

A Soul's Journey

One Soul's struggle making its way through the Soul Lines!



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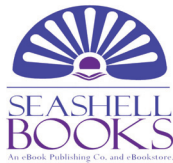
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Chapter 1

The Emergence

“What was that?” I felt something brush against me. There it was again on the other side. All at once, more things started hitting me on all sides, but I couldn’t see anything. I didn’t know whether I was blind to my surroundings or surrounded by nothingness. At first, it was unnerving. But since there was no pain, I got used to it.

Sounds passed by me. I heard whispered voices that I couldn’t understand. Laughter? Yes, those were some of the sounds. Some of them were small giggles and some were boisterous and loud. One of those laughing sounds stopped right beside me. I couldn’t help but laugh with it, and then it moved on. They were pleasant sounds, and I wished they’d stayed longer.

Suddenly, a scream whizzed by. It sent shivers to my very core. One by one the sounds came again and gathered together. The whispers grew louder and louder, and when they mixed in with the laughter, cries, and screams, it became an overwhelming cacophony of noise surrounding me. I couldn’t stand it anymore. I felt as if my insides were going to explode. “QUIET!” I shouted.

By saying that one word, all became calm. No more whispers. No more laughter. And, thankfully, no more cries and screams. Things were still brushing up against me, but they were now few and far between.

With my newly found peace and quiet, I started thinking about things. Predominately, the issue of death and life. Why those were the first things I contemplated, I didn’t know. What is life? I wondered. Was I alive, or was this place I existed in a death shroud? I had to laugh at that silly thought. I couldn’t be dead. After all, if I was dead, I couldn’t think. I think, therefore, I live. That concluded my thoughts of life and death.

How old am I? This was another question. Time seemed to have no measure here. I may have existed in this void for a fraction of a

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millisecond or an infinite number of millenniums. I've neither been bored with my existence nor anxious about what comes next—until this instant.

Hmm next? This was another new thought. Is there a next? There had to be more to my existence than this void. More questions entered my thoughts. Who am I? What am I? Where am I? If I have a purpose, what is it? Am I the only one in my existence? Or, are there others? With that last thought, I heard a voice. This time, the voice wasn't a whisper. It was a distinct word.

"Celeste," it called.

That answered one question. I—was not alone. There was a voice. *But what is Celeste?* I wondered. *A name perhaps. But whose name? Maybe it's my name.* I said the name quietly. "Celeste." I pondered it a moment and said it a bit louder. "Celeste." In that instant, I knew it was my name. This time I answered the voice with confidence. "Yes, I'm Celeste."

Suddenly, something came over me when I said—*my name*. Something new besides thoughts and questions. It was fluttery. It tingled within my being. In an instant, I knew what that sensation was. It was excitement. I'd never been excited before. I liked the feeling, and it was caused because I now knew my name—Celeste.

"It's time, Celeste," the voice said.

"Time?" I questioned. "Time for what?"

"Time to move on."

The voice had answered more of my questions. There was a next, and, apparently, since I'm to move on, there was more to my existence than this void.

"Move to where?" I asked the voice. "And where, is here?"

"Come on out, and you'll see where you are, and I'll tell you where you're going."

"See?" I queried.

"Yes," the voice said. "See."

I knew that term. I knew a lot of terms. But right now, I couldn't see a thing. There was no light, no dark, no color. It was difficult to describe other than to say it was a void. Even though I knew all these terms, I'd never experienced any of them.

But how do I come out? I wondered. That's another question. I was familiar with the term, movement, but as far as I knew, I'd never moved. Another question. Do I want to move? Do I want to face the unknown?

Another feeling came over me. It was fear. Fear of the unknown. I felt safe here, but questions kept entering my thoughts one after another, until it became a bit overwhelming. Curiosity was another term I knew and far surpassed the fear of the unknown. Suddenly, I became uncomfortable within the void. A new sensation of loneliness overwhelmed me. I didn't like that new feeling. I needed to get out. I had to know what was beyond the void.

With that intense desire, I felt movement. I was moving through the void. It was a rush like no other feeling I've felt thus far. I was anxious for the first time. I wanted to—see. With that last thought, I burst out of the void.

I was so excited. "I can see!" I shouted. I could see everything, and it was amazing. There was darkness, and light within the darkness, and around the darkness and within the light were colors of all variety. It all blended together harmoniously. Another term came to mind—beautiful!

The voice I'd been hearing chuckled slightly. "Come on down, now."

As I floated within the light and colors, I looked down and saw a form sitting on a multi-colored bank before some sort of flowing river. It was large, round and bright with a sparkly, emerald green hue. I floated down and landed softly on the bank. "Who are you?"

"I, am Seth," said the sparkly round thing. "Happy birthday, Celeste."

"Birthday?" I asked.

"You were just born from the River of Knowledge," it said.

I looked where Seth indicated. Even though Seth had no limbs to point out the direction, or a face that I could see within its round, sparkly form, somehow, I just knew where it wanted me to look.

The river, or void, as I had been calling it, had a multitude of colorful, wispy, ribbon-like strands flowing within the current as far as I could see. It's strange that I couldn't see them when I was in there. I was curious. "I see that the river moves, but I never felt movement when I was in it. Why?"

"The River of Knowledge contains thoughts, feelings, questions, emotions and many other attributes," Seth replied. "It would take too

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long to name them all. But to simplify, these attributes are in continuous flow individually and are completely unaware of the other attributes around them, until they begin to adhere to each other like the ones in you did. When that happens, it becomes too cumbersome to flow, so they stop. I've followed your progress since the moment you stopped flowing."

"So, how long had I existed in the river without flowing?"

"Time, here, is basically irrelevant," Seth said.

I sighed. "That was a silly question for me to ask. I knew that."

"No question is silly," Seth replied. "Time and space are measured differently in other realities. But, if I were to give you a measurement based on Earth standards, I would say about three minutes."

The term minutes I knew, but even so, it was still a slight blur. "Is that a short time, or a long time?" I asked. "And what is Earth?"

Seth chuckled. "How quickly time passes, depends on the one experiencing it. Sometimes a minute might feel like it takes an eternity to pass. Then again, sometimes it may seem like no time at all."

"So, feelings and time are connected?" I asked.

"In the broadest sense," Seth replied. "However, the length of time it took you to develop, is irrelevant. Development takes as long as it takes. And, as far as Earth is concerned, it will be explained when you're ready to know. So, shall we go?"

"Go where?" I asked.

"I'm taking you to Placement so you can choose a line."

Seth started to bounce along the bank. I followed it. I liked this bouncing movement. It was better than standing still. As we bounced along the bank, I saw other sparkly, round beings watching the river. They looked exactly like Seth, but, somehow, different at the same time.

I was about to ask another question, when Seth stopped beside one of the sparkly beings. How I could tell the difference between the two, I didn't know. But I knew I could pick Seth out in a crowd of sparkly, emerald green beings.

"How's it going, Bee?" Seth asked the other.

Bee sighed. "The strands dissipated and didn't develop."

"How sad," Seth replied. "I'm sure there will be another soon."

"I'm sure," Bee said. I could tell Bee was looking at me and then it

added, "I see you have a new one."

"This is Celeste," Seth introduced.

"Happy birthday, Celeste," Bee said.

"Yes," I replied. "It's my birthday, and I am happy."

Both Seth and Bee chuckled. I was curious about their humorous response. "Did I get that feeling wrong? Am I not happy?"

"No, the feeling of happy is correct," Seth said, "But your response should have been a courteous reply. "Thank you, is what you should have responded with."

I thought about it. Seth was right. So, I corrected myself. "Thank you, Bee, for the happy birthday words."

"You are welcome, Celeste," Bee responded.

Seth said good-bye to Bee, as did I, and we continued bouncing along the bank. Seth called out to others as did others call to Seth, but we didn't stop.

Stopping to talk with Bee had interrupted several questions I had. I pondered my questions and put them in an order which I thought were the most important. So, I asked my number one question. "Seth, what am I?"

Seth stopped bouncing and looked toward me. "Celeste, you are a new Soul."

"A Soul? And what is a Soul?" I asked.

"To simplify, Souls are the beings incorporated within all creatures to enable them to live. Without a Soul, a creature cannot have life."

We continued bouncing along and I continued with my questions. "Seth, will I reside within a living creature?"

"That's why we are going to Placement. You have choices to consider."

That sparked another question. "Why can I not exist on my own?"

"That will also be explained when you get to Placement."

"Are you a Soul?" I asked Seth.

"No, I'm a Guardian of the River of Knowledge. I guide new Souls to the Placement archway. But there is a Soul which resides within me."

"Truly!" I exclaimed. "May I see and speak with your Soul?"

"Sorry, Celeste, that's not possible. Once a Soul is installed within a creature, it can't communicate with other Souls until it leaves that

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creature.”

I sighed. “How disappointing. I would have liked to ask your Soul questions about being a Soul.”

“No need to be disappointed, Celeste. You’ll have plenty of Souls to speak with when you reach Placement. You’ll find new Souls, like you, and Souls who’ve been through the various lines many times. Questioning them will give you more insight than I can.”

Seth had answered a lot of my questions, but there was something else I was curious about. If the bright, sparkly, round Guardian was not a Soul, I wondered what I looked like.

I was about to inquire, when just up ahead, I saw something burst out of the River of Knowledge just as I had done. “Is that a new Soul?”

“That it is,” Seth replied. “Come, we’ll welcome the new one.”

I was anxious to greet this other new Soul. As we neared, I was able to get a better look at it. It wasn’t round or sparkly like the Guardians. It was wispy and made up of many colors. However, its primary colors were a variety of blues and reds. Describing its shape was impossible because its shape kept changing.

“Is that what I look like, Seth?”

“More or less,” Seth replied. “But I would say your primary colors are lavenders and pinks.”

“So, basically, I’m formless.”

“Your form will be as you will it to be, but that will come later. As of now, your natural state is similar to that of a small, colorful, wispy cloud.”

Within my limited knowledge of terms, I knew what clouds were. I also knew they often shapeshifted. At first, I was disheartened that I had no real form, but as I watched that new Soul float in the sky, I thought it rather pleasant looking, so I decided being formless wasn’t so bad after all.

As we got closer, I heard the other Guardian, shout, “Lee! It’s time to come down.”

“No, this is fun!” I heard the Soul, called Lee, respond.

“Problems, Cho?” Seth asked the other Guardian.

“I thought I’d never convince Lee to come out of the river, and now I can’t get it to come down from the sky!” Cho exclaimed.

I watched the Lee Soul as it floated around. Though I enjoyed floating in the sky when I came out, floating had nothing on bouncing in my opinion.

“You’re a silly Soul!” I shouted up to Lee. “I’ve been where you are. You haven’t lived until you’ve bounced.”

Just like Seth, even though Lee was shapeless and faceless, I could still tell it was looking toward me.

“What are you?” Lee asked.

“The same as you,” I replied.

“And what is that?”

“Well, if all you’re going to do is float around up there for eternity, you’ll never find out.” I turned to Seth. “Can we go? I want to get to Placement. I don’t want to wait around for that silly Soul to come down.”

“I know what silly is,” Lee said. “I’m not silly.”

It was then that Lee started to float down to the bank next to us.

The Guardian, named Cho, turned to me. “Thank you for your assistance.”

I thought about the response I should use and I was fairly sure I’d get it right this time. “You’re welcome.” I then added, “How long had Lee been floating Earth time?”

“About six months in the sky and a year in the river,” Cho replied.

“That long!” I exclaimed, even though I had no real concept of what six months or a year felt like. “It only took me three minutes.”

“And how do you know so much?” Lee asked in a tone I knew to be sarcastic.

“Because I came down when Seth told me to and asked questions. I know who I am, what I am, where I came from and where I’m going. Can you say the same?”

Lee was quiet for a moment. “Well, no.” His sarcastic manner had diminished.

“See, when you float around in the sky doing nothing, you can’t learn anything,” I replied.

Lee sighed. “You have a point.”

After that, introductions were made, and the four of us started bouncing along toward Placement.

After its first few bounces, I heard Lee laugh. “You’re right, Celeste.

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Bouncing is fun too.”

I listened as Lee started asking questions of Cho, which were basically the same questions I'd asked Seth previously.

As we bounced along the colorful bank, I looked at the surrounding area. It was just as colorful as the sky, but it was also barren as far as I could see, except for the expansive River of Knowledge.

“Where is this place?” I asked Seth.

“I was just getting ready to ask that,” Lee said. “It looks so empty around here.”

“It's called Noplace,” Seth answered.

“How odd,” I replied. “This is some place, but you call it Noplace.”

“Yet, that is what it's called,” Seth reiterated.

Lee chuckled. “I can guess why.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because it's so empty around here, this is—no place—where I would want to stay. I want to be—some place—where it's not so empty.”

I thought about Lee's statement. “I tend to agree,” I replied, then posed another question to Seth. “Is Lee correct? Is that why it's called Noplace?”

“It's a possibility,” Seth replied. “It's been called Noplace long before my existence.”

“How long have you existed?” I asked Seth.

“As I've said, time is irrelevant here, and before you asked, I wouldn't know how long by Earth standards either. My existence began, then at some point, which I don't bother to think about, it will end,” Seth said. Cho couldn't answer either when Lee had asked the same question.

I listened as Lee asked Cho about the River of Knowledge. Apparently, it had no beginning and no end. “If a million-trillion Souls popped out of the river at the same time,” Lee asked, “would the river run dry?”

Seth and Cho both laughed. “It actually happened once in our existence,” Seth responded. “That was one busy experience.”

“Only there were a lot more than a million-trillion, as you called it. The number was uncountable from my perspective,” Cho said. “Yet, the River of Knowledge remained unchanged by it.”

“Why did so many come out at the same time?” I asked.

“We don't know,” Seth replied. “We Guardians just deal with

situations that happen within our realm. The reasons why are irrelevant.”

“Our function is to answer basic questions within our capability and lead you to the Placement archway,” Cho said. “At that point, one of the Superiors will take over and give you more information about the Soul Lines.”

“You mean I won’t see you after I leave Noplace?” I asked.

“We Guardians don’t leave our boundary,” Seth replied.

I sighed. “How sad. I’ll miss you when I leave.”

“What would happen if you did leave?” Lee asked.

“I don’t really know,” Seth replied. “But I have no reason to leave. I do, what I do, because I enjoy it. It’s my place in this existence. When I cease to enjoy it, I will cease to exist, and my Soul will go back to the Soul line for placement.”

“What happens to your physical form when your Soul leaves?” Lee asked.

“Very seldom do Guardians wish not to exist. But it did happen once, in my life time, that I know of,” Cho said. “The physical form of a Guardian, name Ahn, had dissipated from around its Soul and became one with the elements around us. Another Guardian led the abandoned Soul back to the Placement archway.”

It was then that Lee came close to me, snickered and whispered, “We could be moving through the remnants of dead Guardians.”

A new feeling came over me. It was the feeling of disgust. I searched my thoughts for a proper response and came up with one to match my feeling. “That’s gross, Lee!”

Lee laughed and rejoined its Guardian, but the thought of moving through the remnants of dead Guardians stuck with me. I know time was irrelevant here, but I just had to ask, “Seth, will we be arriving at the Placement archway soon?”

“It’s just up ahead.” Seth replied.

I looked ahead and could just barely see what could have been and archway in the distance. I also saw other Guardians and Souls approach from the other direction as well. I made a count of the others that were approaching. There were twenty-six pairing of Souls with their Guardians. With Lee and me, that made twenty-eight pairings in all. Even though I would miss Seth, I also was excited to move on to a new existence.