

Full Circle

In a place far away and a very long time ago, a dark-eyed beauty named Xene tended a dovecote. The tower stood thirty feet high; it was framed of wood and covered with roots, vines and clay. Scattered openings were intricately carved in the uppermost sections. It was quite beautiful, really, and very old, lovingly built by forgotten ancestors.

Xene wore cloth slippers and a white robe that covered her arms and legs. Slim with light brown braids, she deftly moved her ladder from nest to nest along the walls until she'd reached every possible inhabited cranny.

"May I remove some of this?" she whispered to a dove incubating eggs, and gently gathered some droppings without disturbing the hen.

A cock, the other half of the pair tending the nest, perched outside the entrance and regarded Xene with a beady eye.

"What have you been up to, Sir?" she inquired.

The bird danced from foot to foot, bobbed his iridescent head, and cooed from his soft, deep throat. The sound filled Xene with peace.

She knew this bird flew regularly to the horizon. Had there been invading armies or hordes of locusts out there, the flock would be restless and on alert. Xene went on gathering droppings. At 15 summers, she had been sole keeper of the dovecote for two complete season cycles. It was to be her life's work.

Only the most intuitive, those who could demonstrate psychic abilities, were chosen for such an important position. Knowing the language and behavior of birds was a delicate skill requiring careful cultivation. Xene had led a sheltered life. She stayed with Josiah, the village leader, during her childhood.

Josiah always remained calm. "The way to develop intuition is to practice calmness," he told his student.

"A life of strict celibacy is also a requirement for dove keepers," Josiah had explained, "Sexual experience, necessary among the villagers, is a drain on psychic power. You must hold and transmute your creative energy; purity will facilitate your understanding."

Xene's every other need was seen to by the village elders. Some of the best food, clothing and other provisions were brought to the dovecote. But she talked to none except the midwives

## Full Circle

and medicine women that came to gather plants and to teach her how to make infusions and tinctures.

Xene was very busy. She communed with the doves and the plants as she tended them. She was well educated and wrote notes about breeders and clutches. There were generally two clutches a year in the mild climate. Extra eggs and chicks fed the village, feathers had many uses and droppings fertilized the garden.

In contrast, Jor was a serious threat, although he acted anything but serious. The young man said he came from a neighboring village, but no one knew his family. He was a carefree drifter, available to work on farms for a good price. Jor was strong, he could lift large boulders and felled trees without much effort. He played with the children, hoisting them high overhead and spinning them, but he never got dizzy. Jor liked the ladies, and the ladies liked him, but the brothers and fathers put themselves between Jor and their sisters and daughters. They knew what he was up to.

Jor was good natured and good looking. He charmed even the older women with his wide-set dark eyes, shock of golden hair that fell on his forehead, full lips, strong chin, and tan muscular arms.

With the ladies all inside, Jor made a clandestine journey through the wooded area at the edge of the village until he arrived at Xene's cottage next to the dovecote. Xene did not at first let him in, but he slept outside her door. In the morning, she found him fascinating, and he could hardly believe his luck that this tender morsel of womanhood was left by herself in a remote area. Xene was easy prey; all Jor had to do was show her a little concern and admiration. She felt special under his attentions. When he was ready to take her in his arms, she succumbed to her own desires.

The affair went on in secret until the seasons changed and it was time for Jor to move on. Even the midwives and medicine women did not suspect because Xene hid herself. She knew there was a child in her womb and she called it evil, cursing it and begging it to go away. But it came when a medicine woman was there and heard the baby's cries. It was a boy. The villagers were alerted and the elders, along with Josiah, gathered at the dovecote.

Xene was inconsolable, she hated herself and everyone else. "I've never seen such a frantic mother who would not look at or touch her newborn, let alone nurse it," the medicine woman told Josiah, "Her eyes have changed completely, she speaks only threats or strange delusions. She is broken."

Josiah pushed his way into the room where Xene sat on the hearth, her son's tiny body swaddled at her feet. The usual punishment for one who dishonored her sworn duty was exile and death. The villagers would send the offender into the woods to wander alone until they starved, died of harsh weather or got attacked by wild animals.

## Full Circle

Josiah knelt over Xene, pondering. "Give the baby to one of the village men whose wife is barren," he told the medicine woman.

A childless couple gratefully accepted the boy to raise as their own. When Josiah turned his gaze to the elders, it was with resolve.

"This is because of the drifter Jor and because of us. I blame myself. All of us took care to protect our own daughters in the village, but none of us thought to protect Xene. Instead, we let this happen. The rogue is gone, impossible to punish, but we should not harm this one. She is good now for pounding roots with the old women. The elders listened to Josiah and relented in the face of his compassion and shared responsibility.

Xene's resentment and shame continued to impair her mental health. She and Josiah blamed Jor for the rest of their days, although they never saw or heard of him again. Resentment clouded their minds in death, Josiah in his old age and Xene from an accident. When they met understanding beyond the veil, a plan was set in motion by their guides, teachers and angels to help them learn to love their enemy.

## Full Circle Part II

Johnny Winter pounded on a keyboard, shaking his white hair. The television speakers blasted surprisingly good stereo sound. Young people sat on couches surrounding the screen. It was 1973 and they'd each eaten a tab of acid half an hour ago; it was starting to come on.

In 1954, Xene had returned to Earth as Xiomara, the daughter of depression era parents in the southwestern United States. She relaxed on the floor near the bass speaker and started to feel the psychedelic drug affecting her limbs and her breathing. Bright trails of colors created a stunning visual in her hair when she turned her head. She couldn't help smiling.

Josiah had reincarnated in 1940 as Ken, born to a family in which grandparents migrated from the dustbowl. He sat on the end of a couch kitty corner from Xiomara. Catching each other's eyes, they felt an electric current pass between them. They believed they met at this summer party, as neither could remember the past life. Within three days they were bedmates.

"How do you feel about the institution of marriage?" Xiomara asked, expecting Ken to say, 'it's just a piece of paper,' which is what her 19-year-old peers were touting.

But Ken was 33 and more mature. "You want to get married?" he said with a smile, "then sure, I'll marry you!"

## Full Circle

He met her parents. It took only two weeks to arrange a sunset wedding on a sand dune behind Ken's apartment.

Her new husband had the kindest eyes Xiomara had ever seen. She was drawn to his rugged good looks, the Greek nose, bearded chin and long hair. Never mind his bald patch, wrinkles, and freckled arms; he was the first grown man she had ever dated. The boys she'd been seeing didn't treat her the way Ken treated her. His hands were big and strong, and he had calluses on his fingers from playing guitar.

Xiomara had fresh youthful skin, an ample bosom and shapely legs. She was insecure about her body, however, imagining herself fat and flabby. She had no idea that this was as good as her looks would ever get. Ken saw her beauty and she loved his compliments. There was no honeymoon, as Xiomara was training to be a nurse. She invited her classmates to the wedding and attended lectures the next day.

Graduation happened while her new last name still felt unfamiliar. Since Ken was an army veteran, the couple was able to buy a two-bedroom cottage in the corner of a date grove 20 miles from the hospital where Xiomara worked. Surrounded by conventional farms, neither realized the risks pesticide exposure would pose to their family. They also didn't think about the toll accumulated mileage would do to their old cars and how repairs would deplete their savings.

The cinderblock dwelling sat on a third acre parcel. Enough valencia orange trees grew there for the couple to enjoy pitchers full of juice all winter and spring. Ken grew a garden and Xiomara sewed their curtains. Inside, a red cement floor edged a giant fireplace. The house had one bathroom, a pipe in the wall for a shower, and no central heating or air. In winter the couple hunted wood and huddled by the fire, and in summer they sat under an evaporative cooler or slept on cots outside. But their new home seemed like paradise to them.

Two years rolled by, and a son was born, followed by a daughter two years later. Ken rented land to grow organic row crops and Xiomara worked nights at the hospital. She suffered irritability and exhaustion trying to stay awake until Ken could come home to care for the kids.

"I want to go back to school," Xiomara told Ken. "I already earn more than you do and if I get an advanced degree, I'll be able to make better wages and work fewer days. I think you should stay home with the kids and let me do this."

Ken agreed to take on the role of house husband. "If," he said, "you can do it with a smile on your face."

While Xiomara was in school the couple had another daughter, Eva, and another son they named Jon, unaware he had been Jor in their shared earlier incarnation. Jon started out as a very independent youngster because Xiomara was at work and school, and Ken was very busy with three other children.

## Full Circle

One day Ken was gardening and noticed 3-year-old Jon in the street. "Get out of the road!" Ken shouted.

The boy looked at his father, put his hands on his hips and planted his feet. "You don't tell Mr. Jon to get out of the road!" he replied.

Ken laughed and asked his son nicely to please return to the play yard.

Asked to remove some bushes while working a summer job, Jon extracted a whole row of them in an afternoon. The boss told Ken he had never seen a kid so diligent and determined.

"Other boys quit or make excuses after just a few minutes!"

In high school, Jon joined the football, wrestling, basketball and swimming teams. He excelled in every sport, while getting straight A's in all subjects even though he rarely studied. His teachers and coaches loved him and relied on him to help other students. Ken went to every game, meet or tournament and both parents swelled with pride at the many compliments and awards received by their son. Jon got a scholarship and joined a university team, hoping to qualify as an Olympic swimmer.

But before the end of the first semester, he called home, "My stomach hurts. I feel like I've been poisoned. I can't concentrate."

When their boy came home, Ken and Xiomara wondered if he'd started using drugs. He set fire to his bedroom. "The voices told me to do it," he said.

Their beloved, wonderful son sat in the dark at night and wept. Xiomara blamed herself for working while Jon was a baby and Ken secretly blamed her as well.

A psychiatrist and two social workers met with the couple after observing Jon for a few days. "Your son's diagnosis is schizoaffective disorder," they said.

A volley of medication trials followed, all of which had terrible side effects. The couple was heartbroken that the young hero had fallen ill and would never be able to achieve his dreams.

Ken and Xiomara loved the person they knew as Jon so completely; their devotion and care never wavered. He'd returned as their son, so that they would be compelled to love him. Because he'd had the promise of a great life and lost it because he lost his mind, Jon also gained understanding of what Xene went through.

## Full Circle

In a few more years Jon's older sister Eva would also become mentally ill. She had a son but was unable to provide for him. After Ken passed away, Xiomara raised her grandchild, who was the baby she had rejected in her previous life.

The roles played in these lives, or any others, were played on purpose. What seemed like tragedy proved to be only a valuable opportunity for personal and spiritual growth.