

Chapter Four

TRANSITIONS 1

Wonder is joy's secret.

LU



DS Pathways Available to All

Change, evolution, psychological growth, spiritual development — these are the dynamics that give dignity and stature to the human condition. They offer each one of us pathways out of misery, stupidity, resentment and misconceptions — into joy, life, intelligence, insight, compassion and respect for others, even for those who would define us in terms of our yesterdays and malign us in the name of "the truth."

The truth is not who I was or was rumored to have been, but who I am today — the person who stands before you and sings the music of his life in these very words. The truth of you is the man you are today, the very person who reads these words. Our choices change our lives. We are never the same today as we were yesterday, not if we dissolve fear and embrace the path of creativity.

SU

Wonder is Joy's Secret

To accept the challenge of the unknown is the only way to grow. True adventure can come anywhere. Whenever we move into the new and unknown with the trusting spirit of a child, innocent, open and vulnerable, even the smallest things of life can become the greatest adventures.

So glad you are cooking right along, moving into new unknowns, finding new magic in each moment, exploring yourself with fresh new eyes.

Wonder is joy's secret.

Much luv, L

SL

The Domain of Possibilities and Shifting Identities

There seems to be a borderline, as Tim Buckley discovered as a very young man in his twenties.

Here, on this side, there seems to be a degree of safety and comfort, if only because of familiarity. We are familiar with the things we like and wish to repeat. As well, there is familiarity regarding even our problems. Hey, at least they are *our* problems, not somebody else's heaped on top of us. On the other side of that amorphous, metaphorical line, there are enticements, novelties, possible new sensations, pleasures, ecstasies. And in that brief buffer zone between this side and that, there are tremblings, questions, temptations (should I?) and fears (but what if?). If we decide yes and take the leap, what might happen? And if we decide no, and don't take the leap, what might we have missed?

Poets and artists, rather like outlaws in some respects, take the leap, if not literally, then certainly in the tumultuous swirlings of their own mind (which in many respects is even more real and true and deep and intense than so-called 'reality'). They dare to step across the imaginary line. They dare to plunge into the "other" of themselves. They dare to leave security, morality, rules, laws, limitations, conventions, and explode into the nether reaches of whatever exists on that far shore. They dare to set sail upon unknown seas. They dare to step beyond social parameters and explore *themselves*.

And so I have explored myself at every step of the way, rather rashly in my yesterdays, more subtly today. I live primarily within the expanses of my interiority. That renders me mostly useless in the objective world, of course. There, nearly everything is reduced to functional fit: whatever "works." But I live in the domain of possibilities, shifting identities, wave forms that have lives of their own. They cast light into strange corners, many of which are radiantly beautiful, bursting with possibilities, options, and hope. Affirmation energizes every sense, every thought, every concept, every potential.

I see a child sitting on the sidewalk crying. She looks up at me as I touch the top of her head. I smile into her deep eyes and tell her, "This too shall pass. You are much stronger than you think you are." To another, a lovelorn friend lost in heartbreak, I quote the words of former Dallas Cowboy football star Michael Irvin from his Hall of Fame speech, "When they knock you down, look up, get up, and don't ever give up."

And to myself, I ironically observe how strange it all is for me. I see so clearly, understand so much, think so deeply, explore so courageously, and give so much of my heartsong to a few people I encounter here and there, and yet I almost never have the sense that I truly know anything for sure.

Once a long time ago, a friend of mine laughed as he quoted two people. One was musician John Cage, who said to a friend of his, "What do you know *for sure*?" The other was Miles Davis, who responded to nearly everybody's observations, opinions, or statements, with the words, "So what?"

Knowledge is final; it is locked into the past. But perception moves within the flowing timestream and is never the same. With each shifting moment, clear perception shifts too. I feel a kinship with Andrew Goldsworthy's *Rivers and Tides*. It's all about *change*.

JK Seeds Germinate in Darkness

Now that the New Year is underway, Spring is already in the air, a new time with new opportunities for fresh starts. Taking action gently, perhaps tentatively, however small it may be, generates the seeds of change, and change, in turn, brings new qualities of awareness, which generate new action and ever-new consciousness. A single step begins every journey, whether around the block or around the world, to paraphrase our old friend Lao Tzu.

Not easy, if one is in a bit of a funk, of course. But seeds germinate in darkness. Change starts slowly, from below, in quietude, where there may be nothing but emptiness, perhaps only moonlight, an occasional breeze in night's blue stillness. Gently, gently, quietly, and in its own time, new life begins. The past falls away like the seed's shell, and sprouts begin to sink roots into moist earth, and stretch upward, toward the light. All in due time, dear one. All in due time. I am with you every step of the way. You are not alone. And your garden can awaken in you everything you need for every phase of the journey.

As our mutual friend Willy the Shake once said, "Silence is the perfect herald of joy."

Much love, Lee

TC Difficult But Not Impossible

Transitions can be a bitch, can't they? One day 29, the next day — over the hill — Yikes!

I hope you had a chance to read the "Birthday Boy" piece I included in the "Aging" chapter. If you did, you know you are not over the hill. In some respects, you're only beginning, and things get better and better.

At the same time, you probably recognize in "Birthday Boy" some of the feelings you have been experiencing, not only the "scared to death" part, but perhaps especially the "meaning" part. What to do now? Does it just keep on keepin' on like this? — Nothing more than working a job to pay the rent and feed my dog? No more joy than playing in a rehearsal hall with my band, spending the night with my girlfriend, and getting a little loaded now and then? Is that it? Will my eyes be as empty and dead as those ground-down people who walk by me on the street?

With fear comes the desperation. What if my music doesn't take off? Should I pack my ass up, abandon everything here, and split to L.A. or New York? Do I have to stack the odds against me even *more* before anything happens? Do I have to journey through life's "dark trenches" and suffer hellaciously and maybe almost kill myself with drugs and booze before I can write a hit song? If I follow Tim's path that way, will I get the respect and appreciation I've paid all these dues for? Is there any way I

can earn a living playing music on my own terms? Have I shortchanged myself once too often? Is life shortchanging me? Is there any way out?

Scary stuff. Sure is. Especially since nobody can find your direction for you or answer your questions. All anybody can do is sympathize and give you whatever they know about these complexities. And what the hell good is anybody else's experience when it's YOUR life, not theirs, and YOUR crossroads, not theirs? Truly difficult — but not impossible.

When I was 29, my woman Jennifer told me not to worry. I wasn't even a man until I turned thirty. She was right. Not only that, but I soon discovered that I was the perfect age to meet women of the same age, and they and I were in the prime of our young adulthood. They looked more beautiful than ever, radiant, confident, in the fullest flower of their young lives, experienced but not worn out, eager, vivacious, and on the hunt for guys in the same age group. Heaven.

In my thirties, the almost unbearable confusion I writhed in as a teenager and young guy in his twenties was well on its way to being sorted out. I had a certain amount of experience under my belt, my body was in good shape (more or less), and as I learned more and matured more, I felt better about myself and others.

At a certain point when I had fulfilled a certain direction (the Tim years), I had to change directions. That was tricky, but only when I tried to force it. When I learned about courage, patience, and trust, and followed my heart as well as necessity, new doors opened, new opportunities presented themselves, and, much to my surprise, life took on meaning and new direction. Before, there was anxiety and emptiness. Now there was purpose and energy.

During the Tim years he and I both figured we would burn out and die early. We also figured that most of the great musicians, painters and writers we loved had explored booze and drugs to the max. Maybe if we did that, and stacked the odds

against ourselves and suffered like they did, maybe we could be as great as they were. After all, didn't nearly all of the music and films and books and poetry and paintings celebrate misery, heartache, pain, loss, fear, and multitudinous varieties of sufferings? Maybe if we swam in those same dark waters, we would become as great as they were, and gain the applause they garnered, and be rich, famous, and universally loved. Suffering sang like those Sirens on *Starsailor*, and seduced us. You read the story in *Blue Melody*.

I have since come around to seeing creativity in a different light. Not only creativity, but lifestyles. Psychologically, we were nuts, of course. I wrote about that too in *Blue Melody*. Perhaps more incisively, and with a more general audience in mind, I wrote about this misguided desire to suffer when I discussed the singer/songwriter Billy Roberts and the pop singer Patti Smith on my site [in the chapters of *Diamonds in the Sky* entitled “The Love of Suffering” and “Outsiders/Insiders,” respectively).

I once told a friend that I was thinking about leaving L.A. I was sick of the commercialized glitz, the insincerity, the phoniness, the superficiality, the hustle-bustle Hollywood crap. I just wanted to disappear, to get out of the musicstream, to go someplace where I could be anonymous. He said, "Can't you do that here?" He was right. I didn't have to go anyplace else. Not only that, but wherever I went I would still be me, still have my looks, my brains, my history, my strengths and limitations, my self.

So, how about staying right where I was? How about regrouping my energy and confidence, taking heart, staying straight, showing up and doing the work everyday, being patient, and trusting that if I were prepared and mentally honed, then whenever an opportunity presented itself, I could respond appropriately and effectively? The main trick was doing the work and being prepared. The work meant not only creating the music or the writing, but contacting the right people — and following up. It was one thing to want the spotlight, yearn for it, need it. Quite

another thing to have somebody say, "Okay, here's the spotlight. What have you got?"

It took me a while, but I finally learned what Maher Baba meant when he said, "Do your work as well as you can, then don't worry, be happy." He didn't mean just the "don't worry, be happy" part that everybody knows. He meant the first part too, which is indispensable: "Do your work as well as you can, THEN don't worry, be happy."

Nobody knows anything, you know? Nobody knows what's going to happen when they take a stand. If you take this road, you automatically leave the other road. What might that other road have offered? You'll never know. What might this road in front of you offer? Nobody knows. That's why a lot of people can't make choices, can't be intimate with a lover, can't pick between yes and no, can't commit this way or that.

But once you make a choice, you implicitly accept the fact that you can see only so far. Beyond that, things get misty, hazy, eventually as dark as night. All you can do is keep-keep-keepin' on, doing your work, setting anxiety aside, dealing with problems as they arise, putting speculations about potential future disasters out of mind. Regrets (past) and anxiety (future) only drain energy away from the now.

If you're on the music road, do the music road. It works out however it can. If it works out terrifically, then wonderful. If it doesn't, then necessity dictates change, which happens automatically. All you can do is follow Maher Baba's advice, right? Whenever fear washes over you, add more love. Meanwhile, show up, do the work, make the contacts, be prepared. Ignore the No's. Go for the Yes's. And when Yes happens, you'll be ready for it.

Whenever doubt knocks your door down, add more trust. Trust means you will accept and affirm whatever happens. You will give your all and do the work and be

prepared. The rest is *not* up to you, and you trust that. If it works out the way you want, great. If it doesn't, you don't cave in and kick your dog. You affirm whatever new directions necessity offers.

Each day you are a new person. Sometimes you change, and things change around you. Other times, things change around you, and then you change. Whatever happens, do your work, then relax and enjoy.

JK Shed Identifications. Smile at the Rising Sun

Your description of the way things transpired over the past couple of years was shocking to me, too — "the loss of my family structure and my sense of home as i had known it for so many years with my children was all gone. it was a shock to my whole system."

Throughout the night I have been thinking about you and the particulars you noted, especially your daughter's angry reaction toward you, and the fact that all three children seem to spend time with your ex-husband rather than you. My sympathies go out to you a hundredfold. It warmed my heart when you said, a little further down in the letter, "but slowly, we have all reached a new equilibrium....i have come to accept things as they are in a loving way...it has been a great learning."

A certain image kept appearing in my mind — a tidal wave crashing to shore, wrecking all of the houses, offices, stores and people's lives, then receding back out to sea, leaving total destruction behind. In the midst of that wreckage, I saw you sitting alone in your house and weeping. What else can one do?

Then a picture came to me, of your standing up, sweeping all the debris out of your house, cleaning out the past, the relationships, all of the identifications. It wasn't as

if you were throwing anything away. It was more as if you were dropping the identification with relationships that once were beautiful and intense, but which now had changed into something very much different from what they once were. It was, I guess, the acceptance you mentioned. Instead of clinging to memories of the way things used to be, and continuing to wish they were still that way (and hence suffering profound anguish, by virtue of that clinging and wishing and nonacceptance), it was as if you simply dropped all clinging, all identification, all resistance to the new, and swept the debris of those previous relationships and discontents out of your house.

You used the present as a shining opportunity to clean house and start a new life. You embraced the spaciousness of your freshly cleaned house, embraced the newness and the emptiness — which was, in fact, a new fullness, a new beginning, a new opportunity to paint a bright new canvas. It was an opportunity to drop the past, drop clinging, drop suffering, drop wishing for the old to return, and to turn a new face toward the birth of a new life — a fresh, clean start, unburdened by the past and its encumbrances, free of all yesterdays and identifications, a welcoming of a new time, a new life, with all of the spacious freedom in the world in which to create a new self, new relationships, new ideas, new work and new love.

I saw you stand up, wipe the tears from your face, shed identifications with the past like a terry-cloth bathrobe, smile at the rising sun, and set to work building new energy, getting in physical shape, consciously forgetting the unchangeable and painful past, being alert and aware when memories started intruding on your consciousness, detaching from them, chuckling at them, setting them gently and lovingly aside, returning to the present and its vitality, generating new ideas, new dreams, new directions. . . It was not as if anything were lost — the memories were still there. The key to the new beginning was the *dropping of the identifications* with them. Therein lay your freedom. Therein lay release, and with it, rebirth into a new time, a new place, a new life with new creative energy.

I guess that's why I breathed more easily when you said, "I have come to accept things as they are in a loving way," because that recognition of the past and what it is, and how identification with it can totally enervate life-affirming energy, is truly the beginning of rebirth, do you agree? And rebirth, like a flower emerging from a stem, or the shoot of an oak tree peeking out from its acorn in the spring, is the beginning of new life. Is there life after death? Of course there is — every day. True, we must choose it, affirm it, utilize awareness and attention, and be willing to give our energy to it in order to generate new energy. And when we do, Universe starts pouring its own energy into us, affirming and supporting us.

First, a dropping of identification with the past, then a sweeping of the debris from our psyche, a cleansing of body, mind, spirit, the creating of inner spaciousness — then that new psycho-spiritual spaciousness gives room for new energy to pour itself into your heart and soul.

In darkness, alone, afraid, isolated, none of this seems even remotely possible, and for a while mourning is absolutely necessary and understandable. But after mourning, and with the kind of acceptance you have described, and the life-affirming efforts we are talking about here, then anything and everything becomes possible once again. You, too, are a toddling child, with a whole new life spread out before you.

The white space you speak of is a kind of blessing, like a new canvas. That emptiness is its very own fullness. Away with old colors, old shapes, old forms, old qualities of feeling and doing. Awaken with openness, awareness, a kind of waiting quality, alert, gentle, alive, receptive. Goodbye to yesterday. Hello to the shining Now.

As Kris Kristofferson once sang to his tired, discouraged musician friend, "Pick up that ol' guitar one more time, you can do it." And he did.

There is something so strange and at times frightening about this middle time of life — distance from parents, children growing up and phasing into new perceptions, husbands and wives changing and shifting, all the earlier dreams and goals coming to a head one way or another. Everything seems so unsettling and upsetting, even painful, chaotic. And yet it all seems natural, too, rather like nature's way of changing seasons.

And so we are reborn into new light. We unfold into new dimensions previously undreamed of and totally unexpected. Not easy if we cling to the past. But if we shed the skin of the old and stretch our arms to the rising sun, the light washes us clean, and we can begin again, thrilled once more with anticipation.

I am with you every moment, J. Keep me posted.

Love,
Lee

SL Confronting Limitations: Waiting, Watching

My own perspectives are radically shifting. For a while now, I've been walking through a kind of tunnel, keeping fear and trembling in check, trusting that all will become clear soon. As clarity begins to emerge, I see that I am coming to a point of transition, a rather scary one at that.

Nutshell: I think I've taken my talents and creative energies in music and writing as far as I can. I've explored all sorts of writing forms — novels, poetry, essays, major interviews, letters, reviews, screenplays, and all forms of reading, from classics to modern writers, fiction to non-fiction. I've delved into reading/writing as deeply as I can and have done a good job.

Same thing with music — have played guitar in a dozen different genres (folk, pop, jazz, other peoples' music, my own music, have listened to everything from the lowest chakras to the highest), and have pushed my abilities to their limit.

I don't think or feel that I can take these domains further, deeper or higher. I am confronting my limitations, looking over the edge, peering into an abyss, which is even darker than the forest in which that abyss appears. And yet I neither fear nor hope. That feels rather liberating, you know? There is a sense of wonder about this exploration.

As an athlete (I used to be a football running back and track runner/jumper), I learned how to detach from fear; how to breathe and relax in incredibly violent and/or challenging situations. I learned how to wait, how to not push the river, how to float in the not-know zone as reality unfolds. I learned how to be clear-headed, aware and observant even if anxiety crept in from the back door. Like Siddhartha (in Hermann Hesse's novel), I learned how to wait, when waiting is the only appropriate thing to do.

So that's what I'm doing. Waiting, watching, not panicking, remembering and appreciating what I have explored and accomplished up to now; remembering my age and the nature of fulfillment, completion, new stages and new beginnings.

In short, it may be time to release identifications and open the next door to — to what? There's the abyss — the big question mark. Instead of backing off with bitterness, overwhelmed by fear and trembling, I'm looking through the eyes of curiosity, adventure, wonder. What might tomorrow bring? Will there even BE a tomorrow?

Will keep you posted as things move along.