

Eternity: Here and Now

On his way to find Wendy, the hyena, Angelo, the deer, took a detour to visit Andy, the wise man in another desert. He arrived at dawn. Noticing that a faint lamp light seeped through Andy's window, Angelo knocked on the door ever so lightly, just in case the local healer was asleep.

Jumping to his feet, Andy ran to open the door. "Oh, my!" Exclaiming for joy, Andy hugged Angelo for a long time, "What brings you here again, Angelo?!"

Sitting across the table from Andy, Angelo recalled his encounters with Wendy and Hope, and his unresolved the question of how one might deal with the concept of "good might not get good."

"I'm not sure if I have the answer to your question either," Andy spoke softly and slowly, "but I wonder whether or not we back ourselves to a corner if we are looking for the remote 'eternity.' Once when I was a little boy, I met a fawn named Sam. Sam and I became the best of friends and we promised each other that we would 'always' be friends. Then one day, Sam decided that he was going to go 'experience' the world since he had become a grown fox. He promised that he would 'always' come back and visit 'because we are best friends,' he told me when we said goodbye to each other. I waited and waited, for years I thought I was going to die because he had not come back to visit. Finally when I reached young adulthood, I packed my bags and went looking for him. I climbed the mountains and crossed the oceans. I searched everywhere for my dear friend fox but I could not find him. I started to feel that I was terribly betrayed because Sam certainly understood that I believed his words, and that if he had valued our friendship, he would have come as he promised. I felt that our little un-ceremonial goodbye years ago was really an undeclared farewell then. With that feeling, I visited a monk in the deep mountains of Himalayas, for he was known to be 'the healer of the broken hearts.' The monk listened to me intently and then asked me, 'Do you still think that when he was with you, Sam entrusted his thoughts, his feelings and his whole being to you? Do you think that you were both 'present' then and there with each other?' I nodded and started sobbing. I cried for weeks. And the monk simply fed me and made sure that I had a place to lie down when I sobbed myself to sleep. When I finally ran out of tears, the monk said, 'I see that you mourned your lost. Now you have a decision to make. Do you want to keep hating Sam from now on and do not trust anyone else, or do you want to simply cherish the memory you had with him and give yourself fully to new encounters with others?' I couldn't answer his question then. Nor did I understand what he really meant. He said that his questions did not require an answer and sent me home. So I came back here, first I simply resigned to listen to others because I had nothing else to do. A few years later, a frog's life story and her contemplation took my breath away and I found myself giving my 'whole being' to our 'dialogues.' Gradually I learned how to do that with all 'meetings', how 'know' the 'other,' just as how I knew Sam and he me. Not that anyone ever replaced him in my heart, just that I have learned to cherish every such 'encounter' as a 'genuine relationship of the here and now' and not to count too much in

the future. 'Live in the present,' as they say..."

Angelo became more and more distraught as he was listening to Andy, "But Hope didn't have the 'present' with Jack. And he thought that he, perhaps, could count on a future with Jack, when his friend Jan was less insecure about their new friendship and then Jack could have a 'living dialogue' with him again. If you say that one shall only live in the present, then do we always have to give up a friendship that has no 'present'? And should Wendy not trust anyone who promises her a future but cannot give her much time and attention, in your words, 'meetings and dialogues,' for now?"

Andy fell into silence then.

After a long while, he replied, "Angelo, I have no solution to your problem of either how to deal with 'good might not get good' or what is the key to a long term relationship with anyone. But I do know that if you give yourself fully to the moment, it feels like 'infinity and eternity and always' are all experienced in the here and now. Over the years, this concept has given me an unimaginable amount of freedom and joy. And it has helped me not to disappear in the idea of the future just to escape the present, or to absent myself from the moment simply to live in the past...."

Angelo pondered on what Andy believed to be the helpful way for him. "It sounds like that Andy is a step further than what Hope resigned himself to, but is it better?" He voiced his doubt only to himself.

Thanking Andy for providing yet another option, Angelo continued on his way in search for Wendy.