

CRYSTALS

There was this location in deep space where she could achieve complete contentment. Over time her soul would gravitate to this place. All the while she was resolving the coordinate of this paradise.

I could look at the arrangement of crystals in the window and detect a clear path to a crimson rose in the garden. For that one moment, the flower would be in complete alignment with the crystals. I was looking at a very detailed star map. If I changed any aspect of the map, it would not have the same resonance.

Waves of sunshine filled the room. All the light was blinding. There was such natural warmth. Alida rode this current. It reinvigorated her.

“There is a being deep within you, your other. It is waiting to get out. You have to face it and overcome it, or it will destroy you.”

Alida was introducing me to a deeper turmoil in her existence. Perhaps, this was why she avoided conflict with others. She was working out her own dreams. She was journeying deeper into herself.

This conflict welled up first as a disturbance of your well-being.

“It is an itching that burns from inside. The more that you want to scratch it, the more it eats away at the soul. It becomes a dull throbbing pain. Then it dominates your whole nature. It consumes all of you. You can’t do a thing about it. It overcomes your whole being.”

She was presenting her dilemma as a confrontation with this otherness, this force from outside of herself. At what point does this form attain a personal nature. When in a dream or in the imagination does this force emerge and captivate the human psyche?

Alida was confronting an entity much more formidable than a mere phantasm. This being was rooted deep in her being. She couldn’t simply shake it off. It captivated her. It held her attention, and if she tried to shake it off, it found a place in the hidden recesses of her nightmares. And it held there and mocked her.

“I was a little bit feverish. And I was watching myself. So a little bit of delirium had crept into my routine. But I continue to keep guard. I was making sure that everything was okay with the world as I started to fall asleep. Faced with this feeling, I could not go to sleep. All that I could do was keep watch. I assumed that it would be a long night. And there were dangers all around me. The nature of these threats would become clearer as I fell asleep. Could I protect myself from these challenges while I was dreaming? This was becoming a major test for me.”

“I refused to fall asleep. But I needed to sleep. And there was no real reason to stay awake. But the dreamscape had already penetrated the real world. I needed to battle these creatures. I wanted to claim victory for myself.”

“I settled in. I scanned those around me. I focused on what they were doing. I worked to break them down. No one was going to get close enough to shake my confidence. I was in the midst of a major conflict. I needed to make my stand.”

“I could feel myself drifting off. I was not going to yield. I gave in my enemy. I could sense how they were creeping up on me. I needed to battle them back. I did just that. I was engaged in a fight for my life.”

“This was silly. My eyes were getting heavier. There was no antidote to lack of sleep. I

needed to close my eyes once and for all.”

“I was floating over myself. I was in the middle of a great transformation. I was being broken in three. I was sleeping. I was keeping guard. And I was hovering over myself. What did any of this mean? I was totally independent from myself. I was floating in the ether.”

“This deep separation was amazing. It was clearly the effect of my light-headedness. But it also spoke to something deep in my nature. I was submitting to this change. The guard and the sleeper. Then the dreamer. The one keeping a deeper watch. All of this fascinated me. I was surrendering to something so amazing.”

“For once in my life I could feel total safety. I was being looked after attentively. My siblings had take care of me. I had kept watch over my family. This was something new. I was looking after my own needs.”

“I first presented a picture of utter certainty. I was not going to sleep. I would never sleep again. Then I went to another stage. I was half sleeping and half watching. This was where my body seemed to split in two.”

“In the final stage, I was still somehow watching. But I was asleep.”

“I wondered how this looked. I thought of myself sleeping while standing up. But I was totally laid out. I was convinced that I had split into two beings. The noble lion was still watching. And the young cub was passed out. Could this even be the case? How could I be so divided? I wanted to believe that I was still keeping watch. I was resolute. I would not give in. But I had totally succumbed. I needed a theory. I wanted an explanation. I had crossed over to this spiritual place. This great place of strength.”

“My spirit was lying down. But my body was still standing. How was this possible? The fatigue had overcome me. I wanted to believe that I could resist. I would not submit to what was happening to me.”

“I could feel myself be puled down. I was in deep sleep. I had not idea if my spirit was still keeping watch. I wanted to believe that I remained on guard. But I felt totally helpless. I had just let go. And I gave in to the power of sleep. My fatigue had been so overwhelming. I was not able to break it down. It came for me, then it assaulted me. I was knocked down. I shut my eyes for good.”

“I was in a world of darkness. I could not move. I had been shut down. Then I felt a break. A stirring in the imagination. I crossed over to another world. I gained new powers.”

“I was in the middle of my walk. Nothing was unusual. I kept along my path. I heard a whistle. Then it repeated. What was happening around me? Everything appeared to be okay. I was peering down long, dark streets.”

“I kept moving, I didn’t want to make myself into a target. My pace became brisk. I was not afraid. I just wanted to be safe.”

“I looked far ahead. I noticed a shadow in the distance. I again heard the whistle. I wasn’t going to let anything deter me. I kept moving. I built up a head of steam. I ploughed ahead. Then I faced someone who blocked my way. He was not going to let me by. That would hardly deter me. I was just going to switch directions. Then I would wend my way around him.”

“I was walking the other way. I could see that the person behind me was moving towards me. I needed to find a way out. But the man’s accomplice was coming at me from the other direction. They were both running at me. I looked for an opening. They had blocked me in.

There were buildings all around me. But there was no safe passage. The first man grabbed my shoulder. I eluded him. His accomplice grabbed me by the waist. I kicked him, and he pushed me. But he had to let go. The leader caught me. He was holding me as I struggled. I kept kicking in the air. That made it harder for the accomplice to get close. He kept punching in the air until his blows landed.”

“He was hurting me. The leader kept trying to hold me. I continued to struggle. One of the blows hit the leader and he stepped back and let me go.”

“I was weak, but I started to run. I just took off. No one was going to stop me. Both men went after me. They were bigger and faster. They had me surrounded. They came at me from both sides. They swarmed over me. I fell to the ground. They were kicking me. They wouldn’t stop. They were killing me. I grabbed at the legs of one man. He lost his balance. He fell into the other.”

“I had no choice. I took off running. I was fleet. I ran ahead and turned a corner. I had escaped the men.”

“I found a hiding place. It served me well. They weren’t going to find me. Through the corner of my eye I saw the shadows. They were not giving up. But they did not see me.”

“I was all bruised and bloody. I did not say a thing. I held my ground. I didn’t make a sound. I made myself small.”

“Here she is.”

Somehow they had found me. They surprised me. They came in from the other side of the building. One of the men picked me up. He held me in the air. My helplessness increased. I screamed out. I screamed with all my might.”

“They both laughed. The accomplice hit me with all his might. I just went out. When I came to, they were still hitting me. I had no defenses. Each blow seemed to destroy me. These were monsters. And I had no defense. Would they ever stop? The leader through me down. They both kicked me. They move on. I was sure that I was dead. If I was not, I was all broken. I lay there in my mess. There was blood. I was in the mud. The toll was incredible.”

“I could feel the life draining from me. I wanted to hang on. I wanted to be put back together. There was an incredible ringing in my head.”

“I got into the pain. I made myself lost in the darkness. I slipped down into the nothingness. I couldn’t hang on. I was a pile of mush.”

“I lay there unconscious for I don’t know how long. In my imagination, the clock continued to tick. But I was completely out. Oh, so out!”

“This incredible lull. I was this weight which kept falling. I was boring into solid rock. I was melding with total oblivion.”

“I heard a crow call. It led me out of this darkness.”

She was going to this place of total serenity. It was the deep outdoors. It existed in the yard, but it was a completely different place. This was the wilderness of her childhood. Whether it was a cat or a chipmunk. It was ready to reveal its secrets. Alida gave words to these creatures. They were speaking of their dreams for total liberation. They wanted to be free to explore every dark corner, and Alida wanted to go along.

They no longer needed to hide their treasures. They were allowed to touch and hold and smell. They could disappear from view and reappear at the other end of the yard. They could

consume any plant. They could follow any trail. They could simply meander. They needed to answer to no authority.

She noticed these natural builders. The birds gathered for their nests. Squirrels stored nuts. Every being was trying to dig deeper. Where had a dog hidden a bone? Where had a fallen star kissed the earth. Where did the rabbit hole lead? How deeply did the tree root do. There were all these marvelous entanglements. Each twist went deeper. There was another world of enchantment where these different languages all made sense. This was the place of total hibernation.

A body could get lost down here. Alida knew the temptation. She always wanted to penetrate these secrets. This was the stuff of life. It went beyond survival. It was something completely different. This was preservation. This was the tribe. The ant colony. The beehive. The bunny hutch. The bear's cave. The snake's lair.

People wanted to know. They wanted to feast. They wanted all these sensations to overtake them. This was a grand understanding. Alida was reaching her destination.

There was no story here. Just pure sensation. All cares were wiped away. All pain disappeared. This was what it was like to see your own shadow. There was a total clarity in the moment. There were no human entanglements. No jealousy. Just a total purity. A rebirth. A simplicity.

She was a cat tasting a bowl of milk. This was more than refreshment. There was a lasting feeling. It reached deep into the night. The cat felt its powers. It stretched out. It tasted more of the milk. This was fortifying. Within herself, she felt a contentment. She licked her shiny coat. She drew to herself the powers of the universe. She was mysterious. She was more than herself.

Alida was not a big fan of milk. She couldn't very well derive the same pleasure from the bowl. She still wanted to know. She needed to understand the way of the pleasant feline. The cat had soul. It had style. She wanted that energy. It didn't take much. The milk revived. It brought her into the world. It reinforced her nature.

Alida watched some chipmunks scurry. They chased each other around the yard. Then they disappeared down their infernal holes. That was not enough. She was searching. She needed to explore. She wanted to peel back all these layers. Who was she? Where was she.

She was in the deep outdoors. She was going down into herself. She wanted to know the science. She had her science. What came apart could come together. There was a primal sympathy, an attraction in all things. The ringing tone.

Alida again broke it down to something so simple. The dirt. The rich soil. The source of life. The growing. The spreading out in the yard.

These living things all wanted more. They wanted to trail around the yard. They wanted to twist back and forth. They wanted to steal the treasure and take it down in that hole. It raised so many questions.

There were all these things that were lost. For the present, she imagined making contact with them all. These were the things that she had cherished. They seemed to slip away. She was looking at a picture of herself from long ago. She was in no particular place. She was not at home. She was not by the river. She was not in the city.

There was an image and a murky background. What life existed behind the face? For the

time being, she was not exploring her memories. These were the dreams she felt when she first came to the city. Montreal. Ottawa. Toronto. There were a million possibilities. She could finally define herself. This was how she wanted to be. She love this idea. She didn't have family. She didn't have any children. She was spreading out in the city. She was becoming a million things.

There were sparkling lights everywhere. Glowing candy. Neon flashing. Fireworks going off. She simply looked at it all. And it glared back. Like lights shining during the rain. An overload of sensation.

She didn't want to enter any story. This wasn't about finding a job. Or searching for a place to live. This was simply disappearing in the fabric of existence. She had never felt so unencumbered. It made her think that there was something that she was forgetting. She couldn't allow fear to hold her back. She simply gave in. She let herself drift. She had no purpose. She felt a oneness with the city.

She was not here to catalogue sites. She pressed forward with her hands, and the world simply gave way. It was so relaxing.

She knew the power of window shopping. Everything was a possibility. All her dreams were opening up for her. This was something else. This was immediate. All the distinctions were blurred. Everything was in her face. She welcomed the sensation. But it also frightened her. She could only take so much. It might dazzle her too much. She couldn't let it overcome her. She needed a little bit of control. Too slow down the flashing lights. To limit the magic. A simple revelation. A lull. An occasional appeal.

She sense it all around her. It was like the holiday cheer. It hung there before you. It drew you in. She surrendered to the moment. There was a nostalgia. She was being beckoned. She reached out.

She felt something substantial. She could feel the reassurance pulse through her. Her heart beat faster. She was in the midst of an awareness. This was the anticipation before a gift. Not so much the object, the sense of contact.

She was immersed in all these marvelous effects. Colored lights flashing. Lights reflecting. A wholeness. She was floating in the glory.

Alida was searching for a greater confidence. A sleigh ride. The moving train. She was part of the wind. She let herself get tossed in the flow.

This was her encounter with creation. The moment of recognition. No longer a memory. Everything was perfected in the now.

She now radiated this wondrous energy. It was a city full of electricity. It was an eternal fire. It could not give out. It lived on sheer will.

Here was a constant renewal. She sought the touch. She was letting go. This was not sleep. It was not a dream. It was the now. She never knew how to exploit this feeling. This time, it was so evident. She went deeper. There was more to discover. She sought a greater awareness. She was everywhere in this understanding. It was for all time. She embraced its promise. She was absorbed.

Alida did not have to worry about any limitations. This was other than physical. She felt it in and through the body. But it was more a way of seeing. Not an object. She was not looking at a still life. She was in the experience as a totality. It sustained her. She didn't need to eat or

move or do anything else. It was there with her. She was one with the invitation. She accepted it and followed along with it. It was everywhere extensive. She was there. And she was in it.

She wanted to distill its meaning. She needed to see it for what it was. The immediate. The bedrock of perception. The thusness. *Here I am. I am being discovered.*

Alida was not into the indefinite. She did not like to hang around. She could not be idle. So this was new for her. How could she make something out of what was going on? She was not supposed to make notes. She was not classifying or arranging. There was no comparison to anything else. It needed to be what it was. A putting together of these aspects. A configuration of attitudes. A just this. Holding here before her eyes saying look at me.

What was she to do with it? How was she to combine it? Or take it apart/ It was not meant to be that way.

If you had ever gone through a book of pictures, it would be similar. But not the same. There was no content. It was the album without the pictures. An interesting way of capturing the here and now!

She didn't have to go anywhere. She didn't have to do anything. She didn't have to find something. She didn't have to be someone. That was all that it was. All that.

It was not noisy. It was not silent. It was there. It was percolating. It was complete.

Alida didn't like to play philosophy. She wasn't there to contemplate or to ask silly questions. She wasn't putting something together. She wasn't stringing together thoughts. There was no free associations. No first impressions. No substitutes.

She needed to let go. She needed to give it all away. She wanted to take it all back. She needed it to look back at her. She wanted to shut her eyes. I don't need to see any more of this.

I want it simpler. It could get simpler.

She was back with her cityscape.

She closed her eyes. She felt this intense warmth. It drew her closer. She was attracted by the fire. She pushed closer to the source.

All around her was this intense energy. She needed its inspiration. It pulled her along. The power became overwhelming. It was pervasive. It penetrated to the core of her being.

She understood the nature of this radiance. It was transforming her. She went deeper and deeper into the fire. She felt renewed. She needed all that energy to sustain her.

She existed within this total flow. She may have been mesmerized by the lights. Here she bathed in her comfort. That feeling flowed outward. She felt it in her bones. It shone on her skin. She was coming alive.

She again went to follow a path to the center. She couldn't let herself get cold. She craved all the heat. She wanted to be able to store it up. The field now surrounded her. It blessed her with its abundance. She wanted so much more.

Her encounter seemed transitory. She was enveloped in the marvel. It reaffirmed the present. She needed that same confidence for the future. How could she save her comfort? She needed to enjoy it for the now. Her recollection could affect her later on. In her essence, she wanted to believe that she had created a lasting perfection. She could call upon this power. She drifted deeper in her imagination. She sought to control her experience from this protected place. It allowed her to savor the joys of the present.

"When you get older, you ask yourself how many more winters will you be able to take.

Just one could be your last. And you feel yourself slip down gradually.

“There are only so many storms which can play in my life. Each cold snap breaks me a little more. Finally, I have nothing else in me that I can use to fight.”

You could see the sense of anticipation in her face. She was announcing the next tumult.

“I want to know authoritatively what this means.”

That was more my idea. I was expecting some kind of revelation. The cold returned the world to the deep freeze. Everything went back to nothing.

Alida realized that she needed to create her own equilibrium. She anticipated the disruption, and she avoided its effects.

Even the smallest change was enough to shake her up. There was something frightening in the wild wind. The two of us would be inside, and we would hear the noises outside. We were protected. The house became the essence of her being. She existed in this safe place inside.

We could sense one of those massive waves roll over us. The house was battered from without. It started gradually. A change of air pressure.

“It is coming.”

I tried to sense the change. This was something big that was transforming the world. The house was our sensor. It could grasp all the events which were occurring around us. We weren't able to sit still. We were moved back and forth by the motion.

Alida would stay in her room. She would play cards and watch television.

“They have announced the change.”

What did it mean when the transformation in the world was felt within the body. It represented a personal change. There was another transformation of the self that was completely independent.

“I think that our greatest fear is that we will change irrevocably, and the world will go on without us.”

“We were bringing in the thing which would destroy us. I needed to get closer to Alida's understanding.

“It is more than the climate. The earth is changing. We are being shaken to the core.”

This was not about the end of the world. But we did imagine all people together on this momentous journey. Where would it end up?

There were so many confusing signs around us. We needed to learn how to interpret.

“I am good for now,” Alida reminded me.

This was going to be difficult. She could feel herself pulled down by the events. She had remained indoors. She waited for the worst to pass.

It was now warmer outside. The sun shone down with assurance. Alida needed to partake in that refreshment.

“The sun is renewing us for now. We have to take everything that it gives. In the dead of winter, it will be stingy.”

After taking what she needed, she retreated to her room. She needed to store up her energy. She felt a deep strength. She molded that into the present moment. It was liberating.

Even in her room, she could feel the blessing. Two small birds hopped outside her window. She traced their path. She wanted to be with them. She wanted to bestow them with

her sense of awareness.

The birds flew away. They were taking Alida's dreams with her. She followed their ascent. It seemed perilous. Their little bodies were fighting the wind. They understood their path.

That first cold snap was followed by a more severe one. We were all shaken by its severity. Alida stayed in. She let the world turn around her. She needed to escape the worst. She needed to stabilize.

She sat at her television table with a bowl of soup. She had her heating pad. She was doing what she could to control the moment. She didn't have a great many of alternatives. She handled the situation deftly. She was dancing in the rain.

Indeed, there was a cold rain falling outside. It made puddles among the leaves. Everywhere was this wild mess.

"These are the times. This is what we have to suffer."

Alida built up her momentum. She had a sunny disposition. She would not let herself be knocked out by the day. There was a wild smile on her face.

"Whatever happens outside, it is not going to affect me in here."

Her heart radiated a million degrees. She needed that permanence.

"I can create even if the weather tries to distract me."

I did what I could to take her advice. I had a great deal of commitment to what I was doing. I liked to observe Alida for more inspiration.

"I can't wait for perfection. I have to jump in the fray."

She was reminding me what I needed to do.

"I am feeling better. I have kept myself busy."

I wanted to reply to her with the same sense of exuberance. I hadn't written much. I only filled my head with what I had seen. I let Alida provide me with direction.

"Steven, you seem a little in the dumps."

"You are so good at taking on the weather. I just lose my way."

"The weather has a mind of its own. We can never let it have too much power over us."

Who were we if we weren't creatures of the winds which swirled around us. The forces solidified. They gave us form. They helped us battle against the elements. We were a product of these contrary forces.

"One cold snap can break us apart for good."

I understood what she had been telling me all this time.

"We are heading towards the source."

My head feels all cloudy. I can feel something coming on."

She was doing what she could to fight the cold. She needed to sleep.

Alida felt uncomfortable how her health seemed to single her out. Each illness made her feel as if she had been chosen for some deeper understanding about her nature. It was this knowledge which enabled her to survive. This was the battle within herself. She wanted more fortitude. She had enough to think about. She didn't need to feel as if she was pushed to the edge.

There was a contentment in her struggle. She saw the source of her discomfort. And she learned how to overcome the threat. Even if she was not able to overcome the threat, she could

hold it at bay. When it was time, she hoped to be able to deliver a knock out punch.

There was so much power in her pursuit. She would not let herself be taken down. Even if the weather seemed to engulf her, she found a defensive position. She worked to sustain herself. She restored her marvel.

If Alida was feeling a little sick, I was meant to show a contrast. I needed to offer her my resilience. I wasn't there to share my problems. This was not meant to be an exchange. I didn't want to bring her down.

The story progressed before me. It was a series of waves. I would observe the ups and downs. I couldn't let them affect me directly. I needed to show concern. I was reinforcing her personal strength. And she was reminding me how much a person could tolerate and still maintain her composure. I was not use to these fluctuations. I wanted more order. But I needed to understand that I was going through the same cycles. They were no so severe, but they were affecting me nevertheless. I needed to be clever. I needed to rely on my own powers.

"When the big event occurs, Steven, will you be ready for it?"

I was sifting through the ideas in my mind. But Alida had her own idea. And she was trying to tell me something specific. I needed to know what she was talking about.

"I need to take a long journey."

She smiled at me. It was as if she was sharing a deep secret.

We had already explored the contours of space. There was this place of total otherness. These reflections of the crystals were pointing us way out there.

"Without your reference points, you can lose your mind."

In a sense her instability was an introduction to this otherness. When she righted herself, she found the proper reference points. There was another version of herself waiting way out there. And once she encountered this self, she would find fulfillment.

"Alida, I am your angel. I have been waiting for you all this time."

This double would have all her secrets catalogued.

"This is your key. You eternity. Take this pill."

There was no such easy remedy. But she loved the promise that this represented.

"This is a condition of the light. How it plays with the body. A kind of seeing."

I could stare at these crystals, and I would feel that I was traveling. I was living off of Alida's mysticism. This was brilliant. I kept upmy gaze. And the feeling burned all through me. I was seeing the flowers, the birds, the stars. All these inspiring patterns.

I submitted to this study. It wasn't formal in any sense. But there was so much to it. It was wily. And playful. This was a unique revelation. No one else could offer all the facets. I was sitting on the launching pad as I made ready to go even deeper into space. I was already floating.

"There is nothing here but you and your double."

What would it be for me to face the same challenge as Alida. She was way out there and giving me the clues to get me back. For her it might be disheartening. She was doing this on her own. Others had ventured out. But she had a combination of tools. She was going further out. She couldn't just press a button and come back. Her body was already taking her to this other place. That was the trade off as she surrendered herself to these forces. That was why the journey had such appeal for me. If I could take the same path but not face all the risks.

I thought about her confrontation with winter. It made her more attuned to the appeals of the sunlight. But the summer sun could wear her out. So it was an uneasy deal. There wasn't enough of a benefit to endure the terrible cold.

I was doing my best on my own to understand the patterns in the weather. This revealed something about the rhythms of the body. I needed to learn from Alida. She acted like the birds who had a special sense about nature. I was too focused on a purpose. I couldn't strip away the veils that were in my way.

How did Alida arrive at her sensitivity about the world? She could concentrate on those little hopping birds and sense that lasting communication. I wanted to speak to the wind. What did I lack? I was a writer. I was attuned to something unique. But Alida was teaching me about her feelings.

As I woke to the day, I bathed in the sunlight. All that warmth was rushing over me. I felt motivated. I wanted to shape the day from my imagination. I still didn't have the patience to slow my life down. I was living here because it gave me a new hope. I was not worried about deadlines. I held my people at a distance. I realized that this would not last. I would be overwhelmed by my life again. I would get caught in all the idle pursuits. When she played her cards, she gave me a new hope. She simply followed the story along. That was the kind of writer that I needed to be. I needed to fill in all these details.

I was afraid if I broke things down to their components that they would lose their magic. I would concentrate on a blade of grass and lose its power in a strong breeze. It was as if I was trying to explain the blueness of the sky. I couldn't forget the promise that those endless heavens offered.

I stared at the trails in the sky. The clouds detaching themselves. I was in the midst of something creative. I needed to find the flow. The coming storms. The time of recovery. The return to the liveliness of nature.

Alida told me, "This is life."

It was the ability of the world to reflect the sunlight. To fix the oneness of the now. This was not the end in itself. Time was stopped in its magnificent potential. It fluttered around me. It hung in the air. It was the hint of a perfume. The echo of a sound.

I lost myself in the sparkle of the crystals. A flash of light temporarily blinded me. I was disoriented. I felt their spell. I was understanding. Beyond the light, there was this solidity. I needed to feel that pull. I needed the feel of solid ground.

I projected along with the intersecting lights. I was escaping the hold of gravity. I was out in this lonely place. I had taken a chance. This was marvelous for the moment. But I couldn't take the burden. I wanted to understand. I needed things to make sense.

"You have to surrender yourself."

Alida had found ways to negotiate these narrow spaces. She realized that she couldn't control every aspect of her health. It wasn't just medicine. It was time. She was embracing possibilities. She was giving herself over to processes. She was finding a place among the stars.

I couldn't go all the way. I kept pulling back. I had the dream of the crystals, but all that faded. I was looking at dull clouds. A rain was coming in. I couldn't avoid the gloom. How had I missed the marvelous opportunity? I was too caught up in my certainty. I wanted my pen to tell the story. I wasn't trusting my body. I needed to know all the patterns before I started the

journey.

“I know the risk. You are afraid of getting burned up in the atmosphere. You will be able to control your descent. Use your knowledge!”

I needed all those markers there for me. I couldn't step in the void. Alida had found a beautiful partnership with nothingness. I knew no such thing. I was filling on all those spaces.

At some point, the bird simply took flight. He was not waiting for any guide. He trusted the path.

“I am not a bird. I need to know more.”

I could feel how I was free falling. There were too many impediments for me to start my travels. I was tethered to the ground.

Alida needed to be light. She could needed to navigate the downturns. She needed to find joy in these little revelations.

“Steven, do not miss the magic in front of your eyes.”

“You didn't really say that to me!”

She had the map. I was only seeing the clutter. Maybe it was the practice with crossword puzzles. She realize that there was a pattern there. She had seen it time and time again. Now it was emerging before her eyes.

“This is lovely.”

I was following her lead. She was pointing to me where to look. It all made sense. After this guidance, I was back on my own.

I was facing my own double. I wasn't ready to go one-on-one with the self. I lost myself as I watched a magnificent hawk trace its path.