

The Outsiders



by

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The Outsiders:

Inside Out

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We must be willing to let go of the life we
have planned, so as to accept the life that is
waiting for us.

-- Joseph Campbell

Prolog

The Outsiders is a story of what could happen in the world and what is possible in human nature. The Outsiders' story is not meant to be a fantasy and I believe that there are already such individuals in the world and they are making some small difference. But humanity is at that stage where we need more help. The story of the Outsiders is the story of a group of whole and enlightened individuals who have set out to do just that. Will they succeed in the end? Is their mission doable or just a deluded fantasy? The Outsiders' first change to the world is themselves and they hope the world will follow.

If we know that another way exists, then we will know that it is possible to reach it. That is the message of the Outsiders.

These first two parts describe the Outsiders' psychological nature and their culture and set the stage for further inquiries into other possibilities.

This segment of [*The Outsiders*](#) is being released as a free e-book. I prefer to bypass traditional publishing and establish a more direct relationship with the readers. If you like the story and want it to continue, please send a [donation](#) as your vote for the story to continue. If the story is appreciated and acknowledged, then I will be encouraged to continue the exploration and inquiry into further possibilities.

Thank You!

Part I

I

It was another day in the big city and Jason was having an argument with his younger brother.

"So what's wrong with people being a little different? Not everyone can be the same." Jason was exasperated as he tried to deal with his brother's narrow mindedness.

"Aw, come on Jason, you know what I'm talking about. These people walk around indifferent to the world, to the rest of us. They don't care. I can see why you call them Outsiders; they don't even try to fit in with everyone else."

"Look, we have the same argument all the time and nothing is resolved. Let's just let them be; they're not hurting anyone and you have to admit they're peaceful types that just keep to themselves."

"You let them be if you want. I don't like their attitude, even if they don't say anything. We're all stuck in this life and they shouldn't walk around so high and mighty."

"Okay, Bill, we'll talk about it another time."

Bill walked away with an irritated look on his face.

For Jason, the mystery of the Outsiders was an ever-present puzzle. He did not know any of them, or even talked to one of them for that matter; but there was a nagging curiosity and he knew he would have to unravel the puzzle sooner or later.

~

The world had become a dangerous place in recent years with terrorism reaching many of the larger cities. There was also financial insecurity as taxes were raised to pay for military expenditures. Then there were the climate issues. The warnings were incessant for as long as he could remember but political wrangling had blocked every attempt to deal with

such important issues. All this together instilled a sense of helplessness and impending doom. It was no wonder that everyone was tense and stressed.

And then there were the Outsiders. They walked slowly and calmly thru the chaos, untouched and apparently unconcerned. It was a mystery that even the media had overlooked.

Jason was a journalist by trade and had an eye for people and how they moved in the world. This was one story he would have to get on his own – he was sure his editor would never buy into it. All the stories these days were about the terrible things that were going on in the world; and the “positive” stories were light, fluff pieces on community service or the latest movie star scandals or some other “feel good” piece without much substance. But today was going to be different; it was time to find an Outsider and meet the mystery head on.

The city was pulsing with fast-paced activity, but much of it was stress-induced and gave the false impression that speed had something to do with purposefulness. People were hurrying because they felt something had to be accomplished, even if it meant going from point A to point B as quickly as possible when there was really no need to do so.

Jason got off the bus and headed for a busy part of town. He decided he would slow his pace and let everyone overtake him, figuring if he came across someone at his speed that person might be an Outsider. At least, that was his plan. He hadn't decided what he would do or say if he came across a likely suspect.

As Jason wandered the busy sidewalks, he spotted a middle-aged man slowly coming his way. He had a strikingly serene look on his face. He had to be an Outsider, Jason thought, but all he could do was to stare at him. The man gave Jason a faint smile and kept going without breaking his stride. Jason continued his walk and vowed to contact the next person in some way. It didn't take long before he noticed another – a young woman with a child

in hand. She had the same serene composure as the man before. This time Jason was determined to do something. He stopped as she approached and made eye contact with her, hoping that she would stop and engage him. She paused only briefly as they looked at each other and Jason could feel her inner peace. It was a wonderful feeling to experience peace in the midst of the bustling crowd. She passed by him while he was lost in the reverie of that peaceful moment.

Jason was bewildered. How could he contact an Outsider if they were so self-contained and peaceful within their world? There was apparently no need for them to engage anyone. He stopped and sat on the steps of an apartment building. The juxtaposition of their peacefulness and his obsessive quest for understanding suddenly made him very tired. He sat with his chin in his hand, lost as to what to do next, as if the most important thing in his life had no way of being accomplished. That's when he noticed him. He was standing across the street leaning against a utility pole and looking at him. He had a slightly amused look on his face. Jason felt irritated that his efforts were being rewarded by a clueless street walker who had no idea what his task really was.

He decided to cross the street to see what would happen. The guy seemed harmless enough but he was no Outsider, at least that's what Jason thought. He approached the man as if he was given permission.

"Hello"

"Hi"

"I noticed you watching me from across the street. Was there something you found amusing?"

"I was observing your plight."

"Plight? What plight?"

"I was watching you as you were walking. You were walking slow and determined and I didn't understand your purpose until you stopped in front

of the woman and child. You were trying to make contact but didn't know how."

"Yes, but why would that interest you?"

"It's unusual to find someone who is not rushing in blind haste, as most do these days."

"I'm a journalist and I take time to observe people and patterns that most are not aware of."

"So, you are working on a story?"

"No, this is just for my own information."

"Just who or what are you interested in?"

Jason was somewhat reluctant to reveal his suspicions to a complete stranger, but he had a sixth sense that this person knew more than he was letting on.

"I've been observing people in the city who are not part of the muted hysteria that is going on these days. These people are calm and serene. I call them "Outsiders" since they are not a part of everything else that is going on."

"Outsiders – that's an interesting description. What else do you know about them?"

"Nothing, really; I just have a nagging curiosity about them and I'm certain there is more going on with them than meets the eye. What I really want to know is how they can live in this world and yet not be a part of it."

"Ah, you do have an inquisitive mind. And what will you do if you find the answers to your questions? Will you write a story?"

"I don't have any plans to write a story. I don't think my editor would even like the subject. I just want to know because I think it is important to find out."

"Okay, I can appreciate your quest for truth. Why don't you come back here tomorrow at this time and I can tell you more."

"You mean meet under this light pole?"

"Well, you can find truth in the most unusual places these days," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Okay, I'll see you tomorrow then."

~

As Jason walked back to his apartment, he wondered if he really met an Outsider. He didn't know what to expect, and this guy seemed so normal and down-to-earth. He knew one thing: there was no turning back now; he was going to solve this mystery no matter where it took him.

Bill was back at the apartment and immediately noticed a change in Jason's demeanor.

"Where did you go today, you have a strange look about you."

"I went downtown to do some investigation."

"Is it your Outsiders obsession again?"

"I think I met one of them."

"Maybe now you'll be able to expose them for what they are."

"And what are they?"

"I don't know, but I expect that you'll find out. And don't pull any punches. I want you to find out why they are so strange."

"I'm going to find out, you can be sure of that."

II

Jason's life as a journalist was uneventful. He was given routine assignments such as community events and the occasional investigative piece; but there was a longing within him to cover important events that affected the world. The story of the Outsiders could be an important story but it was not mainstream enough for his newspaper.

~

Jason awoke in the morning with a sense of expectation, that something important was about to unfold. He told his brother he was going downtown and would meet the Outsider again. For once, his brother's complaining tone was absent. Perhaps he could sense the seriousness in his attitude and decided not to ride him about it. Jason even felt slightly nervous, something that he rarely felt. It was a rainy day and he decided he would go downtown a little early and have lunch at a deli near where he met the Outsider. That would give him a chance to go over his thoughts and decide what questions to ask and keep his wait in the rain to the minimum.

He walked into the deli. It was one of those owner-operated businesses that are so prevalent in the city. The deli was small, but it was immaculate and the colors were warm and inviting. Jason made a mental note to visit the place again. He ordered a cold sandwich, chips and juice at the counter and sat in a booth so he could have a quiet place to go over his thoughts. After a few minutes the girl at the counter indicated that his sandwich was ready. He went to the counter to collect his food and noticed the serene face of the girl. He was so preoccupied with the meeting that he hadn't noticed her earlier. *So they are a part of the world after all.* As she was getting the change out of the cash register, the "Outsider" that he met the day before emerged from the kitchen.

"Hi, my name is Nick. Would you prefer to meet here over lunch?"

"I'm Jason. Sure, anything is better than standing in the rain."

Nick followed him to the booth and sat across from him.

"Janey, would you bring me a grilled cheese sandwich on sourdough, and a glass of water? Thanks."

"Do you work here?"

"Janey and I own the place."

"I see."

"I was taking a break yesterday when we met. You stood out from the crowd and I was curious about you, so I followed you for a bit. It's a big city, and given the fast pace, I guess the 'Outsiders,' as you call them, stand out if you are paying attention. And you being a journalist, I can see why you are curious."

"It's more than curiosity. My brother thinks I'm obsessed with them. I think there is something special in their way of life. But I really don't know much about them. I think that if they can remain so calm and serene while the world is in chaos, then there must be something worthwhile in how they live."

"You may be surprised to know that it is not a way of life; it is a way of being. That distinction is very important."

"You mean that you do not live by a set of standards or beliefs?"

"That is correct. Think of it more as a transformation of being such that the end result is a person who is peaceful and serene. And from that inner peace comes the behavior that you have observed."

"So, simply put, calm people live and behave calmly, while stressed people act stressed and erratic."

"Yes, that is the long and short of it."

"Are there a lot of Outsiders in the city? You don't mind if I use that term, do you? I need some kind of referent so we can discuss them."

"That's okay with me. Actually, the name fits in more ways than you know. Yes, there are many of us, but it's not possible to know the numbers."

Some of us know each other and there is an informal network. Mostly we help Newcomers with getting a job or foothold in the city. It should be no surprise to you that we do not fit in with the mainstream, so we have to fend for ourselves.”

“The impression I am getting from you is that Outsiders are solitary in nature. So why are they living in a big city?”

“We have to live somewhere. There are many resources in the city and anonymity is assured in a large population. I think in a small town we would be noticed and probably gossiped about. We are quite free here.”

“I know there is more that I want to find out, but I didn’t have time to prepare my questions. Is it okay to meet again?”

“Sure. If you come around two, I’ll have more free time to answer your questions. Any day is fine.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow then.”

They both shook hands and Jason left.

~

While taking the bus uptown to the office, Jason had a little time to think about his encounter with the Outsider. *There is much more going on here than I ever imagined. The Outsiders are probably a subculture, but they are too solitary and independent to acknowledge it. This has all the makings of an interesting story, but I know they do not want the attention.*

Jason decided to pitch the story to his editor anyway, fully knowing that it would be rejected. He just wanted to hear the excuses first-hand. Jason walked into the editor’s office to find him pouring over the latest story.

“Hi Bob, you got a minute to listen to an idea for a story?”

“Sure, go ahead.”

“You know, I’ve found an interesting sub-culture in our city—”

“Hold on. The city is full of sub-cultures. We don’t have time to investigate them.”

"This group is different--"

"Of course they are different; that's why they're a sub-culture."

"What I mean to say is I think there is something important to be found in their way of life."

"Like what?"

"They are so calm and peaceful in the face of the strife that is going on these days. Their secret is surely worth knowing."

"Maybe they take drugs or pray a lot. You have more important things to do and you know it. I'd like you to cover the charity event downtown on Thursday, the one with all the celebrities. It's about world peace, so you might find some peaceful types there. Interview one of them if you want."

"Okay."

Jason walked out of the office with a suppressed smile. *Well, there it is – intellectual curiosity at its finest*, Jason thought sarcastically. He didn't expect anything different from his editor so it was not a disappointment.

~

Jason dressed in his tux and headed for the World Peace Charity Event. As he arrived he found throngs of people surrounding the entrance hoping to get a glimpse of their favorite celebrity. It was a typical charity event; everyone wore their own brand of peace symbol as they spoke with endless passion about their current project to create peace in the world and their need for funds. There was a frantic energy in the room that almost bordered on desperation. World peace seemed out of the grasp of ordinary citizens and out of the reach of governments to quell terrorism, so celebrities took on the cause with all the passion they could muster.

As Jason scanned the room, he thought of the Outsiders and what he felt and learned from them so far. *It seems to me that inner peace is a requirement for world peace. Peaceful people do not create conflict or make war.* That simple statement summed it all up for him. He knew that the

bumper sticker mentality that was so prevalent these days would have no effect on world peace. But people probably felt better making some kind of statement even if was only a lapel pin or bumper sticker.

Jason was now more determined than ever to find the secret of the Outsiders. The world needed their secret. People needed to find the inner peace that the Outsiders exemplified so there would be no motivation for conflict. He could put up with these superficial events as long as he had hope. This was the kind of story he was craving all his adult life – something that would make a difference in the world.

III

The morning arrived and Jason decided to formulate his questions to Nick early in case something unforeseen came up. He realized that it would be impossible to know all the questions in advance since his understanding of the Outsiders at this point was very limited. But the chance to meet and communicate with one of them was like meeting someone from a lost tribe never before known to humanity.

Bill was having breakfast when Jason came down to eat.

"What are you up to today?"

"I'm going downtown for another meeting."

"Did you find out anything about them yet?"

"Not much, but I only had a short meeting yesterday. Today I will be prepared."

"Keep digging."

~

There were a lot of basic questions he wanted to ask today, and he would let the answers lead him wherever they went. This was a basic interview style that he knew so well.

After an hour or so of relaxed thinking and note taking, Jason was ready. He took the bus downtown and headed straight to the deli. Janey was at the counter as before. She smiled and said hello.

"Nick is in the back. I'll get him."

"Hi Jason. How are you today?" Nick said as he emerged from the kitchen.

"Pretty good. Do you have time now for an interview?"

"Sure. Let's go to a booth."

"Is it okay if I record this?"

"I thought you were not writing a story."

"I'm not. It's just my reporter training. I find that I can organize and understand the proceedings better if I have some kind of record."

"Okay. Let's start then."

Before asking his first question, Jason took a moment to study Nick's face. He found a serene face with intense eyes that did not waver for a second. Nick was completely relaxed, at peace and confident as if he had the entire universe on his side.

"I guess the first burning question that I have is, why have you chosen to reveal yourselves to me?"

"You said it yourself – you are almost obsessed with finding out what we are all about. I think your quest for truth outweighs all other considerations. That is a pure motivation and is one that we can trust."

"Thank you for telling me that; I really appreciate it."

"You're welcome."

"My first impression of Outsiders is that they are peaceful and serene. And the city is just the opposite; it is fast-paced, stressed and almost frantic. So, what are you doing here? And why do you even want to be here?"

"Well, you must be a good reporter. You are asking the right questions right from the start. But there is more to us than meets the eye, so you will have to be patient as I explain. It may take a while before you get the big picture."

"Okay, I promise to be patient."

"The simple answer to your question is that we want to interject our peace into the chaotic mix of the city. You may have heard of monks chanting and praying in faraway monasteries, but we have decided to live in the middle of chaos to show people there is a way out. And if we reach sufficient numbers, we hope we will have an impact."

Jason was taken aback by Nick's direct and honest response. His answer was something he never expected.

"Has it helped at all?"

"We don't attempt to quantify our influence – we just show our face in public and let it go at that."

"Do you have public meetings? I mean, do you recruit others? How do others know to come to the city?"

"There is no formal effort to find others. Those that are like us eventually find out there is a community here. They find their way here. There might even be a few websites out there that discuss it. We just keep an eye out for Newcomers and give them whatever help they need."

"This is so fascinating," Jason said, abandoning his detached reporter persona. "The Outsiders are actually committed to healing the world!"

"Yes!"

Jason tried to contain his growing excitement and returned to his pre-determined interview plan.

"Do you want the world to know about what you are doing? Do you need help to promote your cause?"

"No, because when it becomes a cause, it is then an intellectual issue. We are trying to affect others in a non-verbal manner. I was watching when you tried to contact the woman with child. You felt something and it made you stop in your tracks and ponder. This is the type of effect we want to have. If our cause is publicized, then we become objects of interest and study. That would defeat our purpose, our anonymity."

"You are right. But knowing what I know, I feel a need to help in some way. This is such an important thing the Outsiders are doing. You seem like genuine monks doing good work for humanity."

"I understand your desire to help. And we are not monks nor are we affiliated with any religious or spiritual movement. You may be able to

understand us better if you come to one of our informal gatherings. I think you would learn a lot that way."

"I would like to come to one."

"Next Tuesday evening we will be meeting at DeLong's Books. It's a small bookstore at 2465 Lancy Street, just a few blocks away."

"I know where it is. Around seven is okay?"

"Yes."

"I'll see you then."

~

Jason left with a sense of elation, feeling like he was on the cutting edge of some immense change in the world. He could not believe it was happening. He had hoped to ask more questions, but there was only so much that could be digested in one sitting.

Jason boarded the uptown bus. It was time to go to the office and see what his editor had in mind for him. Whatever it was, it was no match for the story that was unfolding before his eyes.

IV

For the rest of the week and throughout the weekend, Jason's mind kept coming back to the Outsiders. It was the matter-of-fact response of Nick that the goal of the Outsiders was to heal the world that would not leave his mind. He was waiting in hopeful anticipation that the Tuesday meeting would reveal even more of their secret world.

Jason also started a journal and planned to keep meticulous notes. Even if he wanted to write a story on them, he didn't think anyone would believe it. But it wouldn't hurt to document everything he saw, thought and felt.

~

Tuesday came and it was soon time to leave for the Outsider meeting. Bill noticed Jason's restlessness as he was getting ready to leave."

"What's going on? You seem all wired up."

"I'm going for another meeting."

"So what's different about this meeting to make you so jumpy?"

"This is an informal gathering of the Outsiders. I'm not sure how many will be there, but I get to see them interact. I'm hoping to understand them better."

"What's going on with them? You haven't told me anything yet."

"I've only been getting bits and pieces, but I should have a clearer picture after tonight. If you're waiting to hear all the weird stuff about them, you may be disappointed. The one Outsider I met, Nick, seems as normal and down-to-earth as anyone. It's just that there is this deep peace that exudes from him."

"There's got to be more to them than that. Why do they walk around so detached from the world?"

"I guess when you have that kind of peace, the world does not hold much interest. There's nothing they need from the world except their physical existence."

"Hmm... Let me know everything you find out."

"I will."

~

Jason arrived at the bookstore around 7:00 and found it full of people. They were all browsing or reading books and he couldn't tell if they were customers or Outsiders. He saw Nick and approached him.

"Hi, Nick. Is this the gathering?"

"Yes."

"What should I do?"

"Just browse through the books. There is no planned agenda so everything will happen spontaneously."

"Okay"

Jason was thinking that some kind of otherworldly event was about to take place but there was just silence for the longest time as the Outsiders poured over the books. Then a conversation finally started.

"John, did you hear of any Newcomers recently?"

"Not directly, but Bob in the Rose District heard from another that there was someone new in town."

"Are they being looked after okay?"

"Yes, I think so."

There was more of this type of talk as the Outsiders sought to find out if any Newcomers were arriving in town. Then a new line of questions caught Jason's attention.

"Did anyone pick up someone new recently?" asked Nick.

Only one person responded.

"A young man, around 20, approached me and wanted to know what I was all about. I said we should meet again, so we are meeting tomorrow at a coffee shop."

"Good. You may have heard about Jason here – he's a journalist and has been observing us for some time. I made the unusual choice of approaching him when I saw that he wanted to contact us. He's not writing a story about us, although I bet he is keeping thorough notes."

Jason smiled when he heard that.

"He wants to know all about us so I am slowly introducing him to our world."

The group looked over Jason and nodded their heads in understanding.

Shortly after that the gathering dispersed and Jason walked back to the deli with Nick.

"So, that's all there is to a gathering?"

"Yes, it is something like an informal business meeting. We get caught up with current events and offer assistance if someone is having a problem."

"I don't know what I was expecting; maybe something more on the spiritual side."

"You are thinking of a prayer group or something like that. We are not in need of inspiration or spiritual guidance. We are all committed to the same mission and we help each other accomplish it as best as we can."

"You mean your mission to heal the world?"

"Yes."

"I'll have to take some time to think about all of this. There is one area that I haven't gone into and I think I will have to go there soon. I don't think the big picture will be complete until I find out how you became what you are. I'm fairly certain you weren't born that way, so there must be something else that happened."

“Well, we were *all* born that way, including you. And something else did happen; it happened to all of humanity, and some of us were fortunate enough to free ourselves from it.”

“That sounds a little mysterious. But let’s wait for another sit-down meeting to cover that. Okay?”

“Sure, anytime you want.”

“I’ll come by in a couple of days.”

“See you then.”

V

Jason needed to discuss the Outsider events with someone who might understand them so he called his friend, Beth. Beth Grantz taught at the local community college. Her area of interest was social psychology and social movements so she might take an interest in this. He would meet with her before seeing Nick again.

~

Jason arrived at Jilly's, a coffee shop near the campus. Beth was already there so he ordered a coffee and joined her at the table.

"Hi, Beth – it's been a while since we sat down and talked."

"Yes it has. I remember that we always had interesting conversations."

"Well, today will be no exception. I've come across a unique sub-culture in the city with an interesting mission."

"A mission? Sub-cultures are not that organized. They may be more like a voluntary society, where individuals with a common mission band together."

"Yes, I think your description is more accurate."

"Tell me more about them."

"I've been observing them whenever I am downtown or in crowded areas of the city. They stand out from the crowd because they are serenely peaceful and go at their own slow pace."

"I admit that is a little unusual for this city."

"There is more. I made contact with one of them and explained my interest in finding out what they are all about. He agreed to meet with me."

"Did you tell him you were a reporter?"

"Yes, but I also told him I was not writing a story but had a genuine interest in understanding them."

"Okay, go on."

“Well, they explained that their mission is to inject their peace into the chaos of the city in the hopes of effecting some kind of change. They really want to heal humanity, and not by chanting or praying in some faraway place but by getting into the thick of it.”

“Wow. How many of them are there?”

“I don’t know, but I think they are all over the city. There might be hundreds or more.”

“This is really interesting. Do you think it is possible for me to meet one of them?”

“They do not want to be the object of study. They said it would interfere with their anonymity and affect their mission.”

“Okay, but I want you to keep me apprised of what’s going on with them.”

“I will. But there is something you may be able to advise me on. I want to help them in some way, but writing a story may cause them more harm than good. There must be something that I can do to help them with their mission.”

“Please tell me that these people are not deranged or anything. I mean, there have been groups before that wanted to save the world, but they have been very bizarre.”

“I went to one of their informal gatherings at a local bookstore. They really are serene and peaceful like monks. My contact, Nick, is so down-to-earth that I can’t imagine any bizarre behavior coming from him. The rest of the group I saw was totally dedicated to the mission. It’s in their blood; it’s not a philosophy that they are following.”

“Maybe there really are good people like that trying to fix the world. It gives one hope just to think it is possible.”

"Yes, I feel that hope whenever I am around them. It's like they know what needs to be done and are doing it. I just don't know what I can do to help."

"Well, I have an idea. And I don't think it will jeopardize their anonymity."

"Go ahead."

"You probably know about the peace march that is scheduled for next month. It will go through downtown and then to North Park for a rally. They expect a huge crowd. Why don't you suggest to them that they join in the march? You said that they want people to notice them but they don't want to reveal their mission or world. This is a perfect opportunity for them to 'inject their peace into the chaos of the city.'"

"Hmm... That's a great idea. I'll ask Nick if he wants to attend."

"Not just Nick. All of them."

"All of them?"

"There is no registration for the march, you just show up and walk with everyone else and are completely anonymous. Can you imagine all that peace concentrated in one place? It's got to have some kind of effect."

"Yes, perhaps it would reach critical mass and impart the type of peace the world really needs. Thanks for your input, you are helping more than you can imagine."

"You are quite welcome. And don't forget to keep me informed."

"I won't forget."

VI

Jason decided to bring up Beth's idea at his next meeting with Nick. But first he wanted to know how they came to be what they are. It seemed improbable that so many people just happened to be that peaceful and then decided to work together.

~

Jason grabbed his voice recorder and headed for the bus. He knew that he would discover the missing link today, the answer to what makes them tick. He entered the deli and found Nick and Janey working behind the counter.

"Hi Jason" said Nick. Janey smiled in her usual detached manner.

"Hi. I see you are busy today. Should I come back later?"

"Why don't you have something to eat until the crowd thins out?"

"Okay."

Jason ordered a sandwich and took his time to eat and think and observe the customers. After about 20 minutes, most of the customers had left. Nick came over to Jason's booth and joined him.

"You look like you have something on your mind."

"Yes, there is something I want to speak to you about, but it can wait until we finish the interview. Today I want to cover what I feel is the last piece of the Outsider puzzle: how you came to be what you are."

"Okay. I'll give you the short and concise version so that it does not get too complicated."

"That's perfect."

"We all start out life innocent and uncorrupted. As we grow up, one of the things we go through is the socialization or conditioning process. Our parents, and then the schools, impress upon us what we must learn and the nature of the world we live in. This process is not optional for most of us and we must swallow it whether we like it or not. One of the unfortunate side-

effects of this conditioning is that we must hold everything inside and maintain it there, and it is difficult to let go of things we no longer need. As we become teenagers and young adults, we start looking at the world with a critical eye. We find that the world is not like what our conditioning tells us. And this starts an inner conflict that begs for resolution. Many intelligent children feel alienated because they do not accept their conditioned view of the world nor is their own view fully formed. They only know that they do not belong anywhere. This alienation can drive the child to drugs, bizarre lifestyles, and rebellious behavior – all in an effort to avoid resolving what seems to be an unresolvable conflict.”

“That makes sense so far. I’ve seen many youngsters go through a difficult time transitioning to adulthood. My own transition was not that easy either.”

“What can happen next may happen at any age but often happens to these youngsters when they feel there is nowhere else to go. They reach a point where they can no longer cope with their inner turmoil and confusion and some commit suicide after they conclude it is impossible to live in the world. Others take a proactive approach and decide they want nothing more to do with their conflicted inner world. They abandon it by focusing outward until their inner turmoil dissolves.”

“That is the other meaning of “Outsider” that you alluded to?”

“Yes. The inner becomes a place that cannot be managed, so they abandon it by going out of it – by leaving it behind.”

“What happens to their inner world after that?”

“It is emptied, cleared out. When the parental and societal conditioning is gone, what remains is an inner emptiness that begins to fill with the joy of life. When the conditioning is absent, they can see the world as it really is and no longer fear it. And from that point onward, anything is possible in life.”

"So that's the whole thing? It's not as mysterious as I expected. It is very courageous to throw off one's burdens at such a young age. It must be a difficult thing to do."

"Yes, it is a somewhat traumatic process but it is over fairly quickly."

"All the Outsiders have gone through a similar process?"

"Yes, that is our way."

"That is a fascinating account that I am sure I will be thinking about for days to come. But now there is something I would like to ask of you. You have told me that the Outsider's mission is to show their face to the world so that others can know the peace of their existence."

"Yes."

"What do you think of the idea of appearing as a group and yet still be anonymous?"

"How would that happen?"

"You may know of the Peace March that is coming up next month. It is going through downtown to North Park. The Outsiders could walk as one group. The other groups would likely carry peace slogans and banners but the Outsiders would embody real peace. I think it could make an impact."

"Hmm.... That is an interesting proposal. Let me ask Janey what she thinks."

"I overheard your conversation," said Janey. "I like the idea. We've been doing the same thing for years – just walking the streets. I mean, I think what we're doing is a good thing, but maybe it's possible to have a greater effect."

"I'll get the word out to have a meeting at the bookstore, and if this group agrees that it is a good idea, then we'll spread the word around the city. I'll let you know the outcome. We have around three weeks until the march, so there should be enough time if everyone agrees. Stop by or call and I will keep you updated on our progress."

"I will. And thanks for being open to the idea. I think it will be an interesting event for all of us."

Jason left the deli with a satisfied feeling, that he was able to help in some way. He was looking forward to the upcoming march. He had a premonition that something momentous would happen.

VII

Jason kept in touch with Nick and found that those he spoke to thought the peace march was a good idea also. They agreed to spread the word around the city to meet at the starting point of the march at 9:00 am. How many might actually show up would not be known until the day of the march.

~

It was pleasant and sunny on the day of the peace march. The Outsiders met at their pre-determined location downtown. This was the first time so many met in one place and a few hundred or more had already arrived. There wasn't a lot of talking between them but there was a contented glow on their faces as they looked over each other, seeing themselves in the other. Each one drew energy as they validated their mission by the other's presence.

The march started and the Outsiders walked at their usual slow pace. They carried no banner, no slogan – they exemplified peace in their very manner and demeanor. This was in stark contrast to many of the groups that dressed in costume or carried placards to express their point of view.

Jason was also there but on the sidelines. He wanted to observe them and any reactions from the crowd. He brought his camera in order to take a few pictures.

After about twenty minutes the Outsiders came to an area of the city where families with children were watching. No one could have predicted what happened next. Spontaneously and almost all at the same time, children ran from their parents to where the Outsiders were walking and joined them. The children all had a big smile and the Outsiders seemed happy to have such innocent company. The parents were shocked and ran to their children.

“What are you doing, Bobby? Who are these people?”

“I don’t know. I like them. Can we walk with them?”

“Okay, but you don’t have to hold his hand. You don’t even know him.”

The children all pleaded with their parents and most of them relented and joined their children in the march. The parents didn’t know what to make of it but after a short while a smile appeared on their faces. To see their children happy made them happy too. This scenario repeated itself several times during the march and the crowd of Outsiders, children and parents grew. The entire group was easily over five hundred by the time they reached the park.

Jason stayed on the sidelines the whole time and watched it all transpire. He was not surprised that children, with their uncorrupted innocence, would be drawn to the Outsiders. The Outsiders, in their own way, had many of the same qualities. Jason also noticed that some in the media had trained their cameras on the group for longer than might be expected. He wondered if they would become a news item and was concerned that the Outsiders might be exposed.

Jason found Nick at the park and approached him. “How did everyone enjoy the march and their young visitors?”

“It looks like everyone was happy with what happened. The children are such a blessing to be around. Their uncorrupted nature should be the norm in the world.”

“I hear you. I was watching on the sidelines, even took a few pictures. There was enough joy, happiness and peace in your group to fill the entire city. And I don’t think it went unnoticed. I saw a few camera crews taking time panning your group. It is possible that curiosity may be aroused when people view it.”

“I guess it’s inevitable that we would be discovered one day. We do not fear or solicit change; it’s just a part of life and happens when it happens.”

“What will you do if the Outsiders become a news item?”

“We are still anonymous. We appear to be an organized group but no one knows anything beyond that.”

“Maybe I should write a pre-emptive article so we can tell your story on your own terms. Once the media gets hold of something it may take on a life of its own. It is better if we control the facts.”

“I’ll ask around and see what everyone thinks. I’ll let you know.”

~

When Jason got home he revealed all he knew about the Outsiders to his brother. Even Bill, with his hostile attitude towards the Outsiders, found the details fascinating.

Jason knew that it was a great risk to bring all the Outsiders together in one place. Something was certain to happen and it might do more harm than good. He was determined that the Outsiders would not be harmed in any way.

It was time to approach his editor once again. He would show him pictures of the march and describe the story he would write based on his knowledge of the Outsiders. As long as he had exclusive access to them, he could tell the story on his own terms and no one could question it. He expected that Nick would approve this step as it was the best way to deal with an emerging problem.

~

Jason heard from Nick and he approved the plan to present the Outsider’s story while still maintaining their anonymity. Then Jason met with his editor who saw the appeal of the story.

The news article and picture (specially angled to avoid showing faces) drew a lot of interest. There were many letters to the editor about the story. One comment stated, “They are like guardian angels right here on Earth. We hope their peace can counteract some of the chaos in the world.” After the

article appeared, it was picked up by the news services and appeared in newspapers around the country. Then, Larry King Live asked Jason to join the show for an interview. He brought Nick along so the Outsiders story had a face to it. Nick joked that he would not be able to take long walks for a while. The final step was an appearance on the Oprah Show. She was fascinated by what the Outsiders were doing to heal the world. It was one of her more interesting shows.

Jason was certain that his introduction of the Outsiders to the world was the right thing to do. The mere knowledge of their existence had offered hope to so many.

After several months the public fanfare was over. Jason had collected numerous offers for high paying jobs at prestigious newspapers but he wasn't sure what he wanted to do with his life anymore.

VIII

Jason's time helping the Outsiders was finished – there was nothing more he needed to do. The thought of going back to the world of journalism no longer interested him even with the lucrative job offers that came in as a result of his public appearances. Anything he could do from this point onward he felt would be anti-climactic and meaningless. It would all pale in comparison to his discovery of the Outsiders.

Jason sat down in complete resignation that there was nowhere else to go. He sat and stared at a painting on the wall. It was an abstract piece with no apparent meaning. He stared and stared because he no longer wanted to deal with his own reality – the world he carried within him for so many years. He knew from Nick that this was the way out – the way that the Outsiders took. But leaving it all behind was not a frightening prospect – there was nothing he wanted to go back to anyway. As he stared, the room started to fade away. The picture filled his consciousness, although it no longer had any meaning – it was just a focal point for the process. As the process became intense and uncomfortable, he told himself that he was leaving – going out and not coming back. The intensity soon reached a climax. The light in the room then became a blinding white presence that engulfed him and burned out his consciousness. And then it was over. A calm, a peace remained where doubt and despair once was. There was a vast emptiness within him now, but it was filling with a rising joy that told him he was one with the universe. And then the meaning and understanding of the Outsiders world was clear as a summer day.

Humanity has indeed been healed. I can see it with my own eyes. And the world will know it when they see my face.

Jason took a bus downtown. It was a good day to take a long walk.

Part II

IX

Jason's life was transformed. The self-emptying that occurred left him in way that he could not anticipate or prepare for. Everything felt new to him. His senses were alive and each ordinary experience was fresh and vital. He wondered if he would ever get used to this and if this sense of aliveness would fade.

Jason took long walks downtown. The city was noisy but his peace was unfazed. Had he not known the Outsiders he would likely have stayed away from this din and sought more peaceful surroundings, but their mission was one he now adopted. He didn't know if anyone noticed him but it did not matter. The Outsider's goal of healing humanity was an honorable one and it helped keep him focused. It was so easy to get lost in one's musings. He felt so light at times he thought he could just float away as a disembodied spirit. When the pull to let go was too strong, he would go to the park, sit on a bench, and get lost in the sights and sounds of nature.

He hadn't seen Nick since his transition and he thought it was time to drop in to the deli. As Jason walked into the deli, Janey immediately noticed the change in him. And Jason noticed her reaction at the same time. His perceptions and intuitions had become extremely acute since that day.

She said hello and called for Nick.

Nick came out and welcomed his new-found brother.

"Hi. I see there has been a change in your life since we last met."

"I came 'out' as you can see."

"I'm very happy you made it. Are you having any difficulties adjusting?"

"Not really. I'm just getting used to seeing with a new set of eyes. Everything is so alive. It's a joyous experience."

“It’s always wonderful right after the transition. Are you able to work your regular job?”

“I’m on vacation for a few weeks.”

“Are you going back to reporting?”

“I need to make money, so I have to go back to work. I like reporting and finding out things, but my high expectations were not to be met on the job. On the other hand, my curiosity to ‘find out’ helped me find the Outsiders.”

“I’m glad we met. And the outcome of your discovery is a positive thing for us and those that take an interest in our mission.”

“Do people notice us now that our *modus operandi* is known?”

“In general, there are more people stopping us and asking what we are all about. They aren’t curious in the celebrity sense, but actually have a genuine interest in understanding us.”

“So it *is* really good for all concerned.”

“Yes, very much so. Oh, we are having an informal meeting at the bookstore tomorrow night. You might want to come by. I’m sure the others will be happy to see you.”

“I’ll be there. I’m part of the community now so there is no reason to remain so solitary.”

“Very good – I look forward to seeing you there.”

As Jason walked back to the bus stop, he felt happy that there was a community of like-minded individuals that understood what he went through. It seemed miraculous that his transition actually happened and the Outsiders world existed. He was still certain that the joy and peace of their existence would have an effect on the world. Wherever he went, he could feel his peace envelop the restless and fast-paced crowds that passed him by.

~

Bill had taken an interest in Jason's new life now that he had a brother and Outsider all rolled into one. His questions were fewer but his attention to Jason's demeanor grew.

"Hey Jason – been out for your afternoon walk?"

"Yes. The weather is perfect for walking these days."

"I think I am starting to understand the peace of the Outsiders. Whenever I see you, I can feel your peace. You seem to be detached; somewhere else, in a peaceful world."

"I am still here in this world. But I have a sense of another place within; a place of stillness, peace and joy. This sense pervades everything I do. Sometimes I just want to stay there, but the rest of the world is out there," he said, holding up both hands.

"Do you think you will ever be able to adjust to it?"

"I think that's the challenge. I know that Nick is comfortable in the world. I'm sure a balance is possible; I just don't know how long it will take."

Bill just smiled at Jason. He had a sense of pride and admiration for his brother. He didn't think he had the courage to do what Jason did, although he wasn't exactly sure what he did.

X

It was Tuesday and Jason entered the bus on his way to the Outsiders meeting at the bookstore. The last week or so had been a time of happy bliss where the woes of the world did not intrude. He was looking forward to meeting some of the Outsiders. Even the thought of a friendship was in the back of his mind.

As he walked into the bookstore, he was greeted by silent and attentive smiles that spoke louder than any applause ever could. It was a welcoming moment that said so much.

Jason walked through the stacks and found a few books to scan through. As was the apparent custom, there was a period of silence until routine business was talked about. This time there was more talk of individuals approaching Outsiders to find out what they were all about. The news was very encouraging – people wanted to know about the Outsiders world and how they could enter it. There was also talk of an individual in the city, like Jason, who had made a similar transition. Jason was hoping he or she would come to the next meeting.

After the meeting dispersed, three young men approached Jason and asked him if he would like to join them to listen to music. He wasn't much of a music fan, but he was glad for the chance to be around other Outsiders in a social setting, so he agreed.

The four of them started walking uptown and after a half-mile or so they stopped at a small, converted garage.

"You live here?" asked Jason.

"No, this is where we go to make music."

"Oh, so you are all musicians?"

"Yes."

Jason had never been this close to live music and was curious about the type of music they would play. As he entered the garage he noticed a

keyboard, a bass guitar, and a small saxophone. There was also an electronic device that he couldn't figure out.

Before getting organized the three of them introduced themselves. The sax player was Ed and he seemed especially friendly. The guitarist was Lenny and the keyboard player was John. They all emanated a joy that made Jason look forward to hearing their music.

John switched on the electronic box and it started to play a rhythm through the speakers sitting on a table. It appeared to be an electronic drummer. After a few adjustments he got the tempo where he wanted it. Then he started to play some chords. They were pleasant and repetitious. Lenny came in next with a bass line. Now the sound and rhythm started to get into his head. It was hypnotic. Ed smiled and raised his saxophone. He started playing a very sweet sounding melody that complemented the rhythm. Jason's head began swaying with the music. There was nothing in the world but this wonderful sound. After a few minutes Ed paused just long enough to say, "Can't you just feel the love?" It was true – the music embodied love. Not romantic or sensual love, but the kind of love that touches the whole world. It was all-encompassing just like his inner peace. The two qualities seemed to go together and he was so grateful to have experienced it.

The music continued for almost ten minutes and then concluded. The three musicians were glowing as they exuded the love that their music touched. Then Ed suddenly said, "Let's walk!" They couldn't contain their love and wanted to bring it out to the world. That was the Outsider way.

As they walked, Jason realized there was something new and wonderful. He usually walked enveloped by his peace, but this feeling of love was alive and vital. He felt that the four of them could burn a hole in the universe and release all the sorrows and woes.

The three musician friends had stopped in front of a bush and were kneeling down. He joined them to see what was so interesting. They were watching a spider web. Ed was saying how beautiful the symmetry of the web was. The other two were watching a drama with a spider and a fly that was trapped in the web. They knew the outcome, but they watched in rapt attention anyway.

The four started walking again. Lenny commented that real life was far more interesting than anything you could find in books or television. The walk was interrupted by these nature scenes every few minutes. It was hard to believe that nature was so alive in the midst of a concrete jungle. But there were squirrels, birds and insects and they all had a life going on if you just paid attention.

After a few more minutes a young man approached the group. He seemed a little agitated and restless.

"Hey. You guys seem to be high on somethin' good. Can you turn me on to it?"

"We don't do drugs," said John.

"Come on... You guys are trippin' on somethin' good, I can tell. I just need a little somethin' to take off the edge – somethin' to make me feel good."

"I can see that. We're just high on life. It's free and there is no hangover."

"You expect me to believe that there are people high on life in this crazy city?"

"Well, here we are. You don't have to believe anything – it is right in front of your eyes."

"Oh, man, I really need whatever you got."

"Okay, you can walk along with us and have as much as you want."

"Great!"

The three friends smiled at each other. Jason thought that this scenario must have happened before. This was becoming very interesting.

The four of them walked as a group and Jason walked slightly behind. He preferred to be the observer so he could understand the dynamics of the situation. Jason wondered what he must be feeling, walking amidst this group of "high on life" individuals.

"Hey, I'm waitin' to get some of that stuff you are on. You said I could have as much as I wanted."

"That's right," said John. "Life is all around us – just take it in."

"What kind of bull are you feeding me? I need something NOW!"

"I can only tell you what we are experiencing. If you don't want any part of it, then there isn't anything we can do for you."

"You mean yer really not doin' any type of drug?"

"That's right. We're free of the need for anything like that."

"I don't have time to figure out what you guys are all about. I gotta go."

"Okay. Good luck to you."

The guy walked off in a hurry to find a quick fix to his problem.

"You handled him pretty well," said Jason.

"We've had similar encounters before. Sometimes they become really curious how we can be this way without drugs. Did you notice the confused look in his face as we started to explain? He couldn't figure us out but he couldn't reject us either. Perhaps he will reflect on this encounter later."

"Are all your walks this interesting?"

"Frequently. Last week a squirrel followed Ed for two blocks after he gave him a peanut. I thought he was going to have to adopt him!"

These guys have got a good sense of humor. It's going to be fun and interesting to walk with them. Jason took Ed's phone number so he could contact him later. He thought they could become friends.

XII

Jason had started to think about many things in a manner he never knew before. He was used to thinking logically and linearly, but now thoughts were rising from his inner silence without any effort on his part. It's like his current interests were being worked on below his conscious awareness and then percolating to the surface at random intervals. These rising thoughts were insights he felt he could trust. This was his inner wisdom.

A few days later, as Jason sat on a park bench soaking up the natural world, he watched as poetic phrases emerged from his silent mind. They were inspired by the love music he experienced a few days earlier. He never had any interest in poetry and was surprised when it occurred. He knew he would have to write it down. Whenever thoughts rose from his inner silence he gave them full respect. He had a small notepad that he kept in his back pocket – a habit from his reporting profession. He opened to a blank page and started writing.

*Common love is an illusion,
It wants us to possess that which gives us pleasure,
It tells us to pursue the object of our desire,
It does not see beyond itself.*

*True love has no object, no goal;
It is just love.
The love where there is no "me"
and "you" is the rest of humanity.*

When Jason read what he had written, he was amazed. It seemed like the beginning of a good poem, but it was a mystery how he was able to

write it. The only thing he could conclude was that the transition had changed his entire being, including his thought processes. He wondered what else was in store for him.

XIII

After a few days, Jason called Ed to ask him if he could meet other Outsiders. Ed said he knew a number of places where Outsiders lived and would be happy to take Jason to visit a few. They arranged to meet on Saturday afternoon.

~

On Saturday, Jason went downtown to meet Ed at DeLong's bookstore. Ed suggested that they combine walking with visiting. While walking, some more background of the Outsiders was revealed.

"Do you know anything about how the Outsiders started here?"

"There is no official history of our presence here, but the first Outsider seems to be Nick. He has the clearest view of the Outsiders' way and we can turn to him if there are any questions."

"He has a different demeanor than the other Outsiders that I have met. He seems even more peaceful, if that is possible."

"I know what you mean. He has reached the end of the journey we are all on."

"I thought what I went through was all there was."

"No, there is more. It takes more time to integrate that initial event. At some point the integration is complete. There really isn't anything we need to do – it just happens over time."

"I see. I know that my life is still changing in many ways."

"We're coming up on Lenny's place. He is sharing a three-bedroom with a couple of guys."

"All Outsiders?"

"Yep."

Ed rang the bell and waited. Lenny answered the door. He was happy to see Ed and Jason.

"Hi. Come on in."

Jason entered to find a somewhat sparse place. There weren't the customary paintings or pictures on the wall, but everything was neat and clean. There was something about that sparse look that was calming – there were no distractions to interfere with one's peace.

"Please sit down – I'll check to see who is here. I'm sure they would like to meet you."

Lenny came back after a few minutes with a young man. He looked familiar.

"Hi. I'm Jim. I remember you from the last meeting at the bookstore. Is Ed giving you the tour?"

"Hi. Yes, we are walking and visiting today."

"Is Bill here today?" asked Ed.

"He's in his room but he seems to be meditating or something."

Ed explained that Bill preferred his solitude to walking in public like the other Outsiders did.

"We've asked him to come along with us but he rarely goes out. I've told him that it is better to be out in the world in order to become more fully integrated but he always refuses."

"Does he work?"

"His parents send him money."

"Do you think he will get it together?"

"I wouldn't say there is anything wrong with him. There are individuals that go through what we did and take the solitary route. There are outcomes other than the Outsider way and we do not disrespect any of them."

"Okay. But the Outsiders have a mission – they do not just sit around and meditate."

"That's right, we have our way."

"Where else are we going today?"

"We're going to Robyn's place – she is one of the few females in our group."

"I was wondering why I hadn't seen any so far."

"I don't know for sure, but I think it is more difficult for women to break free of their conditioning. They are more emotionally connected so it is harder for them to let go."

~

Ed and Jason walked for another mile or so and came to a small apartment building. Ed pressed the button for unit 2A on the entrance way panel, and after a short conversation the door was buzzed open. They walked up the stairs and found her door opening as they approached.

"Hi, I thought you might like a little company," said Ed.

"Thanks for coming by."

"This is Jason. He is new to our group also."

"Hi, I'm Robyn. I was wondering where all the newbies were."

"We may be the only two for now," Jason said with an ironic smile.

"Would you mind if I joined you in your walk? It's too nice a day to stay inside."

"Sure!" Jason and Ed chimed simultaneously.

The three of them started walking. Ed said that they were nearing his home and he wanted to conclude his walk. Jason and Robyn continued together.

"Would you like to go to North Park? It's always very pleasant to sit there in a nature setting," said Jason.

"That sounds nice."

Jason was feeling an unusual connection with Robyn. It wasn't the typical man-woman attraction that focused on physical attributes, but more of an inexplicable soul connection that defied description.

"I heard you helped orchestrate the Outsider's involvement in the peace march."

"Yes, I was close to them, trying to understand their world and was able to convince them to come together as a group."

"I found out about the Outsiders by watching them on Oprah. It triggered something in me and I was able to let go of my messed up life and find peace."

"Do you find your perceptions and understanding of the world changing day by day?"

"Yes."

After about 30 minutes, they arrived at North Park.

"This is a special place in the city where the tranquility of nature is like what we feel inside," said Jason.

"It's beautiful and peaceful here."

The two of them sat on a bench situated in a grove of trees. It was a warm day but cool and somewhat secluded under a large oak tree. From that vantage point they could watch the squirrels and birds living undisturbed in their natural environment.

After a short while Jason began experiencing a rising feeling of love within him. It wasn't a love directed at Robyn but the same universal love he had experienced while listening to music a few days earlier.

He smiled at Robyn and she returned the smile. He knew from her expression that she picked up his emotion and mirrored it back to him.

Is this what love really is? We are both embraced by the same feeling of love. But it isn't about me or Robyn, but the common connection to love we are both experiencing.

Jason could tell that she understood this connection without the need to spell it out.

"We should come here again," said Robyn.

"Yes."

Jason and Robyn sat quietly in the glow of their mutually perceived love. It was a moment that required no explanation or reflection, as if they were watching an awe inspiring sunset together and wordlessly appreciating it.

As dusk approached, they left the park. Jason walked Robyn to her apartment. After exchanging phone numbers, they agreed to spend more time together.

Jason took the bus home while still experiencing the afterglow of love. While on the bus a recurring thought entered his awareness. He had to write it down.

Love that is not borne of self

Touches everything and yet nothing in particular.

This all-encompassing love

Frees us from the confines of self.

He knew this to be true. This feeling of all-embracing love was liberating. He didn't know where it was going to take him but he trusted that no harm would come to him.

XIV

Time passed. For over two years, Jason walked and experienced life in a new way. He spent time with Robyn and their love became personal and intimate, all the while remaining connected to the universal love they experienced separately. He also had regular meetings with Beth Grantz so there would be an objective record of the Outsiders presence. She asked Jason many questions about the Outsiders' world and his state of mind now that he had transformed his life. She said at some point she would like to author a paper or give a lecture on them. Jason realized that this may be the best thing for the Outsiders. To introduce their way of life could help humanity in ways he could not yet dream of.

~

It was a cool day in early May when Jason was sitting alone in North Park. He had been feeling somewhat remote lately, wanting to spend more time alone. Sitting in the park he was able to be completely absorbed by the tranquility of nature. There was a sense that he was heading towards something, but he knew not what. He decided that he would visit Nick. He was hopeful that he would understand his state of mind.

Jason started walking toward the deli. Somehow, his "mission" was not as important these days; he just wanted to stay in that quiet, undisturbed place. After some time he reached the deli. He could see Nick and Janey talking behind the counter. Nick noticed Jason and waved for him to come in.

"Hi Jason, how's it going today?"

"Things are changing. Can we talk?"

"Sure."

Jason and Nick sat down in a booth. Nick looked at Jason intently. He could tell at one glance what was happening.

"Nick – my life is changing. I really don't want to walk these days – I just want to remain alone in a quiet way. It is so intense, as if it is calling me."

"I understand what you are going through. When one of us reaches this place we recommend that they go on retreat out of the city so they can be more fully absorbed in the process."

"Where can I go?"

"We have a cabin upstate in the mountains that is perfect for retreats. It belongs to one in the group and is available as needed."

"How long would I need to stay there?"

"It may not be very long. If you can get away for two weeks, it should be enough."

"Will I know when to leave?"

"Yes."

"I'll ask for a leave of absence. My boss noticed my distant look and even suggested that I take a little time off."

"Good. Come by when you're ready and I'll give you the key and directions."

"Thanks."

~

In less than a week Jason was on his way upstate to the cabin. It was such a relief to be out of the city that he did not give a second thought to the Outsiders or their mission. His need was primary this time and he was grateful to have a place like this to go to.

The cabin was located on a mountain ridge accessible via an unpaved road. There were other cabins along the way and there was even electricity. Through occasional openings in the trees he noticed pristine views of the valley below. He already felt like he left the world, and wondered how he would feel after a few days in this environment.

Jason entered the cabin and found sparse furnishings. There were no distractions here – no intrusions to that intense quality of being that took over his every waking moment.

Jason's first stop was the rear deck. There was a clear view of the valley below. As he sat on a chair he was overwhelmed by the pervasive silence. There was only the sound of the wind through the trees and a few distant birds. The view was expansive and dizzying and he felt like he would lose everything if he continued to look. He decided to return the next day after he was fully rested.

~

Jason woke early the next day. The cool mountain air had an invigorating quality and he felt refreshed and energetic. He had a light breakfast and went out for a walk. Walking in this serene environment helped put his life in perspective. It used to be there was a constant awareness of his inner life, as if some part of himself was watching his inner world evolve. But now, he felt like he was being completely absorbed into something greater than himself. He was being drawn towards some kind of void and there was nothing he could do about it.

After returning to the cabin, Jason went to the deck to sit. Again he found the view dizzying, but this time he just relaxed into it. After a few moments he felt what could only be described as ecstasy, spreading throughout his entire being. He felt consumed by this feeling as he gave himself fully to it.

He could only take a few moments of this and then returned to the cabin. He thought he would just lie around or read, and do as little as possible. All the answers were available to him if he only listened. And listening was easy to do in this peaceful place.

After a few days of this routine, Jason was able to reflect on his life. He realized that the ecstasy he experienced was something beyond anything

else he had ever known. He could give himself to this feeling but he knew he could not come here every time he wanted to experience it. He concluded that he would have to let it go and not pursue it again.

From that point on, something changed within him. He no longer had a pull towards some unknown destination. By giving himself to the ecstasy of the void and experiencing it in its fullness, he was free. Now he felt peaceful and normal, as if he reached the end of his journey. He was home.

As he sat on the deck for one last time, he felt a simple contentment. His thoughts were again on love.

*Once set free we can travel,
Protected from the harshness of life
Carried along on the wings of love
We consume ourselves in its wondrous flame.*

~

The next day morning Jason left for the city. As he drove he felt light, as if his life was going to be effortless from this point onward. He wasn't sure if he was going to walk in the city again – that phase of his life seemed to be over. But he was content to remain in this simple way of being forever.

XV

Jason returned home by the afternoon and took the bus downtown to return the key. He never felt so normal in all his life. There was no longer a driving force within him – he was perfectly calm. But his senses were fully alive and he was fully alert. His inner world was silent – everything just passed through and he watched as it happened. And yet he was functioning fully in the world. It was miraculous.

He arrived at the deli and met Janey at the counter.

“Wow,” was all she said.

Nick came out and said, “You made it.”

“I had quite a time in the mountains. It was a fitting conclusion to the journey I’ve been on these last few years.”

“Now you understand the Outsiders world from beginning to end.”

“I’m not sure that I understand what just happened other than it concluded everything.”

“I could explain the details if you want to know.”

“I really don’t want to know anything more at this time. I need to live this way for a while. Perhaps I will be curious later.”

“Okay.”

“But there is one thing you could do for me. I have been meeting with a sociologist friend since the beginning and she understands the whole process up to this point. Would you be willing to meet with her and explain this final step to her?”

“Sure. I don’t think this final resolution has ever been fully explained before.”

“Thanks. I’ll let you know more after I talk to her.”

~

Jason went home and found his brother staring at him intently as soon as he entered.

"There is something different about you today. I can't put my finger on it, but something has changed."

"Yes, something has changed. You remember that I told you I had a sense of a place of joy and peace within?"

"Yes, I remember."

"It's gone now."

"Gone? What replaced it?"

"There is no 'what' anymore; there is no sense of a 'within.' Everything just flows through me. Everything is as it is. I can't explain it any better than that. I feel like I came home. Whatever I was going through for the last few years has concluded now."

~

On Monday, Jason met with Beth to inform her of this latest development. She was perplexed as to what actually happened and was willing to meet with Nick to understand it more fully.

Jason spoke with Nick and a meeting was arranged for Wednesday evening at the coffeehouse.

On Thursday, Jason stopped in the deli to see how the meeting went. As he entered, Nick came out of the back and greeted Jason.

"Hi, Jason."

"Hi."

"The meeting with Beth went very well. She's very knowledgeable about us. You must have taken comprehensive notes."

"I did. But she was fascinated by the subject matter and was always eager to know more."

"She was saying something about presenting her findings in a lecture at the college. It should be very interesting to hear the big picture. The public will really get to know us."

"That *is* interesting. I'll call her and see when she is planning to present it. I'm going uptown now to see my boss. I think I can go back to work now. But I sometimes wonder what profession I would have chosen had there been no need for the transition I went through. It may have been very different."

"You are young and there is plenty of time to consider other jobs and professions."

"I know. And I will be doing that."

~

After speaking with Beth, Jason found that she hoped a lecture would be ready to present in about four weeks. She planned to use an auditorium on campus that was occasionally used for public lectures and events. She would give him the exact date as soon as she knew it. Since the Outsiders already had national exposure, the college was willing to pay for publicity hoping they would get a large crowd.

XVI

The date was finally set for a Thursday evening at the end of the month. Thirty minutes before the lecture there was already a large crowd in the auditorium along with another crowd milling around the lobby area and another outside.

Jason arrived with Robyn and immediately scanned the crowd. He recognized a few Outsiders and expected there were more inside.

The college kept the admission fee low in hopes of filling the auditorium, but now it looked like it may overflow. The college in its foresight already had loudspeakers outside the building for such a possibility, so that everyone in attendance would have an opportunity to listen to the talk.

Five minutes before the lecture a bell rang, and everyone headed for their seats or found a comfortable spot outside.

As the crowd got settled, Prof. Beth Grantz walked to the podium and addressed the audience.

"Good evening.

"Thank you for coming tonight and taking time out your busy lives to hear a fascinating story about a remarkable group of individuals that live, work and walk among us.

"The Outsiders, as they have been named, represent an emerging phenomenon of a new way of being. A way of being that shares the best qualities of a child's innocence along with the wisdom and maturity of an adult's experience.

"Please hold your questions until the end as many early questions may be answered by the time the talk is completed.

"I first heard about the Outsiders from Jason Long, a friend of mine. He had noticed them walking the streets in their slow and peaceful way and wanted to know more about them. He made contact and shortly after that

contacted me to see what I thought about it. I was, of course, fascinated by what I heard and wanted to know more. Over the course of two years I listened to Jason's accounts of the Outsiders. During that time I watched as Jason, himself, was transformed by a liberating psychological process that seems to be unique to the Outsider culture. This process culminated recently for Jason and now he says he has never felt so normal in his entire life. I look at Jason and see a profoundly peaceful individual that has seen the 'promised land' and now lives in it. That said – I would like to explain the Outsiders world as I have grown to understand it.

"The Outsiders have all gone through a unique psychological transformation that I could not find any reference to in the scholarly literature although there were similar references if you include personal revelations or 'spiritual awakenings.'

"The Outsider transformation begins when the young adult (there have also been a few cases of older individuals) reaches a place in his/her life where they feel their back is against the wall. They no longer have a direction in life and it seems like a dead-end. This is often a place of deep despair or depression. At this difficult juncture we find that some will take their own lives while others will find a way out. The potential Outsider opts to find a way out by moving away from their inner turmoil rather than trying to sort it out. They use a particular focus technique to shift their focus from their inner turmoil to an external object. They maintain that external focus until their inner releases. That release liberates them from their dysfunctional inner life and changes the course of their lives.

"From various interviews and from several journal articles, I have a tentative hypothesis to present. The path from child to adult in virtually all cultures is a shift from the simple, sensory pleasures of childhood to the cognitive world of the adult. All these young adults had difficulty in making this transition and out of desperation, found a way out of the process. The

way out was to snap the bonds of cognitive dominance to return to the sensory outlook of the child. In other words, they reversed the socialization and conditioning process.

“Does that mean they became children again? No, it means they became more childlike, more aware of the moment as experienced through the senses. The adult filters sensory data through the intellect, but the child experiences it directly and may or may not think about it. When you combine the child’s sensory orientation with the adult’s mature use of the intellect, you find an extraordinary human being as the end result. And this is what the Outsiders have become.

“Why do the Outsiders walk our streets? This answer was not so apparent. But it appears that the first Outsider would walk the streets hoping his inner peace would be perceived by some in the fast moving crowds. And it was. One person stopped this first Outsider and listened to his story, then wrote about it on an internet blog. The word somehow got around and others, who recognized their Outsider nature, came to the city to walk. Eventually, a large informal community grew in the city.

“The walking appears to be part of the maturation process of the Outsiders. They have made walking part of their mission and say it helps them to stay focused on the world and become more integrated in the marketplace of life.

“The world of the Outsiders does not seem that different from everyone else. They work and live among us and do many of the things we do. However, they are not motivated by conditioning as the rest of us are but by a joy of life that is seldom seen in the world.

“The Outsiders exhibit a peace and serenity that is usually found in a monastic setting. But they are here among us showing their faces every day.

“Let us return to the psychological journey of the Outsiders. From the initial liberating event, their journey is a reorientation to the sensory way. It

takes some time for that event to be fully integrated. There are few models other than their fellow Outsiders, as the rest of the world operates in the cognitive mode. So, it takes a number of years before this new way takes hold completely.

“The final step of the Outsiders journey is perhaps the most telling. I have interviewed two individuals that have concluded the Outsider journey and I have a few observations that I would like to share. There is a strong tendency to want to know exactly where you are in life. This is part of the cognitive way that most of us travel. But at some point the Outsider needs to relinquish intellectual understanding and plunge into the void of unknowing. This is near the end point. All along the Outsider was observing his inner world progress towards this point, but at the end, even the observer goes silent. That is when the Outsider goes on retreat. The inner void represents finality in that the primacy of cognition gives way to pure sensory experience. This sensory experience has been described as ecstasy and sets the sensory way firmly in place. After that, the individual describes a normality and calmness; a place that seems completely natural; a ‘coming home.’

“This is the entire Outsider journey as I understand it. One interesting observation: when the Outsider concludes their journey, their walking mission takes on less importance. I think, at that point, they are integrated enough to function in the world in whatever capacity they want. I have only met two individuals who were still there at the end: Jason Long and the original Outsider who started the group.

“The lecture part of this presentation is now concluded. Please excuse the short nature of the talk. I did not want to over analyze the Outsiders and present their way as an intellectual, scholarly understanding.

“The fact that so many of you are here today shows that their mission of walking in the world works. It has captured us in their web and now we want to understand what it’s all about.

“The Outsiders have shown us the way back to the childlike ways we gave up when we became adults. Perhaps they have it right: we are not supposed to give up our childhood and become mindless automatons; we are supposed to be true to our nature. If the inner peace and serenity of the Outsiders becomes the norm in the world, then war, violence and conflict would be a thing of the past. For that reason alone, the world needs the Outsiders to help show us the way.

“I have seen the Outsiders world as close as anyone can and it is impossible to be a detached observer. I only hope that it’s not too late for me to change.

“Thank you for your interest and we will take some questions now.”

For the next hour and one-half, Prof. Grantz took questions. Nick and Jason also joined her on stage to help illuminate the answers. There was a hunger to understand the Outsiders and many already had a sense of what they were all about. Some were happy they were already on their own journey, which they said had parallels with the Outsider way. Others felt a deep anger, that they had been living a lie and felt shortchanged. Everyone in auditorium was affected in some manner.

On Saturday, Jason went to see Nick. He had received an intriguing call the day before and knew Nick would be happy to hear the news.

“Hi Jason,” said Nick.

“Hi. The lecture went really well. There was a surprising amount of genuine interest.”

“I guess all our walking finally paid off.”

"It has. I received an interesting call yesterday. It was from Chip Barnes, the billionaire. He made all his money in software and computers and is now a philanthropist."

"I've heard of him."

"He said he saw the lecture on YouTube. It's amazing how fast things get there. He was curious where all the Outsiders went after they concluded their journey."

"I still have some of their phone numbers and addresses. I think a lot of them went back into the world in some way."

"Chip has the idea of creating a community for Outsiders to live in. Sort of a model of how integrated, whole individuals would live in the world – and what kind of society would emerge from their interaction. It's something of an experiment. He would pay for the whole thing and hire Beth to document it."

"Wow. That goes way beyond my expectations. It's certainly a worthwhile endeavor. Are you up for it?"

"I am. I'd like to see what kind of society would emerge from a pure, Outsider community."

"Good. I can make some calls if you can get the ball rolling with Chip Barnes."

"Perfect. I will call him today. I guess our journey is not yet over."

"I guess not."

"I'll be in touch."

To be continued.....

Epilog

The psychological transformations illustrated in the *Outsiders* are real, not invented. The focus method illustrated at the end of Part I is a real-world method that has been used by others.

The outcome of a liberating release does not happen to everyone. Those who are in desperate straits are likely candidates to let their inner dysfunction go completely and “awaken.” It takes a real disillusionment with one’s life to let it go completely in one event. The general seeker may use the method as a technique to move away from the cognitive, ego-driven life. In time, they may reach a place where letting go becomes a habitual process. It will require much patience and honesty to go that route.

This segment of [The Outsiders](#) is being released as a free e-book. I prefer to bypass traditional publishing and establish a more direct relationship with the readers. If you like the story and want it to continue, please send a [donation](#) as your vote for the story to continue. If the story is appreciated and acknowledged, then I will be encouraged to continue the exploration and inquiry into further possibilities.

Thank You!