



The Young Prince with the Great Heart

Chapter One

Once upon a time, long long ago, there was a Young Prince.

He was brave and reasonably handsome. But he was seriously smart. In some ways, he thought that was his secret power. Of course, he was young and had yet to learn. Clever and witty from an early age, learning came effortlessly. The Young Prince would soon learn that a perceptive mind could also be a burden, since it created expectations that demand to be met.

His royal parents were very proud of him. They talked endlessly of his future and all the possibilities that lay ahead. They loved their Young Prince. He was like a swan, they thought. Heads above the rest. The royal parents were a bit more like the duck side of the family, but they hardly noticed. To them, his differences made him all the more special and precious.

As he grew, he studied the history of the kingdom and surrounding lands. He was intrigued by the give and take of riches, the winning and losing of land, and the endless struggles. His books hardly mentioned the sorrows behind the stories. He was caught up in the grand scheme of time.

In the summer, he would forsake the books and go exploring the lands around the castle. With a troop of boys from around the castle, he would scour the marshes

for frogs. They would walk the paths, imaging a great mystery to be discovered. Which of course, there was.

As the Young Prince became a man, his parents prepared him for a life serving the greater good. The prince had earned his way into the Royal Lyceum where the ways of statecraft and service would be infused with the humanities and the arts. The path had been laid clear for the Young Prince, one for which he had prepared all his life. Ah, but had the Young Prince ever really been consulted?

There are many stories throughout the kingdom about what happened next; no really knows for sure. Some say a witch, a beautiful temptress, beguiled the Young Prince and distracted him from his path with sensual passion and common joy. Others believe that the Young Prince experienced a psychic shutdown as the inevitable result of a brilliant mind under constant pressure to succeed, and more importantly to please. Still others tell the story of the Young Prince being visited by angels who guided him though a foreshadowing of his chosen path of cold dispassionate statecraft. Take heed, they advised, “many have as great an intellect as you, but your secret power is your heart. You must strive to nourish your heart, or your soul will die.”

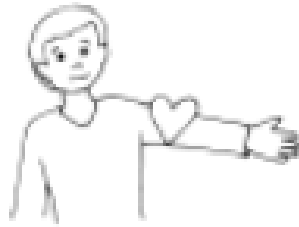
In the story of the Young Prince, there is no way to know which of these stories are true, perhaps they are all true. But one thing is for certain, the Young Prince had fallen from grace and was no longer seen, nor discussed, at court. What was once such a promising career in public service was now as broken as the spirits and the dreams of the Young Prince.

The young prince’s father was the court apothecary and familiar in the prevailing ways of science, and it was to scientists he turned to attempt to repair the damaged prince. Relentlessly, they pushed and prodded the Young Prince. New herbal brews, the latest of the apothecary trade, were administered. Most exasperating for the Young Prince, endless hours were spent meticulously reviewing key moments in the Young Prince’s life, looking for psychic clues to his disintegration. But the scientists were powerless, and their repeated interventions were futile. Slowly, the Young Prince’s curiosity for the scientists had turned to contempt; he knew he was on his own. The battle for equilibrium against this onslaught was the consuming quest for the Young Prince. Once again, the Angels visited with sage guidance. “You cannot save the world” they said.

“Draw your circle around that which is dear.” And, in response to the failed science, “you hold the key to your own survival, use it!”

After a couple trips around the sun, the Young Prince began to reappear in public. Predictably, he had been abandoned by all his well-healed friends at court at the first sign of any abnormality. But the courtier’s and laborer’s sons, with whom he had enjoyed many a summer’s night in childhood, remained loyal, supportive, and resolute. It was among this common stock, out of the view of the judgmental court, that the Young Prince began to reconstruct his life. And it was around these friends that the Young Prince drew his protective circle. The Young Prince had always been a generous person, but this association of friends allowed for many opportunities to display generosity of time, treasure and spirit.

It is said that for those with an empathetic heart, such as the Young Prince, the magnitude of the world’s problems can pose a crippling dilemma, one of what NOT to address (since all resources are finite). The Young Prince, aided by the angels, had found a guiding principle. The Young Prince had determined to “commit myself to making my personal section of the world as peaceful, pleasant, and productive as it can be.” Having healed the divisions in his heart, it was at this moment that the Angels smiled upon the Young Prince.



Chapter Two

Affairs of the heart were tricky for the Young Prince as he had always worn his heart on his sleeve. Never able to adequately disguise his feelings, the Young Prince had developed complex coping mechanisms to deal with the broken heart which invariably resulted.

The Young Prince felt everything deeply. In sport he was committed, if unspectacular. In debate, he was passionate and convincing. In love he was devoted, kind, and vulnerable. As a child, not knowing any better, the Young Prince believed everyone felt as he did, and he was continually mystified by the indifference, inaction, and cruelty he saw all around him.

The Young Prince came to believe he had been touched by fire. That fire burned inside the Young Prince and gave him red hair and skin blotches. This physical disfigurement seemed to ebb and flow with season, and with the intensity of the heat within him. As a young boy, this fire almost consumed him as rages of temper risked alienating the Young Prince from all he held dear. But the Young Prince learned the value of swallowing that fire, and instead relying on the dearness of his heart to triumph over the fire of his passion. When the passion and the heart were combined creatively, it could be wondrous.

As he became a teen, the Young Prince poured his passionate heart into music and love. One a source of unending joy, the other of repeated heartbreak.

Growing up, there had been music in the house for as long as the Young Prince could remember, from classical to contemporary. The Young Prince's parents both enjoyed music, but it was his mother that identified the Young Prince's passion for music at an early age. The Young Prince's mother, who believed

herself cultured and sophisticated, nurtured and encouraged the Young Prince to explore every possible means of immersing himself in the world of music. From providing lessons to learn instruments to taking the Young Prince to hear the court Chamber Orchestra, to tolerating “that un-godly racket” that the Young Prince and his friends made when they tried to make music. When, while still in school, the Young Prince decided to quit athletics because it was forever in conflict with his music (much to the vocal dismay of the Young Prince’s father), it was his mother who defended not only the decision, but the Young Prince’s right to make the decision, both of which were in dispute. His mother’s intervention caused his father to grudgingly accept the choice the Young Prince had made.

Mother and son had created a bond around music. It was like a secret language that the two of them communicated in. It was then that his mother first told the Young Prince that he had a special heart, one capable of great and glorious things. But with equal sincerity, she talked of the hazards of feeling too much too deeply. The Young Prince was too proud, or shy, to talk with his mother about his experiences with girls, but as she said these words, he knew exactly what she was talking about.

Once he became a teenager, father and son disagreed about almost everything. Athletics had been the sole area of common ground, and now the Young Prince had abandoned sport in favor of the bohemian lifestyle of the musician. However, for all their differences, it was remarkable how similar to each other they actually were. Sadly, it would take many years and many painful travails before the Young Prince would come to this revelation.

The Young Prince had his father to thank for his unflinching respect for women and girls. The Young Prince’s father was an adherent of the oft-maligned Chivalric School who maintain that women were not created simply to amuse and serve men, but should be allowed to pursue and enjoy life in any way that suits them. The Chivalrics were criticized heavily on this, primarily by male fraternal societies, for disrupting social order.

The teaching commenced at an early age. In first grade, the Young Prince pulled on the ponytail of girl while walking home from school. When his father learned of this transgression, the Young Prince was escorted by his father to the young girl’s house, where the Young Prince delivered a somber apology. The early

lessons had the desired effect. Three short years later, again on the way home from school, the Young Prince witnessed a girl being picked on. While the Young Prince had not yet discovered the courage to intervene (that would come in time), the Young Prince brought flowers to the girl afterwards and apologized for the actions of his friends. In succeeding days, the Young Prince would return to visit the girl. When discovered, the Young Prince received taunting abuse from his friends; he cared not!

Although the structures of society did not make it easy, as months turned into years, the Young Prince found he much preferred the social company of girls as friends. Not that the Young Prince completely abandoned the traditionally male associations in sports and (at the time) in music. But the Young Prince found male communication predictable, shallow, and boring. Talking with girls, especially if you first listened well, opened up whole new worlds of topic possibilities. Not that every dialogue was intellectually stimulating, but that never happened talking to boys; talking to girls it was at least possible!

It was here that the Young Prince's passion for music and his love of female companionship collided. The love sonnets of the modern age had touched and shaped the Young Prince. He would listen to them endlessly, feeling their beauty, absorbing their intensity. (*"Give me one kiss and I'll be happy. Just, just to be with you"*) Cupid had burrowed his arrow deep inside the Young Prince's heart. The music stirred in him a longing for an idealized love, a perfect love, the love of song, the kind he witnessed at home. While too young to understand fully all the intricacies of an adult relationship, the Young Prince had no doubt that his father adored his mother, or that his father was the center of his mother's universe.

Whether consciously through music, or merely through example, his parents had created a hopeless romantic in their Young Prince. Night after night, as he was falling asleep, he would listen to the musical poetry of love and dream. How would it be to be in love, what would she be like, how would he know she was the one? Why would she like him? Ah, insecurity. That fear, fed by uncertainty, was never far away, even for the self-assured Young Prince.

Every young girl who came into the Young Prince's life would be subconsciously evaluated for the likelihood that she might be THE one, which of course she never

was. Invariably, the Young Prince would come to believe that HE was the one unworthy of that romantic interest, and would resign himself to a life-long friendship instead. Only twice in the whole of the Young Prince's academic life did he allow himself to believe that "the words of the songs have come true." The first ended in unexplainable humiliation and embarrassment; the other in catastrophe which ushered in the Dark Ages for the Young Prince.



Chapter Three

It is said that the Gods deliver nothing which cannot be borne. If this is true, the Young Prince must have had the strength of 10 men. After years of flirtatious teasing, the Angels had delivered to the Young Prince the girl of his dreams (or so his young heart believed). Inconceivably, it had happened with one of the young maidens the Young Prince's heart had landed on with friendship, years prior. As the Young Prince prepared to travel to the Académie, somehow, they had rediscovered each other and a wondrous love had blossomed. The Young Prince's heart sang, he could barely contain himself. This beautiful, smart, funny maiden loved him; an average looking, if sincere, Young Prince. When he closed his eyes at night, the Young Prince was overcome at the sheer beauty of world in which this was possible. All the love songs finally made sense.

But rapturous beauty in the Young Prince's life had come with a cost. Love's warm glow, or rather the fear of losing love's warm glow, had reignited the fire of his youth. With the fire's growing intensity, the Young Prince's ability to clearly

convey his thoughts, was gradually impaired. Desperately, the Young Prince struggled with his parents to revise his imminent plans to leave for the Académie, so that his new love would not be disrupted (or worse) by distance. The Young Prince's parents were adamant, the stars at his birth had foretold greatness for the Young Prince, for which he must attend the Académie. And attend the Académie he WOULD. No amount of pleading by the Young Prince could change his parents mind. And the fire in the Young Prince grew higher.

As the blotches on his skin grew more intense and enflamed, all around him were oblivious, save the beautiful maiden. Her concern grew to fear as the Young Prince's inner intensity began to match his external combustion. When the Young Prince attempted to serenade the Young Maiden with passion from his exploding heart, his intensity scared her. The Young Maiden had not yet developed tools to deal with this kind of fervid passion coming from the Young Prince. Plaintively but decisively, the Young Maiden turned away from the Young Prince, incapable of withstanding the heat of the Young Prince's heart.

Unable to convince the Young Maiden, the only person who truly mattered, of the purity of his virtue, the Young Prince succumbed to the fires consuming him. And the mind and heart of the Young Prince were no more. In that moment, the Young Prince's heart touched the infinite. Now interconnected, his mind was suddenly clear, overwhelmed by the realization that all were one, connected by love. And by the certainty that God was not the patriarch of myth, but the life force inside every sentient being. The weight of this knowledge both humbled and empowered the Young Prince. The message the Young Prince sought to spread was simple, yet profound, love others as you love yourself.

But the Young Prince's message was scorned with derision, by the people closest to him. His friends wondered if the Young Prince had swallowed some vile potion, his parents wondered if a witch had cast a spell over him. Overjoyed, the Young Prince believed he had be gifted with supreme insight, but everyone else feared that he had taken leave of his sanity.

The angels assured the Young Prince that his insights were real, and very much true. However, they chastised the Young Prince for revealing too much, too quickly to simple minds. "Most people are just not ready to peer behind the veil of reality to glimpse their true essence." Your certainty scares them, even if your

message intrigues.” Being angels, they knew this psychic maelstrom was coming for the Young Prince, but were powerless to do more than advise the Young Prince on corrective action, and means of coping with the fallout.

In many cultures, the mystic, or one endowed with mystic powers, is celebrated, even revered; the Young Prince was not living in one of those cultures. As he attempted to spread his universal message of peace and love, the Young Prince was feared, harassed, and finally incarcerated. The Young Prince was taken to a re-education camp to reimpose the opaque barrier commonly separating the view of reality and its true nature just beyond. But, the Young Prince refused to relinquish his vision. Having glimpsed a perfect truth, the Young Prince found no reason to recant what he knew was true. The Young Prince found kinship in Galileo’s refusal to buckle to the Inquisition, even if it meant he would be punished. The Young Prince determined to hold on to his vision.

But the Scientists tending to the Young Prince were persistent. In a battle with a stubborn patient, they did not like to lose. Attempts at verbal persuasion were pointless, and administration of powerful potions had proved ineffective. Through it all the Young Prince had remained undeterred, infused with a beautiful optimistic insight toward life that he would not, could not relinquish. But Science has ways unknown outside their circle, to deal with such obstinate refusal to embrace the status quo. The Scientists summoned the force of lightening down upon the mind of the Young Prince. Again, and again the synapses of the Young Prince’s mind were subject to assault until his beautiful mind surrendered. Watching impotently as the Fire slowly died, the angels wept.

When the Young Prince awoke, he was pronounced cured. Science had prevailed again. The security of the senseless, cruel, inhumane world had been restored. Safe from the heretical onslaught of a young prince preaching love.

For the first time in his life, the Young Prince felt . . . nothing. The optimistic passion which had so recently imbued the Young Prince with a sense of the infinite, had been replaced with a dull indifference to the mundane. Days went by, with the only decision of consequence being whether or not to wake up. The Young Prince’s parents were wary, but seemingly satisfied with what Science had wrought on their son. At least he was no longer belligerent towards them. But like a caged lion under sedation, the Young Prince’s lethargy would only last so long.

How would they cope when their lion awoke? They too relieved to anticipate anything beyond the Young Prince's current state.

But, gradually, as if washing off layer of soot from an oil painting, the colors of the Young Prince personality began to reemerge. The colors were no longer as brilliant as they had once been, but they did paint the outlines of a personality that resembled the person the Young Prince had once been. The Young Prince repeatedly examined his mind. Was this how I used to think? Is this what I used to like? Nothing was harder than his renewed expression of simple emotion. Many of the Young Prince's friends and family had been burned by the flaming personality of the Young Prince. Now every expression of even the simplest of emotions was met with the anguished admonition, "don't get excited Young Prince." So how was he supposed to act? Only his old childhood friends seemed to take the "new" Young Prince at face value. A fact that mightily pleased the Young Prince.

There was also the persistent problem of remembering. For some reason, there was a significant portion of his recent past that was beyond his ability to recall. Even his last weeks with the Young Maiden, flush with poignant moments, had become a confusing blur. A fact that tormented the Young Prince, since he no longer had any recollection how their once idyllic affair had ended.

Despite feeling like a used car after a wreck, the Young Prince could sense that the he that was him was still there. And if he listened very carefully, he could still hear the words of that beautiful song he had been tortured to remove from his mind. The Young Prince knew better now than to share this wonder with an unwelcoming world anymore. But this knowledge of the infinite instilled in the Young Prince a mature calm beyond his years. The Young Prince knew what was important in his life, he felt a purpose. He would devote himself to kindness and service to those around him, and to till the garden that envelopes him.

The angels told the Young Prince that he had become heroic, but that his greatest journey was still ahead. With a smile and nod from the angels, the gypsy family, and most importantly Mona, entered the Young Prince's life.



Chapter Four

A band of Gypsies had long-lived out-side the court. The most common of common folk, the gypsies lived a simple but joyful life, always surrounded by music and dance. The Gypsy life had always fascinated the Young Prince. As an adolescent, the Young Prince had performed in a pageant alongside one of the gypsy girls. Against tradition they had remained friends. The Young Prince's fall from grace had made him acutely aware of the value of the people who had not abandoned him! When the gypsy girl invited the Young Prince to a festival on the equinox, he was intrigued. The Gypsy girl promised food, drink, and plenty of music. The Young Prince agreed gladly to attend the festival, unaware that his life was about to change forever. If fate had ever smiled on the Young Prince, this was the moment.

The atmosphere at the festival was intoxicating, everywhere he looked, the Young Prince saw people taking, laughing, singing, and dancing. A minstrel band played in the main room, everyone joined in on the singing. The Young Prince had never felt such pure joy. As the night wore on, the crowd gradually began to disperse. The Gypsy Girl and the Young Prince, who had brought his guitar at the Gypsy Girl's request, were left with a few friends in the Great Room, around a table, attempting to sing any song they could remember. Seated at the head of the table was the gypsy girl's mother Mona, looking more like her sister. Mona's husband had recently abandoned her, leaving Mona and her adult children to run the clan. It was clear that Mona took a special pleasure watching her daughter sing. Lovingly Mona would encourage us to "sing one more song." As sunrise approached, the Young Prince thanked everyone for a special night. Mona told the Young Prince he was welcome to return anytime. Mona said that even though

tonight was unusually busy. There was music and fun going most nights. The Young Prince left that night knowing he would be back.

As the Young Prince returned home his mind was overflowing with the sights and sounds from the gypsy festival. It was the music playing, delivered by this random collection of musicians and singers assembled for the evening, that the Young Prince kept coming back to. Not only were they a joy to behold, they had welcomed the inexperienced Young Prince to join in. Providentially, the fact that no one knew this of the Young Prince eased his insecurities, left over from his Dark Ages. This enabled the Young Prince to sing, and especially play, better than he ever had, at least the fact that everyone seemed to enjoy it allowed him to think so!

In this house, the Young Prince had been welcomed without reservation and made to feel a kinship instantly. To be sure, his parent's house provided love, comfort, and security. But this gypsy family seemed to embrace life with an ecstatic joy that took the Young Prince's breath away. Where his parent's house was controlled, organized, and formal. The gypsy house had a beautiful chaos and eccentricity that indicated a life lived fully. The Young Prince's home was segregated between formal and informal living quarters, always in preparation to entertain and impress. The gypsy family had no such dichotomy they lived in the whole house every day, with family pictures and memorabilia adorning nearly every wall in every room.

Even more compelling were the people the Young Prince had encountered. The Gypsy Girl and her friends reminded the Young Prince of the servant and courtier's sons who had remained his loyal companions. Once again, the Young Prince had gravitated to simple, common people, where his heart was free to invest in their lives without fear of judgment. They were funny, loud, talented, and involved. The Young Prince wanted to be around them. Then there was the Gypsy Girl's family. There was no way to tell on this crazy, hectic night, but it was said the Gypsy Girl was the oldest of 12 sisters. The Young Prince knew nothing of sisters, growing up with 3 brothers. Perhaps when he returned, the Young Prince could take stock of these 12 sisters and see for himself.

And return he did. And while the festival atmosphere of the first night had diminished somewhat, with fewer people around it was possible for the Young

Prince to appreciate the intoxicating nature of the Gypsy family. Everywhere the Young Prince looked there seemed to be adorable little girls, the younger sisters to the Gypsy Girl who had invited the Young Prince to the house. In fact, a dozen girls and their mother Mona, all lived together under one roof. They were happy, silly, and sweet, and they enchanted the Young Prince.

Then there was Mona, herself. Some nights, after the singing had stopped and everyone had gone home, or to bed, the Young Prince would find himself with Mona at opposite ends of the great table. There, the two would talk about everything and nothing. Whether it was the affairs of the world, or what one of the girls had done that day, Mona had an engaging manner, a quick wit, and wonderful sense of humor. Mona didn't say funny things, she said things in a funny way. Mona had humorous insights into the absurdity of life that the Young Prince relished and found hysterical.

For the Young Prince, this enchantment drove a fascination which created habituation. Night after night the Young Prince would return to the Gypsy family. Outwardly, this was always to participate in the nightly ritual of fun and song. But inside, something special was happening to the Young Prince. More and more he found himself thinking about the Gypsy family, and the pleasure of seeing them in the night ahead, while tending to the tedium of his daily life. More and more the Gypsy family had become the sun around which this planetary prince revolved.

The Young Prince came to cherish the hours spent with Mona, after all the others had gone. Unlike with the girls he had known at court, in Mona, the Young Prince had found an intellectually challenging conversationalist who was equally at ease talking sports, music, politics, philosophy or gossip. As these nightly dialogues evolved, any notion of an age difference between Mona and the Young Prince evaporated. Each took turns in prompting new and interesting revelations from the other. This experience with Mona had cast a beautiful light in front of The Young Prince. A window had opened into a life that seemed to fulfill the Angels' prophecy, and the Young Prince's eternal quest for a true peer. Here was a section of the world the Young Prince could devote himself to with all of his heart. A world of both service and succor. Subconsciously, improbably, the Young Prince was already in love with Mona. However, it would take months of time, rejection and near loss for the Young Prince to come to this realization.



Chapter Five

As the Young Prince had wondered through the Dark Ages, his heart never lost hope. Despite the furious fire inflicted on him, the vision that had inspired and driven the Young Prince remained resolute in his mind; the purpose of life was to love and be loved. To the Young Prince, there could be no higher calling than to protect and nurture those you love without condition. This perspective informed the everyday life of the Young Prince. Everyone who ever encountered the Young Prince could feel the warmth of his emotional bearhug immediately. To a stranger he was kind, to a friend he was loyal, to a loved one he was devoted.

Throughout the Dark Ages it was his friendships that had sustained the Young Prince. He had immersed himself in the friendship and comradeship of the boys he had grown up with. True love, having been lost once, was now the Holy Grail to the Young Prince; mystical in composition and elusive to reclaim. However, for the Young Prince, the quest for the Grail of true love had devolved into an aspirational goal; something to sing about, not something he had any desire to actively pursue any longer. Perhaps the tempest of his mind (and the belligerence of his parents) had cost the Young Prince his shot at true love. It was in this frame of mind that the Young Prince encountered the Gypsy family.

In a matter of months following that first gypsy festival, Mona and her girls had become a daily part of the Young Prince's life. The pretext had been dropped. Sure, the Young Prince would visit with his guitar and sing with the older girls, but now stopping by during the day, just to say hi, or to see if anyone needed anything, had become routine. To the point that Mona and the younger girls

would good-naturedly demand an explanation from the Young Prince, should something prevent him from showing up on a given day.

Getting to know the younger girls was a revelation for the Young Prince. He had been raised with brothers, in a boy's world. As we have described, with girls his age the Young Prince was well acquainted with the slings and arrows of romantic love. But getting to know these younger girls (all under 13) awakened an emotion the Young Prince had no precedence for. Their sweet affection was unconditional and touched the Young Prince deeply. He was overcome with a desire to protect them from the hurt of the world, and to provide them with whatever he could to bring them a moment of happiness in their day. The Young Prince had become their friend and he cherished those friendships.

Mona and the Young Prince continued their tradition of late night talks. There was no one he more wanted to see, at the end of his day, to rehash the day's events. But more than anything, The Young Prince just loved to listen to Mona talk. The Young Prince loved to listen and ask questions, and Mona loved being heard and listened to. It was during one of these question-prompted discussions that Mona indicated that she believed she had some kind of psychic power that gave her premonitions of impending events, good and bad.

The Young Prince had read of such powers, but had never met anyone so gifted. He wondered if Mona had this power all her life. Mona replied that the powers came to her after she almost died giving birth to Torrie, one of the younger girls. Torrie was supposed to be a twin, Mona said, and after giving birth she had a massive hemorrhage (which Mona always believed was related to the absent twin) and was later told that she nearly died. As Mona described the scene in the hospital room, with doctors and nurses furiously attempting to revive her, Mona added she knew this because she observed the whole scene from somewhere overhead, looking down. Mona later related some of her observations to one of the nurses who was incredulous. "How could you know that," the nurse exclaimed, "you were unconscious." At this point the Young Prince excitedly interrupted Mona's story, "your psychic ability came from your near-death experience!" Mona explained that she had no idea what I was referring to, but yes after she regained consciousness she became aware of this ability. The Young Prince vowed to bring Mona more information to read on what she had

experienced in the hospital. Mona told the Young Prince she had never told anybody about the experience in the hospital. It was a moment of intimacy in conversation, that would happen often when they talked.

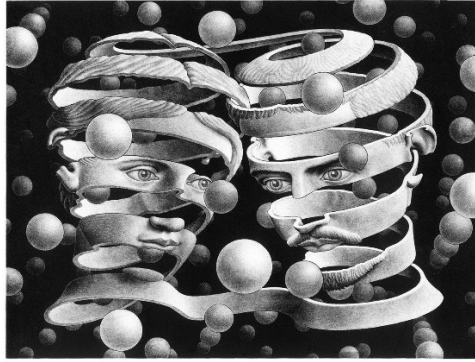
But there was one story that the two shared, that was too coincidental, too improbable to be anything but fate that they should share it with each other. The same power of lightening that had been harnessed to numb the Young Prince's great heart had been unleashed on Mona when the weight of a love-less marriage and the pressure of raising a half-dozen children basically alone, caused Mona's strong will and expansive heart to be temporarily disabled. When Mona described the anguish of looking into the face of her newborn baby and feeling nothing, the Young Prince knew he had found a kindred spirit who too had walked through hell and come out the other side. The Young Prince had never felt such a profound oneness with anyone in his life.

The Young Prince, being naïve at his core, had no framework to place these emotions within, this was after all, a woman almost 2 decades his senior. All he knew was, he had never felt the joy he experienced around Mona and her girls. The Young Prince needed to see them, be a part of their lives, every day. He couldn't imagine anything else. Driven by his heart, the Young Prince never considered the possibility that it could end. Mona and her girls had come to represent everything beautiful in the world. As days turned into weeks, the Young Prince's big heart was nourished by the love and affection the Gypsy family returned to him. Around them he felt alive with purpose and love. The mere thought of returning to the dull grey existence he had before the Gypsy family came into his life frightened and saddened the Young Prince, it was inconceivable. Before he had lived the life of a damaged curiosity; with the Gypsy family he was heroic.

Which is why the Young Prince was taken completely unaware that night in the middle of a snowy February when Mona approached the Young Prince by the great table. This was the time, after the music was over, when they would sit and talk through the night. Instead, without sitting down, she approached the Young Prince with a somber look on her face. Mona placed her hand on the Young Prince's shoulder to steady her gaze and looked at him mournfully. With the precision of rehearsed speech, Mona began, "You're gonna have to stop coming

around here anymore. . .” In that instant the Young Prince’s world shattered and his great heart broke. But in the succeeding instant his broken heart summoned all its might to fight. After an eternity, which lasted the length of a finger snap, the Young Prince began to say what was in his heart, just as Mona completed her thought, “ . . . because I think I’m falling in Love with you!” “But, I love YOU,” the Young Prince cried, with all the certainty his great heart could muster. He was bolstered by the sudden realization that maybe his world hadn’t ended. Had Mona just said she was falling in love with the Young Prince? Had he heard that right? But Mona was incredulous, “Why would a Young Prince love me, you could have anybody? You should be with someone your own age” With a passionate sincerity the Young Prince told Mona, “because you are the most important person in my life and I can’t imagine spending one day without you. And I don’t want anybody else, I want you.” The Young Prince leaned toward Mona, and kissed the love of his life. Standing there, embracing, they were overcome with emotion, the Young Prince felt tears well in his eyes. He vowed to himself that he would never forget what this moment felt like. As the crescendo of their emotions waned they did what had nurtured their love in the first place, they sat down to talk. There was so much yet to say and even more to feel. Everything seemed surreal. Sitting there, the Young Prince thought, had I actually said it? Had I articulated what had been consuming all my waking thoughts for weeks, if not months? The Young Prince wanted to hold Mona and just tell her over and over; I, love, you. He wanted to hear how it sounded, he wanted to look into her eyes as he said it, to see her smile, to touch her heart. The ecstasy he felt was almost overwhelming, and yet it was accompanied by a beautiful calm. For the Young Prince understood that his entire life has been a preparation for this moment. In time, talk could only say so much, passion would not be denied, and talk gave way, as Mona and the Young Prince began a new voyage of discovery.

For the Young Prince, once again, his life had changed in an instant, and he was euphoric. Everything seemed obvious and very simple to him. It hadn’t occurred to the Young Prince that his opinion would NOT be shared by the Young Prince’s family, or friends, or frankly by anyone other than Mona and the Young Prince. The Young Prince was not through fighting for his love. His great heart and the new love that nourished it, would be sorely tested, but it would not waver.



The Young Prince waited for the earth to quake, and yet everything remained as it was before his world had so dramatically changed. For the Young Prince, this was probably the most significant day in his 22 years; yet to everyone else it was just a cold Tuesday in February. As he sat holding Mona, his Mona, emotions came flooding in. He wanted to ensure that he would always remember this moment, so the Young Prince rehearsed his memories in his head, the colors in the darkened room, the light bleeding in from underneath the locked door, Mona lying in the dappled light more beautiful than he had senses to comprehend. In that moment, the Young Prince glimpsed his life laid out before him and he was truly humbled by the knowledge. During the Dark Ages of his life the Young Prince had reconciled himself to meteor's life, brilliant in its brightness and its brevity. But now, this gypsy woman Mona, through the sheer beauty of her being, had illuminated a way forward with goodness and grace for the Young Prince. A way of enlightened generosity and kindness that would so magnificently fulfill his destiny as laid out by his Angels so many years ago.

As the Young Prince and his new love kissed a goodnight to this momentous day, Mona begged him to stay the night. Every emotion in the Young Prince's body wanted to say yes, but, for this moment at least, logic prevailed. The Young Prince was not prepared to confront the certain ramifications of staying out all night, nor did he feel capable of delivering a plausible fabrication that would forestall further inquiry from his parents. Holding his heart in check, the Young Prince told Mona he could not stay the night. Sensing Mona's disappointment, his heart would not be completely constrained, so the Young Prince added, "but we will have a lifetime of nights together very soon my love." Mona, only partially convinced, whose wounds of insecurity and abandonment were never far from the surface, responded wistfully, "that would be very nice."