

UNDERSTANDING MOONSEED
ESSAYS OF LIFE

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Sixteen Chakras

I was a wreck, couldn't get my head to my left shoulder. I had a massage that reached bits.

1.

There was a window above the bathroom sink. It opened pantry-style, a deep shelf pushing out to freezing Chicago winters. My mother stored our dairy products on the shelf, opening the window's door to food stored on a two-foot ledge before the screen in place to keep out summertime mosquitos. Most often the dairy products were ice. I remember that the tiny refrigerator in the kitchen worked, and wonder. Was madness at play in this placement of food or is it better explained by saying that my mother let me experience what she grew up with: an "icebox?"

2.

For some reason, I was born a Democrat. Odd from a solidly Republican set of parents. They fought, except in politics where they agreed in different cities, voting for different local candidates. I managed to disagree in either city. So at seven, I stood at the corner of Cedadr and State Street, handing out JFK bumper stickers with my whole heart in the act. Sometime later in the campaign, I slithered between shiny shoes and heavy coats lining a velvet rope between brass stands at the Conrad Hilton to shake the hand of JFK, his big digits stretching over my hand quickly before reaching out to others.

3.

MaryAnne MacFarlane was the assistant to the headmaster, an astute Irish lesbian who took a liking to me even though I dropped her typing class in high school after deciding that good typing qualified a girl for a lesser job. It was a big decision. Somehow she stuck around in the wings of my rocky, high-school experience,

swooping in after my best show of drama with a message. “You’re not fooling anyone but yourself.”

4.

I love music. There was the kind produced by my tiny hands that started piano at five and continued until liberated by a friend who drove us to football games in the suburbs in her father’s convertible with diplomatic plates. The music of others tore into my heart, filling me, setting off hopes, questions, conviction. But my lessons raged on until the day a sour teacher assigned me the very piece I had played in my audition for him. I loved the piece and the reprieve, didn’t have to practice. He knew what he was doing and fired me.

5.

My father lived in New York, and I did not. My mother declared a seven-year war in which I did not see him, even for tiny visits. Her ceasefire when I was sixteen was more of a total capitulation, “I’m sending her to you”—“to fix,” her unspoken message. I met a stepmother, a half sister and a half brother. More family than I’d ever had, and they had families. These were the people inside the windows I looked through at Christmas. My father had suffered more heart attacks than one could count; he lived, grumpy from meds, fierce in conviction that his reincarnation was imminent. I fantasized that we made the fruitcake aging in the cupboard, together, father and daughter. He told me, “Cut out the bullshit” and bragged about having big balls.

6.

The icebox-bathroom had a cupboard high above the toilet. (This was an odd place, don’t you think?) I climbed on the toilet, reaching into the cupboard to get to the letters kept in boxes. Late at night, I’d find my mother working through those letters, reading, the boxes in her lap. I was a shadow, spying and fading, learning my own story in darkness. I climbed up and took down the boxes when she was away. Saul Nack. Child support. Missed payments. Failure. Custody. I looked up the words, and then went on a search. How does one get to be a parent? I found the word: “sperm.”

7.

The Democrats lived large and powerful in Chicago under Mayor Richard J. Daley, a name that must be said in its entirety. Mayor Richard J. Daley and I had the same dentist, and I saw him rather often in my high school years in the elevator to the office of Dr. Phillips. We'd smile at each other and chat. He knew I was a Dem, and I thought he'd make one of the best Santas I'd ever seen and perhaps a really good dad. Dr. Phillips was another story, having worked with Albert Schweitzer and devised clever ideas like using drill bits to fill root canals before the high-tech age of cat gut. I've had some drill bits in my root canals from my early days of chewing too much Juicy Fruit and drinking Coke. It's thrilling to be in a chair now when a dentist says in awe, "Oh my, tell me about what I'm seeing." I'm connected to history.

8.

I love the name Paddy Whannel and enjoyed his college film classes. Those were the coming-to-terms years. I also had a professor named Alan Artner who assigned readings in John Abbott McNeill Ruskin's *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*. Alan and I dated. He wanted to sleep with me in the worst way. He had really bad teeth. Paddy Whannel handed back a paper that said, "You've got more to give than this." I got the message. Although I had taken up acting under the tutelage of Leigh Roloff and Lila Heston, acting terrified me. For all that I feared, I imagined a saw carving a circle in the floor around my feet. The circle complete, I would drop through, out of the sight, safe.

10.

Here's how I joined the NAACP. It was sixth grade, in an exclusive private school in a converted mansion with a regal entry staircase—and the usual, nasty back one for the servants. The school's students used both. The servant staircase was a meeting ground for kisses, lingering chats, hoping for kisses, and dashes hoping never to confront the conversation. I stopped one day, meeting the dark eyes of Stephen Wade. He insisted on having his name spoken in its entirety and spelled out the "ph" when introducing himself. His brother was an over-achiever at the University of Chicago. One Monday morning he announced, "My brother joined the NAACP, and I did, too." He boasted a very appealing metal button on the lapel of his uniform jacket. I desperately, all of a sudden, wanted to make sure that every human had

opportunity, perhaps including me, though I didn't think of that at the time. My heart went out to every Black person, every civil rights march that I had already attended, and for the lips of Stephen Wade, who has since made a name as a banjo player.

11.

Just before I started high school, I decided my mother and I needed to move. I toured apartments in our neighborhood and found one in a six-plex once occupied by Hemingway. My mother signed the lease with no comment. The apartment's hardwood floors were a little warped in places but three bedrooms made it seem normal in every respect except that my mother slept under the dining room table. I was otherwise quite proud of the dining room. It was a good place, though we never once ate there. When my friends stopped by still hallucinating from a bad trip, my mother served strawberries and tea in the living room. On two occasions, my house was the last stop before they were taken away for treatment of persistent flashbacks.

14.

I was always the youngest in the class. It wasn't until many years later that I realized I simply did not get what went on all around me in high school. One friend, sexually abused by her brother and a cousin, battled a mother in denial by stealing her tranquilizers. Another couldn't shake flashbacks, and I was dispatched with a kitten to lure her into the car that would take her to the hospital. The local pharmacy assistant, my boyfriend, was a drug dealer who claimed his dad had invented the drinking straw. He died in a car accident some years later in the grip of whatever drug. Our local brand-name heiress took off on a cross-country junket—a well-funded, druggy boondoggle with a boyfriend who needed a cause. Many years later I found the report from a shrink who evaluated me. He wrote, "I would caution anyone who takes this girl as a patient: look beyond her sophisticated presentation. She came into my office, smoking using a cigarette holder. At the end of our session, she asked if I could lend her money for cigarettes."

15.

In college, the study of acting was useful in many ways, one being that it taught me how to breathe. Acting class started with lying on the floor, palms on our

diaphragms feeling our breath. Shoulders still, chest still, the lower ribs opened as the diaphragm worked, pulling oxygen into the lowest recesses of the lungs. It was calming, centering. In my days of anxiety attacks and the nights when they became insomnia, I'd feel my stomach tight and hard, my chest heaving in hyperventilation. The floor became my remedy, the cloud that lifted me, palm on diaphragm, carrying me through space and time to sanity, sleep, peace.

16.

I still forget the thing that works better than holding every little thing inside, the worries, sadness and fears. My massage therapist calls me rebar, and unbends the tightness. My therapist embraces a tangled bundle, and sets strands of me straight. I'm learning to let go, inhale deep in the recesses of stomach and soul. I'm learning that seeking is not finding, but exhaling just might be.

JFK and Me

I must have taken people by surprise, a seven-year-old standing alone on the corner of Cedar and State Street, passing out bumper stickers and campaign buttons for JFK. It was an act of irony and early independence as I was born into a solidly Republican family, their tradition marred only by the fact that my mother once voted for FDR—and now me. “Passing out” understates my zeal; I was determined to get a button on every lapel in motion, to undermine the integrity of gleaming chrome with that red, white, and blue strip featuring the name Kennedy and his irresistible smiling face.

I look back on his campaign slogan, *Leadership for the '60s*, with today's hindsight on all that I did not know about him then, I don't think I would change my seven-year old stance. At the time, I was so much a fan (was it really my first crush on an older man?), that when he came to the Conrad Hilton as president in March of 1963, I managed to slither my ten-year-old frame between the camel hairs and lesser winter coats right up to the rope aisle and stanchions to shake his hand. The occasion that day was a civic luncheon where he identified unemployment as a national economic concern specifically related to youth workers, agriculture, and automation. Eight short months later, he would be dead.

My mother, a puritanical persona who artfully concealed the parts of her that were not prudish, hinted to me in age-appropriate innuendos that Kennedy was not a saint. Even then I knew what that meant. She went on to say that he could never be effective without Bobby and crowned her indictment, saying that he was in cahoots with the Mafia. She did, however, shed tears when little premature Patrick died and complimented Mrs. Kennedy on being “such a lady” before launching into a hissed vilification of a rich socialite from money marrying money. When Bobby went after organized crime and, as historical record shows, redirected the president from his bromance with Frank Sinatra, I took a victory lap in loud and vigorous debate with my mother. Somehow, Marilyn Monroe singing “Happy Birthday Mr. President” just didn't spark my interest.

I went to a private school in a converted mansion at the edge of Lincoln Park, requiring my mother to drive me from our Gold Coast apartment on her way to the north-side high school where she taught English literature. Car time was say-what's-on-your-mind-time (a strategy I would like to think I later employed with better results with my own daughters). Driving through April's showers in 1961, I heard a lot about the Bay of Pigs from my mother because it turns out that one thing worse than being a Democrat was being a Communist, and Castro definitely was a Communist (of course completely a puppet of Khrushchev), which meant that the CIA most definitely *should* have prevailed, and it was *just terrible, just awful*, that this attempt at setting the world order right had failed. And now the Communists knew about our plot against them and that would endanger the Cold War world order even further, so it was a good thing that we have air-raid shelters. In case something awful happened.

I was developing anxiety and also getting a hint of how fact and fear can coexist on a collision course.

It's not surprising that my mother told me point-blank that we were getting into another world war a year and a half later when the story broke that the Soviets had shipped nuclear missiles to Cuba that were capable of attacking US cities. History offers a better set of facts than my very nervous mother who scared the shit out of me every morning in the car. Turns out that through a Russian spy masquerading as a clown performing for children in the Kennedy compound, Bobby established a back-channel to craft a secret deal with the Russian ambassador whereby America would pull out of Turkey and Soviet weapons would be withdrawn from Cuba. My mother and I were not the only ones who were greatly relieved.

Today especially, I want to vote for a president who comes from principles of service to the people and the nation. Subsequent generations have shown the Kennedys to have plenty of that, along with the tragedy and human failings that have kept us all riveted for almost seventy years.

There was no PA system in my mansion-school. The news of JFK's assassination travelled floor to floor and classroom to classroom, carried by breathless students that November 22nd. Like so many, I was riveted to the black-and-white broadcast of the motorcade, the salute, the veil over Jackie's face. The hours after the assassination replayed Johnson's swearing in next to Jackie's blood-stained suit, and

history has since exposed all the ways that JFK was not a saint. But JFK had our backs.

Life In Architecture

I was born in the city of Bauhaus black buildings, Mies Van Der Rohe skyscrapers along a lake that sometimes shimmered with metallic elway corpses washing ashore—a city famous for the wedding cake Robie brick house and the horizontal lines of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Within a world of tall limestone, I lived in an apartment half in the ground, walked broken sidewalks to a stone church, then to a mansion-school with a circular staircase to bedrooms-turned-classrooms, and then to a brick high school with an asphalt yard and cinder-block, converted coach house.

Next, I matriculated to a frozen lakefront campus, where salt and snow again whitened months of the year until spring greened stone structures with ivy. There in a brick four-plex on Reba Street I found love with my boy/man, his Jesus curls, beard and mustache. His facial hair went, he stayed.

He drove his Fiat to California. We moves to our stucco apartment on Wildwood, then our stucco house on Mauricia and last our boxcar house on Highland.

We rebuilt Highland with columns and recessed lighting on bright art—threw parties in primary colors for people in lipsticked smiles and handshakes built of four hands. We bore two daughters, and our exuberant girls greeted everyone with hugs and sloppy kisses. We ran businesses showcased in pages of advertising and pastel circuit plots showing components that would be miniaturized into a microchip to be manufactured by people made indistinct in white suits and masks.

Fluffy blonde curls and scarecrow-white strands distinguished the two girls in the family that rested in a lakefront redwood cabin, rode up snowy slopes and schussed down, hiked dusty trails with dogs dashing between boulders and humans, rocked in a lakeside hammock breathing the smell of burning logs, as snow melted by the fire inside avalanched from the roof to the ground.

And then a moment in a jumbled office filled with paper—files about people—and new words about them, about him. Words with a hollow, haunting sound of diagnosis. I was there, he was. In these white walls.

New yellow limestone. Hardwood and flagstone, skylights and harp music as if a dream. Up stone stairs, wide, white doors, rounded chairs, sterile surround. A steady beep as drugs were infused into his veins, our foundation newly built of hope and hopelessness, and the two of us together.

With solid certainty, death lurked at life's flimsy frame. The structure we thought sound was neither limestone, granite, wood, stucco, or even a sturdy tent. Love was the wind in daylight, barely touching our skin as we passed under a brilliant sun.

Flight To The Future

On February 15, 1975, I checked a couple of suitcases at Chicago's O'Hare Airport and boarded the United 727 that would take me to a new life with Doug who had driven out weeks earlier and found our new home in a town quaintly named Sunnyvale. Because one traveled, in those days, in dressy attire, I flew in a double-breasted linen suit, seated next to a dark-haired guy in a silk-blend suit. The words "Silicon Valley" had no meaning for me.

The move west at age twenty-two challenged my growing-up assumption that I would live in New York. Yet I was in love, and Doug had gone some weeks earlier to get established.

There was a sense of destiny about this move to California. The summer before, I had graduated from college. Doug had quit his job as a junior engineer in a Chicago-based instrumentation company. It was a hard-won position he obtained a year earlier—in spite of his degree in film production—by displaying circuit boards of his own design from his latest synthesizer, the fifth he had designed and built. Although the presence of a keyboard gave the look of a familiar instrument, the functionality of knobs, colorful patch cords and faders made it look very complicated. Synthesizers could bend, hiss and resonate rumbles that were entirely unlike the sound of striking a piano key.

After quitting his job, Doug had taken some weeks off to enter a contest co-sponsored by *Electronic Design* magazine with a company called InterDesign. The contest challenge: to make custom connections on the final layer of a microchip that would complete the layers below, demonstrating a simplified approach to designing an integrated circuit. Doug entered the contest with a voltage-controlled oscillator design that could reduce the size of yet another of his synthesizers. His sights set on the hundred chips he would be awarded if he won, he submitted his entry, and we took off on a cross-country junket that began in New York and wended down the east coast.

In a call to his parents from Atlanta, I heard him say, “Who? Who’s that? OK, what’s his phone number?”

He cradled the phone against his shoulder as he dialed the next call. “I’m returning a call from ...”

His brown eyes widened behind slightly tinted lenses of wire-rimmed aviator glasses.

“Yes, I am Doug Curtis. Yes? Really? When? Well, I’m traveling right now, and I won’t be back for a week or so. I could....”

I listened, enjoying the crisp air conditioning against my skin, no longer sticky in the smothering humidity outside. Doug said a final, “Ok,” and “I’ll call you then,” and returned receiver to the payphone’s hook.

“I won. I get my VCO chips!”

“Fantastic.” I loved how happy he was, yet a little part of me held back with some strong sense that this would change our lives.

“They’re giving me an HP scientific calculator, and they want me to come to California.”

“When are you going to do that?” I had visions of hightailing it back to the Midwest so he could go right away.

“I told them I’d call when I was done traveling.”

We continued our trip for ten more days, driving north into Canada to visit friends before returning home. Doug flew to California and returned with his chips, his new calculator, and a photo of him holding his circuit diagram.

“They offered me a job.”

Anxiety took hold of me. Move to California? “What did you say?”

“I told them I wanted to build my new synthesizer.”

Months later, the synthesizer built, a recession had set in.

“They keep calling me to come work for them.” A few days later I heard the words I had been expecting, “I said yes. I’ll drive out at the end of the month.”

That was January.

Just as Doug had “won” his first career position, destiny seemed to help me find a job as a writer/producer in a film production company. A year later I moved to a copy/contact position in a San Francisco-based technology-advertising agency. Our clients were minicomputer and chip companies—and terminal manufacturers. Those

were the days when the “terminal” was a distant appendage to the mainframe or emerging mini-computer that centralized all intelligence.

At the ripe old age of twenty-four—just two years and two jobs after moving to California—I started my own “company” with an art director in an office that we shared.

For a time we were independent entities—Mary A. Pacifico, Writer and Keoki Williams Design. Then we were Delicious Advertising using Keoki’s signature pineapple logo. A couple years into our fledgling business, I decided to make a run for the “big-time,” which meant becoming a full-service agency with consistent clients, not just projects. It took some courage to put my name on the door, but it was the perfect West coast name: Pacifico.

In Silicon Valley, young people started companies, unlike New York where I had expected to become an entrepreneur when older and with credible grey hair.

Although I started Pacifico, Inc. with consumer clients—performing arts, car dealerships, a shopping center, banks, restaurants—I was surrounded by technology, had some experience with it, and I lived with the perfect technology coach. I hired a few employees and sought out Silicon Valley companies, taking on a semiconductor foundry, and clients that made test devices, capital equipment focused on the semiconductor market, enterprise software and military electronics. As Silicon Valley grew, Pacifico grew its client and revenue base.

Doug was my biggest supporter. “You have nothing to lose. You can always get a real job.”

He repeated this with a funny grin. Both of us knew I most certainly could not work any harder for another employer than I already did for my own clients.

I, in turn, thought it was easy stuff—hard work, but I was suited to running my own company. “Everyone should start their own business.”

Some friends took my advice only to return to jobs in other companies. Two years after I started Pacifico, Doug fulfilled what I always knew he would do, founding Curtis Electromusic Specialties. He designed signal processing chips for almost all the major synthesizer brands in the world, producing an “analog sound” that was sought by rock ’n roll musicians. With his chip technology packed onto circuit boards, synthesizers became sleeker, looking more like keyboards with lights and knobs. Side by side, we entered the Silicon Valley lifestyle, working our separate long hours in a valley of long hours and game-changing innovation.

I found that for every Gordon Moore and Andy Grove of Intel fame, there were hundreds of talented and very detail-oriented engineers and physicists, albeit uncelebrated, who created a new world on the largest scale by focusing their efforts on the smallest scale. Silicon wafers, the real estate on which chips were manufactured, got larger and larger, creating demand for manufacturing systems that could handle these bigger silicon slices. The components etched onto the wafers became smaller with more minute geometries, the densely packed equivalent of shrinking the room-sized computer of my high-school career onto a single circuit board and eventually onto a pencil eraser-sized chip.

My clients were founders, innovators, fast trackers, detail geeks, venture capitalists and inventors who sometimes thought their technical prowess qualified them to do anything—including what I did. I sometimes quipped to Doug, “Just let me know if you’d like my help on your next IC.”

He’d answer with that crooked grin and tell me he’d like some help now. That settled, we’d do whatever we were doing next.

Apple was a fledgling company at the time Pacifico got its start. Software as a tool got pushed from enterprise-only to the small business to the individual. Renegade companies like Atari and Pizza Time Theater moved games from the traditional coffee table board to the restaurant and then the device.

Still fresh is the moment some years later when a colleague said to me, “Our old test-equipment client is migrating to an internet company.” At the time, the Internet was the communication vehicle for research types. He went on to say, “They’re going to use the Internet for commerce.”

“This could be huge—if it works,” I thought to myself. We quickly reset their corporate identity focus from printed letterhead to the computer screen, and produced a suite of branding materials. The changes wrought by the internet escalated from internal communication to ecommerce, email for all, online retailing, and eventually, social media.

Change converged from every corner of my world in the form of new business models based on networked enterprises and wireless connectivity that rippled into specific applications and problems that needed new solutions—like security. I embraced it all, honchoing every new opportunity for my organization, which grew to one of the largest independent integrated-marketing communication firms in Silicon Valley. We took on global tech clients: the world’s largest wafer foundry, three global

semiconductor capital equipment suppliers, leaders in internet security, the company that pioneered standards for motion-picture theaters and later home entertainment; and then, a succession of internet-based businesses focused on home purchases and loans, engineering components, a commercial building portal, online purchasing, and collaboration.

Pacifico had to hold the doors shut, and I felt like an air traffic controller graphing out our workload to make sure I didn't stress our increasingly youthful staff. I hired in ways I never had, the motto being "redundancy." Headhunters called endlessly, pitching stock options to the young ones who could fog a mirror, but had no experience. They jumped to the next opportunity, the stock options, like lemmings. It moved at a dizzying pace.

I was sustained by a new kind of client call. "I have two million dollars to create this brand. Do you have bandwidth?"

Just a few years earlier I had lamented to Doug, "You have leverage that an agency doesn't. You can shut down a manufacturing line, if they don't get your chips."

He didn't miss the chance to point out now, "This a new time for the ad/pr biz." He was right. For a brief and fleeting moment, I had the leverage to say yes or no to the client. Hiring was another story; the business had to compete for its people.

Convened for an activity called SPAM—something personal about me—the newbies in the company joined with the oldtimers to exchange stories about themselves. We got to know each other, started liking our differences, started feeling like a team and then the famous bubble burst. Slashed budgets and corporate uncertainty became the new way of life. The robust advertising and public relations agency that I had built spiraled downward.

Gone were the days of multi-million dollar print, radio and television campaigns, calling journalists to pitch a story; man-on-the-street market research, and afternoons on the golf course with prospective or current clients.

Those days went the way of the Mergenthaler typesetting machine, photostats, rubylith, art boards, bluelines, color separations, conference reports, calls to action, production artists, airbrushed photos, mag tape, answer prints, cut-and-splice editing shops and distributing materials for publication or broadcast by shipping them to radio/TV stations or publications around the country. All of these things became extinct, obviated into the ether. Photoshop became both a noun and a verb, taking its place in the hall of fame of reusable parts of speech along with Hoover, ketchup,

Fedex, and Xerox. We Photoshopped any image to make wholesale changes to landscapes, backgrounds, facial expressions, and more minor details.

With email we could cc and bcc as many people as many times a day as we could stomach. To send materials, we emailed a wav file for broadcast, a pdf or jpeg file unless the pubs wanted tiff or eps format. The media receiving our stuff were increasingly online anyway, and what we sent got compressed to a banner that winked onscreen. No business was real without a dynamic Web presence.

I lived in the capital of change, Silicon Valley, and experienced firsthand some of the most dramatic change in the history of my own industry.

9/11 hit like a punch to an already depressed economy that reeled from the lesson of funding half-baked wunderkind product ideas that were not worthy of being called companies. In the empty skies that followed 9/11, a terrorist took hold as the game changer and a silence took over for a time. Then, cautious marketers with budgets in tight fists turned to closed-loop marketing with its immediate lead generation benefits. A sales force could take over without the traditional human interaction that once warmed up the sale. If the online prospect took one single action, clicking on a specific topic or link on a banner, webinar or web page, that action was recorded, sent to a database. Follow-up email relevant to the action would be sent without human intervention to the action-taker or the person who needs to follow up. It's fast, cheap and virtual.

Our clients newly counted on us to make their products viral, a term that had meaning beyond the notion of contagion. Viral was code for free.

Just about the only thing that didn't change was that advertising and public relations are about people and money, because only people form perceptions and only people can spend the money on products and services. People write the stories about these products and services, whether they're posted to a blog or jotted on your grandmother's tired, old fish wrap. People contribute to reputation by talking to one another, carrying on great oral traditions just as Native Americans passed on their wisdom about the animals, the stars and the Way. We tell each other about the deal, the sale, the manufacturing defect, what the latest thing is and who just got it. That's not a perception. It's the reality of our biz: eventually people have to meet, look each other in the eye, talk, agree or disagree, and take action.

Only much later did I realize how true it is that some things just don't change—including some sticky memories.

Once when we talked about the future, Doug said cancer would get him, and I replied that heart would get me. We couldn't know, but it was almost as if we did in those early years. We would forget that conversation until a new future appeared: a pain, a moment, a mass, a careening detour from all that we had created and looked forward to together. Suddenly in a disease-defined time capsule, finite in measure we did not know, a story of love would become one of loss, transformation and survival.

On that flight on the 15th of February in 1975, a young woman with long, auburn hair and almond-shaped, green eyes sat next to a dark-eyed stranger in a silk-blend suit. The plane bounced and rattled through clear skies over the Rockies, more turbulence than that young woman had experienced ever in her years of flying. She turned to the stranger, wildly anxious, and he said, "It will help you to place your hand over mine, but don't grab. Simply let your hand rest flat on mine."

She looked into his eyes, wondered about what was ahead and laid her hand palm-down over the top of the hand he spread on the plastic armrest between them. Sunlight shone through the plane's oblong windows.