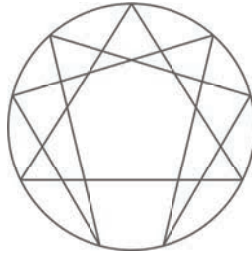


UPLIFT

How to Harness the
Hidden Engine
of Continuous Renewal



BRUCE MILLER

MILLEReMEDIA



Chapter 9

SWIMMING WITH ANGELS

*“No, I never saw an angel, but it is irrelevant whether I saw one or not.
I feel their presence around me.”~ Paulo Coelho*

AT THE RIPE AGE OF TWENTY-TWO, I graduated from UCLA with nothing to do. To fill the summer, I convinced my parents to buy a fixer-upper in Ojai, California – a town down the road from my plunge into cosmic consciousness months earlier atop Reyes Peak.

If you believe the New Age folks, Ojai is centered around a massive spiritual vortex – actually, seven vortexes that tap into the Earth’s electromagnetic field. This vortex reportedly saved Ojai Valley in 2018 when the area was surrounded by the devastating Thomas fire. The 300,000-acre inferno incinerated everything in its path from the mountains to the sea. According to local lore, all the important vortexes on the spiritual bucket list are connected — Stonehenge, the Great Pyramid of Giza, Easter Island, Machu Picchu, and not surprisingly, Ojai.

I was just a kid out of school, so I knew nothing about ley lines, the Earth’s spiritual grid, Ojai’s feng shui “dragon,” or the Chumash burial grounds.



Krishnamurti under the oaks

I had a vague sense of Ojai's spiritual pedigree. Krishnamurti gave his famous talks under the oaks in Ojai, and Theosophist, Annie Besant, author, Aldous Huxley, the *avatar* Meher Baba, and numerous artists, writers, and spiritual teachers all had Ojai connections,.

As my parents and I drove past the For Sale sign and up the long dusty drive, the valley's sweeping panorama suddenly bloomed into view. At the top, a small ranch house called out, "Buy me!" I told my folks to do it, and they did.

I spent my days painting, repairing, and reading *Be Here Now* while the Earth's spiritual grid buzzed in the background. Every night, the mountains took on a rosy hue as the sun set toward the sea. I had never spent time much time apart from other humans, but suddenly found myself without TV, phone, friends, or neighbors. Days on end, I hung with the cicadas and the 24/7 streaming channel called *Bruce's Brain*.

One night, as I picked at my brown rice and peanut butter with chopsticks, an unsettling feeling came over me. I noticed that I had split into two. That's right. Two channels now occupied my bandwidth — *Bruce's*



UPLIFT

Brain and Bruce's Being. To be specific, this new entity, *Bruce's Being*, had the unexpected ability to observe the non-stop chatter of the other *Bruce*. This is no big deal for people who know about meditation, but I had no one to tell me what was going on, nor could I Google it.

According to Random House:

freak-out [slang] is to *enter into a period of emotional instability, as under the influence of a drug.*

Having come close to freaking out after ingesting cacti atop Reyes Peak, I tried to make this new experience go away, but it wouldn't.

The next day, I drove into town to attend a talk given by Benito and Dominga Reyes, an elderly couple who, following a vision, came all the way from the Philippines to establish the world's first new-age university. Maybe, they could help me understand what was going on. When I arrived, instead of a big audience of seekers, it was pretty much me.

Benito and Dominga were no ordinary pensioners. Benito had been born in Manila into abject poverty from a mother who transitioned the dying through death. Reportedly, Benito could commune with saints in the spiritual realms. What's more, as a teenager, he had been recruited by the Theosophical Society to become a spiritual world leader in the same manner as Krishnamurti.

After the talk, I introduced myself. Dominga studied me (or, more accurately, studied *Bruce's Being*) and remarked, "I see that you have a tremendous spiritual capacity in the shape of your face and your forehead."

I assumed they were shilling for converts, so I smiled and made a hasty exit. However, they were successful in establishing The World



University of Ojai, which lasted until they died.

I returned to L.A. to become a photographer. This kept *Bruce's Brain* occupied until I got that phone call from my mom: "Bruce, I need you to shoot a photo." I hadn't put it together, but my *future was coming in*. Maybe, Reshad's "Second Cycle of Mankind" was barreling down my track.

The famed spiritual prankster and author of *The American Book of the Dead*, E.J. Gold, offered to help Reshad set up the Institute for Conscious Life. Taking him up on the offer, I walked to E.J.'s front door on Alexandria Street in Hollywood, looked up at the sign, "First Sufi Church of Christ," and *gulp*, realized I was not in Kansas (or even reality) anymore. E.J. let me in, invited me for lunch, and sensed that I was a vegetarian.

I asked E.J. about promoting the school, but he changed the topic.

"Have you ever had lamb's balls?" E.J. grinned as we sat around his kitchen table. E.J. was a master at blowing the protective circuits of unsuspecting seekers.

"Uh, no."

"You can fry them, saute with garlic, any which way you like." E.J. turned to someone in the kitchen. "Richard, ever fry gonads?" If there was a shortcut to altered states, E.J. knew where to flip the switch.

Later that night — whoosh — my circuits flipped into some strong woo-woo. I assumed E.J. was responsible, so I picked up the phone.

"First Sufi Church. Can I help you?"

"Yes, can I speak to E.J.? I'm having an experience, and I'm not sure what to do."

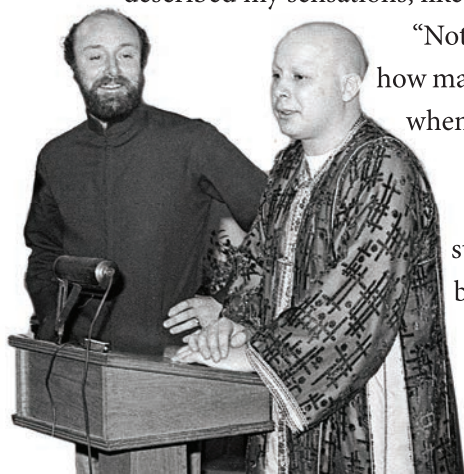
To my surprise, E.J. came to the phone. He was quite attentive when I described my sensations, like a neurologist charting my symptoms.

"Not to worry," E.J. reassured. "I can't tell you how many times I have seen this happen, especially when people first enter the Work."

I felt relieved immediately.

"Here's my advice," E.J. offered as I strained at every word. "Either it will get better, or it will get worse."

Reshad and E.J. Gold, 1975



Fortunately, for the next 20 years, the woo-woo ceased to be an issue. That is, until one afternoon around the time of my midlife crisis, and after reuniting with Karen, getting a new baby, new job, new guru, making good money, and now working in a corporate cubicle. An unexpected dose of woo-woo-deja-vu hit while writing financial technology copy for the CheckFree Corporation.

Having forgotten the drill, I freaked out and went to the ER — a big mistake. The Kafkaesque clinicians quickly triaged me onto a gurney in the hallway. Once I realized the ridiculousness of my situation, I blurted that I was dehydrated. That worked, but not before they mainlined a bag of saline into my veins.

Five years later, Bhagwan came into my life. One day, while driving to pick him up at the airport, another spell of woo-woo forced me to pull over and stop the car. When I finally arrived at the baggage claim, I pleaded my case to Bhagwan.

“Bhagwan, something is going on with me.”

Bhagwan didn’t seem concerned as he collected his bag.

“I think you’re fine,” he announced to my relief and dismay. As a medical doctor, I had hoped that he would analyze my symptoms, but as a realized being, he saw all sensations and perceptions to be “in the mind.”

Flash forward a couple more decades. I was now sixty-three — the back-of-the-napkin age when you’re supposed to get your spiritual house in order. Karen had gone through chemo, radiation, and brain surgery while I was desperately trying to recover from my business crash. One afternoon, while swimming across the lake, I started feeling spacey. What the fuck? Is this a panic attack? A medical event? Something esoteric? Whatever it was, we were exactly in the middle of the lake.

“Karen, I’m feeling funny,” I puffed. It was an inopportune time to create alarm, but the bottom of my being was falling out. “Karen, swim back and get the kayak,” I shouted. “I’ll continue across!”

Feeling agitated, I reached the dock and plopped down like a spent whale. Heart racing, I took stock of my woo-woo situation. Was this garden-variety *fana* (the Sufi term for the dissolving of the ego) or some-

thing more serious?

Karen returned with the kayak and, fearing the worst, paddled me back. My intuitive healer friend, Zora, arrived at our cabin to perform her healing magic.

"I think you're shedding some sort of spiritual skin," Zora reassured.

Karen was thinking, "terrible, horrible medical event." Whatever it was, it wasn't going away.

Not knowing where to turn, I called Bhagwan in Switzerland.

"Hi, Bhagwan. Do you have a moment to talk?"

"Well, normally, you must make an appointment," he replied, "but we can talk."

"Bhagwan, I'm concerned," I explained. "I was swimming, felt spacey, panicky, but also weirdly disconnected from my body and mind. How do you know if an unexplained experience is spiritual or medical?"

"Was it pleasurable?" Bhagwan asked.

"Uh, no, hardly."

"Hmm," he pondered. "I don't think there is any medical issue."

"Okay, that's good. But I'm feeling unsteady. My subconscious is dissolving, and I feel like a polar bear clinging to an ice floe."

Bhagwan and I breathed together over the transatlantic call for the next twenty minutes.

"It's okay to let go," he reassured.

"Really. Just let go?"

"Yes. Let go of the struggle and just be yourself."

"What does that mean, be myself?"

"To be yourself is a state of effortlessness and flow. To be the idea of yourself is a state of struggle and anguish."

"Everyone has an idea of themselves. You can't just wish it away," I rebutted.

"Stay in your center," Bhagwan instructed. "The feeling of disorientation is in the mind."

I took a centering breath and began to feel composed. We were quiet together for some time. I was startled that I could feel Bhagwan's close-

ness despite the phone and the distance. This was the moment Bhagwan helped me understand the mystery of synchronicity.

“Bhagwan, can I ask a question?”

“Yes.”

“It’s a little off-topic.”

“That’s okay.”

“It’s been bedeviling me since you were with us, and now I’m writing a book.”

“Go ahead,” Bhagwan replied.

“When we talked about synchronicity, you said that the entire universe is synchronous.”

“Yes, every moment.”

“So, what about when we’re reacting, doing stupid stuff, making a mess in the world, or having weird sensations — is that included in everything is synchronous? Or just when we’re harmonious?”

“Yes, that is also included,” Bhagwan replied. “Something happens, then there’s a reaction, then it gets worse, then there’s a correction, then there’s a war, then peace, then prosperity, civilizations rise, then collapse. Everything is synchronous.”

“Hmm. Thanks.”

I did another back-of-the-napkin calculation and noticed that my woo-woo events arrived at epochal changes of my life — the Ojai vortex, meeting Reshad, my midlife crisis, and now my age sixty-three collapse. Suddenly, I saw my mind as the Antarctic ice shelf with melting ice water seeping into cracks until a big chunk split into the ocean. *Bruce’s Being* seemed to be thawing *Bruce’s Brain*. Every time a “mental berg” collapsed into the sea of consciousness, it registered as a *woo-woo event*.

Here’s where it got tricky. According to climate scientist Ella Gilbert:

“Ice shelves are important buffers preventing glaciers on land from flowing freely into the ocean and contributing to sea-level rise. When they collapse, it’s like a giant cork being removed from a bottle, allowing unimaginable amounts of water from glaciers to pour into the sea.”¹

My buffers were melting, and no, it was not pleasurable. But now I had a question: I understood the giant wooden hammer, but what about the giant bottle cork?

Two words: ego death.

When we returned home from the lake, I panicked, stomped my feet, and fought with the Almighty. “I don’t want this! Please stop,” I screamed. “All my adult life, I’ve been working my physical, mental, and spiritual edges — practices, studies, breath, yoga, meditation, whirling — but hear me out God, this spiritual thing, I WAS JUST KIDDING!”

My psychotherapist friend, Mimi, arrived. She and Karen wanted me to seek medical attention, but it was too late for a brain transplant, and saline solution wouldn’t cut it. Kübler-Ross would have identified this stage as *bargaining*.

The cork started to ease out. Instead of every twenty years, seven years, or five years, my woo-woos were hitting every ten days. I would be incredibly sleepy for a few hours while I suffered spontaneous *kriyas* — lying in bed while my body shuddered — *zing-zang-zung*. Like an abandoned old house where one sealed-off space after another was discovered — crawl space, attic, closets — I was cracking open to let the light in. Was it pleasurable? Hell no.

It wasn’t until recently, during a Skype meditation, that Bhagwan casually delivered the missing piece:

“The ability to observe your thoughts is a kind of mutation,” Bhagwan explained fifty years too late. “Do not take this for granted. It is actually quite rare and should be cherished.”

Oh, a mutation. I’m some kind of mutant.

Today, my back-of-the-napkin journey has taken me to the ripe young age of seventy, and with it has come a freedom of spontaneity, unfettered love, gobs of energy, and a synchronous ease of living – like injecting helium into my bloodstream for Uplift.

The cork finally fell out after my bout with COVID (caught at a outdoor, windswept wedding in remote New Mexico!). In one swoop, the top of my head filled with a swoosh of white noise and all physical

resistance dropped like rusty armor falling to the ground. But was it *pleasurable*? Herman Hesse asked the same question:

“I have no right to call myself one who knows. I was one who seeks, and I still am, but I no longer seek in the stars or in books; I’m beginning to hear the teachings of my blood pulsing within me. My story isn’t pleasant; it’s not sweet and harmonious like the invented stories; it tastes of folly and bewilderment, of madness and dream, like the life of all people who no longer want to lie to themselves.” ~ Hermann Hesse, *Demian*²

If this book was a tragedy in nine parts, I have reached the final scene — the pivotal moment when the Greek Chorus comments with its moral authority on the dramatic action like a chorus of angels cajoling us forward.

Angels have been used, abused, and caricatured since medieval times. When I use this word, please don’t picture pudgy cherubs with feathery wings, but instead, feel the archetypal realm of Uplift — the boundary between this world and the next, obscured by the mind like clouds blocking the sun.

Angels facilitate the circulation of energy throughout the non-physical universe. Invisible, intangible, and yet within us and all around us, angels serve as the infrastructure of the spiritual world. Some have existed forever... other angels are created through our actions — good or bad. Each action creates an angel that must transmit the meaning and impact of that action to the rest of the world and in our own lives. By changing our actions, we are able to harness the power of angels, transform ourselves, and find greater fulfillment. ~ Yehuda Berg, *Angel Intelligence*³

The “infrastructure of the spiritual world” takes many forms — sometimes sublime, other times ruthless. Yehuda Berg became a famous Kabbalah teacher to a growing list of celebrities. Madonna, Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, Demi Moore, and Britney Spears studied at the Kabbalah Centre started by Berg’s father, Rabbi Philip Berg, a former insurance salesman. The elder Berg taught out of his insurance office

until his celebrity cachet skyrocketed the Centre into a coast-to-coast phenomenon that brought millions of dollars into its coffers. Eventually, the Centre came under investigation by the IRS for tax fraud. Family members faced allegations of using the foundation for personal enrichment. Yehuda Berg even paid damages for allegedly sexually assaulting a student. Yes, there are bad-actor angels, too.

Lest we forget, swimming with angels is a full-contact sport. Maybe, Yehuda got in over his head, but I like his idea of angels forming a “spiritual infrastructure” – like downloading a file of angelic data from the cloud.

What I call “Uplift” and “continuous renewal” might also be called angel intelligence. This intelligence is innate. It penetrates our world in the same way the scent of a rose penetrates a room. How many olfactory molecules does it take to become aware of a rose? Reshad once explained:

“The split second between the bud and the rose is only known to those who have become roses.”

In that split second (through outside shocks and intervals), we leave the world of the bud behind and become the rose. In this way, I kicked and screamed against the woo-woo until I could finally embrace the angels guiding the show.

“It’s okay to let go,” Bhagwan reassured.

“Really. Just let go?”

“Yes. Let go of the struggle and just be yourself.”



Let's recap the chapters:

- **Introduction: “The Giant Wooden Hammer”** — Your life deals Wild Cards™ from the Deck at precise yet unexpected intervals..
- **“The Dramatic Universe”** — All the world's a stage. The arc of our character swings from hubris to humility to advance the story. Paradoxically, even though the script is already written, we get to make it up as we go along.
- **“Katabasis”** — Whether you call it the *dorsal* state, *katabasis*, or garden variety depression, we grow our wings on the way down.
- **“The Energy Must Go Through”** — You are basically a tube through which subtle energies are transformed according to harmonic proportions. Life is “evergreen,” ever-reaching toward self-renewal.
- **“I am the Octave”** — Your desire for freedom bumps into fear and refusal – the *denying force*. A mysterious third force dissolves this resistance when you rise above the stalemate. The Octave is not a set of notes on a piano or a musical score. It describes the inner force of the pianist who makes the score come alive.
- **“Different Worlds”** — It's easier to go down than up, so watch that first step – it's a *Lulu*. A single step can take you into a lower world, but you can't know that world without stepping into it.
- **“The Two Trains”** — Unexpected (but inevitable) events come into our life story to be wrestled with. The outcome is uncertain. This is Hazard. Each chapter of our lives unfolds from the future with the promise of transformation.
- **“The Engine of Continuous Renewal”** — While it appears as a random stream of thrills and spills, the human lifetime functions as an enormous transformation engine – also called the Enneagram. Like the glider pilot who seeks out thermals, we can use our lives for transformation and Uplift.

- **“The Inner Lines”** — Like the chef who envisions an entire banquet to the final toast, we don’t have to be trapped in linear time. The inner lines expand our present moment to let angels enter our awareness. They travel on avenues *One, Four, Two, Eight, Five, and Seven*. We see this entire road map with their help.
- **“Swimming with Angels”** — Angels form the infrastructure of the spiritual world. Swimming with angels is more than wishful thinking. It’s a full-contact sport where angels place their bets on risk, action, and follow-through.



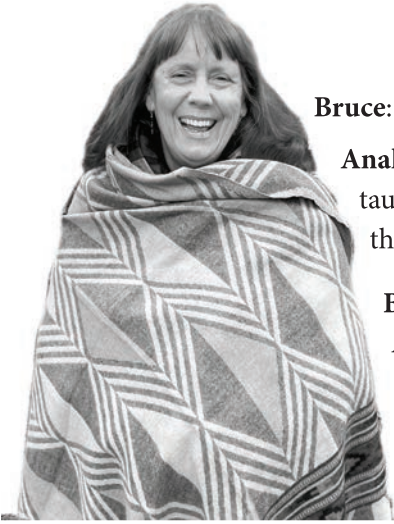
Susan Jeffers

Famed psychologist and self-help author Susan Jeffers discovered how angels place their bets on doers — people who stick their necks out. Her celebrated book, *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*®, gave full expression to facing the wave head-on. A few quotes:

- “If we wait to stop feeling scared before trying to do what frightens us, we could wait forever; pressing ahead is the only way to erase fear.”
- “There’s no such thing as a bad decision. Each path is strewn with opportunities, despite the outcome.”
- “Every time you encounter something that forces you to ‘handle it,’ your self-esteem is raised considerably. You learn to trust that you will survive, no matter what happens.”
- “When we finally are able to let go of the need for control, for the first time, we are truly in control.”⁴

Susan Jeffers learned to swim with angels the hard way. She faced a teen pregnancy, a difficult divorce, and an early bout with breast cancer. She understood how Uplift is often forged from dire circumstances that force us to attune to the angelic realm.

For this reason, the best reporting on Uplift comes from people in the trenches – like my friend Anahata Iradah who has been stranded in Adelaide, Australia, for more than two years. I gave her a call:



Anahata Iradah

Bruce: “Hi Anahata, how is it going?”

Anahata: “Thank you, Bruce, yes I am really well. I taught month five of my training in South Australia this past weekend.”

Bruce: “Fantastic. Can you share why you’re in Australia?”

Anahata: “To do the story justice, first some background. For the last 30 years, I have been teaching the Dances of Universal Peace.”

Bruce: “Anahata, before you start, let me also add a short history. The Dances of Universal Peace originated in San Francisco in the 1960s by Samuel Lewis, an heir to the Levi Strauss and Rothschild banking families. Sufi Sam, as he was affectionately known, rejected the business world at a young age to pursue a life of spirituality. In 1923, he met Hazrat Inayat Khan, one of the great figures of Western spirituality. In the 1960s, Samuel Lewis received a vision of the Dances of Universal Peace which combined Dervish, Mantric, Jewish, Christian, and folk dances. He taught these dances for the remainder of his life playing a significant role in the spiritual awakening in America.”



Samuel Lewis

Anahata: “Thank you for presenting the history. I traveled and taught the Dances of Universal Peace for many years when I joined forces with a partner who was involved in Tibetan Buddhism. Together we were invited to teach sacred dance to the Tibetan women, nuns, and lay people. She focused on the dance, and I composed the music. We traveled around the world, teaching and

composing dances and music, including at Tibetan monasteries at the invitation of his holiness, the Dalai Lama. Part of the year, we lived in Maui and then would fly to India, Nepal, Russia, and other places to teach.”

Bruce: “It sounds like a rich and exotic life.”

Anahata: “In a certain sense, it was a glamorous life.”

Bruce: “So what happened?”

Anahata: “For one thing, thirteen years ago, my partner and I broke up. The world we created fell apart. I spent two years traveling and teaching alone — trying to figure out what to do while all my possessions remained in Maui. Eventually, my partner said, ‘You’ve just got to move out. I don’t want your things here. You need to go.’ I was on a solo tour, and my last stop was in this tiny town in Georgia – Hogansville, population 3,000. The couple hosting me said, ‘If you’ve got nowhere to go, bring your stuff here.’ And so I did.”

Bruce: “What a shock – jet-setting around the world and then getting deposited in Hogansville.”

Anahata: “I lost a lot of teaching and faced a big financial loss. I took this as an opportunity to reconnect with the earth. So, I started a garden. As I gardened, I realized to have good soil, you need chickens. And that’s how it began. I got the chickens to feed the garden, and I became obsessed with them. I built up my flock very quickly.”

Bruce: “When we met, we knew you as the chicken lady.”

Anahata: “Let’s say I became very knowledgeable about chickens. I had at least 120 in my backyard in town. One day I heard a knock on the door. The new animal control officer gave me a week to move them. I begged for more time, so she gave me three weeks, and I put them on a farm. Then she

got fired. In my mind, she only existed to deliver the ominous knock.”

Bruce: “The future coming in — aka The Giant Wooden Hammer — it must have been stressful.”

Anahata: “It wasn’t an easy situation because twice a day, I had to drive to the farm, thirteen miles each way. I reached a point where, once again, I didn’t know what to do next in my life or how to get out of my circumstances.”

Bruce: “How did you end up in Australia?”

Anahata: “I was still teaching, but much more limited. Every two years, I traveled to Australia to teach for three weeks. My organizers would choose a theme, and I would build workshops that combined music, dance, spiritual teaching, and meditation.”

Bruce: “This was early 2020. Was coronavirus on your radar?”

Anahata: “One of my friends is an epidemiologist for the CDC. She travels to Rwanda, Senegal, and around the world fighting disease. I asked her what to do. It was February 2020 when she said to me, ‘You must go; you must go now because there are only two or three cases in America. If you go now, you can travel there and back before COVID sets in America. But if you don’t go now, you may never get to go. So she pushed me out of the door.’”

Bruce: “That’s what friends are for.”

Anahata: “I landed in Queensland, Australia, did two nights of teaching, and not a peep about COVID. Suddenly, Tom Hanks and his wife were diagnosed in Queensland. The news said they must have brought it from America. They were isolated and put in a hospital.”

Bruce: “They tested positive on March 11, 2020 — “The official day that COVID swallowed everything.”

Anahata: “My next stop was Tasmania — what the locals call Tassie. One of my students was the CEO of Tassie Health, so we got daily updates from her during our workshop — but we still had full attendance. Nobody stayed away.”

Bruce: “I remember that moment. We were still between two worlds — normalcy and our COVID future coming in.”

Anahata: “The CEO phoned her office every day to give us an update. I remember her reassuring us, ‘I don’t think this is anything to worry about, but we just need to stay aware.’”

Bruce: “We were so young in 2020, still whistling past the graveyard.”

Anahata: “We started taking extra precautions with hand washing, but nothing more. Then I flew to Sydney, where about half the normal number showed up. I felt concerned, so I called ahead to my next stop in Adelaide. My host said they had twenty-three booked, but one or two might cancel. In actuality, we went from twenty-three to six. It was the last retreat, and suddenly, people did not want to hold hands in the dances.

Bruce: “Joining hands is the essence of the Dances. So you were in Adelaide – not holding hands – and today, two years later, you’re still in Adelaide.”

Anahata: “Still here. During that last stop, I got an email from California telling me not to come. I was due to teach there, but they were in lockdown. I changed my ticket to fly straight back to Georgia. My travel agent called me the day before, ‘Everything’s fine; you’re good to go.’”

Bruce: “That phrase, *everything’s fine* is how the universe

shows its dark sense of humor.”

Anahata: “I arrived at the airport at 3:30 am for a 6:00 am flight. I looked up, and there was nothing on the board. Worse, there was no one there. I found someone from Virgin Australia who told me they had a 70 percent layoff overnight. I asked, ‘Well, what do I do?’ I showed them my ticket, and they said, because a travel agent had booked it, there was nothing they could do.”

Bruce: “That must have been terrifying.”

Anahata: “I raced back up the mountain to Adelaide Hills to talk to my travel agent. She was horrified. She went online and found one last flight leaving Australia before the national borders closed. She said, ‘It’s going to New Zealand, but you have to be an American citizen. And it costs \$6,000 one way.’ And I’m not an American citizen, so I wasn’t even allowed on the plane. To this day, there are thousands and thousands of Australians stranded abroad who cannot get back into their home country because the borders are still closed!”

Bruce: “What was it like to become suddenly stranded?”

Anahata: “Years ago, I was on a flight that hit such dramatic turbulence that I did not expect to live. At that moment, my body became empty, just a blob, like an amoeba. I had that same sensation at the airport that morning. My whole world was disintegrating, and I didn’t know what would happen to me. I stood there and started weeping, not because I was anxious, but because I didn’t know where to turn. I didn’t know what to do.”

Bruce: “It wasn’t just you. The whole world was shutting down.”

Anahata: “My host, Amrita, wisely said, ‘Let’s do one thing,

and then do the next thing, and see what happens.’ “

Bruce: “Was it like stepping into a void?”

Anahata: “Because everything happened at the same time, I could see the whole picture. I could see what would happen in my life if I didn’t get back. My animals were a full-time job, so I knew that my life, as I knew it, was not going to be the same.”

Bruce: “There are few times in life when our entire world is turned inside out.”

Anahata: “I literally couldn’t do a single thing, and it was immediate. I could see the entire scenario unfolding before me before it actually happened.”

Bruce: “Those inner lines – the expanded present moment.”

Anahata: “It was like a burst of liberation. At that moment, something collapsed and opened at the same time, because I knew I wasn’t going anywhere. There was also an edge of excitement because I only had one option — to surrender. My hosts, Amrita, and her husband, said, ‘Well, you’re going to stay here. You’re going to stay with us until we figure it all out.’”

Bruce: “What about your life and responsibilities in Georgia?”

Anahata: “I have a close, but tricky, relationship with my ex-partner in Hogansville. She came through for me to help figure things out. Eventually, we decided to rent out my house. She ended up giving away all my furniture and probably heaps of my possessions. She sent me photos of my space newly painted but also *completely empty*! It was like, oh my God. You don’t realize how much of your identity is in your possessions when you don’t have them anymore.

Every room with everything gone, just empty spaces. It was unbelievable.”

Bruce: “Suddenly, you’re a stranger in a strange land, and your backstory erased. What did the government do?”

Anahata: “Even in a pandemic with a lockdown and with the borders closed, you still have to be legal. I only had a 30-day visa. A friend of a friend was an immigration attorney who helped me extend it to nine months — but I needed to show that I could support myself. The Dances of Universal Peace group here and friends raised a stipend for me so I could pay for an Airbnb and food.”

Bruce: “ So, Amrita was right — ‘Do do one thing, then the next, and see what happens.’”

Anahata: “Yes. I started to live my life in Adelaide as if it was the only life I’d ever known.”

Bruce: “I call that Stop-Start-Change.”

Anahata: “I found a farmers market where a bunch of farmers and musicians came together. I went to the Saturday morning market, and they invited me to come to their Thursday night singing group. This became my network. I started to make friends easily — more so than during my ten years in Hogansville.”

Bruce: “You were fortunate to get nine months of breathing room, but can’t immigration take years? What was your plan?”

Anahata: “I called Kevin, my immigration attorney, and asked, ‘What’s next?’ Right from the start, the government told me, we don’t care if the borders are closed; you still have to be legal, *and* we’re not giving out visas. So I was trapped in a Catch 22. Kevin thought about it and said one

visa might work — a Special Program visa. He asked me if I knew anyone who could sponsor me.”

Bruce: “What kind of special program?”

Anahata: “The visa lets you stay in Australia for between 12 months and two years to take part in an approved special program. This can include cultural enrichment. Kevin said it would take \$3200 (that became \$6,000), reams of paper-work, and six months to set up. I had to borrow the money from a generous friend. We requested for the program to run fifteen months.”

Bruce: “Kevin seems very clever.”

Anahata: “He is. But unfortunately, after he submitted it, the government turned it down. Kevin noticed that they hadn’t printed the grounds cited for rejection in their guidelines. So, he used this opening to ask if we could reapply. One of my students in the Dances had experience arranging visas. She helped us completely revamp the application like a university-level course with a detailed curriculum, students receiving credit, and me giving tutorials. It was backed by letters of support from doctors, lawyers, CEOs, and professors. It was huge — hundreds of pages!”

Bruce: “Wow, so much support! It’s one thing to submit a curriculum; didn’t you need paying students?”

Anahata: “Here comes the turning point in the story.”

Bruce: “I sense the Enneagram.”

Anahata: “Before Kevin and I applied for the visa, a friend and I walked to the farmers market one Saturday morning like we always did. My friend mentioned that the church bazaar had just started up after being shut down for COVID. She suggested, ‘Why don’t we walk that way ‘round instead

of going straight to the market?”

Bruce: “I love this. A turning point where you actually made a turn.

Anahata: “I said, yes. Let’s do it. We changed the route and headed to the bazaar.”

Bruce: “I need to interject, but I’m feeling the Octave. When I was a kid, we read these Superman comics where reality turned inside out. The Man of Steel suddenly found himself on a fictional planet called ‘Bizarro World.’ It was an alternate universe where everything ran opposite to your expectations. I feel we’re about to enter the Bazaar-o World. That’s a pun.”

Anahata: “That moment is etched in my memory. We walked into the bazaar; tables and booths were everywhere. Straight ahead, hanging on a clothes rack, a brilliantly colored apron caught my eye. It was an amazing piece with superb craftsmanship. I said to my friend, ‘Look at that; isn’t that beautiful?’ What caught my eye was more than the craft. The astonishing piece of artwork on the apron – in Tibetan colors – was of a CHICKEN!”



The infamous apron

Bruce: “Cue the triumphant music: Stranded in a global lockdown – a chicken comes to the rescue!”

Anahata: “More than the chicken, I felt absolutely comfortable in the presence of the woman running the booth. I must have looked upset because she asked if anything was wrong. I explained that I had to leave my beloved chickens behind in the States. Her name was Liz. She asked, ‘Why are you here?’ I said I teach the Dances of Universal Peace. She was instantly curious and wanted to know more.

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I said something like, it's ecumenical dancing where we take phrases from various spiritual traditions and walk in the footsteps of those traditions. We try to empathize and understand the spirit of each religion. And then she said, 'WE WANT IT!'"

Bruce: "Wow, you just put it out there – and she wanted it! What kind of church was this?"

Anahata: "It was an Anglican Church."

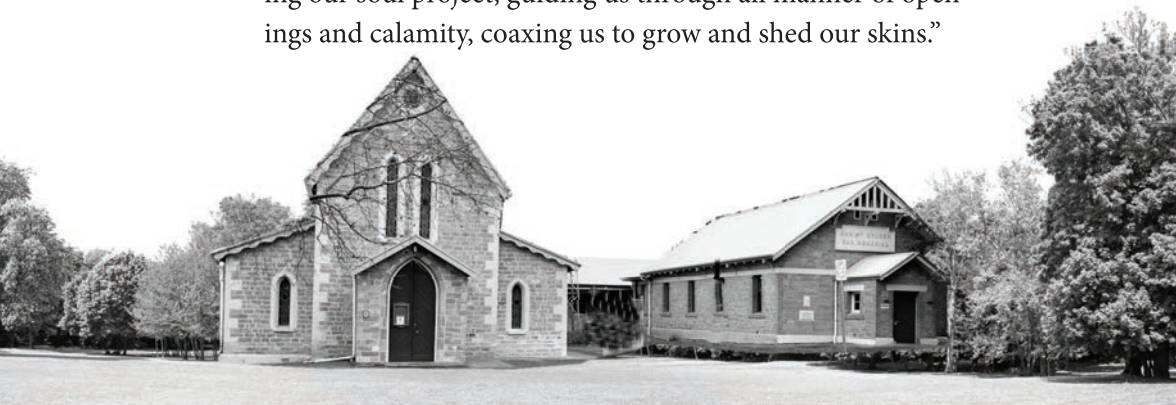
Bruce: "Those wild, crazy Anglicans."

Anahata: "It gets crazier. Liz called over to the next booth, 'Father Thomas, come over here!' Liz had me describe the Dances to Father Thomas. As it turned out, Father Thomas was from Kerala in southern India. I started describing projects I was working on in Kerala and Nepal. Liz jumped in and asked, 'How many do you need?' And I said, sixteen. And then she said, 'I'll let you know within two hours.'"

Bruce: "Wait... this all went down while you were admiring the chicken apron?"

Anahata: "Yes. Within two hours, she texted, 'We've got thirty-five coming on Friday. Will that work?'"

Bruce: "I want to pause here and feel the angels. There's a passage from John O'Donahue that begins, *'All through your life, your soul takes care of you.'*⁵ We step into a crisis but sense that it's a set-up. We discover that our angels are guiding our soul project, guiding us through all manner of openings and calamity, coaxing us to grow and shed our skins."



Anahata: “Very much so.”

Bruce: “I’ve always felt that one’s ability to trust comes from knowing you’re loved – knowing that there are people who have your back. This begins as a child. And now you had Liz and Father Thomas.”

Anahata: “I felt so at home with Liz that I got teary-eyed.”

Bruce: “That’s beautiful.”

Anahata: “I forget to trust like everybody else and then realize that things are unfolding. At times, the whole thing freaked me out. How am I going to make this all work? And then it became absolutely evident that there is nothing I could do to make it work other than give my best. Things are going to be what they’re going to be.”

Bruce: “I want to move to the important part of our conversation. This is a book about Uplift. I use snatches of stories overlaid with ancient knowledge to paint a picture of the invisible world that guides the surface of life. I use angels to invite the reader to find this invisible way through attunement to the subtle world.”

Anahata: “I’m not somebody that talks in terms of angels. There are more than enough people in this world who do.”

Bruce: (laughs) “I don’t either, but the word *angel* offers a wonderful shorthand to describe the subtle realm, the grace that enters to offer Uplift. You were in an impossible situation. How did you navigate your way through? And don’t use the word *angel*!”

Anahata: “I’ve been forced to live on an edge at all times here — where I have to remain vigilant. I have been living at the mercy of other people who control my destiny to some extent. So, my vigilance is in every department – in my

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relationships, finances, and making sure that my classes are tip-top. With my Special Program visa, people had to sign up for fifteen months. That is a huge commitment in COVID times, so I am on my toes all the time to offer something meaningful. I don't have anything secure. I don't have a house. I don't have possessions. I am forced to pay attention all the time."

Bruce: "I can see that you are on your toes – but there is this other side. People have been remarkably generous."

Anahata: "I have a story that speaks to this. When I was very young, maybe thirteen or fourteen, I would visit old people while heading home from school – always a different senior citizen. I would just sit with them and talk to them. Sometimes I might help them with shopping, but mainly I would be a companion for an hour, and then I went home. It occurs to me now how innocent I was. Nobody asked me to do it, and I didn't ask for any payback – no payment at all. It came from a place that was part of me. It was not cultivated. Sometimes, I feel that a lot of the goodwill I am receiving now is not just because of who I am or what I give. I feel that we build karmic bank accounts, and at certain points, we can draw from them."



Bruce: “I’m still waiting to make my withdrawals. “

Anahata: “We don’t pay in to take out. There is this sense of being taken care of. I have done things from a place of innocence for a lot of my life, and now, from a place of innocence, I am receiving.”

Bruce: “Drawing from the karmic bank account is one part, but you described a reciprocal generosity that takes place in real-time — where you remain on your toes.”

Anahata: “I feel we are always reading each other. We know when to come forward and when to pull back. To give an example, last December, a couple invited me to stay at their beach house in Tassie for two months. I knew it would be pushing it, but after my stay was up, I asked to extend it for two more months, and they agreed. At the end of two months, it was time to start my Tassie course. I didn’t even hint at asking that favor again, so I found another place to stay. All of a sudden, they announced, ‘Anahata, let’s make this your home whenever you’re here to teach.’ We’re always reading each other — coming forward, moving back; it’s like a dance.”

Bruce: “Let’s take this to the next level to see where your soul project is taking you. How do you understand why this happened?”

Anahata: “Quite honestly, I was in a place in Hogansville that was so awful, I just didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know how to get myself out of it. The universe didn’t want me to suffer anymore, but I couldn’t work my way out. I was picked up, minus my animals, and planted in Australia.”

Bruce: “Could you be laying the groundwork for the next chapter of your life — Anahata 2.0? It would be very cool if the universe were planning your next grand chapter.”

Anahata: “If I’m lucky, and if I have planted the right seeds, this course could be used over and over again. It’s an amazing template. It embraces musicianship, the dances, spiritual traditions, and meditation. An enormous amount of preparation has gone into it. Can I add one last thing about Uplift?”

Bruce: “Please.”

Anahata: “I have a student in Tassie who is in and out of a mental institution. She is really a sweetheart, and I love her very dearly. She was the first person to sign up for the course, and she paid for it in advance. When she came out of the hospital, recently, she seemed a bit rocky. So, I said, ‘If 50 percent of your spiritual practice involves difficult, penetrating work, the other 50 percent should offer joy and uplift. If it doesn’t, there’s something wrong with the path.’”

Bruce: “It’s not just sackcloth and ashes. We wish for freedom.”

Anahata: “Exactly. I said this to her because she was stuck. And I felt my job was to bring her joy, to bring joy to her practice. Joy follows the work of penetrating. I gave her some meditation techniques, and she said, ‘They don’t teach that in the hospital.’ And I asked, ‘What do they teach?’ And she said, ‘They talk about going through golden doorways.’ I said, ‘That’s nice, but that’s guided imagery. Your job is to feel exactly what’s happening to you and let that transform you.’”

Bruce: “Let’s close on that. I use lots of imagery – paddling through waves, becoming a tube, *katabasis*, funky stairs, the Lulu step, two trains, and the Octve/Enneagram. The point of these images is *to feel exactly what’s happening to you and let that transform you*. Thank you, Anahata. I can’t wait to see how your grand adventure unfolds.”

Anahata: “Thank you. Let’s always keep in touch.”



Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.space.com/antarctic-ice-shelf-collapse-as-earth-warms>
- 2 Hesse, Hermann. *Demian*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 1715.
- 3 Berg, Yehuda, *Angel Intelligence: How Your Consciousness Determines Which Angels Come into Your Life*:
- 4 <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/12/arts/susan-jeffers-psychologist-and-self-help-author-dies-at-74.html>
- 5 *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom*: John O'Donohue: 9780060929435: Amazon.Com: Books

