear sends to it. Vee said that the heart also sends information to the brain but the part of the brain that receives this information was underdeveloped in most people. This underdevelopment was due to training, education, and upbringing that was rooted in a culture that did not recognize the value of heart perception.

Vee said that there were times when people had flashes where the brain was able to receive what the heart was sending. Vee called hearts that this happened to "hearts that walk." He said that in some that part of the brain that receives the signal that the heart sends was not only underdeveloped but had also been damaged. He called these "crippled hearts." Most of what they felt was not genuine. In fact it was greatly distorted. Crippled hearts were motivated by fear.

Vee had said that hearts could learn to fly. That the perceptual apparatus of the heart and that part of the brain that receives it could be developed. It was possible to integrate perception. He looked around the circle. He was begging the question. At almost the same time two people said, "How?" Vee smiled and said, "I thought you'd never ask."

Maria returned from her memory and moved in her chair, catching herself as she was about to doze off. She was excited at the prospect of another opportunity to strengthen the wings of her heart. The higher she soared the more she saw. A bird's eye view. Looked at from a higher level everything appeared connected and part of the same ground. Everything on the ground was part of the same fabric of existence. This fabric is woven of love.

Maria was hungry and wanted to fix something to eat but first she went to her jewelry box. She took out the winged heart and looked at it. Then she pushed away some jewelry and took out the folded sheet of paper that was in the bottom of the jewelry box. It was the paper that Vee had passed out. He reached into his pack and passed the papers in both directions around the circle. Then he read it aloud.

Maria unfolded the paper thinking about how long it had been in her jewelry box. She read through it while thinking of that day long ago when Vee had read it:

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CONFUCIANISM:

*"Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you."
-- Analects, XV, 23*

JUDAISM:

*"What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the entire law, all the rest is commentary."
--The Talmud, Shabbat31a*

BUDDHISM:

*"Hurt not others in ways that your yourself would find hurtful."
--Undana-varqa: 518*

CHRISTIANITY:

*"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."
--Luke 6:31*

BAHA'I:

*"It is our wish and desire that every one of you may become a source of all goodness unto men, and an example of uprightness to mankind. Beware lest you prefer yourself above your neighbors ."
--Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, 315*

ZOROASTRIANISM:

*"That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good of its own self."
--Dadistan-I-Dinik, 94:5*

HINDUISM:

*"This is the sum of all true righteousness: deal with others as thou wouldst thyself be dealt by. Do nothing to thy neighbor which thou wouldst not have him do to thee after."
--The Mahabharata*

ISLAM:

*"No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires of himself."
--Sunnah*

TAOISM:

*"The good man ought to pity the malignant tendencies of others; to rejoice over their excellence; to help them in their straits; to regard their gains as if they were his own, and their losses in the same way."
--The Thai-shang. 3*

Maria went to the kitchen and made a sandwich. While eating it she thought of how crippled hearts wallow in their own misery, much of it self created. For some the misery was almost constant and they did not recognize it as such because it was the only way they knew. She thought of the sadness in this and a tear tricked down her cheek. She ate the last bit of sandwich, went into the living room, and put a CD in the stereo. She stretched out on the couch and drifted off to sleep while listening to Lennon's *Instant Karma*.

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