

## ***Moments of Silence, Moments of Gift***

It's sometime, someplace in the future. I am sitting on a marvelous beach with inspiring artificial waves, white sand, and a sky that's half-blue, half-grey. The sun is on the one side, clouds on the other.

"Strange weather today," I tell myself. I have just finished my business intervention and I am looking forward to seeing my kids.

I look at the sky and take a moment to breathe. I start to think about the journey of my life and what my future will be like. After I've been sitting for a while, completely absorbed by my thoughts and feelings, a group of strange children, men, and women join me. At first we are silent, sharing eye contact and building invisible relationships with each other. Though they are strangers from different planets, we are able to begin an amazing conversation. It's as though time is shifting. Our individual languages vanish and a new language emerges so that we are all able to connect.

Sarah, a fifteen-year-old girl, representing planet Tech, asks the first question. "Why can you not accept that we are born into a decade of technology? We are wired completely differently as far as learning, being, and relationships are concerned."

I'm a little bit shocked by this direct question. "Because I am frightened," I admit. "I'm afraid you will lose your human soul, that you'll lose interest in what is important to me. I worry you will not be ready to find happiness, and that we'll lose contact."

Lu, a boy from Tech, listens carefully to my spontaneous and honest answer. He looks deeply into my eyes and responds, "What if you stop viewing us this way, and trust instead that our human soul is there and will reveal itself when necessary?"

"Do not even respond to the question," Sarah adds. "Give the question a place where it can exist and deploy its creative force within you."

Kira, a woman from the planet Soul, bounces into the conversation. "How did you manage to not lose your soul during your life?" Again, I discover something about myself in answering. "I think

I did lose it for a while. I was probably too busy in working, succeeding, helping others to succeed...but I was lucky because life offered me various wake-up calls in the guise of tough challenges. I learned that instead of fighting and complaining, it is more effective to embrace challenges by saying *yes!* I learned that facing these challenges with a *yes* generated creativity and new possibilities. I discovered that my soul showed up when I needed it most and guided me to new ways of being and behaving."

A seventeen-year-old girl entered the conversation with passion and joy in her voice. "That's exactly what we're trained to do when we play our video game 'Be Yourself, Be Together,' which we play on our new microtablets. If we resist the challenge, we lose the battle. If we embrace challenge, we have a chance to innovate and to find new solutions."

Jimmy, a forty-year-old man from the planet Performance, takes a deep breath. "I feel that everything I call a 'challenge' is in fact an experience. Everything changed in my life when I stopped obsessing over control, performance, and results. My leadership methods changed the moment I started to see challenges as an invitation to experience something new. My company began to invent new ways of collective performance. When I think about it, I have to admit that the company's soul was regenerated

in that moment. We all were invited to think and act differently.”

We are all touched by this story. Gru, an old man from the planet Joy, enters the conversation. “You are asking so many serious questions! Look at your faces; feel your hearts. It seems to me that all your life is hard work and challenge. Where I come from, we learn that joy is everywhere and a fundamental life force. But in order to see it, we learn to change our way of seeing things, of looking at things. We have been told that people from other planets are resistant to joy. This seems to be true from your stories.”

There is silence after this comment until a woman from the planet Be Useful stands. Gru’s comments have moved her deeply. “How can we have a joyful life when there is so much suffering in the world? It’s not okay to be joyful when others suffer.”

“Look at this,” Gru replies to her. “I’ve just downloaded the insight of the day on my microtablet. It says, ‘Whatever you see, you are free to choose your attitude.’ I can only repeat that you are free to choose.”

Suddenly, a deep voice interrupts from out of nowhere. “Are you there? I have something to say.” We cannot see a speaker. Is the voice a download through our brainwave devices? Are our human souls finding a pure medium to express themselves? Is the voice a figment of our imaginations? We are all intrigued. Some of us are frightened; some are smiling. Some of us even seem to be used to this kind of voice.

We all expect a message to be delivered, a question to be asked, or a challenge to be proposed. But the voice’s question is followed by silence. We wait five, ten, fifty minutes. Finally, we all stop expecting any further message from the voice. We look at each other: smiling, surprised, and somehow relieved. Jo, a young boy from the planet Mystery, says, “Maybe silence is the gateway to the future. Maybe a moment of collective silence is the window to our soul. Maybe we have to learn to be together in silence so that the future can touch us and we can start a conversation.”

As soon as he says this, the moment that has brought us together begins to dissolve. We all instantly know that our moment of connection is over.

I leave the beach and go home, puzzled by this experience. As soon as I open the door I hear the noise of my children’s Playstation. My kids, deeply involved in their game, stop playing and look at me. “Mom!” my son Lukas says. “We had a strange experience in cyberspace today.”

“What was it about?” I ask. “The essence of life,” my other son Jonathan responds. “What’s the essence?” “Oh, Mom,” Lukas laughs, “You won’t get it. It’s way too cyberspacey for you. It’s something like, “Be silent so that the future can find you, and if the future finds you, say yes.”

We all smile at each other, silently connecting through our looks. Together, we silently say, “Yes!” We turn back to our respective activities, but we are connected forever through our moment of shared silence, a moment of collective soul, a moment where the future has touched us. Moments of silence, moments of gifts.

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