



A Journey Into the Heart of Wisdom

by Michael J Tamura © 2011

When I die, I hope you're laughing. I know I will be. And, it'll be so much more fun, laughing with you. I'd like you to feel the gladness I'll be feeling, that I attained my freedom. Because my freedom will be yours as well.

It's OK if you felt like crying, too. But, then, your tears ought to be tears of joy. Tears, like torrents of rain, pouring out of your soul. Let them release you from whatever it was you had been holding on to, that you've so long ago forgotten. Cleansing tears that rain from your soul, wash away the dust and grime settled in the darkened corners of your mind, leaving only the freshness of cool, clean prayer. And those tears would come and go. A burst of hearty laughter will be the song that we'll sing remembering all the wonderful times and adventures we've shared. Even if the storm clouds roll in, you know it'll darken your skies just until the last raindrop dances. Then, more laughter.

My mother, for one, made a truly graceful exit from this world. On a warm midsummer's night, after getting her golf gear ready for the next morning's tournament, she went to bed. Shortly before dawn, she died in her sleep. When she visited me in the spirit that early morning, she was joyous. "I am free!" She said.

I knew, too, the moment my teacher, Lewis, died. He came swooping through like a gentle comet as I was taking my morning shower. He said, "Help me pull up the anchors!" As I did so, he took me along for a most spectacular ride, like Superman snatching the hostage free from the villain's grasp. Together, we took off into the skies. We became the air, the grass, the trees, the sunlight. We were whooshing through the world at light speed. Then, I found myself back in my body, still standing under the shower. Lewis was on his way home.

I've often wondered earlier in my life, why it was that at most funerals, those who were still "here" were the ones crying tears of sadness, loss, and pain, while the one who "died" was the one laughing. I had a suspicion that it had something to do with the choices that we make in our lives. But, it was Lewis who first taught me that I had a choice in how I wished to die.

I remember I was twenty-one years old and in near perfect health when he said it the first time. "You can choose to die in pain and suffering or in love and at peace with yourself." I've always known I had a choice in how I lived, but, until then, I hadn't considered that I had a choice in how I would die. If I wasn't willing to choose how I would die, I realized that I couldn't truly choose how I would live. As long as I was trying to cheat death, I would end up betraying life.

Reflecting on this scenario made me think of a man who once came to me for guidance. His curriculum vitae showed an intelligent, well-educated, and until recent years, a successful professional. Yet, for the past several years, he had been struggling to keep his personal finances afloat. When I told him that his financial decline coincided with a particular break-up of a close relationship, he confirmed that his troubles began just about the time of his divorce. "You made a choice at that time not to give anything to your former wife," I told him.

"You better believe it!" He said. "I will never give her a cent, if I can help it."

I then asked him if he were aware that his vow to withhold from her at all costs has been costing him his fortune. He knew that if he made more than a little above his subsistence level, the court would order him to pay alimony to her. His refusal to pay her anything directly limited the resources available to him to live his life fully.

How many of us staunchly refuse to pay the Grim Reaper? And how does that affect the resources we have available to us for living our lives fully? Could it be that what we call our "life" is often a collection of self-convincing strategies to avoid death? Most of us don't even like to think about our precious loved ones ever dying. Yet, we know they all will sooner or later. We all will. So, from the moment I realized that I have a choice in how I wished to die, I began to consider what my choice would be. "You can choose to die in pain and suffering or in love and at peace with yourself," Lewis had told me. The latter choice sounded good enough for me. Ever since I made my decision, I've been practicing how to make a graceful exit.

I've been practicing now for over 36 years. In that time, I've had two "near-death" experiences, one as a result of complications from an intense gout attack six years ago and the other during my first heart attack four-and-a-half years ago. I've also logged many "near-misses," during which I was blessed each time with an opportunity to refresh my choice. And today, twenty-one days after yet another heart attack, I'm happy to report that I am definitely making progress in the death and dying program.

This time, I didn't "flatline" on either of my two ambulance rides of the day. Yet, during my initial transport to the ER, my ECG revealed the characteristic "tombstones" on the "S-T" segments, one of the telltale signs that my heart was undergoing another major



trauma. I flashed back four-and-a-half years to a scene in another ER when the doc stared past me at the ECG monitor blipping and whispered, "It's a miracle that you're still alive." Then, after initiating a series of procedures, she said, "They don't call these huge S-T elevations 'tombstones' for nothing."

One thought welcomed me back to the present: "Was this it?" Was it my time to go? With this question, I found myself reviewing my life.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover I had no real regrets. Naturally, I had unfinished projects, yet-to-be-realized visions, and, in short, a lot more that I could do in this world. As well, I still had many here I loved deeply. And, I probably hadn't quite exhausted my quota for sushi or ice cream. Yet, if this was my time to go, I found myself ready. No regrets, no worries. My incarnation, even with all of its various blemishes, was just perfect as it was. I don't recall ever truly experiencing this completeness with anything, much less with an entire lifetime. I felt at peace with myself, perhaps more than I had ever felt.

Today, as I write this, exactly 21 days have passed since I embarked upon my most recent adventure into the mysteries of my heart. For me, the Twelve Days of Christmas began, not on Christmas Day, but twelve days before, on the morning of December 13th - and, not with a partridge in a pear tree, but with another myocardial infarction.

(Side Note: I found the timing of the two heart attacks interesting. The first one occurred two days before our 15th wedding anniversary and three days before my 53rd birthday. This one happened twelve days before Christmas. Both happened just before major occasions for celebrating and receiving gifts! Of course, for both occasions, the gift I received was my body and a new life.)

Now, let's get back to December 13th. On that Monday morning, after a good night's rest stop at the only motel in the little Interstate 5 town of Patterson, California, I stirred up my protein drink, worked out in the "fitness room," showered, and set out on the road again, just past ten. The day before I had completed the last of my stops on a

productive two-week events tour of Southern California and was enjoying my long solitary drive home in my Ford Expedition loaded down with guitar, clothes, and all my traveling stuff. If I cruised along at the speed limit, I thought to myself, I should be home in Mount Shasta in just over five hours. *I'll be home for Christmas....*



Forty-five minutes into my peaceful drive, I felt a twitch between my shoulder blades. I stretched my body to see if I could ease things up a bit. Then, my kundalini energy popped up. Lightning strikes of pain streaked down my right arm, then my left. I became light-headed and started to feel disoriented and nauseous. Hurling down the freeway at 70 miles per hour in the middle of three lanes, I found myself caught in an avalanche of symptoms, some of them all too familiar.



Mustering up what energy and awareness I still found available to me, I struggled to navigate the behemoth I was driving to safety. First thought: Get to the shoulder of the road. Counter thought: No, get off of the freeway. I first moved over to the far-right lane and looked for the nearest way off of the Interstate. The sign read: Lathrop, next exit.

Thanking God for the easy off-ramp, I then I turned on my inner "Yelp" app.

What's my best and closest

bet for a place to park this SUV and seek help? I looked up to see three options: A Seven-Eleven, a Standard station, or a Denny's. I decided on the restaurant. My reasoning was that 1) it had the best parking lot, 2) I could get some orange juice if this was primarily a severe hypoglycemic reaction, 3) if I needed immediate assistance, there would be more people available, and 4) if I needed 911, the EMT's would be able to find me more easily.



By the time I pulled into a parking space, I could barely maintain my mental focus or stay on my feet. I had to get out of my car and lie down on the grass. I recalled that during my first heart attack, all I knew was that I had to get outside, on the grass, in the sunshine. That time, I had fallen on my knees on the most verdant, pristine patch of lawn in our backyard, in the warm and radiant sunshine of mid-summer in beautiful Mount Shasta. Now, the best I could find was a yellowed, scratchy band of grass by the curb of Denny's parking lot in Lathrop. At least, it appeared free of dog poop, and it gave me a place to lie down. Then, the sky darkened, and it started to sprinkle.

Breathing deeply, I relaxed my body, but, the symptoms continued to worsen. I found my phone and speed dialed Raphaëlle. My call went straight to voice mail! She was occupied on the home line with someone. I closed my eyes and prayed, "Please, answer this one," and dialed Raphaëlle's cell phone. "Hello," Raphaëlle answered,

"Michael, are you OK?" Her voice was the greatest medicine I could have asked for in that moment.

My spirit was willing, but, my body was definitely *not* OK. It took every ounce of my energy and ability to talk. As I kept Raphaelle on the line, I fumbled with my emergency vial of Nitro tabs trying to read the label. I've carried the vial ever since the first heart attack, but never had the reason to use it until now. In over four years' time, not only had the minuscule and unreadable label worn off, but, I had forgotten exactly how to use the Nitro. "I know I'm supposed to put the Nitro tab underneath my tongue, but, I need to know the dosage," I whispered into my phone.

I knew I was once again completely in God's hands when I heard Raphaelle conferring with Beverly, our extraordinary housekeeper and friend whose husband had had a heart attack and used Nitro. She had just walked into our house to clean it as Raphaelle was answering my call. I heard Beverly instruct Raphaelle in the background, "Tell him to take one tab, then, if that's not enough take another one in a five minutes, then another." As I put one tab under my tongue, I heard both Raphaelle and Beverly say, "Call 911."

It may be a sad comment on the state of our health care system when the very first thought I had, as I looked at my cell phone to dial those three numbers, was, "This call may bankrupt our family and business." I knew, however, even as I found myself being lured into the quicksand of cardiogenic shock, that the alternative would cost Raphaelle much more. For the first time in my life, I dialed 9-1-1.

It's an amazing experience, calling 911. Yet, it's one that I hope that I would never have to go through again. It reminded me of the rawness of being born. Most people tend to forget just how intense of an experience it is for a soul to be born into its body, especially in the usual modern hospital setting. Everything is so loud, so glaring, to the sensitive soul. And, even more than the physically induced sounds and sights, often the rawest of the experience is people's energy. Very few people learn how to manage their personal psychic energies in relationship to others, especially during crises.

"My name is Michael Tamura. I had a heart attack four or five years ago and I think I'm having another one now. I'm in the parking lot of the Denny's Restaurant right off of I-5 heading north." Every word, in fact, every thought required so much focus and energy from me. Somehow, I assumed that once I made the call, my location automatically appeared on the 911 operator's screen. I didn't realize that that wouldn't be the case since I was calling from a cell phone instead of a landline.

"Can you tell me where you are?" Thundered the 911 operator's voice. It felt as though every word she spoke was a brick tumbling down on me. When I looked in my mind, I could find no answers to her question. "I think I drove about an hour north on I-5 from Patterson," I stammered. The raindrops sprinkling my face grew larger.

"Can you find out what city you're in?" The words punched me in the face and, like a dazed boxer looking around the ring for the ropes to lean on, I searched across the parking lot for a friendly face. I staggered toward a cluster of a dozen people who had just come out of the restaurant.

"Can someone tell me what city this is?" I asked. No one even turned around, engaged in their conversations. Perhaps, I wasn't speaking loudly enough for anyone to hear me. I took a few more steps toward a couple and asked again. Finally, someone replied, "Lathrop." Only then did I remember seeing the exit sign announcing that city earlier.

Then, I heard one of my guides encouraging me to go inside the restaurant. It would not only be warmer and drier, but there would be more people available for assistance and it would make it easier for the emergency personnel to find me. Once I identified the city for the 911 operator, she needed to know the exact address. I think in exasperation I said that I thought there's probably only one Denny's in Lathrop and that it's the one right off of the freeway ramp. But, apparently, she needed more.

I finally made my way into the restaurant and told the two employees at the front counter, "I'm on a 911 call and I need help." Everyone continued to wait on their customers making payments or waiting for tables. "This is an emergency. I need to know what the address is here." Finally, someone hollered from the back, "16851 South Harlan Rd." Thank you. Then, I collapsed onto the waiting area bench by the front door.

But wait, there was more that the operator needed from me. "What's the cross street?" I knew the operator was trying to help me, but I wanted her to know that my cell phone had GPS and that she should be able to triangulate my exact position. They do that sort of thing on all those cop shows on TV, don't they? I was able to find a smile of amusement for myself. Then, I called out to the restaurant employees, "What's the cross street here?" I don't remember what someone shouted back, but the 911 operator got it. She then reassured me that she would stay on the line with me until help arrived. Her voice finally became more like marshmallows pelting my face than bricks. Then the line went dead.

I heard a voice thrown out from behind one of the counters asking me if I wanted some water or anything. It was strange that no one actually came to offer any help other than that in all this time. I supposed no one wanted to come too close to me with the Grim Reaper standing so close by. I thought that this must be what it's like sometimes for someone surviving on the streets, cold, hungry, and not well.

The front door of Denny's blew open with a thud and a clank. I felt the whoosh of cool air mixed with hints of engine oil, exhaust fumes, musty canvas, and rubber. What I assumed was the gurney, jangled and shuddered in time with heavy-footed fireman's boots hitting the linoleum floor. A flurry of activity descended upon me from all sides.

"What is your name, sir?" The voice seemed to blast out of a megaphone. And, a whole new interrogation began. Yet, I was glad to hear any voice. And, everyone kept asking me what my birthday was. How many times do they have to ask me that question, I thought to myself. It wasn't until I was in the ambulance that I realized that it was to assess my mental state. I told my attending EMT that I was glad that they didn't ask me what date it was to test my mental state. "Oh, we don't ask that," he said. "No one would get it right!" Ah, a little laughter....

As I was being wheeled out of Denny's, I was given a multiple choice quiz: Would I want to be taken to County General, Kaiser, or Doctor's Hospital? I had no idea. "I have Anthem-Blue Cross catastrophic-only insurance," I said. "Which ones take that?" One of the medics told me not to worry about insurance at this point, but, they should all take my insurance. From my long-ago experiences as a nurse, I knew to stay away from County General, if possible. I also hadn't had great experiences visiting friends and patients hospitalized in many Kaiser hospitals. So, I asked one of the medics, "How's Doctor's Hospital?" Another one answered from the back, "That's my favorite." All righty then!

Once in the ambulance, I was relieved that my immediate physical needs would now be taken care of even though I felt things were still very much touch-and-go. Once I was hooked up to IV's and monitoring devices, and having gotten permission, I called Raphaelle to update her of my status. She was already packing and making arrangements to deal with my car I was leaving behind in Denny's parking lot in the middle of nowhere. "Make sure you get someone to lock your car," she said. I felt a glow of gladness to have Raphaelle in my corner in every way.



It was during that first part of the ride to the ER, that I had discovered my newfound peace with myself and my life. And, I knew I was in good hands all the way around. My mother was the first I recognized in spirit who came to my aid. She put her hand on my right shoulder and said in Japanese, "Dai jobu-yo." "Everything is all right." She was with me without interruption throughout my ordeal. Then, I saw several Masters, guides, and some other friends that were in attendance in the ambulance as well. On the physical end of things, I was in the capable hands of the EMTs and ambulance crew. All was in God's hands. And, this time, unlike during my first heart attack experience, I knew I was to stay as much in my body as I could. The first time was more to discover something about myself as a soul and make a new decision. This time, it seemed more to do with me, as a soul, learning something new in relationship to my body and my life in this world. I had the distinct feeling that this was not just another unfortunate heart attack, but rather part two of, hopefully, a two-part mini-series to complete a cycle of growth.

During that same ambulance ride, spirit had intervened in many curious and profound ways. For one, when Raphaëlle got off of the phone call with me, she noticed a "missed call" message on her cell from my older son, Greg. So, she called him right back only to discover that he hadn't intentionally called her. He was at work and he surmised that he must have accidentally sat on his cell phone and it speed-dialed her number. No doubt, someone in spirit arranged that call at precisely the moment I was being rushed to the ER. Then, when Raphaëlle told Greg what was happening, concerned, he texted me to let me know he heard I was en route to the hospital and that he was available any time I wanted to talk to him. I didn't get the text at the time, however, since I had put down my phone to let the medics work on me. Yet, somehow, my phone called Greg's phone back! When he answered, he said I didn't respond to him, but he could hear my voice in the background. He listened to ten minutes of all the conversations and procedures that went on in the ambulance before my phone cut out. I had no idea he was on the phone with my phone. Yet, he was right there with me in the ambulance. How's that for spirit-influenced use of technology?

It also turned out it was our long-time spiritual healer and teacher friend, Aleah Fahey, with whom Raphaëlle had been talking on our home line when I had made my initial distress call to her. When Raphaëlle told Aleah why she had to get off of that call immediately, she offered to start giving me a healing right away. Then, while Raphaëlle was still at home preparing to drive down to meet me at the hospital, another good friend, Beth Beurkens, an accomplished shaman, just happened to call her to find out if everything was all right with us. When Beth offered to give us both healing, Raphaëlle passed that baton on to her.

Later that evening, after she settled into her hotel room, Raphaëlle felt compelled to email Sara O'Meara, a dear friend and the last person I had visited before my now diverted drive home, to let her know what had happened. Sara, one of the great faith healers of our time, spent the entire following night in a prayer healing vigil for me. As my mother had reassured me, everything was not only fine, it was being perfectly orchestrated. Deeply grateful, I experienced the power of the healing I was receiving, both directly in myself as well as in all that was unfolding around me.

As the EMTs wheeled me into the ER at Doctor's Hospital in Manteca, Toni, the nurse-supervisor, gave me a warm welcome. I would be under her care there and I was glad to see not only a friendly face, but, also one belonging to a very capable nurse. Just as it was with my first heart crisis, every step of my care and healing, both in spirit and in the body, was Divinely choreographed. Toni talked me through every step of my process and presented me with the waivers to sign so that she would be able to start administrating the thrombolytic "clot-buster" therapy. Ah, yes, I remembered the drug fondly. It's the one that the ER doc in Mount Shasta told me that there was a 50-50 chance of the drug killing me, but without it, I had a 100% chance of death. I felt that the odds this time against my body surviving without the drug was the same as the first time, but the odds of it killing me was a bit more to my advantage. I didn't hesitate to sign the waiver.

After all the preliminary procedures were in place, the ER doc came to examine me. I could tell he was a very intelligent, caring, and patient East Indian man. I felt good to be in his care and hoped that the cardiologist that would eventually treat me would be like him. As it turned out, just as was the case in Mount Shasta during my first heart attack, the small hospital in Manteca was not equipped to handle the cardiac procedures I would need. Once the thrombolytic therapy was started there, I was to be transported to the more fully equipped St. Joseph's Medical Center in Stockton, a 35-minute ambulance ride away. It also turned out that this Indian physician was a cardiologist who also worked at St. Joe's and would be my doc for the duration.

"Am I still having a heart attack?" I asked Toni. She smiled gently and nodded that I was. "Are there still tombstones on my S-T segments?" I continued with my line of questioning. She was a bit surprised at first, but I told her I had learned about them during my first heart attack. She nodded again and showed me the latest ECG strip.

"It takes a while for the thrombolytic drugs to kick in," she explained. I knew I was not out of the woods. The first time, I could feel the drug kicking in within minutes of it being administered intravenously and the feeling of stability coming on as the clots dissipated in my arteries. It was different this time. Committed to being so much more in and around my body for this experience that I was exquisitely aware of subtle and not-so-subtle shifts happening in my heart. And, it didn't feel all that promising....yet.

Once everything was arranged, a new EMT team rolled me out into another ambulance for transport to St. Joseph's. I was pleasantly surprised when Toni hopped in the back with me. She was accompanying me to the next hospital. "I'm going to personally deliver you to Tina at St. Joseph's," she said. "You'll like Tina," she continued, "she's a great nurse. So, Toni's going to hand you over to Tina. That'll make it easier for you to remember, won't it?" I laughed and then I wondered to myself, "Why would the supervising nurse of an ER go on an hour-plus round-trip in an ambulance just to deliver a patient?" No, I definitely wasn't in the clear yet. Toni was going to make sure I made it to St. Joseph's alive. As if to confirm my suspicions, the ambulance driver turned to Toni and asked, "Do we go code 3 or 2? Audio or no?" Toni answered, "Start with 2, I'll let you know if we need to go to 3." Well, at least she didn't feel the need to have sirens blasting, to start. But, code 2, in the emergency services parlance meant, if I remembered correctly, "get us there as fast as you can without sirens blaring and stopping traffic." I quietly went back to reviewing various nooks and crannies of my life. The ambulance was in the driver's hands. Everything else I surrendered to Spirit.

At one point during my ambulance ride, I noticed my heart getting less stable and I felt that same sensation that I experienced just a moment before I died for a few moments in the ambulance during my first heart attack. I felt extreme light headedness and everything became intensely bright. "Is this it?" I thought.

I felt my heart clenching and I looked down at it in my chest cavity. I realized that my body was feeling helpless as I watched it from above. Then, in an instant, the light went

on within me. For the first time, not only in this incarnation, but, perhaps, ever, I experienced an entirely different relationship to my body. I understood my body in a way I had never before even considered. It was such a subtle difference of perspective, yet, it changed everything. I finally stumbled upon a piece of the puzzle I had missed lifetime after lifetime about having a body as an immortal soul. This instant of knowing translated into a feeling of immense gratitude and a profound appreciation for the body into which I had chosen to incarnate. This body was perfect in every way. It gave me everything I needed, always. There was not a more faithful servant. The only thing that was missing was my seeing it. And, not seeing, I failed to relate to it correctly. Now, I had my work cut out for me.

This time it was a completely different experience during my ambulance ride to the larger hospital. I didn't die. A beautiful and luminous angel didn't have to bring me back to my body. I was already there. My work here would never be done, yet, I could leave at a moment's notice without a regret. Even with my heart making big tombstones on the strip, even with the jury still out on my verdict, I was truly happy. I felt happy through and through.

As she had promised, Toni personally delivered me into the loving care of Tina, the supervising nurse for the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Stockton. I knew the moment I saw her smiling face, that I would be under the care of a wise and compassionate healer. Then, together, they rolled me into a private room with a view, no less. Under the circumstances, I couldn't have asked for better.



As I gazed out my window I feasted on the play of sunlight on the multi-colored treasure chest of the remaining leaves on winter trees. How nice, I thought to myself looking at the beautiful scene of tree tops and blue sky adorned with cotton clouds, it must be a park out there. A little patch of nature in a concrete and asphalt city just outside my window. I counted my blessings.

Of course, that initial experience from the prone position of my bed, transformed to gales of laughter filling the room the next day when Raphaele and my sons returned to visit me in the morning. Greg, my older son walked up to the window and looking out for the first time during daylight suddenly said, "Whoa! What's that? Oh, wow, I don't believe it! You're right next to the cemetery!" I knew we all shared the same thought and started laughing.

"Hey, it's one-stop shopping here!" I said.

"They just need to put a chute from the window," Greg chimed in.



"Yeah, the graves are pre-dug and the body just flips in from the chute," I added. "Maybe all computer-operated, too."

"If we can't fix you," Greg continued, "we can bury you."

Raphaelle rolled her eyes and Nick, my younger son, groaned. Tina, the supervisor-nurse came into the room and offered her tidbits of gallows humor, which elicited even more laughter.



"And, here, from my position, I thought I was looking out into a nice park," I said.



"That's why I wasn't going to mention it when I first noticed the cemetery yesterday," Raphaelle said.

I loved the laughter. I was so happy to see each of them. Raphaelle drove five and a half hours with Alexes, our assistant, straight from Mount Shasta the day before to come to my aid. After a night's rest, Alexes picked up my car at Denny's parking lot in Lathrop and drove it home for me. My two sons, Greg and Nick, explained the situation to their respective bosses and drove up six hours from LA as soon as they found out which hospital I was being taken to. They arrived about an hour after Raphaelle and Alexes made it to the hospital. And all the laughter was the cherry on top of my sundae.

I was happy, too, that the touch-and-go part was done with before anyone had arrived. Shortly after I was admitted to the Cardiac ICU at St. Joe's, due to all the anticoagulants, thrombolytics, beta blockers, and ACE inhibitors pumped into my system, my blood pressure and pulse fell to an extremely low level. Without all the medications, my blood pressure had averaged around 114 over 70 before the heart attack and my resting pulse stayed around 62. With the heart attack and the medications, the blood pressure started to drop as low as 68/38 and my pulse got down to 36 with red lights blinking and monitors bleeping. I breathed deeply and strenuously and brought my pulse up to the high 40's, but then, it would start dropping again. I knew it was getting pretty serious when Tina brought out the atropine syringe with the long needle. She said she wanted the box near me "just in case." I worked on bringing my pulse and blood pressure up. When it dropped again, Tina broke the seal and opened the box containing the syringe. "Just in case," she reiterated and winked. Then, my pulse started dropping further and she took the syringe out and put it on the table next to my bed. I started seeing the bright lights and felt myself fading. Tina picked up the atropine. I talked to my body. Was it done? Or was this just a reaction to the meds?

My body was good to keep going, it said. So, I decided to stay put as much as I could. Finally, my pulse and BP came back around to the ideal zone the docs wanted them to be in.

"We'll keep out the atropine just as a good luck charm now," Tina said. That sounded good to me. After that round of adjustments and the subsequent arrival of my "calvary," I felt stable for the overnight wait for my scheduled angiogram and likely stent surgery.

By the time my scheduled procedures at the Cardiac Cath Lab came around the next afternoon, I was more than ready to go have a real look at my heart and its arteries. The Cath Lab at St. Joe's seemed much more high-tech and complex than its counterpart at Mercy Hospital in Redding where I had my first procedure executed flawlessly by my cardiologist in record time. Besides, the room felt like a giant, sterile refrigerator. There were many more people and equipment involved this time as well. Yet, the angiogram, angioplasty, and the insertion of the stent to open the occluded coronary artery went exceedingly well.

The two cardiologists that worked on me were both of East Indian heritage. Toward the end of the procedure when one of the two docs started into me with his medical brand of "fire and brimstone" preaching-cum-interrogation, I realized that he was the Indian soldier who faltered in his attempt at beheading me at the end of my lifetime in India as Jesus' disciple, Thomas. This present-day cardiologist was then a dedicated warrior sworn to carry out the orders of his king and when he came to execute me, all he knew of me was what he had been told about me as a treacherous felon. Once he experienced me first hand and saw that I offered not only no resistance to him killing me, but even more so gave him understanding, permission, and forgiveness, his conviction about my criminality crumbled and he hesitated in his swinging of his blade in the act of decapitating me. Thus, he failed to fully cut through my neck and a fellow soldier in an act of mercy speared me through my side to finish the deed. It may be that the other East Indian doc, the one who saw me first in the ER, was the merciful soldier in that lifetime. As with so many karmic cycles trying to be completed, often, at least one of those involved has a difficult time completing it without throwing in a few final punches. I felt, however, that whatever karma that was still unfinished from that earlier time was now completed. And, today, I celebrate my three week anniversary of my new adventures into the mysteries of my heart.



I know now that the first heart attack, and my second near-death experience as a result of that, four-and-a-half years ago, was like my final exam in the art of dying in grace. As well, it served as my initiation into the art of resurrecting myself. This time, though the

heart attack itself was physically similar to the first one, my experience of it has been completely new right from the onset. I find myself living a new chapter from the heart of wisdom. As I explore further the mysteries of healing my own heart, it is guiding me ever deeper, on my journey into the very heart of healing and the art of living the wisdom of my heart.

