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Section One - Escorting My Mother

My brother, Séamus, picked me up at Cork airport on Monday November 15th 2010 and filled me in on my mother's latest condition. It wasn't certain that she would still be alive when we reached her home. He is a very fast driver, but now it was really Formula One time as he fishtailed his car around the tight bends on the secondary by-roads to my mother's place. We arrived at 5pm. Gratefully, she was still alive. She clasped my hands fervently and repeated, in mantra fashion, "You came home; you came home..." I spent the next 44 hours at her bedside. During that time her surviving five children (my sister, Eithne, had died of a brain aneurysm in 1995), and most of her 22 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren visited. And there were rarely less than 10 or 12 of us sitting on or around her bed, telling her stories, recounting significant and humorous incidents from the past, and singing her favorite songs to her. She died at 1pm on Wednesday November 17th.

As if on cue, people melted away, each to attend to some of the myriad tasks in order to prepare for the three-day wake which would take place in her own home around her own bed. I was alone with her in the silence. I climbed onto the bed and lay on my back beside her, clasping her left hand in my right one and pressing my face against hers. I wanted to escort her on this next phase of her journey, the Out-of-Body-Experience (OBE) that she was having, as her sense-of-self separated from her physical form and investigated its new condition. I lay there for an hour, visualizing what her experiences were, until the doctor arrived to certify her death.

I'd like to invite you to do the same, as a way to celebrate the Easter mystery.

Section Two - Escorting Jesus

Like my mother, and like all recently departed, Jesus' first post-mortem experience was an OBE: his sense-of-self, now separated from his physical frame, withdrew a little to get a different perspective on the events unfolding on Golgotha. He looked on from a distance as the various players watched his abandoned spacesuit hanging grotesquely from the cross. He saw and heard the jeering mob, delighting in the entertainment; he saw and heard the self-righteous comments of the priests as they attempted to justify the murder; he saw and heard the bored soldiers, who'd done this routine on countless other occasions, as they haggled over his clothes and cast dice for ownership of one seamless garment; he saw the haggard, strained, devastated faces of his mother, his beloved Mary of Magdala, his favorite male disciple John and Joseph of Arimathea who had really come good at the end.

It was probably Joseph who first realized that Jesus had died. As a member of the Sanhedrin he was known to Pilate; so now Jesus watched him whisper to the women and then rush away to ask Pilate if he might take charge of the body. Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus had died already, so he sent a centurion to certify it. Unlike the doctor who certified my mother's death, this soldier did not come with a stethoscope, but with a spear which he jabbed expertly between the ribs and into the heart. Jesus watched from a distance as the corpus gave one final sign of a life lived totally for love - it squeezed out a few drops of water and blood. It's as if the world had asked, "How much do you love us?" and he replied, "With all of my heart!"

Jesus went back, once more, to check on Joseph. Having received Pilate's permission, he was now rushing to a store to buy a burial shroud. Then he rushed back to Golgotha to oversee the removal of the body from the cross. Pulling the nails out was more gruesome than driving them in; the two Mary's turned their heads away. His mother sat on the ground and asked to have her son given to her one last time. They laid him as gently as possible on her lap, first removing the crown of thorns so it didn't pierce her also. She clasped him to her, just like she had after his birth, naked and bloody and messy. But, unlike that first time, now only one heart was beating; but it was beating wildly enough for both of them.

And the Magdalene bent and caressed his face; she, who just weeks before had wiped his feet with her hair, now used it to wipe away the spittle, the sweat and the rivulets of drying blood.

Joseph was very aware that the evening, and thus the advent of the Sabbath, was upon them. They wouldn't have time to wash and anoint the body because that was servile work and forbidden on the Holy Day. Gently but urgently he said, "Mary, we have to get the body into the tomb before the sun sets!" Numbly she gave up her son. John and Joseph gripped the corpse and began hobbling awkwardly towards a brand new tomb, Joseph's own, which had been hewn from the rock face.

Jesus watched and walked with them as they wrestled it inside and placed it on a flat slab. With one small piece of linen they bound the head so that the jaw wouldn't hang open, and, then, draped the long shroud under and over his body. The real preparation of the body would have to wait until Sunday morning.

He watched from a corner as the women hugged the body one last time, and then there was the sound of the great stone being rolled into place, grinding up some small pebbles that had been kicked into the groove. The final splink of light was squeezed out and there was utter darkness.

He could hear the muffled voice of Joseph giving directions about the placement of the stone, and the sobbing of the women; then the scuffing of sandals on the dusty pathway and the prayers of the women as they fervently wished the Sabbath away so they could return and properly prepare the body of their beloved. Then there was utter silence.

He was alone.

Then Jesus saw the tunnel and the white light beckoning. He swam towards it, whirling dizzily, and then he was in the presence of The Father. Their forms merged but not fully because his Earth work was not quite finished. He would agree to go back for 40 days (the deeply symbolic number of completeness.) But, for now, Father and Son looked back on planet Earth and on his mission of the last 33 years. Scenes flashed by rapidly and they both inhabited the moccasins of all the players in all the events.

It was a tale of two caves. It all began in a little cave outside Bethlehem, where he was born; and ended in a little cave outside Jerusalem, where he was buried. A

journey from a womb to a tomb. He smiled as he recognized the scenes: firstly, volunteering for mission, before time had begun; then fusing soul and body at conception - he who knew cosmic expansiveness accepting the cramped quarters of a zygote; then birth and a nurturing breast; his first visit, at age eight days, to the temple of Jerusalem; the strange words of Anna and Simeon; visiting the temple again, at age 12 years - a scolding from his mother who thought that he had been lost, and an adolescent rejoinder where he reminded her of both his and her true purpose.

He saw and ran his hands over the lovingly crafted pieces of furniture that his carpenter-father, Joseph, and he had fashioned; then the decision, at age 30, to step out of the shadows of his private life and into the Giant Shadow of humanity's public blindness; three hectic years of preaching a radically new, good message; tender, compassionate, healing touches to lepers and prostitutes, the mute and the blind; then the suspicion, the anger and, finally, the bloodlust of the authorities; the dull, narcissistic agenda of most of his apostles who vied for privileges in his messianic kingdom until they witnessed their dreams collapse in a single night; and, perhaps most disappointingly of all, the flip-flopping mediocrity of the masses who cheered him lustily and cursed him churlishly within the span of a single week that began with a joyful procession on Palm Sunday and ended just five days later in the ignominy of crucifixion; that final week would see the gifting of three sacraments - a new form of priesthood, based on the sacrifice, not of humans nor even animals, but of the ego; a new form of meal, the Eucharist, in which we would be invited to recognize the inherent blessedness of all life forms, even a piece of bread; a third sacrament, the Washing of the Feet - a call to service not power.

And that hectic five days would accelerate into a 24-hour blur in which he would be betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, abandoned by nine more of the twelve; subjected to five pseudo-trials - one in front of Annas, the ex-highpriest, one in front of Caiaphas, the incumbent high priest, one in front of an entertainment-hungry Herod, and two in front of Pilate. The final three hours were nightmarish in their intensity - crucifixion, invented by the Persians, imported by Alexander the Great, adopted by many middle-Eastern and Mediterranean cultures and used most widely by the Romans. The tree of life become the tree of death become the Tree of Life.

The review was completed. Father and Son agreed it was time for him to go back and solidify the fledgling movement of Christ Consciousness.

So he did.

Section Three - Escorting You

You, also, experience OBE's - every night when you dream. Your sense-of-self separates from your sleeping frame and has all manners of adventures, visiting distant locations and former incarnations, flying, bilocating, and cross-fertilizing among some of the parallel universes in which you currently star. Occasionally, you even have encounters with dead, loved ones. Would you like to have an OBE now, using Jesus as a guide?

Find the right place, with all lights and all noises turned off. Now shut down your external senses one by one, as if they were the burners on your cooker. Lie beside him, as I did with my mother, your hand in his, your faces touching. Now release your soul to travel back over your entire lifetime to date.

Do you remember volunteering for this mission? Do you remember carefully preparing, outside of time, for your journey in time? Do you remember examining each detail and possibility with your heavenly mentor? Do you remember the Launching Pad, when you and countless other souls assembled for final instructions as you headed off for mission in different dimensions and realities? Do you remember docking - the fusing of you soul with the cramped little spacesuit? Learning how to work the arms and legs? Somersaulting in the amniotic fluid? And what of your birth - was it long and labored and claustrophobic or did you just pop out?

Now examine your life in seven-year chunks. For each chunk look at who the important players were; what the important events were; what the important lessons were. I'm sure there were a few crucifixions along the way, with mobs and Judases, Magdalens and Josephs, soldiers and "justice" systems. Are you big enough now to

love all of them - offering forgiveness to some, healing to others, and gratitude to the rest? What is the narrative that now connects them all for you? Is it Victim or Mission?

You will be sent back, just as Jesus was, to fulfill the magic number 40 - whether it be hours or days, weeks or years. How will your understanding of your life's purpose have changed when you come back? When you turn the lights back on, who will you be? Will you have remembered who you *really* are? Your incarnational contract has just been renewed. You are to awaken more fully, help others to awaken, and, together, awaken the planet to Christ Consciousness.

You have toggled between the two caves, between the womb and the tomb, between birth and death; and it is often not obvious which is which: the womb of conception that birthed you into physical reality was the tomb of the launching pad that expelled you from Eden; and the tomb that will receive your mortal remains is the womb of your transition into the fullness of your Isness. They are two portals, two "thin places", two "Caol Áiteanna" which together choreograph the complex love-dance of pre-incarnation, incarnation, post-incarnation and re-incarnation.

They are life-in-the-round, the beginning-less, endless circle of God playing hide-and-go-seek with Herself.

The enlightened response is the ecstatic laughter of YES!.....

May God continue to hold you tenderly in the hollow of Her hand.

Namasté,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Seán". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the text "Tír na nÓg".

Tír na nÓg
April 2012