

Brian undergoes a psychic awakening during six months with his grandfather in Alaska.

Psychic Awakening, The Source, the Truth and the Meaning of Life

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The Source, the Truth and the Meaning of Life

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ISBN 1-59113-263-0

Published by Dennis R. Picard, ND, USA.

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Dennis R. Picard, ND

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	THE ARRIVAL	7
Chapter 2	A TOUR OF HELL	15
Chapter 3	INDIGESTION	24
Chapter 4	BURIED IN BEANS	32
Chapter 5	LIFE	36
Chapter 6	WHAT LURKS BENEATH.....	42
Chapter 7	LIFE LESSONS.....	49
Chapter 8	SUSAN	56
Chapter 9	DAVID.....	66
Chapter 10	CRUMBLING IDEAS, CRASHING MARBLES	77
Chapter 11	WALKING IN A WINTER WONDERLAND ...	86
Chapter 12	THE GOOD FIGHT	94
Chapter 14	SOARING.....	113
Chapter 15	WHAT WE'RE MADE OF	123
Chapter 16	TEMPERS.....	138
Chapter 17	BEYOND THE VEIL	146
Chapter 18	BRASS TACKS.....	152
Chapter 19	CHRISTMAS CHEER.....	162
Chapter 20	FULLY AWAKE.....	175

Chapter 1 THE ARRIVAL

I groggily raised my throbbing head, and forced my eyes open through a crushing teenage hangover. My lightheadedness temporarily evaporated, however, as the shock of what was happening hit me square between the eyes. Mother had often complained how hard it was to wake me in the morning, but I immediately sprang into full awareness, and full terror. My name is Brian, and this is the story of my awakening.

Mother was in the seat next to me, conducting the ritual scouring of the purse. Her bag was so big she lost everything in it. Once she started whining “Where ARE they?”, and various profanities. There was no ignoring her. Her hairdo bounced, jewelry rattled, and her elbows swung around, until her goal was achieved. It was probably a swinging elbow that woke me up.

Finally, she succeeded, and that pill was out of the bottle and down her throat so fast, the little yellow guy never knew what hit it. Mother flopped back against the seat’s headrest, closed her eyes, and some of her gnarly, frustrated facial contortions began to melt away.

I immediately realized this to be my last chance for a “Hail Mary” pass, so I weighed my options, while giving her drugs enough time to work. I knew it had to be my best work. It had to be positive, self-effacing and sincere.

I began with a sweet, and rarely uttered, “Mom?”.

“Yes?” she grumbled, without moving.

“Can we please talk about this?” I asked, in the sweetest voice my sore throat would allow.

“There’s nothing left to talk about. You made your bed.” Rarely had my mother been so determined about anything. Sure, she’d threatened to ship me off to live with my crazy grandfather many times, but it had never gotten anywhere near this far. I felt the floor crumbling under my life.

I pleaded with her, “I’m sorry I got drunk last night, I was just freaked out about Charlie. Isn’t there any way I can make it up to you? Please Mom!” Had I planned the tears that rushed to my eyes, I would have felt pretty smug. Instead, they were produced by fear, and by the fresh memories of Charlie’s wake and funeral. The gut wrenching mental images, of my best friend, lying dead in a coffin, insisted on a constant space in my consciousness. I felt like a blubbering 2-year old. I pulled myself together as my mother was forced to explain my behavior to the flight attendant.

The lady asked, “Is everything OK here? Can I help you with anything?”

“Oh, thank you dear”, replied mother, then she whispered softly, yet clearly, “He’ll be fine. He’s just suffered the loss of a very close friend.”

The flight attendant said, “Oh, I’m terribly sorry to hear that. If there’s anything you need, you just let me know, OK?”

The stranger forced me to stop crying, and nod my agreement. Once I did, she went on her way. Of course, mother was able to fake a pleasant persona for a stranger, but I knew that was no indication of what I could expect.

Mother could be described as a high-strung, anxiety-ridden, confused mess, with terrible mood swings, which she felt the need to medicate constantly. She reminded me of a ship without a rudder, always looking for the next panacea to get her from Monday to Tuesday. She was overweight, wore too much makeup, and spoiled herself regularly at restaurants, the beauty parlor and the local spa. She dated at least twice a week, but eventually every man saw through her confident public façade, to the baffled little girl inside, and eventually stopped calling. She never married, but together, we endured and survived many painful separations. I hated to see mother hurt, but it was after her romantic breakups that we were the closest. Now, she was breaking up with me.

As I sat back in my seat to regroup for my next approach, the corner of my eye caught a glimpse of snow-covered mountains out the window. “Oh my God”, I thought, “We’re almost there.” The knife was twisted even further, no more than 5 seconds later,

when the flight attendant took to the microphone, to explain our imminent descent into what promised to be my personal hell, frozen over no less. Anchorage, Alaska, home of ice beards and dog sleds, just what a sixteen-year-old boy from Los Angeles dreams about, in nightmares. I buckled up, but didn't give up.

"Mommy", I said. This was really reaching, but I was out of options. "Please don't send me away, I promise I'll do better. I didn't mean to get drunk last night, but Charlie, he's gone!"

"Yes, it's awful", she replied, "but if I don't do this now, I just know you'll be next, and I'd just curl up and die if anything ever happened to you."

She turned, threw her arms around me, and planted wet lipstick on my cheek. That caused my attempts at civility to go right out the window. I pushed her away, wiped my face, and jeered, "Oh, mother, I'm sure there's a pill for that."

"Pills and booze aren't the answer to life's problems," she retorted confidently.

"Yeah, you're living proof of that, aren't you?"

"My pills are by prescription, young man", she scolded. She answered loudly enough, so that anyone who heard me could hear her too. "My medicine is ordered by one of the most respected doctors in California!" The mere mention of medicine sent her scurrying through her satchel again, until a larger white capsule was immediately discharged to join the pill party in her belly.

I was beat. Not only was the plane pulling up to the terminal, I also recognized the white capsule. It would make any further discussion impossible, in about ten to fifteen minutes.

I grudgingly followed my over-processed and overmedicated mother off the plane. Trying desperately to slice through the fog of my hangover, I considered options to get me out of there. All my numb brain could come up with was to stop walking when we got into the terminal. Of course, that was little challenge for mother, who quickly snatched up the short hairs on the back of my neck, and pushed me ahead. To avoid such pain and humiliation, I grudgingly walked beside her. I didn't want my grandfather to see me in such an embarrassing position either.

Mother seemed doggedly determined, and seemed to know exactly where we were going. The loud crashes from her shoes, as she slammed them down onto the tile floor, rang through my head, like cymbals crashing in my ears.

We found my grandfather reading a newspaper in an airport café. I'd never met the man, but I was well aware of how much mother disliked him. She had told me, repeatedly, that grandpa had abandoned us to go live like a hermit in Alaska. She said he never called or visited because he was a selfish old man, who disapproved of my father, and was very judgmental.

Whenever I asked about him, she'd make disparaging remarks like, "He's a know-it-all, he's condescending, he thinks he's God" or "I will not have him ruining our lives, like he did to my mother and I". She never explained what she meant, or offered any specifics. Whenever I pressed for details, she would just call him names, walk away, or change the subject. When I asked if we could call him anyway, she would say, "Igloos don't have telephones", and that would be the end of that.

"Daddy?" she said, like a schoolgirl about to admit to some bad grades.

"Blossom!" came the excited reply, over the sounds of crumpling newspaper and folding reading glasses. Yes, mother's name is Blossom, Blossom Sears, but mother always invited people to call her by the name of their favorite flower. My grandmother started it by naming her Blossom, then calling her Lily, after her favorite flower. I never picked a favorite flower, we just agreed on 'mother'. Mother never told me grandfather's favorite flower, but I was about to find out.

My grandfather stood, and said, "Land a goshen, sweet petunia, would you look at you!" He stretched out his arms to receive mother, but was rewarded only with a quick peck on the cheek and "How ya been dad?"

Dejected, he slowly began to reply, "Oh, I'm..." but before he finished, he noticed me, and said, "This can't be Brian. Why, you're already a man. Put her there, kiddo."

I complied, and soon realized that shaking hands was anything but casual contact for my grandfather. His light hazel eyes were like tractor beams, as they fixed on mine. He towered over me; about six foot four, and held my suddenly puny hand in his leathery mitts for at about 10 seconds. I felt like I was being scanned or probed somehow. His warm smile, surrounded by a manicured beard of white snow, and his hypnotically piercing eyes, somehow convinced me to ignore my immediate instinct to pull my hand away.

When he finally let go, he offered, "I'm very sorry about your friend, Charlie. Give it time, it'll get easier." I assumed mother had told him about the accident, but she never told me she had.

Then he said, "And don't worry, I've got just the thing for that hangover at home. Sit down boy, let's have a chat." I'd been demoted from a man to a boy in less than 30 seconds, but next to the thermal and wool clad frontiersman sitting across from me, I felt more like a floundering babe in the woods, than a man.

"OK, let's make this quick, I've got a plane to catch" was all the interest mother was able to muster.

A sad look came over my grandfather's face, but it only lasted a split second. He replied to mother, "Oh don't worry, dear, you'll be in Vegas, rolling 7's, in no time", as his sad face morphed into one of disgust. That moment was the first time I thought, "hey, this guy might be OK."

Mother's success in casinos was legendary. While she never flaunted her talent, many casinos, in more than one city, often paid her off, rather than allow her to gamble at their tables. I remember wondering how my grandfather could use her best skill to insult her. Regardless, I took a tickly pleasure in seeing mother cringe in embarrassment, like she was caught with her hand still in the cookie jar.

Then it was my turn.

"Now, Brian", he began. "I agreed to take you into my home for a while, but we need to get some things straight first. Like, how do you plan to pay for your room and board?" Oops, I

thought, enter the prison warden. I sheepishly turned to mother. She was fumbling with a cigarette, but looked up to catch my SOS eyes.

She said, "Oh, no, I can't afford to take care of you forever. I'm sure your grandfather has some chores and things that you can do, ain't that right dad?"

"Yes that's true", he said. Then the warden turned to me. "I will share my life with you, if you will share with me. That means we split whatever work needs to be done around the house, on a schedule. Living in Alaska is a little trickier than Southern California. So what do you say, do we have a deal?"

"What exactly do I have to do?" I tested. "And what if I don't?"

"You have to do whatever needs to be done. If you decide not to, there are plenty of caves nearby for you to sleep in. Of course, you'll have to share with the bears."

I felt like Superman being rapidly frozen in ice, with big chunks of Kryptonite in each pocket. I gave my terror one last voice by bursting into a beg fest, tears and all. I shrieked as passionately as a hungry baby, imploring my mother to have mercy. Don't dump me at the North Pole! Please! Not with Grizzly Adams! I bet he doesn't even have a TV!"

Calmly, my grandfather said, "Oh I have a TV, but it only gets 3 channels, and no MTV. I only turn it on for news and weather forecasts."

"See, mom", I reasoned, hoping I was making some points. "I bet all they get here are Grizzly Adams reruns and National Geographic. You didn't pack my video games, my Walkman, or even my music cassettes. What the hell am I supposed to do in the middle of a glacier, make toys with the other elves?"

I thought that was pretty clever, but it still got me nowhere. Mother could barely concentrate enough to avoid burning herself with her cigarette. She shook her head, as if to say, "Too bad", and offered no explanation. Finally, I had no choice but to pull out the big gun. I screeched at mother, "You're just like my father, running out on me!" I folded my arms, looked down, and hoped.

Timed correctly, that line had earned me unexpected presents, even vacations, but on that day all it got me was a slap on the back of the head, and a slurred “What a good mother I am” speech. As she droned the familiar diatribe about everything she’d bought me, places she’d taken me, etc., I started to realize she was actually glad to get rid of me. The “good mother” speech used to be an apologetic laundry list of failed attempts to relate to me, but this time, it was an indictment. She was glad to be rid of me, and she was medicated and drowsy enough to make my sentencing a vicious affair.

She ended with, “It’s time for you to grow up!”

It took me a second or two, but I finally faced up to my future. “OK, Santa, what do I have to do?”

“Well first you have to understand that I am not Santa Claus, what I give you will be earned. Nor do I celebrate Christmas. Right now I could really use some help with my autumn harvesting and canning. My garden is bursting, and I have to get everything picked and canned before the first frost. Can you help me with that?”

“Yeah, I suppose.” Didn’t sound too bad, it wasn’t chopping firewood or building igloos, I thought.

He continued, “Soon, you’ll be in school, during which time I expect you to study hard, as well as tend to chores around the house. I’m fair and generous, but I don’t put up with slackers, understand?”

I glanced over at my judge and jury one more time before agreeing to the terms of my incarceration, but her intense fascination with the smoke rising along her fingernails meant her pills were in full effect. I was on my own.

I tried to close the negotiation with a token win, by saying, “OK, I’ll do it, but what’s your first name? I don’t know you, so I don’t think I’ll call you grandfather.”

“You can call me grandpa, nothing else. Call your friends by their first names, not me.” We both noticed mother fighting to keep her head up, and her eyes open.

He added, “Now let’s get your mother to her plane.”

Grandpa could tell mother was tranquilized, but he neither scolded nor criticized. He escorted her through the terminal like she was royalty and he was her faithful butler. His whispers made mother smile, even chuckle once. I'd never seen anyone take care of mother like that, unless, of course, they wanted something from her.

It must have brought warm memories back for my mother because she showered him with appreciation and affection at the gate. As she stumbled down the ramp, into the care of the flight attendants, grandpa told the gate attendant that mother was afraid of flying, so she had taken a mild relaxant.

The warm blanket of caring my mother had just enjoyed was then offered to me. Grandpa smiled a fuzzy toothy grin, pumped his fists, like a coach before the big game, and asked, "Are you ready for an adventure, kiddo?"

"I guess" was all I could muster, but it was enough for grandpa. He wrapped his arm around my back, put his forehead against my forehead, squeezed me like I'd done something to make him proud, and said, "You better believe it!"

As grandpa led me through the terminal, I yawned, and felt like taking a nap, so I couldn't have been too upset.

Chapter 2 A TOUR OF HELL

I let grandpa's arm lead me through the terminal, but we didn't end up in a parking lot. Instead, I found myself waiting at a counter, until grandpa could inform the man behind it, that we were leaving.

I didn't pay much attention to what grandpa and the man discussed. I overheard something about the weather being clear, but I was too absorbed in my hangover and self-pity, to figure out what was going on.

Finally grandpa said, "Let's go Brian", and he started walking towards rows of small propeller planes I could see through large windows. Tired and emotionally drained, I followed, oblivious to what lay ahead. I was right behind grandpa as he opened the door and led me onto the tarmac.

A blast of Arctic air hit me like an avalanche. I yelled, "Whoa, shit! It's fucking freezing!" from somewhere deep in my diaphragm. Immediately, my feet stopped, and my arms wrapped around my black Metallica T-shirt, but there was little I could do about the draft blowing up my $\frac{3}{4}$ length, ripped and baggy jeans.

Grandpa slowly turned, grimacing, apparently trying to contain his anger, but then said calmly, "Watch your mouth, I won't put up with that nonsense. The only people who use that kind of language are either too stupid or too lazy to say the words they actually mean."

Then grandpa smiled and said, "Besides, it's only 50 degrees. It's still summer!"

Grandpa seemed perfectly comfortable in full length jeans, work boots, a tee shirt and a wool-lined parka that he left completely unzipped. Meanwhile, every muscle in my body was shivering and my teeth began to chatter.

Grandpa chuckled, reached out his hand, and said "Welcome to Alaska, kiddo. Come on, I've got something you can wear in the plane."

We jogged to what looked like a compact car with a propeller tacked on, and wheels propped up on stilts. Grandpa

opened a door, reached in and pulled out a bright orange jump suit. It reminded me of a prison uniform, but the lining was quilted and looked warm, so I didn't waste any time making a sarcastic remark. I pulled it on and zipped it up as fast as I could.

"Better?" asked grandpa. I nodded humbly, still shivering, and he showed me to my seat. As I stepped up with my right leg to enter the plane, the weight of my foot made the plane rock severely. I thought pulling myself up might make it tip over.

"It won't tip over will it?" I asked, apprehensively.

My query earned me a hearty laugh, a pat on the back, and a sarcastic "No".

Once I was in, I figured out how to buckle myself in, while grandpa carefully inspected the plane's exterior. Next, it seemed to take grandpa forever to check all the knobs and switches inside the plane. I tried to warm up by sitting perfectly still.

"Ready Brian?" grandpa asked cheerfully.

"As ready as I'll ever be."

"OK, then, hang on, and if you get sick, there's a bag right here. Alright?"

I was forced to accept the very real possibility of getting sick, given my tequila binge the night before, so I took note of the barf bag's location.

I playfully quipped "Onward and upward", in a futile attempt to laugh away my feelings of utter helplessness.

Grandpa smiled and turned the key. The engine started. A big plume of dark smoke blew out the side of the plane. Grandpa didn't seem to mind, so I didn't say anything, but the lump in my throat jumped skyward anyway.

The vibration was incredible. I felt like a paint can clamped into a mixing machine. I envisioned the bolts and rivets, that held the flying tin can together, shaking loose, and the plane falling apart mid-flight. The whirling propeller seemed close enough to reach out and touch. I swallowed deep and I checked my seatbelt one last time.

Again grandpa asked if I was ready. A sheepish nod later, we were driving towards the runway. As grandpa talked to the

flight tower on the radio, I started to calm down a little. This driving on the ground wasn't bad, so how scary could flying be? I started to take in some scenery for the first time. The airport was a big cement platform like any other airport, but the mountains on one side of it sure were impressive, I thought, if not foreboding.

Suddenly, without asking if I was ready, grandpa gave the engine full throttle. Speeding down the runway was cool. Faster and faster we accelerated in a straight line, until we started to lift off the ground. It felt like the floor had been pulled out from under me, which of course, it had.

The higher we went, the more nervous I got. I gripped two of my seat's metal bars, and felt like a stowaway on a space shuttle. I knew we were going higher and higher, but my eyes were glued to the riveted sections of aluminum under my feet, making sure the floor didn't fall out. There was nothing to see outside but sky anyway.

Grandpa was wearing a headset and microphone, so he didn't hear me when I yelled, "How long? How far is it?" Finally, I waved and he noticed me. He motioned to another headset, and hollered, "Put it on!"

Once I got into it, and we could hear each other, grandpa said, "We'll be climbing to 5,000 feet. I'll show you around the area a little, and then we'll go home." The idea of his home sent shudders up my spine. Soon it would be my home too. I clenched my fists and hoped it wasn't a cave, or a drafty log cabin, or built out of ice cubes. At that moment I craved heat above all. The higher we flew, the colder it got.

After what seemed like climbing halfway to the moon, we leveled off, and I could see the horizon again. Grandpa started pointing to mountains and rivers and things, but my attention was consumed by the vibration of the plane, which was markedly less than it was on the ground, but still quite nerve rattling. I could feel the wind blowing us from side to side, and the bouncing started to make the horizon look like it was bouncing instead of us.

I vaguely remember grandpa lecturing proudly about glaciers, eagles and other cold things, while I tried to find some

comfort in my skin. Instead, I found myself with an overwhelming desire to urinate. In fact, my whole belly felt like a sloppy bag of Jello ready to pop out in all directions, but my bladder demanded immediate attention. I asked grandpa what to do, and he calmly handed me a plastic contraption with a funnel on one end, and a sponge inside.

The piss bag was easy enough to figure out, but not spilling half of it was a different challenge altogether. I was violently shaking around in my seat, and was starting to feel nauseous, but I pushed on. I unzipped my prison uniform, maneuvered my jeans' zipper down, got into position and waited.

As I started to pee, an overwhelming wave of nausea came over me. Quickly deciding that vomit is more disastrous than urine, I reached for the barf bag with both hands, and hoped for the best with the pee bag. Of course the pee bag fell over and urine shot everywhere, like a baby boy who's diaper was just removed for changing. I puked my heart out, and felt like I would die, but I took some consolation in my ability to spill hardly any vomit. Some dripped down the front of my t-shirt, but the interior of the plane was spared. The stench of the half-digested tequila and strong urine, humiliated me further, as if that were possible.

Just when I thought I would puke up my stomach and finally die, I felt grandpa's hand on my shoulder. Soon after, I started to feel better. I closed up the barf bag and accepted a handkerchief from grandpa to clean myself up. I offered him the pee bag and the barf bag, but he said I could hang onto them until we landed.

Grandpa said, "We'll save the rest of the tour for another time. We're headed home."

"Thank God", I thought. Forgetting that the scariest part was yet to come, I decided I would probably live.

Suddenly, an alarm started to beep loudly and rapidly in my headset. I yelled, "Oh my God! Are we gonna crash?!"

"No, no, that's just the landing beacon. We'll be landing soon."

We went into a dive that seemed so steep, I felt like I was in one of those trick planes I'd seen at air shows back home. I trusted grandpa wouldn't pull a loop da loop, but the rapid descent was certainly scarier than any roller coaster I'd ever ridden. During the climb, I couldn't see the ground, but during our descent, I saw the vast expanse of hard, greenish-brown earth below us. I hoped grandpa knew how to find the runway.

Shortly, the runway did come into view, and I started to brace for impact. Instead of going down, however, we leveled off and flew right past it.

I dared find out if something went wrong. I asked as calmly as I could, "Wasn't that the runway?"

Grandpa answered confidently, "Sorry, had to check the wind direction first, now we're going in."

There was nothing I could do but watch and wait. The lack of control was the hardest part, but after displaying a total lack of control of bodily functions, I was glad I wasn't in charge of anything. We pulled a hard right turn that seemed to bring the plane to a 90-degree angle with the ground. I braced myself and worried about falling out the door, which was almost directly under me. Finally, after what must have been a full O-turn, we leveled out.

As we started to fly towards the ground, I stretched out my hands and feet fully to brace for impact. As I did, the plane jolted sharply to the left. Grandpa reacted quickly and leveled the plane again, and I felt the floor pushing back up against my left foot. My Adam's apple jumped up and tried to bite my tongue, but I swallowed it back into place.

Grandpa instructed, "Careful, don't step on those peddles, they steer the plane." I didn't need to be told twice. I pulled my feet back and locked them against my seat.

I took my headset off so grandpa wouldn't have to listen to my sound effects of terror, as we touched down. I was glad I did, as two small bounces and some tense braking later, I was a little hoarse.

I tried to follow grandpa's directions to help him clean and refuel the plane, and then to put it away in its hangar. I remember

feeling totally defeated, humiliated and humbled. I tried to do exactly as he asked, submitting to his direction, while silently craving rest.

I did my best to wipe up after my accident in the cockpit. Grandpa seemed very regimented as to the right way, his way, of doing things, but he was very appreciative when I took the initiative to wash up any remaining urine.

Finished, grandpa closed the doors on the corrugated aluminum box that served as hanger to the plane as well as a truck, lawnmower, gardening supplies, skis, snowmobiles, etc. There was no lock.

Just then, a small, dark person came riding up on an antique Columbia bicycle.

As the cyclist got closer, I guessed the olive-complexioned, and black-haired male to be about my age. His straight white teeth shone forth triumphantly as he ran to grandpa and hugged him excitedly. Must be a native, I thought.

Grandpa hugged him back and told him, "It's OK, I told you I'd be fine."

"No leaks?", said the excited man.

"No, Micah, no leaks, some liquid was spilled during the flight, but we were never in any danger, right Brian?"

After waiting a moment to let me squirm, and to let Micah become confused, grandpa added, "Micah, this is my grandson, Brian. He'll be spending some time with me."

Again, Micah's eyes lit up as he looked up at me and walked over to shake my hand. Taller than him, I tried to shake his hand with strength and pride, but I was overwhelmed by his enthusiastic handshake. My body and head shook like I was back up in the plane.

I was shaken, but not stirred. I was determined to adapt to and survive in the surreal world I was entering. My head throbbed as I did my best to make small talk with the over-enthusiastic Indian. I will admit he made me smile, and he and my grandpa sure seemed to have a bond, but at that moment I was cranky, to say the least.

Once Micah was done telling me how nice it was to meet me, and I answered a few basic questions, I turned to grandpa.

“Can we go inside, so I can clean up a little?” I could smell my bodily fluids, so I figured Micah could too.

“Sure, sure, would you like to come in too Micah?”

“No, I have to get back to my garden. I’m just glad you’re OK.” One more hug for grandpa, and Micah was on his bike, waving as he sped away.

Grandpa turned to me and said, “See, they’re canning too. I’m way behind. Oh, well, let’s go.”

Grandpa led me up a path, which I did not enjoy climbing. It was steep, and I got more exercise in that short hike than I got in the last 3 months. The 25 pound-or-so spare tire around my waist, made its presence painfully obvious. I was puffing and huffing, but I forced myself to not fall too far behind grandpa.

About halfway, grandpa was joined by a bird that landed on his left shoulder. Grandpa seemed to chat with the large black bird, its beak bigger than my thumb, and then the bird flew off again. Soon after that, I heard a dog barking from the top of the hill. It was the deep and authoritative bark of a big dog.

I celebrated privately as we reached the top, and a beautiful two-story, wood sided house, with enormous windows, was revealed. At first glance it seemed like a mansion, but I soon realized that the extensive decking surrounding the house made it seem bigger than it was.

As we reached the grass lawn surrounding the house, a quite large brown and black dog ran up to grandpa.

Grandpa called out, “Come here, Brutus!”

Brutus had medium length hair, a broad jaw, and drool soaked gums, hanging from either side of his mouth. Grandpa stopped to shower the dog with affection for a few seconds, then pointed to me and said, “That’s Brian, go say hi.” Instead the dog barked once more, then scurried back to the house.

Grandpa turned to me and said, “That’s Brutus, he’ll warm up once he gets to know you.”

Mother and I had always lived in apartments, so I entered the house with a certain reverence. Grandpa insisted I remove my shoes upon entering. I pulled off my dirty old sneakers, then went straight to the biggest bay window. I was stunned by a view that would have made Jack London or John Denver melt. Vast fields of grass and wildflowers extended for miles into the horizon, melding into distant forests. The countless trees kissed the feet of the far-away behemoths of virgin rock and ice. I felt like I was in a commercial for designer water. There was even a lake a few miles in the distance, partly hidden by some hills.

The modestly decorated living room had wood floors, wood paneled walls, a fireplace with what appeared to be a metal, self-contained fireplace inside. I would later learn it was a pellet fed stove, and keeping the tank full of pellets would soon become one of my jobs.

Otherwise, there were a few simple wooden chairs, and a small bookshelf with some local arts and crafts displayed in it. The huge bay windows almost made the room seem like a porch. While it was enclosed, and much warmer than outside, the large, sparse living room seemed like a natural extension of the spectacular scenery. I remember thinking that the room must be barely decorated, because no adornments could compete with Mother Nature's grandeur.

Grandpa tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Here, take these. They'll make you feel better."

I held out my hand, but grandpa said, "Don't touch them. Open your mouth, and I'll put them under your tongue. Just let them dissolve there."

I complied, and soon counted 5 little, round, sweet tasting pellets under my tongue.

"Now follow me." Grandpa led me across the dark wood floor towards a simple room with a bed, a desk and chair, and a clock on a nightstand. Another exercise in minimalism, I thought. The bed was made, and there were clothes on it.

Grandpa picked up the clothes, gave them to me and said, "These are for you. Sorry no rock and roll bands. And this will be

your bedroom. These and the other things in the closet should be all the clothes you'll need. If you need anything else, you let me know." Grandpa walked over to the closet and opened the door to reveal a variety of garments, boots and even a robe.

He said, "I've been looking forward to this for quite some time. Since the first time your mother called me with the idea six months ago, I've been collecting things you would need."

I was a little stunned by this display. No one had bought me clothes in years. When I needed something, mother just gave me her credit card and a spending limit. I usually bought only as much second hand clothes as I absolutely needed, and pocketed the rest. It was becoming clear that grandpa was really looking forward to my visit. For the first time, I began to feel welcome.

A courteous "Thank you, grandpa" was all I had to say, but I was actually wondering if this new situation might not be half-bad.

"You're welcome, now bring those clothes and follow me." He showed me to the bathroom. It was right next door to my bedroom.

He said, "Take your time, have a hot shower, and then we can have something to eat. OK?"

I agreed, and went into the bathroom. Again, grandpa's planning for my visit was touching. I found a toothbrush with my name engraved into it. There was also toothpaste, soap, shampoo, even disposable razors, all with Brian inked on them.

Thirty minutes later, I was tired and hungry, but showered, and starting to relax. My headache was lifting, the sun was setting, and memories of a ski lodge I had once stayed in came to mind. Memories of Charlie and I followed, as I sat in the desk chair, and my eyes wondered out the window.

Brian undergoes a psychic awakening during six months with his grandfather in Alaska.

Psychic Awakening, The Source, the Truth and the Meaning of Life

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