

PHILOSOPHY OF A SUPERFLUOUS COUPLE

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CHAPTER 1: OUR BACKGROUND

I could solve most crosswords and had an IQ of 198 (200 is the max). But I opted for a geology degree, which was largely useless. Then I traveled around teaching English before returning home to NYC where I did a master's degree in archeology, but as an archaeologist, I languished on the poverty line. I could barely afford beer, the only thing that made me happy. I was now 38 years old and white... living in NYC.

In my geology studies in university, I questioned why supercomputers couldn't predict the weather long term and questioned whether the World was heating up of its own accord as it had been more or less doing since the end of the last ice age and maybe we would all be surprised by global cooling. I said to various people, "Sure it's bad to pollute, but who knew what the result would be?" And I believed there was a power source at the Earth's core.

When I studied a Master's in archaeology. I figured human beings as we know them have been around for hundreds of thousands of years and had colonized the Americas crossing the Bering land bridge hundreds of thousands of years ago. And we needed to use Ground Penetrating Radar to find prehistoric sites. And zoom in on our ancestors. But ultimately, I figured there wasn't much to find; better to write books of the future.

When I went to the bar all alone, in my travels, I often met girls who were amazed by my wit and a few of them told me I should really do something great with my mind. So finally, I started

to write, I wrote a book about being superfluous. I wrote in my own style, which was really a series of short pieces about varying useless people. Some, like me were superfluous. Others were just plain useless.

Persephone was a girl who was smart but married a rich man at age 20 and didn't have to work. She was just his love slave but really had no positive impact on peoples' lives and had no children. And her husband had many affairs, but she put up with them as she loved him. She tried learning to paint pictures but found she couldn't do anything new with painting and this discouraged her. Then she tried to write a novel about her life, her struggle. But no publisher was interested even though she had some deep insights into life and what it meant to be useless. She started to feel superfluous and began writing about it. Finally, she divorced this man, at age 33 and hung out with me. We quickly fell in love. We were both philosophers and both believed strongly in human imagination and we both believed we were superfluous...

So, then I wrote a book about my romance with Persephone, set in the future. We drove an air car and participated in orgies (all sex diseases had been cured) and read one another's minds and were eternally youthful. But today, we were hypnotizing one another to love only one another. Persephone and I were both failures and were both lost and superfluous.

I was spending most of my working hours teaching English Online. It was a hangover from my days as a teacher abroad in many countries. I'd taught in Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Niger and Russia. She worked as a newspaper columnist/ reporter.

Then one night we had an argument. I told her, “You are useless to me. You don’t inspire me!” She said, “I feel the same about you.” But we stayed together all the same.

“My latest book was, “Tales of Madness.” Like one day there was a singer who thought she would sing madly despite the cold and a group of homeless people joined her and sang along in semi-harmonious voices. They sang in the center of the modest city and had a screen behind them which displayed art that they had designed just for this singer. And as time went by she wrote her own songs and now had a full choir backing her up. Finally, a record company from the big city picked her and her choir up and they released an album called, “Psychedelic Winter” which was about a nuclear winter in which everyone was dying, and the choir painted paintings of it. Art in the Apocalypse!

And another book was about a madman who became the most famous man in Brunei by writing tales of madness like once upon a time there was a man who was President of the USA who took LSD often and made colorful, mad speeches like saying things like things look pretty grim, but imagination would save the day. Everyone would be forced to do at least one imaginative thing per day and people got the hang of it as imaginative behavior was rewarded with riches and fame. But some said imagination was all madness and everything would end badly for the President. And sure enough, one day a man he trusted caused him to overdose on LSD and he ran about shouting and screaming until finally a pedestrian shot him for accosting him.

And another book was about a man who was King of Sheep. He lived on Mars and all his subjects were morons and looked very foolish. The King enjoyed sex with the females and played drinking games with the men. Everyone was a drunkard. But the King said, "Unusual behavior was sublime and even humorous." Like having sex with androgynous people, and trying to be a thinker.

And Persephone said, "The tales were a grotesquerie and grossed me out." I replied, "Why don't you tell me about your latest stories!" So, she said, "Once there was a couple of star-crossed lovers who got locked up in a criminal mental asylum for trying to break into an asylum and helping their friend to escape. In the asylum they were both raped and abused and finally they killed themselves. Another one was about a selfish man who never did a good thing for anybody. But he went to Heaven, just like everyone else. And ruined peoples' Heavenly experience. And still another about a useless man who nobody liked, and he died miserably."

We were both writers, but no publisher of any size liked our work. People asked, "Why don't you two do something useful with your fine brains?" I resolved to form a rock band with me on guitar and Persephone singing. We wrote lyrics now as well as books. And we harmonized well together, as I sang too! One day I told Persephone, "In this World of madness, you and I will not survive long." We were both alcoholics and smoked a lot of grass which was bad for our lungs.

I said, "There are some people who are crazier than us!" She said, "We give new meaning to the words, 'mad love.'" I said, "I'd do anything for you, no matter how crazy!" She said, "Let's

try and be calm and sane for a day!” So, we tried it, and in the morning, I put solidified laughing gas in her breakfast cereal, and she loved the maid who was a moron. And so, the day went.

The next day I asked her in all sincerity, “How we could be useful to our fellow human?” She replied, “I think we should start a political party, the imaginative party.” I said, “Brilliant! We could draw up a mad manifesto in which, everyone should be rewarded for imaginative ideas. And people could spend their time trying to make sense of the reality that we are all useless and life is meaningless.” She said, “Reality makes me sick. It is so arbitrary and mindless. We need imaginative solutions. Like for example, elect the most imaginative people to positions of power. Often such people are relegated to obscurity and if they try and write, they can’t find a big publisher, and die in obscurity. We have plenty of good ideas amongst the population, I am sure! We just need to harvest them like we were intellectual farmers. I know a man who said, ‘Most people are malleable, and we can make them into anything we want. It is just a matter of education and hypnotism to convince them to join us!’” I said, “We need to use search engines to find imaginative people and not look at those who are published under big publishers. We’ll find the people who should matter! And turn the tables on the establishment who want everyone to follow the status quo. Shake things up a little!” So, we began our search. And gave up on the musical band idea for a while.

CHAPTER 2: WE BEGIN OUR SEARCH

One of the first people we found in our search was a woman, Doris, a black American of 30, who said, “We all have our roles to play in the script, only now we need to use all the best people in power. Using scientists, artists and entrepreneurs who are hesitant to strive for power, to give them a soap box to speak from.” And she said, “All it takes is a little cajoling and friendliness.” And she said, “The ideal persona will take every idea and try and improve on it. Political ideology will become like a sculpture in the making. First off, we need to care for the poor and unfortunate and especially those who are clever but have fallen on barren ground. Then we need to consider the views of those who are radicals and don’t succeed in school and life. We want radicals to be Princes and Princesses of our modern World. Radicals who are in obscure but great rock bands, marginalized writers and artists, all those who are really brilliant but can’t find success.”

Another radical, Bob, a white American of 55, we found said, “Old age should be a privilege for the most imaginative, those who are dull and boring should only be allowed a short life, yet all would be given a chance to show what they can do!” I said, “Such a World would be ideal, but hard to pull off!” Persephone said, “The idea is brilliant. An ‘imaganocracy’” I said, “The most imaginative could meet and inspire one another and the imagopolice could arrest people for being boring. It would be cruel but would be paradise.” But Bob said, “Many are violently against me, and I feared for my life, but was confident I could avoid assassination.” I said, “Yes, some would consider it a type of genocide, but technology is crying out for progress, and we have to follow the beat of that drum.” Persephone said, “Most people are just killing time in life

and do no good works or imaginative deeds. And children should only be allowed for those who have led an interesting life.” I said, “But the people will rise up and revolt! And give us the guillotine.”

Another radical, Julie, a Hispanic American of 41 we found said, “The most imaginative, best lovers should lead us in a loving society in which the best lovers are the richest, most famous people. The best lovers would share their techniques and philosophy with everyone else, thereby improving everyone!” I said, “Imagination is like a bottomless pit, you can always go deeper.” Persephone said, “To truly fall in love with a great lover is the best feeling, regardless of whether or not your true love loves you!”

Another good radical we found, an Arab American of 34, named Persimmon said, “She was kept down by her religion, but had an idea to make all religions believe in free love.” I said, “Free love is nothing new, but to try and force everyone to follow free love is new. In the 1960s free love was like a juggernaut that seemed unstoppable, but somehow it petered out.” Persephone said, “Soon as they cure herpes and AIDs free love will come again.”

Yet another radical, a female, named Nicole, a white American of 29, said, “I wanted to break through the wall that is society and live in paradise for all. Such a paradise would involve true freedom and it would be against the law to try and curtail another’s freedom.” I said, “The freer you are, the more you impinge on others’ freedoms.” She said, “Within reason of course.” Persephone said, “In history it has always been such a struggle to be free, now true freedom seems possible.” And she said, “To fight for freedom is to have use!” I said, “First we need to

convince people that they need to be free. Free of marriage, free of wage slavery, free to travel anywhere, free to think as deep as they can, free to buy anything they need such as a home and air car, freedom to take medicine that will prolong youth, free to take drugs of pleasure and so on. And even free children who can choose fun ways to learn.” Nicole said, “Yes, some people are stubborn and say they want to be free but are not and don’t even try!”

Another new friend of ours, PJ, white American of 43, said, “The end of the World is coming through bioweapons. Too many people have access to them, and the spies can’t keep up. We are all rendered useless to do anything about this. It’s out of control.” I said, “Yes there are many things that will bring the World to the end like computer hackers shutting down whole countries, like nuclear war waged by dictatorships destroying whole countries and so on.” And I said, “The only way out is for a group of us like-minded imaginative citizens to seize power and put out the fire. But we will be killed if we fail in all likelihood.”

And we had a new friend, Tim, a Chinese American of 33, who kept telling us, “We were useless like everybody else and there was nothing we could do to change that. Life was meant to be simple and meaningless and that’s what our civilization was. There was no meaning.” I said, “But surely to improve the World for all would have meaning!” Tim said, “There is no meaning and there is no God.” Persephone said, “But we are free to create our own meanings. Everyone has some things that are meaningful to them.” Tim said, “It’s just a dream!”

CHAPTER 3: THE IMAGINATION PARTY

I said, “So far you, Persephone and I have done nothing to improve the World. Do you think World change should be our goal?” She said, “We could try harder, but ultimately it seems futile. No one person can change the World.” I said, “But if we get a movement behind us, we could work miracles.” She answered, “You are a dreamer, but who knows you might get what you want in the end!”

And we met a physicist, Marjorie, a white American of 39, who said, “I had developed the math for faster than light travel but was scorned by the conservative scientific community.” And she said, “Posterity will find me, just like the inventors of the first computers, but I will not succeed in this life I am afraid.” I said, “I feel the same about my writing. The conservative publishing industry is so hard to crack when you have an unusual style, like I do!”

And I made love with Marge, Persephone and I believed in free love. I had a great feeling the next day and was determined more than ever to be useful.

Then we met Samuel. Samuel was a Filipino of 30, a seafaring man who said, “I meet the best people while sailing to little known parts of the World!” I said, “You can meet brilliant people anywhere, even in a small town!” He said, “True but to go to a place like NYC everyone knows

has more clever people per capita than almost anywhere else and with yachties it is the even more pronounced; most of them are clever and successful.” I asked him, “How do you measure success?” He said, “To make a difference and be rewarded with cash!” I asked, “How have you made a difference?” He responded, saying, “I was a stockbroker, and I made a lot of people rich!” I said, “But most rich people are greedy and selfish!” He said, “People on the whole are greedy and selfish but at least rich people are successful and make others successful too!” I asked him, “Is being successful then the meaning of life?” He replied, “For me it is!” Persephone opined, “Success is measured, to me, in how many people you have inspired to do good things in your life.” He said, “Success in itself is inspirational.” So, we took a cruise from NYC to the Azores, and he knew some of the yachties there. They were raising children at sea and claimed to have had an adventurous life. One man told us, “I was a poet and had written a lot of lyrics for a rock band.” The band was obscure but the lyrics were deep like, “At sea/ One learns to live off the Earth/ And the Earth was crazy and all the creatures in it/ It was a World of peril and suffering/ And one needed to keep your eyes on the prize/ which was immortality/ To create music for the ages/ Is something everyone gauges/ And although it is madness/ It is good/ Live life as a crazed persona/ Is the way to be.” Persephone and I partied in the Azores for a few weeks before returning to NYC.

I said to Persephone, “Some of those yachties made us feel like royalty. But the easy, free life is not for us!” She said, “Yes we are on a road to Hell, but plan to survive all the same.” I said, “Yes we are destined for politics and hard-won policies.” (Of course, we were both founding members of the Imagination party). And our mission was to recruit new members around the USA. People had to prove they were imaginative and did so in numerous ways. But the

important thing was we all put imagination first above all other things. Create until death do us part.”

Many of the members of our Imagination party were entranced by the idea that imagination will solve all the World’s problems. But typically, one solution led to more challenges. It was an endless cycle but was challenging for all! Persephone opined, “All people need is a challenge in which they play an important role.” I said, “To immerse oneself into politics in a new way is the highest of roles. Many people who could make a difference in politics are scared away by having to follow boring party rhetoric and have their good ideas snubbed.” And I said, “Few politicians have a true vision for the future. They just want to spend tax dollars in wasteful ways. Even Conservatives/Republicans when in power are beholden to special interest groups and doling out money and power to such groups. Most politicians are corrupt.”

And I said to Persephone, “It is a World of power in which the entitled garner money and control. It is usually the rule of the rich. And if the socialists get in, they spend incredible amounts of money, enriching the poor, but it cannot be sustained. We need to create a system in which the poor can succeed! Such as raising dramatically the minimum wage and putting caps on the rate at which real estate can escalate to. And everyone should have health care and dental care as a basic right.” She said, “There’s no limit to the abuse of one man to another. As if some weren’t fully human. One can be like our yachtie friend, Samuel, and try to forget about the poor and just worry about the successful people, but this point of view is hardly charitable.”

And Persephone told me, she was sick of reporting on the news. “It was all bad news,” she said, “And it was a vexation to her spirit.” And I said, “I was tired of talking at my English teaching job. And I felt my students were learning very slowly.”

So, we quit our jobs and worked only for the Imagination party. We polled the American people about what they wanted in life. Most said love, freedom, a good job and a healthy family. Something like that. We proposed a more imaginative life to them but found they were largely disinterested. We told them, “But the two established parties are dull and boring.” Most of them agreed saying things like, “Better to be dull than dead.”

Persephone said, “I am not so worried about the poor, but rather the poor in spirit. I wish I could inspire everyone to do their best.”

Then we met Alberta, a white American of 50. She said, “You guys are headed in the right direction, but the question is in the end will a substantial number of people back you?” I said, “Good ideas spread like wildfire in this society we live in. And I am confident we will have numerous idea people in our party.” And Persephone said, “Almost everyone deep down wants to do the right things and we are giving them a chance to make a difference.” Alberta said, “But you are trying to lead people into a great unknown and most are content with their life as it exists.” I said, “Everyone though is greedy for more happiness, more satisfaction...”

Then we met Vera, Japanese/white American. She said, “I don’t know how people of your caliber can consider themselves to be useless. I feel you are just what the doctor ordered for this

time and place.” I said, “The next election will be a referendum on our mission. We will run candidates in all House and Senate seats as well as Persephone as President. We have still got one year before the next Presidential election in 2028 to get our act together. We have the ideas; what we need now is organization.”

So, we held elections for our new party members to elect candidates. Most of them were former Independents, but there was double digit support in both the Republican and Democratic party supporters for us

I was planning to run as her Vice-Presidential running mate, and we would govern together. But we ended up with just 21% of the Presidential vote and elected only 10 to Congress. Still, it was a start. But my feelings of uselessness returned. Some said, “You are greedy for power.” Others said, “You are just a dreamer.” I figured I was a dreamer, and an unsuccessful one.

But one day, the government’s secret service appeared at my door and warned me to stay out of politics. So, I fell into despair. I told Persephone about, “the visit from the spies.” And she said, “They came to me, too!” I asked her “What was our next move?” She said, “If we don’t desist we’ll be assassinated!” I said, “I think so too.” She said, “We’ll make it as writers. And she wrote a creative nonfiction tale of our reality.” But publishers didn’t want to touch it. And so, we both felt useless again. And we disbanded the Imagination party.

And again, I started to write. This time around I wrote Dystopias and was morose. For example, I wrote about a world in which aberrant ideas were punished with death. Some

scientists in that World had to work in secret and writers circulated their manifestos in the Underground. But ultimately, they were all caught and sentenced to death.

Another Dystopia I wrote was about was a World of need in which everyone was needy, but the government didn't help them. Some starved, most were alone and lonely. No love attachments, you couldn't see the same lover twice in a year. No one was allowed to have children and most people died very young. If you lived beyond 40, you'd be pressured to kill yourself. So, this civilization was slowly imploding. In the end the only adults left standing were the Oligarchy of 5 men and 5 women, who had test tube babies, grown in an incubator with the women given fertility drugs to produce more eggs. And so, the group had been producing 55 babies every year for 10 years and so now had a total population of 560. They were starting civilization all over again. They resolved to live like Kings, and everyone had the best of everything. And they figured they were all kindred spirits and loved one another intensely. And lived on and on with eternal youth. And looked to the future. But no publisher took my story, and I couldn't get an agent.

Persephone said, "Why don't we set up a charity for struggling artists of all kinds? We could view their work and award grants, only all works would have to be very deep. We could raise money from established writers to pay for the grants." I told her, "It would be enjoyable to meet such people." So, we set up a website that would publish all sorts of media, writing, painting, music, comics, audio books and so on. I said the difference between us, and most other publishers is we are more imaginative. We designed a knockout site and had a number of artists right away. We invited them to stay in our place when they were in New York and finally set up

a hostel for artists who could show proof of good artwork. The hostel had a 20-hour bar, open 8 am to 4 am and a library. We got a grant from the state to keep the price of a tiny room to \$75 a night. We found there was a lot of synergy in this bar and many artists came from far away.

CHAPTER 4: THE LEAGUE OF IMAGINATION

One of the women we met was a white American of 44, a hypnotherapist. She said, “I can help struggling artists succeed, using post-hypnotic suggestion.” But Persephone and I had seen a stage hypnotist and heard stories of hypnotized people being driven insane by cross-hypnotism. But still we were interested to see miserable starving artists improve and go more mainstream and be happier. We had her hypnotize a couple down and out writers and they perked right up, and we told her to keep hypnotizing people.

Another woman we met, Juliette, an Indonesian of 47, said, “I liked to paint pictures with animals and men of great height or small height. Like painting a farmer with giant dogs or painting a giant who ran about the countryside as if he were King Kong.” I asked her, “What was the point?” She said, “Everything is a matter of scale.” Persephone said, “There’s no point to your paintings!”

And we met a man, Will, who wrote highly artistic love letters to his many female acquaintances. He wrote one to Persephone saying, "People like her keep the World turning and love was in the air all around her. And her scent drove him crazy." And he said to her, "I will never forget you; you have inspired me." So, I told Persephone, "To go ahead and love him."

Anyway, I wanted to love Carrie, a Hispanic American of 32, a musician who made psychedelic music with choirs. She was really sexy, and we sang a duet together. But for some reason this musician was also unsuccessful. But after all we lived in this era of boring, senseless commercial music. I wrote some lyrics for her called "Black Hole," and I loved her for weeks. Afterwards, Persephone told me, "I thought I'd lost you." I said, "You know I'd never leave you!"

Then still at the hostel, we met an American gay couple, Petunia and Georgette who were both writers. They said, "We write as a hobby and don't expect any laurels, but I read one of their books they'd cowritten and it was splendid about a woman who discovered a cure for herpes which set off a free love world trend. It was like the late 1960's all over again. And the book was full of interesting characters who were inspired by love to do good art. And this scientist in the book was given the Nobel Prize for Chemistry and was the spokeswoman for the new "Love Movement." I said, "In the meantime while we wait for a cure, we can test everyone at the hostel for STD's including herpes and AIDS. People will say why not love everyone?"

Another artist, Shelly, a Chinese American of 46, I met at the hostel said, "I painted pictures of Hell. They were pictures of people being tortured and burnt and women handcuffed and raped, and the Devil was in every picture in one guise or another. Sometimes it was the Devil who was tortured. No one in the pictures seemed to be having a good time. And she had audio accompaniment narrating the thoughts of those in Hell." And she said, "I have a student who just paints heavenly pictures, also with audio. But I think the human race is on the road to Hell!" I replied saying, "It could go either way, our future, Heaven or Hell. Or maybe both at the same time!" Shelly said, "The future will feature out of control inclement weather and unprecedented hacker crime, and everyone will be victimized, and evil will triumph." I said, "On the negative side, bad art will also triumph as will all manner of moronic ideas. The masses will go one mindless way and then another. But on the plus side, at least some great scientists will be famous and influential. And presumably some great artists will be at least semi-famous." Shelly asked, "Is that what is needed, fame?" I said, "To be a person of renown is to have power to change the World!" She asked, "How would you change it?" I said, "Above all we need a government of the brilliant intellectuals; we need to scour the Earth looking for such people. And get them involved." Shelly said, "But great intellectuals never get involved in government." I said, "So that is the challenge!" Shelly said, "I read biographies of clever people like Einstein, and they were full of gems and wisdom." I said, "It's just inertia, once we get the movement started it will be an unstoppable juggernaut." And she said, "I wish you luck in your quest to be useful, but I doubt you will succeed." And I was wondering what the spies would say about such a movement." Persephone said, "I want to see the God Emperor/Empress appear. And unite the World and take control." I said, "The spies wouldn't like it, it is too much power!" Persephone answered, "It's just a thought or more accurately a wild wish!" I replied, "At least we are free to

dream, at least for now!” She said, “The dream police are coming though.” I said, “Anything we can imagine will come true at least in part. And we just have to back the best people.”

And I said, “I want to form the League of Superfluous Humans. People who have so much to give but are rebuffed by society. We’ll join such people together and hope for a synergy that would finally make them well known. To be so good, others can’t resist them.” We recruited on the Internet. One of them was a man who’d written, a book about “How I was hallucinating seeing only ruins everywhere where buildings now stood. And I imagined all the people were rotten skeletons.” I said, “What drugs are you on? He said, “My ability to see things for what they truly are or will be is a divine gift of the Gods.” I replied, “Surely you don’t believe in the Gods?” He said, “Anyway I am gifted. But in truth my life is one of horror. I see death and destruction everywhere and I believe the human race is doomed, soon. Whether from nuclear war or biological war or a cyber virus that can infect the computer user; or genius, but malign hackers.”

Another of our recruits to the League was a woman, Daphne, who had lost her arms and legs in a car accident. But she was a painter who now painted with new software that allowed her to dictate to the computer drawing machine and she produced strange juxtapositions upon juxtapositions. But she couldn’t find a buyer for most of her works and ended up giving them to friends. I said, “In this modern World many organizations try and foster the growth of disabled artists.” She said, “There’s so much art out there that my work gets drowned in the morass.” Persephone said, “Let me be your agent, Daphne!”

Another newcomer was Grace. She had a spectacular face and body, but she told us, “She was swarmed by men who were full of lust for her. And the smarter they were, the more they wanted her.” But she complained, “I am just a sex object, and no one wants to read my romantic novels, clever as they may be.” I said, “People who want to read romantic novels are not looking for a deep read!” She said, “Maybe it is a new sub-genre!” I said, “I tried to make a new genre, that of crazy stories, but failed.” She said, “I guess we are both failures then!” But we loved one another, and it was brilliant, and Persephone told me the next day, “I am jealous and feel spurned.”

Another new friend was Anthony, an American aboriginal of 40. He said, “My goal was always to be a modern-day saint and did charitable work his whole life, but it was largely a thankless task and didn’t feel like I had made a difference. So, I wrote down the story of my charitable adventures, but publishers said, ‘It didn’t fit in with their list.’ So finally, I gave up and now was asking you two, for advice.” I told him, “To go back to school and learn how to be a shrink and help the clever but deranged. You could do some real good work in such a field.” He said, “I am thinking of becoming a cult leader, the cult of the New Jesus. And my books will be from my bible.” I said, “Some people are fervent believers in the second coming of Christ and what good timing. The masses need someone to pray to and believe in, now more than ever. It’s a great idea.” And I promised him, “I would keep in touch!”

Another superfluous persona was Mildred, an Indian American of 31. She said, “I too am a loser. I tried to invest in bitcoin and real estate and such but failed to get rich, buying and selling at the wrong times.” I said, “I figured no one lost in real estate these days!” She said, “I am too

sensitive and too worried about becoming a loser. That's what this club of yours is; a club for losers!" I said, "It all depends how you measure success, many of our number are rich but consider themselves to be a failure." Mildred said, "I am a good-looking dame; I will just marry a rich man and lead a life of ease." Persephone said, "I've tried that, it will only make you feel like more of a loser!" I said, "Mildred there's more to life than riches!" She said, "I feel I am a good, intelligent woman, but can't find a useful occupation. I am superfluous." Persephone asked her, "Do you have any artistic skills?" Mildred said, "I feel like I could paint pictures of insane people, capturing their insanity in their faces!" I said, "Why don't you and find yourself a painter boyfriend?"

Anyway, then there was Xaveria. A Thai American. She was a very high-class prostitute. She said, "I'd loved Kings and movie stars and famous musicians and had a grand life, but now I was getting old at 45 and felt useless. I was too old to have kids and too old to be a whore. I said, "Welcome to the club!" And Persephone asked her, "Are you a nymphomaniac?" And Xaveria said, "I suppose I am." Persephone said, "I know a lot of men who are sex crazed who could keep you busy and take your thoughts away from metaphysics." Xaveria said, "I am doomed to be a love slave, I guess."

And then there was Kenneth, a white American of 35. I quoted the song and asked him, "What's the frequency, Kenneth?" He said, "No one seems to be kindred spirits with me, I don't know what's wrong with me." I told him, "Most of my friends are oddballs and we aren't kindred spirits!" He said, "But you have Persephone!" I said, "If anything happened to Persephone, I'd be in a state of shock! And might not recover..." Kenneth said, "It's a lonely

World and I am manically depressed.” I told him, “I recommend that you immerse yourself in sex, drugs and parties and forget your loneliness.” He said, “I’ve tried everything, and my depression only gets worse!” I said, “Then your only resort is heroin. With heroin at least you will feel good!” He replied, “I suppose you are right. But I am afraid to go down that path.”

Then there was Diane, a Chinese American of 27. Diane had a very pretty face, and had a large frame, but had no tits. She said, “My only resort is breast enlargement surgery!” I said, “It’s doable and not too expensive, why not?” And she said, “Men are so shallow!” I said, “Most women too are shallow! But not everyone.” And I said, “I would like to love you!” And so, we did and it was fun and then she went and had her surgery and never looked back.

Another one was Dave. Dave was a white American of 30. A hairy, gorilla of a man. He said, “I like wild women. But every time, I loved one, I soon get sick and tired of her.” I said, “There’s nothing wrong with that!” He said, “But I need a true love!” I replied saying, “You just need to search for a wild woman who is clever enough to keep you entertained and amused.” He asked, “Are you some kind of shrink?” I said, “No, but many of our people want advice, like you want it.” And I said, “Maybe the Internet is not a good place for you to find love. Maybe try bars or hobby clubs.” He said, “But Online is so easy and has all the statistics about a potential lover.” I said, “Statistics don’t hold much water when it comes to love. It is an ineffable magic, and you don’t know it until you see it in person. He said, “I’ve tried everything. It just seems like it is my fate to never fall in love. To never have meaning in my life.” I said, “I know how it feels to feel useless and unwanted. Without my woman, Persephone, I’d be totally lost.” He replied, “You are fortunate to have such a lover and companion.”

Then Steve, a white Canadian who said, “I am stuck in a dead-end job and have 2 kids and a wife and can hardly afford to feed them. I am miserable and feel like a loser. I feel I have a lot of love to give, but don’t love my wife anymore.” I said, “Why don’t you go back to school and borrow a loan to pay for it and divorce your wife!” He said, “It’s good advice, but if I went back to school, I’d only want to study English literature which is not a very useful degree.” I said, “But you could travel the World teaching English, that’s not a bad life!” He said, “Is it really so easy to teach English?” I said, “You could do it in the vast majority of countries.” So, he went back to school but didn’t divorce his wife.

Another superfluous woman was Candy, a Taiwanese American of 56. She said, “My father cut me off from my monthly allowance since I was still single and didn’t have any kids. And the only job I can do is teach music which hardly pays the bills. I am miserable.” Persephone said, “I know you wear a lot of make up and look attractive, but maybe you should not try and find a man out of your league. Be satisfied with an ordinary man and an ordinary life.” She said, “If I don’t love a man then I don’t want to marry. I’ve fallen in love twice before so I know I can do it again. I may appear hopeless today, but in the future, I’ll be laughing.” I said, “At least you have a positive attitude. Perhaps you’ll get what you want.”

And then there was Able. He was a Jewish American and 33. He said, “I loved a certain woman, but she told me she never wanted to speak to me again.” And he said, “She was my whole life. I am crushed and miserable.” I told him, “You need to forget her and move on.” I introduced him to Diane, the girl with the fake boobs and they seemed to hit it off. But

ultimately, they broke up over a fight about money. So, they were both lonely and miserable again.

Bartholomew was a white man who said, "I'd traveled the World and loved many women and experienced all life had to offer. But life bored me, and I felt useless." I replied, "I know how you feel. But you can meet others in the same boat on our Superfluous Human webpage." He said, "The last thing I need is to meet other superfluous people." I responded saying, "Why not then try and meet famous people. After all you are very knowledgeable and very worldly. Join their fan clubs and write them letters." He said, "It's a good idea."

Persephone was saying, "I am amazed by the thousands and thousands of superfluous people on our website." I said "Ultimately just like the Peter Principle, people get promoted until they are incompetent in their job. Almost everyone becomes superfluous sooner or later. It is not a World of any inherent meaning." She said, "To be useful even to yourself is quite a tall order. But I find meaning discussing life with all these superfluous people." I said, "Many of them are supercilious and elitist and fastidious. And are scornful of most other people." She said, "They are all fish out of water and are choking in the air and most won't live long. But some will reach the sea as it were and find new vistas to experience."

I said to Persephone, "Life today is existential. Everyone's trying to find meaning, and more and more people are lost and feel like losers." I said, "We should post on our website those formerly superfluous people who found meaning and use. There are hundreds on our site. Inspirational stories. But I know that you and I both are still not very useful." Persephone said, "I

think we are mad to be hung up on being of use. Life is what it is and we know everything about it!”

CHAPTER 5 MORE SUPERFLUOUS PEOPLE

Nancy, a Chinese American of 30, said, “My boyfriend kicked me out of his home saying I was just a useless parasite and I felt quite hurt.” Persephone said, “It’s a cruel World in which love usually ends up as a disaster. But take heart, there’s many other fish in the sea!” Nancy said, “I think I am having a nervous breakdown.” I said, “I have just the man for you! He is named Jim and his girlfriend also told him he was useless. But he’s a good-looking guy and clever too but is manically depressed after his breakup.” So, we played cupid and set them up and learned that the two of them had taken to getting drunk every night but were pleased with one another.

Morris, a white American told us, “I am suicidal, my life has no meaning.” I said, “All you need is a good lover and some children and a more useful job. That’s the ticket.” And I said, “We have some shrinks in our Superfluity Club who could help you get back on your feet.” So, I introduced him to my friend, Catherine, a shrink. Morris reported back saying, “Cathy had

shown him the light!” And so, there was no suicide in this case. The last thing Persephone and I wanted was blood on our hands.

Joan was, a white woman of 56, an old friend of mine from school and told us, “I am singing the blues ever since I lost my job as an archaeologist. I was planning to set up my own company with a ground penetrating radar unit to focus on Early Humans.” But she said, “The company work was arduous, and I was depressed. And my lesbian lover had left me when I lost the job, and my friends were not very supportive.” I said, “These days most people struggle with mental problems at one time or another. There’s too much information and too many things to remember and focus on.” She said, “I consider you to be a friend I can count on.” I said, “It’s always good to know that one is of some use. I don’t think I can help my friends with their problems, though.” She said, “I just need a good listener!” And I told her, “I always had considered you attractive.” She said I am bisexual and would like to love you.” So, we did it and were together for a week. After that she said, “That affair was just what the doctor ordered. I feel like a new woman!”

Then I was back with Persephone. She didn’t ask where I’d been, and I didn’t tell her. She said, “I’d been talking with Roger, who was a depressed writer. He said, “I’d tried to publish my books of fables, but had no luck.” She recited a fable of his to me: “Once there were a pair of frog lovers who sat in the same spot in a creek everyday. When progress came to the creek, they built a dam, and it was concrete now where they used to sit. But in the process, the male frog was killed, but the female went back to the same relative spot where they used to sit. The moral is when you die life goes on.” I said, “I like fables. In my youth I wished that there were more of

them. I couldn't get enough. But now I watch as animals are losing their habitats and wildness and become just tame pets in the zoo." She said, "Yes, it is a tragedy."

Then Al, a white American of 32, told us, "I'd tried everything to try and satisfy my lover. But every day she tells me I am useless." I said, "But the fact that you two are together still means you are not useless to her. She probably just likes to complain. Many couples have more serious problems than you two!"

Another newcomer to our group was Alice. She was a black American of 28. She said, "My childhood had been like a Wonderland, but my adult life was dull and monotonous. I keep picking lovers who are boring and my friends too, bore me." I said, "Why don't you go abroad where you can teach English and start a new life with adventuresome people!" She said, "You fill me with confidence, and I think I'll try that!"

Then we met Bill, a white Canadian of 40. He said, "I have an inferiority complex and don't seem to do anything right." I said, "But you live in a small town. Why not live in New York and meet the best the World has to offer?" Persephone said, "In my opinion, you just need a hard loving woman to cure your depression!" He said, "But I'm nervous around women I like and always seem to blow it!" I said, "Keep trying!"

Next up was Stan. He was a Singaporean Chinese. He said, "I have everything I could possibly want and am very rich. But somehow, I am not satisfied. Persephone said, "Maybe life was too easy for you; perhaps you need challenges in your life." He said, my girlfriend is a

challenge; she keeps me hopping and everyday I am challenged to make more money. It is a case of *Je ne sais quoi*, I don't know what is wrong with me." I said, "I can refer you to a shrink, a friend of mine, Chuck, who will analyze your life and tell you what's wrong." So he went to a few sessions with Chuck and Chuck told him, "No one is completely happy. For us humans we are always greedy for more."

Another woman we met was Cynthia. She was black from Zanzibar and 30. She said, "One day soon Africa will get rich, many African economies are now booming." I said, "It was long overdue." And I said, "I had a black lover once, she lit up my life." But Cynthia said, "I am a writer and can't find a publisher in Africa!" I asked her, "What kind of things do you write?" She said, "I've written a few books about travel and adventuring in foreign lands. But I can't publish!" So, I read one of her books and found it to be stellar. I said, "You are on the right track. Just keep evolving, keep writing, and maybe things will work out for you!" And I said, "You know I've been struggling as a writer too!"

Then there was Tina, a white American. She was a semi-famous actress in her youth, but now had problems finding roles. She was too old at age 58, and most parts in films and TV shows were for young women only. She said, "I'm over-the-hill, I am redundant!" I asked, "Why didn't she get into directing or script writing or even an acting coach?" She said, "My only skill is in acting. And now I am useless." I said, "You just need a man who loves you and to take care of you. I am sure you have a number of fans out there!" She said, "I don't need fans, I need an equal who doesn't mind my age." Persephone said, "I think today (2028 A.D.), scientists are on

the verge of discovering eternal youth. Hang in there and maybe you will be immortal!” Tina said, “It’s something to live for!

Another newbie to our group, was Charlotte. She was Chinese and 54 and she said, “I had aspirations for politics in China, but I didn’t kiss ass enough and so was not allowed into the Party.” Persephone said, “There’s more than one way to change the World.” But Charlotte said, “Look at you two and your ‘Losers Club.’” I said, “Most of our people are quite talented, but in unusual ways. The camaraderie between us and them leads to a synergy of ideas and mutual advice.” Charlotte said, “You two give advice freely but do you ever take advice?” And she said, “You call yourselves superfluous, but you are just two more losers. Almost everyone is a loser today and I am looking to join a ‘Winners Club.’”

Then there was Robyn, a Korean American. She said, “I am a loser and I have no friends. I’ve had a few boyfriends who I gave all my love to, but they all dumped me. Now I was 46 and had reached menopause. And so could have no children. I am cursed by God. And my only sibling, my brother also didn’t have kids, so it was the end of our ancestral line.” Persephone asked her, “Do you have any talents?” Robyn replied, “I am a good cook but wouldn’t want to cook for a living. Maybe I should go back to school and become a nurse.” I said, “Nurses are very useful. Why don’t you? And nurses are kind and charitable and you will meet a lot of new friends!”

And then I found myself talking to Gina, aged 63. She was Indian and said, “I am a retired architect, but don’t know what to do with my time. I belong to a number of charities, but it

doesn't give me much satisfaction. And I am tired of architecture and all it involves. I said, "But you still enjoy drawing, don't you?" She said, "I'd be willing to just draw and not have to fuss, but architecture demands a commitment and hassle which I am sick of. And I find myself just doing crossword puzzles and jigsaws and reading most of the time." I said, "We are all killing time, waiting for death!"

Then we were talking to a man, Philip, a Hispanic American, of 49, who said, "I am a carpenter by trade, but I am not very good at it and am currently out of work." Persephone said, "All you can do is try your best! You must enjoy it for it to be your profession." Philip replied, "In my youth I admired my uncle who built a wooden boat/yacht, but I am not nearly as skilled as he." I said, "Most people consider themselves to be underachievers. Or feel that they are not good enough. I would continue being a carpenter if I was you!" He said, "Your advice is very reassuring. I have met a number of kindred spirits in your superfluous club and feel I belong here."

And then there was Jasmine. She was a Chinese tourist and 51. And she said, "I liked jade and jadeite and had many jade sculptures in my house. I am an art dealer who specialized in sculpture." I said, "Yes we live in a World of beauty. At least some people, such as you, surround themselves with beauty." She said, "But my personal relationships are ugly and mean. And I live in a nightmare, surrounded by goblins and witches." I offered, "To love you!" But she said, "That wouldn't solve anything."

And Troy, a white American of 42 said to us, “I am good-looking and am a smooth poet, but somehow all of my relationships end up in tragedy. My last girlfriend overdosed on fentanyl and died. And before that my love ran away with her lover to Spain without saying goodbye. And my lover before that died in a car accident.” Persephone said, “Perhaps your luck is about to change. Have you met any special people in the superfluity club that you like?” He said, “Yes he met a girl, Ava, who he loved, but she had many lovers and didn’t have much time for him.” I said, “Why don’t you have many lovers too then? It is all fashion!” He said, “I guess I am old-fashioned, and I guess I am boring you, but I have no friends I can confide in.” I replied, “Cheer up, old sport, your life will improve now that you are here at our club!”

Antoinette, a girl of 30, said, “I was French Canadian and am a tiger in bed. But I have never fallen in love!” Persephone told her, “Some are not destined to fall in love for numerous reasons!” Antoinette replied, “But I feel I have so much love to give!” I said, “Anyway love is all in the beholder. Many people are in love, and it is staring at them in the face, but they can’t see it.” Antoinette replied, “I feel like I would know when I find true love!”

Percival, a white American of 24, told us, “I am unknown outside my small town in Idaho. I have come to NYC to be a success. I study at Columbia and enjoy the camaraderie of that university, but I can’t find anything to major in that I like. I feel that I am very clever, but superfluous.” I told him, “Almost everyone in our superfluity club is in the same boat. At least we are good shoulders to cry on.” Persephone said, “Kindred spirits for you!”

Nathan, a Hispanic American of 31, said, “I dreamt of a girl who was Latino like me, but she didn’t care for me. I was so obsessed I even started to stalk her. I arranged to meet her by ‘accident’ on several occasions, and I tried to make conversation, but she would always make an excuse to go away from me.” Persephone said, “Most people experience unrequited love at some point in their life!” And I said, “Yes and you have to learn how to understand the target of your affections.” He said, “But she has a lot of boyfriends, just not me. I wonder if it is the way I look or my demeanor or what?” I said, “Who knows the heart of a wild woman?”

And Bobbi, a white American of 27, said, “I’d won a number of beauty contests, and had a nice personality, but couldn’t find the right man.” I said “Maybe you are setting the bar too high? But anyway, many people search for love their whole life and never find it!” Persephone said, “Yes, love is not for everyone!” Bobbi said, “Maybe true love is not perfect, not perfect at all and is more like a war than anything else!” I said, “All people it seems enjoy arguing.”

And then it was Ricardo, aged 35 a Latino American who said, “I have too many lovers. But I can’t find a job I like, so I am thinking of becoming a gigolo. It’s not noble, I know, but at least I will make a lot of women happy and be useful to them.” I said, “I envy you; it is a dream job. Maybe you could inspire some other members of the superfluity club to become sex workers.” But Persephone said, “I have no use for sex workers. They are parasites and one can’t live for just sex.” Ricardo said, “I will no doubt fall in love with many of my new lovers and it will be sublime, living in a heavenly paradise of love.”

Next was Naomi, she was brown-skinned and of mixed race and was 30. And she said, "I was a talented saleswoman but felt I was overlooked for promotions because I was not white." I said, "Life is a struggle for everyone, and there are many challenges. Why don't you start your own business?" She said, "I always wanted to open a bar. Maybe that is what I should do?" Persephone said, "Why don't you trust your guts and go for it!"

Then there was Gary, a white American of 41. Gary was addicted to crack cocaine. He said, "Of course to finance my addiction I am a dealer. And if I can't have bliss then I don't want to live." I said, "Better to stick to sex and alcohol in order to survive. He said, "I need crack. Life is painful and boring at the same time. I can't stand it." Persephone said, "Sooner or later you'll be busted by the police and sent to jail which you probably won't survive. Your days are numbered."

Ginger, a white American of 40, was saying, "In my youth I sang in a rock band. But we never hit the big time. Now I am an airplane salesperson and feel my whole life has been wasted. I am just a waster." I said, "Most of us are wasters; just killing time waiting for death! The secret is to enjoy yourself along the ride." Ginger said, "I am a good-looking girl, so I have had a lot of lovers and fun, but I feel I am of no use." I said, "But you give pleasure to your lovers and make them happy. Nothing wrong with that."

Hans from Germany, aged 50, told us, "I am very fat from drinking beer. I don't know why I drink so much. I guess life is all about comfort for your mind." I told him, "You need discipline, or you will get diabetes and then will be unable to drink!" He said, "Yes diabetes runs in my

family. But rather than drink less, I think I will eat less!” Persephone asked him, “Why do you drink so much?” He said, “I find life to be unbearable without alcohol; I feel I am useless.”

Gordon, a white New Zealander of 38, told us, “I had a gold single record in New Zealand and was well known there. But I couldn’t create another, I am just a one-hit wonder!” I said, “It’s sad to have a measure of success, only to lose it.” He said, “I’d come to NYC looking for inspiration and had found a nice dame, but she kept telling me I am useless. I work as a music teacher and she says, ‘I am just wasting my time.’” And he said, “She wants me to have another hit, but I can’t seem to break through even though I had done it before.” I said, “Perhaps you need another muse, your girlfriend doesn’t seem very inspirational.” He said, “It’s a struggle.”

Roman was a gypsy of 44 and he said, “I figure I can tell people their future, more or less. He said, I am a good judge of character and have told fortunes to thousands of people. But people don’t generally take my advice. So finally, I became a shrink and then people heeded my advice. I am just like you two, doling out advice. And I finally feel I am of use.” Persephone said, “It’s not easy to be useful, actually. If you really want to be, perhaps you can do it!” I said, “Sometimes I feel that life is all a preordained fate. But I don’t really believe it.”

Michael, a black American of 29, told us, “I was a struggling actor. But my heart wasn’t in it. I wanted to write scripts, but all the scripts I had written were rejected.” I said, “I know many good writers who failed to find a major publisher. There aren’t very many big publishers, and they don’t like experimental fiction, generally. You have to write mainstream literary fiction to appease them. It’s all about money, not creativity.” He said, “I am glad to hear you say so! But I

feel I am superfluous and don't have any use to modern day people!" I said, "Just keep trying!" Persephone said, "I read some of your scripts and feel they are good and full of love. I am sure you will make it sooner or later."

Dick, a white American of 42, told us, "I am chagrined to be considered a loser by my bosses. I work in the advertising business, but they never take my advice, or my ideas and I am basically just a gofer. Frankly I am embarrassed to be in such a job. But I need to pay the bills and also work as a night shift security guard. The security guard job gives me a chance to read books. But I am thinking of creating my own advertising agency, though it might drive me into bankruptcy. I replied, "Go for it. Always follow your dreams!" Persephone said, "Just stay true to your heart and follow your heart where it might lead! But be ready for trouble."

Ben, a Hispanic American of 30, told us, "He was in an existentialist funk. And didn't know what to do with his life." And he said, "I tried astrophysics and found I couldn't make a difference. Then I tried to write science fiction scripts, and again had no impact. Now I am just a suicidal loser..." I said, "It's just a phase for you; it will pass!" And I said, "I read one of your novels and found it enlightening. You know the book about 'the enlightened ones,' in which it is rule of the truly wise." And I added, "You just need to keep trying..." He said, "I find my will to live is dissipating and I have recently overdosed several times on drugs, but somehow survived. Anyway, it doesn't matter." I said, "I know just the girl for you. She is a drug addict who likes science fiction. Her name is Anabella. She is also going through an existential funk." And sure enough, they hit it off and both no longer wanted to die...

Annette, a Jewish American of 41, told us, “I am having trouble making ends meet. I am an English tutor, but the pay is low and I’m virtually starving.” I said, “Why not teach TESL abroad? There are many countries to go to.” She said, “I know that, but I love NYC. And I have taught in many African and Asian nations.” I said, “Why don’t you go back to school and get your Masters?” She said, “That’s a good idea, but I have no money now. I suppose I could take out a loan however and study Online. To be wealthy in NYC would be very palatable to me!”

Bernard, a German tourist of 45, told us, “I was living a dog’s life. I live off charity for food and live in a city sponsored flophouse. But I have a degree in Astrophysics! However, I am trying to make it as a painter of pictures.” I answered him saying, “You know you have to go back to school. Money first, then art!” He said, “But I paint far out sci-fi paintings and just need a sponsor to make my life sublime.” And he showed me his “Utopia series,” and his “Dystopia series.” I thought they were wonderful. I told him, “To contact well-known philanthropists to back him. One day his paintings would be worth a fortune.” Persephone said, “I’ll buy several of your paintings right now!”

Bogdan, a new immigrant from Bulgaria, of age 28, told us, “The modern World is about to implode. What with Covid variants, nuclear war, biological war, drastic climate change and so on. So, I have borrowed money to live high for these last few years of normalcy and if the World survives, I’ll simply declare bankruptcy.” I said, “We live in dangerous times, for certain. But the World will pull through, like always.” He replied, “But this current milieu is more dangerous than any previous era, what with Covid and so on.” I said, “Humanity survived the plague,

smallpox, two World Wars and so on. We'll get through this modern scenario one way or another." Persephone said, "We're going to the stars!"

CHAPTER 6

Suzanne, a gorgeous blonde American of 32 said, "I know I am a beautiful blonde, but I am a sharp poker player and am a professional." I said, "It takes a calculating mind to excel regularly at poker, to play the odds." She said, "Many of the male players underestimate me which is to my advantage. But I am bored with life and don't care if I live or die." I said, "I want to love you!" She replied, "So what?" I said, "You have nothing to lose, and I am a really good lover!" So, she acquiesced, and I loved her hard. But afterwards, smoking a cigarette, she said, "You are an OK lover, but I wouldn't want to spend another night with you." I said, "You are a professional heartbreaker! Cold as ice."

Sandra, a white American of 55 told us, "I am an anthropology professor who has a good understanding of human nature. But my husband had died and now I am old and lonely." I said, "Why don't you try gigolos to get your kicks? Or even better love your students!" She said, "I go to a lot of conferences and meet a lot of people, but can't seem to find a nice, mature lover." I

said, "It's a lonely World." And I talked to her about early humans. She said, "Just like tigers and lions, two very different animals can breed in the test tube, so too 'modern' humans could breed with other ape-like people. And she had met a Portuguese man who had a slanted forehead like a Neanderthal, but he was very clever." And she said, "In all likelihood, modern humans had killed off those who were different and competed with them for food." And I asked her, "About human destiny?" And she said, "Human intelligence will increase dramatically and after that anything goes. But as for my future, I will soon be dead and don't really care about life. I too, am superfluous." Persephone said, "You, Sandra, make me feel depressed and nauseous."

Another newbie to the superfluity club was Monica, a Japanese tourist of 46. She said, "I am a fashion designer and semi-famous in France. But life has now become an unhappy burden for me, and I feel it is time I died." Persephone told her, "Why don't you try another career and try and fall in love?" Monica said, "To be honest love is boring and I couldn't do any other career." I said, "I've seen your fashion and find it to be very sexy!" She said, "I really don't care."

Another newcomer to our club was Matula, a white American of 47. She was a classic full-figured Greek model, the girl of my dreams. I'd never met such a beautiful woman. But she said, "Life is boring and though I can have any man I want, I am never satisfied. And I am tired of being a model." Persephone said, "What is this World coming to, with girls like you being turned off living? Do you think you were spoiled?" Matula said, "Sure everything came too easy to me, but I am sick of life now."

Then there was Harold. A man of 32. He wore an eye patch but looked quite handsome. He was a Chinese American. He said, "The only thing I care about is sex and I spend every night looking for love in bars." And he said, "My day job is a science teacher in high school. But I grow weary of trying to teach the youth." I said, "It often comes down to what you do in your free time, that really makes the man. Why not try and fall in love with your lovers?" He said, "It just doesn't happen; I am superfluous."

Then we were talking to a priest, Father Thomas, a Filipino American of 46. He said, "I'd given advice to many of my flock, but no one listens to me. I feel useless, so I am leaving the Church and becoming a gay gigolo," I said, "That's quite a drastic career change!" Persephone said, "Good for you. At least now you will satisfy people." He asked, "Do you think I am good looking enough?" Persephone said, "Certainly and you have a nice build. I am certain you will succeed."

William, a white American, told us, "Everyone, tells me I am foolish. They say I am foolish in love, foolish in my choice of career (custodian), foolish to drink so much, foolish to not have kids and so on. But I feel I am just as clever as anyone else and society has made a loser out of me." I told him, "You are a hero in your own mind and that's what counts." Persephone said, "You don't seem foolish to me!" He said, "I find you both very reassuring." Persephone said, "That's what we are here for."

Olaf, a man of 33 from Norway said, "Norway is the World's richest country thanks to oil. But now oil is being phased out and I worry about the future for my country. And we are all

powerless to stop oil revenues from being taken away from us. I said, “It doesn’t make sense to pollute our air. Who knows what will happen to the climate? Anyway, there is abundant wind, solar and hydro power and nuclear power if we need it.” Olaf said, “But to actually be the World’s richest country is really an achievement. But my country people unfortunately don’t seem to like me. ‘They tell me I am arrogant, yet a loser’ and said, “I had an ugly personality.”” And they say, “I am physically ugly to boot.” I said, “Why don’t you try and get plastic surgery on your face and work out and don’t talk too much.” He replied, “I’d rather grow a beard and if people don’t like me, I don’t care. There must be some woman out there who will like me. And there must be kindred spirits who will befriend me.” Persephone said, “There are lovers for everyone in NYC, but maybe you would prefer high class prostitutes? He replied, “I am rich enough to do either option, but I don’t want to pay for sex. I need true love.” She said, “Well I wish you good luck. Maybe NYC will be propitious for you.”

Jennifer, 40, was an indigenous American. She said, “White people have rendered many of us to be an impoverished bunch of drunkards and prostitutes. Many of us are hopeless. Those who can get educated and leave the reserves, but that is like chopping the head off of the tribes as a whole and makes the reserves into a cesspool of misery.” I said, “But you at least have hope!” She said, “But I am concerned about my people.” I said, “Your people just need a better education, and it would probably be good to abandon the reserves altogether!” She said, “But the reserves are our home!” I said, “We’re living in the 21st century now!” Persephone added, “History was full of injustice, but it is a new era now!”

Jason a white/black American of 50 said, "I am truly superfluous. I am a university professor of English. But every year I teach the same things over and over and I hate it. The magic of the books is ruined for me by beating them to death!" I said, "It is the same for musicians who have to play the same songs every night. But you make an OK salary and can't complain too much, can you?" He said, "Of course many others are worse off. But I am just saying I am superfluous!" I said, "Why don't you try politics? I am sure you can write some loquacious speeches. And you could really do some good!" He said, "Sure I'll join the Democratic party and see if I can rise up the ranks. You have given me confidence to do so."

Jude, a Hispanic American of 45 said, "If I had a dollar for every time, I felt superfluous, I'd be a very rich man. I am a cook in a restaurant and work like a slave for the restaurant owner. I don't know how I ended up like this, I have partial amnesia. I feel like I was hypnotized." Persephone answered him saying, "Maybe you were hypnotized! Maybe you should go to a hypnotherapist and check it out." He said, "It's good advice." So, he went, and the hypnotherapist found he had been hypnotized by an ex to fail. So, the hypnotherapist cross-hypnotised him, which was dangerous, but it worked, and he went back to school to learn accounting.

Nellie was a white American woman of 36, who, "Fell in love with every man I met, and I was a nymphomaniac." I said, "You lack good taste. You just need to be more selective with your lovers and build up loving relationships." She said, "But I consider each man to be a challenge and want to seduce them! And I want to love you too." I said, "You need a steady lover who you can get to fall deeper and deeper in love with you. That should be your

challenge.” She said, “Variety is the spice of life. You would feel more useful if you could make more women fall in love with you!”

Then there was Judith. A Chinese American of 32. She said, “I am a casino fox. I hang around casinos and get free drinks and seduce men who like to take chances. But I feel I should be doing better in life, so I am thinking of marrying one of those rich risk takers and embarking on a career marketing my own perfume. I want to be filthy rich.” I said, “Money is not my God, but if it makes you happy, go for it. She said, “Whether you like it or not success is judged by most people by the money you make!” Persephone said, “At least you have a dream! Many people of our superfluous league have given up on dreams.”

Another woman was Betty, a white/indigenous American of 45. She said, “I had 10 kids, but they were hellions. And I was forced to take heroin to survive. And they are growing up to be kids I am not proud of, and I feel useless.” I said, “I’m sure your kids will turn out fine. And they have a fine mother!” Persephone said, “You are certainly not the first woman to be driven mad by child raising. They’ll grow up soon and then you will be free. All you can do is do your best with them.” She said, “But they’ve broken into my medicine cabinet a few times and stolen my drugs, and I have a lot of drugs I take for sanity and already the oldest is a drug dealer at 16.” I said, “If they turn out to be criminals it is not your fault. Does the father help you raise them?” She said, “No he left me two years ago and I have to work as a prostitute to pay the bills.” I said, “Some people are destined to have a hard time in life; it’s just the way it is. Try and enjoy what you can.”

Mandy, a Frenchwoman of 41, said, she felt she was cleverer than her husband. But he was bossy and treated her bad. And made her feel worthless. She wanted to leave him, but she was afraid to be alone and lonely. I said, “Leave him right now and be free at last.” Persephone said, “Yes, leave him and collect alimony!”

Suzette, a white American of 35 told us, “I am a defence lawyer, but feel I can’t make a difference, the evidence speaks for itself. So, I tried working pro bono and helping the poor and that was more rewarding but didn’t pay the bills. So, I was thinking of a career in politics, I am a socialist by inclination.” I said, “By all means do it!” And she asked why “Persephone and you weren’t in politics?” And all Persephone could say was, “We had a misunderstanding with the powers that be. We stepped on too many toes.”

Joanne, a Chinese American of 43, said, “I am a rocket scientist who wants to put people on the Moon and Mars right now. But NASA fired me for trying to push too hard. And the fledgling Space companies also had modest goals. And the Russians and the Chinese weren’t interested either. So, I worked as a high school science teacher and felt I was wasting my time.” I said, “Why don’t you write science fiction?” She said, “I thought of it, and wrote some short stories, but no publisher would give me the time of day. And it was the best I could do.” I said, “Then all you can do is beg NASA to take you back or give up on Space altogether!”

Martin was from Belgium and 40, and he said, “I am a journalist who worked behind the scenes for the BBC. And now was freelancing. I had been to many hotspots on Earth. And had a number of crazy adventures. And I had just written a book about my life, that was selling well.

But I figured I had a death wish and would die one day soon. I'd been lucky so far..." I said, "Better to burn your candles at both ends for maximum light."

Daisy was an Asian American. She said, "The future belongs to Asia. And the USA will fade away." I said, "But America is letting the best of the 'barbarians' in and draining the best Asian people to join the USA. She said, "But look at the Asian countries grow. They approach double digits in GDP growth. And America just lets in the greediest Asians. Asians don't need them. Persephone said, "But the US economy will boom once Covid is out of the way and the American military is far stronger than China or India or even Russia. Stronger than all of them put together."

Max, a man of 50 from Mexico said, "NYC is a heavenly place. And I have become successful here as a Professor of Spanish Literature. But I feel I should enter politics to be more useful." I said, "There's not much great Spanish literature in translation. Don Quixote is the only one I like." Max said, "Just like in America there are many writers who struggle to make it big, but the publishers are not as good as American ones, and many writers leave for America. There're good Spanish writers, I assure you! And I myself have published some stories in America." I said, "I figure the best writers are involved politically and are murdered by organized crime before they become famous." He said, "Yes, the most pressing issues in Latin America are drugs and the economies, and the two are interlinked." Persephone said, "The USA should legalize all drugs, like Portugal did and this will solve the problem."

Venus, Japanese, of age 49, said, "I am a police detective, here in NYC. But I feel I am not making a difference. We stop one criminal at great lengths only to have another one pop up in their place." I said, "But crime in NYC has been dropping for decades." She said, "In my opinion there are still too many poor people in NYC, desperados who have guns." And she said, "I've been on the scene of many shootings. It is too much to bear." Persephone said, "Why not change careers such as become a private investigator or something?" Venus said, "But although they made her nauseous, crime scenes were addictive and trying to find clues was challenging. It is just like an addiction to alcohol, it's bad for you, but you can't stop."

Tony, a white American of 48, said, "I am an alcoholic and feel like a loser. My job is tire salesman, and I am not making any difference." I said, "Be useful to yourself and if you want a more rewarding career then go back to school." He said, "But there's nothing I want to do. I just want to get drunk." I said, "But you are a functional alcoholic. Maybe you just need a drunken woman to keep you company and inspire you." Tony said, "I've had a lot of drunken girlfriends who I met in the bar, but I quickly get tired of them. I guess I'm not fated to fall in love." Persephone said, "I believe everyone can fall in love, though it might not last!"

Beatrice, a Hispanic American of 35, said, "I am homeless and miserable. I can't hold down a job, I keep getting fired and now rely on charity. I am a dumpster diver as well." I asked, "What kind of education do you have?" She said, "I dropped out in grade nine." I said, "You need to go back to school, definitely." She asked, "What does definitely mean?" I said, "Finish high school and then learn a trade. It should be easy for you. And you can be respectable and clean and have

nice lovers.” Persephone said, “Stop thinking of yourself as a loser, and try things that will enhance your life.”

CHAPTER 7

Berenice, Chinese, said, “In my happy youth, I thought I was headed for a happy career and a loving husband and children. But it didn’t work out that way. I was a sub manager for an oil company, but I became redundant and now am jobless. And there’s nothing I want to do except fall in love.” I replied, “Find a lover and the World will turn for you! You can meet some superfluous men at our parties and can find someone to share the vicissitudes of life.” She said, “Thanks I’ll be at the next one!”

Edgar, a white American of 47, said, “I don’t understand modern society. Computers leave me cold and so does Online dating. There is no meaning to life. I have a job as a lawn care representative and have a wife whom I hate and children who are hellions. I want to leave my wife but can’t find another woman. People say I have to go Online to find a lover, but I don’t feel comfortable with computers. I suppose you could say I am a dinosaur dying out.” I said, “It’s

amazing that here in 2029, someone could live without the Internet. But I suppose you could find a mate who feels like you do, in the bars. Love will set you free!”

Mack, an Irishman of 58, told us, “I was a member of the board for an airline company. I had all sorts of ideas for improving sales, but no one would listen to me. I feel superfluous. So, I quit.” I said, “Some people are destined to be without use, and remind others how lucky they are to be useful.” But he said, “Being useless gnaws on me like a cancer and I can hardly get up in the morning.” Persephone said, “Why not go to Shanghai or some such place and seek your fortune? It’s a big World out there, yours for the taking.”

Bertrand, a white American of 45, said, “I’ve been around the World and tried everything and now feel like there’s nothing new to try and I am superfluous.” I said, “What about being a billionaire philanthropist? He said, “I am a multi-millionaire, but no that is something I haven’t tried.” I said, “Why not make a difference curing diseases like AIDS, herpes, Covid variants and cancer and heart disease, developing vaccines and medicine?” He said, “You make me ashamed. I will try and become a billionaire, just as you say.”

Victor, Jewish American, of 54, said, “I sell jewelry I have made myself in Taiwan and make a pretty good living and have many good lovers. But I feel empty and superfluous.” I said, “Many people feel like they are not contributing enough. Maybe you could volunteer at charities.” He said, “I already work for a charity which feeds hungry children. But maybe I could do more. But we are all just a tiny grain on an endless beach, and maybe God will give us everlasting life, a meaningful life.”

Nash, a 45-year-old from Pakistan told us, “I am sick of religion, and I am sick of worshipping a God that doesn’t exist. But without God life seems empty and meaningless.” I said, “You need only create your new meaning, something you believe in. Like finding a woman who is making a difference and getting a job that makes a difference. And drugs to keep you inspired.” Nash said, “That seems all to the good, but I still feel that life is empty.” Persephone said, “Superfluity plagues all modern-day thinkers, but it can be considered as a challenge!”

Karl, a white American of 66, said, “I worked for charities/non-profit for my whole life, but now I’m growing old and can do no more. I am just wasting away, waiting for death. I am blind and almost deaf.” I shouted, “Is there anything we can do for you? Anything at all?” He said, “Tell me about traveling in Asia!” So, I told him about, “How most Asians were open-minded about Americans. And there are so many beautiful women. And the city streets are very busy with animals and three-wheeled taxis and so many delicious foods.” And I went on and on about my loves and adventures. Persephone said, “I didn’t know you liked Asia so much!” I said, “Asia is wonderful.” And I said, “All my travels were good now that I reflect back. Even when I was robbed or assaulted, they are good memories now. Travelling as a backpacker opens your mind to people who are different. Like you suddenly appeared out of the sky among them!” And I added, “This old man is an angel. So useful to so many!”

Nicole, a 40-yearold, from Brazil, said, “I am from the elite rich in Rio. I know the city is known for its crime, but I didn’t see crime in my circle or in places where we hung out.” And she said, “Here in NYC there are a lot of bad areas too, high in crime slums but I don’t see crime

downtown where I live.” I said, “Where I live in southern Harlem the buildings have all been gentrified and things are improving. Crime is dropping.” She said, “I’ve lived a pampered life and now want to give back to society by doing work for the food banks. And I wish I could do more, maybe I will.” I said, “It sounds noble, but better to attack the root causes of poverty like unemployment of various ethnic groups and lack of English ability and lack of education.” She said, “Maybe I could teach English to new immigrants!” I said, “Yes, Nicole, you are on the right track!”

Madelaine, a woman of 30, from Russia, told us, “I think living in nice American suburbs is the ideal life for anyone, especially if you have kids.” I said, “I prefer the downtown nightlife and am always meeting new people. Sometimes it seems like the whole world is here!” Madelaine said, “But in the rat race downtown, peace and harmony are hard to find!” I asked, “Is that what life is all about, peace and harmony?” She said, “One day there will be peace on Earth, and everyone will live together harmoniously!” I said, “I admit that nothing is impossible, and if the USA took the lead towards disarmament, long-term peace might have a chance.” She said, “I am joining the army to be a UN peacekeeper as an officer.” I said, “That’s pretty good; it seems like freedom and peace in America have rubbed off on you!” She said, “I have always been a peace dove! But I worry my contribution will not be enough to change the World!” I said, “Who knows maybe you’ll rise through the ranks and be a real power player.” She said, “Yes, I’d like to be a General!”

Gin, a girl of 42, from Korea said, “I am busy with my Trading company. I export American rice to poor countries, cheaply; I am a non-profit enterprise. I am helping to feed the World.” I

said, "It would be wonderful if everyone did their part to help out. But don't you feel your efforts only impact relatively few people?" She replied, "I wish I could help more people, but I am doing all I can think of. I've come to you for advice!" I said, "You'd make an excellent Minister of Trade, if you were to get into politics. She said, "You give me confidence to get involved in politics. Of course, I'll join the Democratic party... what about you?" I said, "It's a long story but Persephone and I stepped on the wrong toes and have been advised to stay out of politics." Persephone said, "Perhaps we will get politically involved at some date in the future."

Cora, Chinese of 45, from Venezuela, of said, "You two are beginning to get very popular for giving advice, so I am coming to you for your judgment on me! I am trying to help new immigrants get settled in the U.S. But I lack resources to really make a difference." I said, "Why don't you advertise more and tell everyone you are a charity, and with the money you earn, reinvest it in your venture." She said, "I was thinking the same thing. Thanks!" Persephone said, "We'll help you to spread the word!"

Alex, 21 from Puerto Rico, said, "Can I bum a few dollars off you for food. I said, "Sure." And I told him he needed to go to school and make something of himself and as I got to know him, he seemed quite clever. So, I told him, "The banks would pay for his tuition to learn a trade." I liked him. So, he went to school, and I was pleased. Persephone told him, "You are a diamond in the rough. Don't waste your potential."

Janice, a 29-year-old from China, said, "I am a pro basketball player." She was certainly tall... And she said, "I figure sports makes me an international ambassador. My goal is to be one

day the Olympic Committee President and get everyone interested in sports. Sports were good for health and promoted international friendships.” I said, “We’re all trying to do our part in this great big World!” And I said, “Of course China is a dictatorship and sports are one way for the US to be friends with China.” She said, “But you have been to China and know that many Chinese are open-minded towards meeting Americans.” Persephone said, “The Chinese people are good, but why do they always tolerate dictators?”

Mindy a Hispanic American of 60 told us, “I feel I have been unlucky in my life. I keep losing my jobs as I am always cleverer than my bosses. I am in the boat selling business. But have now worked for most of the big named boat manufacturers. And I have no capital to set out on my own. And I am too old to go back to school.” I said, “Why not simply become a server and collect good tips. Or something like that. She said, “I am too old (60) to be a server.” I asked, “What about charities then?” She said, “I’ve been thinking of the Salvation Army. The pay is low, but I could survive on it.”

Then we spoke with Frank, 39, from France. He told us, “I am a chef. I approach it like an art form but ultimately feel like I am wasting my time. I’ve recently got involved in politics. And I’d like to change the World.” I said, “The beauty of democracy is anyone can run for office.” He said, I am thinking of a new party the Beauty party. And we will focus mainly on beautiful actions. The state will pay for plastic surgery. And everyone will be taught to design their own clothes. And all my candidates will be beautiful women who do beautiful things like help at charities and act in films.” I said, “It’s a novel concept. You might just succeed!” Persephone said, “The sky’s the limit.”

Francine, a white American of 35, told us, “I have a good brain but am shunned by many for my extreme obesity.” I said, “Do you want to live, or do you want to die?” She replied, “Does it matter?” Persephone said to her, “You need drugs to make you happy. Illegal ones. There’s no other way that I can see and if you take heroin, you will probably lose interest in eating! Just like some fashion models!” She said, “I’ve been contemplating various drastic measures, I guess heroin is worth a try.” And we wished her, “Good luck!”

Patricia, an American of 34, told us, she had been born without arms and had learned to use her feet like hands, even drive a car. I said, “I’ve heard of such a thing, but it is hard to believe.” Persephone said, “You make my problems seem trivial and you have overcome so much!” But she said, “I had a lot of trouble finding a mate, finally I matched up with a man with only one arm and one leg. But we were afraid to have kids, and this depresses me above all!” I asked her, “What about your job?” She said, “I am a psychiatrist who specializes in helping the disabled. But I am tired of giving the same advice and without children I don’t want to live!” I said, “Well then you should try and get pregnant and see if you can.” She said, “Many people had told her the same thing, but she worried her children would be too much to handle and such children would be laughed at for their ‘freak’ parents.” I said, “But it is obvious you can overcome steep obstacles, so go for it!”

Michelle, a white American of 46, told us, “I was brainwashed to believe I could succeed in NYC, but rent is so high I had to work 80 hours a week to pay my bills. I said, “Why not work as a server in a posh nightclub and make big tips?” She said, “I’d thought of that, but I am a little

too old at 46 to get such a job. Also, I can't find Mr. Right and it looks like I am too old to bear children, and this makes me feel my life is futile." Persephone said, "Maybe you just weren't born fertile. It's no disgrace. Your genes will live on in your relatives!" I told her, "To study at college part time and become a nurse. You seem like a kind person and maybe you could marry a doctor. You are still very good looking." She said, "Men came so easy to her, but she couldn't decide on a husband and now it was too late!" I said, "Your beauty will last for perhaps two decades. It's still not too late for love!"

Katherine, a white woman of 35, told us, "I am beguiled by living in Space. But I am already 35 and likely will be far older by the time they finally set up the first colonies on the Moon and Mars. It is just an empty dream." I said, "There are plenty of challenging, meaningful things to do on Earth." She replied, "I am writing hard science fiction. Like the pioneer adventures on the varying Planets. The characters face numerous challenges but somehow succeed." But I can't find a major publisher to publish the books." I said, "Writing is a craft, and one improves with age. Up until about age 70. But good for you for trying!" She said, "I am an abject failure." Persephone said, "All that matters is you need to be happy. If you are happy writing science fiction, then be glad and know that you are enlightening many people via small presses." She said, "I suppose I am greedy for fame."

Barb, a white Canadian of 45, said, "My life is futile. I have divorced four times and each time my heart was broken!" I said, "Love is just a game. There are winners and losers. The secret, I think, is not to fall in love, but rather get your lover to love you! Empower yourself!" She said, "That's an interesting perspective. But if I'm not totally in love, I'm not interested."

Persephone said, “Yes, love is a game for most men and their ‘conquests.’ If your lover doesn’t love you there’s no game.” I said, “Surely by now you realize that long-term love is not for you!”

Kim, a Chinese American told us, “I am 22 and am saving my virginity for the right man.” I have a lot of suitors, but don’t want to choose just yet!” I replied, “Virginity to me was something to lose as quickly as possible. We live in a World of experience not innocence. And it’s dog eat dog out there.” Persephone added, “I can’t imagine not being carnally knowing at your age. I lost my virginity at age 15 and it has all been great ever since. Love is one of life’s few pleasures. It is a shame to miss out on it.”

Lisa, a white American of 26, said, “I don’t know who I am anymore. I get so drunk I black out and don’t remember what happened the previous night.” I said, “To drink so much, you must be profoundly unhappy.” She replied, “I feel life is painful without getting drunk. There’s nothing I can do about it.” I said, “Perhaps you can find use as an author, write down what you remember and fictionalize it. Make your stories as potent as whiskey!” She said, “In this drunken World, I have a lot of friends who are interesting people. I don’t remember most of our conversations, but maybe I could record them and edit them. It’s a brilliant idea.”

Suzy, a black woman of about 45, told us, “I had a child with 6 different men. And I live for my children. I have high hopes for them. But now they are almost all grown up and have left the city for other pastures. And I feel lonely.” I said, “But you can have a video call with them almost every day.” She said, “It’s not the same as having them physically present.” Persephone

said, "If you love children so much, why don't you adopt a few?" She said, "I'd rather work at a day care, which is my job now. But I can't shake the feeling that my life is futile. The kids grow up and go their own way." Persephone said, "You are more useful than most people we meet!"

Annie, a white woman from Baltimore, aged 26, said, "I am a pro hockey player. I play for the USA team. But people don't care to watch females play, even though it is much less violent than the men's game. I feel like we are useless, us female players." I said, "Why don't you try being a sport's model? You can model things like tennis gear and volleyball outfits. She said, "I know I am good-looking; it is a good idea!" Persephone said, "Maybe you can even learn how to sew and make artistic-looking uniforms yourself."

Candy, from Taiwan said, "My family back home has cut me off their funding since I am not married. But I don't want to marry anyone!" I said, "Why not pick your favorite lover and ask him to marry you and your life would be sublime!" But she said, "My family wants me to marry another Chinese. And I am sick of Chinese lovers." I said, "You'll just have to make it alone, I know you work for a bank and teach music at nights. Surely the music lessons give you meaning in your life." She said, "No, the students don't practice and just waste my time basically. My life is futile." I said, "You need to fall in love! That will cure your blues." She said, "I wear a lot of make-up and look attractive, but no man wants to stay with me for any length of time."

CHAPTER 8

Rhiannon, 29, from Ireland, told us, “I am a Celtic musician. And I had composed some of my own original songs on the mandolin and the lyre. But they were not popular songs.” I said, “Why not try mainstream rock and roll?” She said, “That would be a sell out! I am a disciple of the past ways and, rock and roll is just not so boisterous as traditional music.” I said, “I’ve listened to your music and its good, but not as good as classic rock.” She said, “I feel like I am improving, but can’t help but feel like a dinosaur. Destined to be forgotten.” I said, “But they’ll be playing your songs in the pubs for the foreseeable future. That in itself is quite an achievement!”

Mabel, a black Canadian of 39, said, “I am an architect, but find my creativity is limited by the client’s wishes. I am really into science fiction and would love to make my towers look more futuristic.” I told her, “No art is totally pure. All artists have to give their customers what they want. It’s just a fact of life.” She said, “Perhaps I should try to be a novelist in which I could design the future itself.” I said, “Why don’t you!” Persephone said, “We all want to read about new futures!”

Debbie, a white New Yorker, of 32, said, “I’ve made a successful career out of advertising. I find it satisfies my creative instincts. But now, I’m thinking I want to be a painter of pictures. I want to paint New York in 100 years time featuring astoundingly beautiful people and buildings.

And so far, no one wants to buy my paintings for a reasonable price.” I said, “Keep painting, keep expanding your audience, and above all keep trying to get the big art companies to back you. I have seen your paintings and figure you will be successful.” Persephone said, “Why don’t you try and shake up the industry and cause people to want your paintings of the future.”

Boris, 29, from Belarus, told us, “Russia controls so much land and resources. It is the future.” I replied, “But the future is in high tech!” He said, “But the future will be greedy for resources and land. Why settle Space, when you can settle in Russia.” I said, “Russia is underpopulated for sure, but it is not the land of the free and probably won’t be in the future.” He said, “In the future Russia will be just as capitalistic as any place else and land will sell for a premium.” I said, “But no one wants to live in Siberia with its ice-cold climate. Space is cold too, but it seems like people want to be a pioneer in Space. And you my friend in Siberia will be left behind.” He said, “Please don’t say that I am useless!”

I told Dan, a Jew of 41, from NYC that, “Women bring out the best in me!” He said, “My experience with women is miserable. I am currently paying 3 women alimony and have to work two jobs to pay them. I wish I’d never fallen in love.” I said, “Obviously your mistake is in getting married. Don’t even live together with them!” He said, “But it was too late for that. I have to pay for the rest of my life, and I don’t even have any kids.” I said, “Maybe you could go to somewhere in Asia, and disappear from the alimony scene.” He said, “It’s a good idea. I have always wanted to go to Nepal, and I don’t think they’d find me there!” I said, “That’s the spirit!” Persephone said, “Your exes are greedy and cruel and too lazy to work. Screw them!”

Lise, 26, from Tahiti said “I had come to NYC to seek my fortune. But I got involved with a lesbian lover who abused me physically and emotionally. And I was struggling trying to be a painter of future cityscapes but failing. I sold my paintings at cost.” I told her, “I liked your paintings and would buy a few and give you a small gift of money.” She said, “I am always looking for new customers. I’ll paint anything you want.” I said, “Paint my head and torso in front of a futuristic landscape!” So, she did, and it was a happy new friendship on the whole.

Lola from Tanzania said, “I am only 17, but am deeply depressed. There’s nothing I want to do with myself. Nothing interests me except sex and booze!” I said, “Then be the life of the party and live to meet new, interesting men. You are certainly good-looking and youthful. I am sure you will find happiness!” Persephone added, “You need to find some intellectuals that you like and try and live cleverly like they do!”

Bella, an a 33-year-old Arab from Tunisia, told us, I wear the hajib, but it is no different than the apparel of nuns in the past. But I feel Westerners are prejudiced about Arabs because of the hajib.” I said, “If you want to marry a Westerner than maybe you should get rid of the hajib. But if not, you might as well carry on wearing it. Who cares what people think of you?” She replied, “But it is hard to find a job. Most people don’t like it if you are very different than them.” Persephone said, “But anyway you are a beautiful girl, and your future is bright!”

Harriet, aged 40, was a black/white woman from Toronto, and had a Ph.D. in English and had traveled the World working at various universities. She said, “I’d lived a full life, but now I am suicidal and depressed. I’ve already overdosed twice but didn’t die. How about you kill me?” I

said, “You need to book yourself in to a mental hospital and try and put yourself back together and take morphine to kill your existential pain.” She told us, “It just doesn’t matter.” And a few days later we heard she’d killed herself. We felt bad that we weren’t able to help her.

Harvey, a white American of age 38, told us, “I am a farmer, but find it hard to make a living. I am basically controlled by the big agricultural companies, and I want out. But there’s nothing I want to do, by way of a job. And all I know is farming.” I said, “Why don’t you try and work for one of those big agribusiness companies?” He said, “I hate them; they are so greedy. And I am in debt to them big time. And to make matters worse, my wife hates me and the rural lifestyle.” Persephone said, “Run away to a poor country where you could make a difference helping poor farmers!” He said, “That’s the best idea I’ve heard yet. Yes, running away from the evil agribusiness company would be a solution.” And it turned out he worked for the UN in farming in India. So, it was a happy ending.

Anatoly, 44, from Russia was saying, “You Americans think your country is best. But the country is riddled with drugs, crime, poverty and guns. Above all, poverty. And even people like you two are not involved with the ‘democracy.’” I said, “But America is still the country of opportunity I think.” He said, “Look around you, everywhere poor countries are now growing fast economically, and that’s where the opportunity is. NYC is just a place for conceited rich people to pat each other on the back.” I said, “I think the quality of people in New York as a whole is good. But of course, Persephone and I meet useless/superfluous people every day.” Persephone said, “The whole World is screwed up.” Anatoly said, “I am going to get rich in Russia. And live like a King. And the beautiful Russian women will moan for me.”

Michael, a Chinese American, of 36, told us, “In my youth I didn’t worry about being useful. I just enjoyed life here in NYC. But now I worry that my life has no purpose, and I haven’t achieved anything great.” Persephone said, “Best to enjoy life and do what you can to help others!” He said, “But I have a profound emptiness in my mind, and I need to change. Just like Scrooge.” I said, “You seem like quite a generous man to me. It is hard for only one man to change the World, but you could always try and get involved in politics.” He said, “OK I’ll join the Republican party and see what comes out of it...”

Matt, a Korean American of 32, told us, “I was a paramedic.” And he said, “I’ve saved a lot of lives and I am an adrenalin junkie. But I am a loser in love. I always seem to pick cruel women to be my lovers. Maybe I subconsciously like the drama, but they keep breaking my heart.” Persephone said, “Try dating a nurse or a social worker or somebody nice and caring. There must be plenty of nurses you meet everyday.” He said, “You make it sound so simple! As a matter of fact there is a nurse I kind of like, but she is five years older than me (I am 32).” Persephone said, “Go for it!” I said, “Yes, age should not be a barrier to love!” So, he asked her out and they became a couple. And hence, it was another happy ending.

Archibald, a white American man of about 30 was telling us, “I am fat, bald and short but, had a wonderful girlfriend, the apple of his eye. But she kept pressing me to change careers. She wanted me to go to medical school and become a doctor. But I was happy as a real estate broker, and made a good living. My girlfriend was herself a doctor and told me I could do a lot of good work as a doctor.” Persephone said, “Why not be a doctor then, you will be far more useful in

your life.” So, he decided to apply to medical school; apparently, he had good grades in university.

Dennis, an Indian, of 30, said, “I liked America, but hackers kept breaking into my computer and ruined my chances to go to law school. So, I worked as a chauffeur in NYC.” And he said, “The tips are generous, and I lead a comfortable life and enjoyed hobnobbing with the rich of NYC.” I said, “There are many skilled people, mostly new immigrants in NYC doing simple jobs like yours. Not everyone who is skilled and hard-working gets rich.” He said, “But I still want to be a lawyer for the poor and make a difference.” Persephone said, “Good for you!”

Jay, a white Canadian, of age 38, said, “I liked the philosophy of being pragmatic. To be useful is the name of the game.” Persephone said, “Tom and I are both staunch pragmatists.” Jay said, “Most philosophies are nonsense and like bad pieces of abstract art. But I consider myself to be a futuristic pragmatist, one who plans for the future in a reasonable, responsible way. And I have written a few books dealing with such subjects as mind reading technology and eternal youth and space colonization all from a pragmatic point of view. I said, “In your books you make the future seem so logical and well-engineered and there are some universities which now offer courses in Future Studies, why don’t you apply?” He said, “Why not, indeed?”

Milo, 28, from Croatia said, “Americans have so much, and should be more grateful.” I said, “Nearly all of us come from families that started here as poor people and their families became successful. They paid the price for us to live high and well. Now of course we are all spoiled brats.” Persephone added, “Every day I kiss the ground and give thanks for the luxury life I lead.

There is no God to thank so I am thankful to my parents and of course Tom, my lover.” Milo said, “I am optimistic that under American leadership, the World will become a safer, more prosperous place. And I believe America should send many thousands of troops to help the UN keep the peace in World hotspots. And demand that Russia, China, India and so on also commit more troops.” I said, “I firmly believe that World peace will come one day, but it won’t be soon.” And Persephone said, “Milo, you are a bit ahead of your time. But people like you inspire me!”

Vera, 49, from Mexico, said, “I am in love with a CEO of a mid-sized company. The problem for me is he has many lovers and I want him all to myself. But he pays all my bills and I don’t have to work.” Persephone said, “Well why don’t you have your own lovers on the side? You are certainly good looking. Vera said, “But I only want him. He is charming and knows how to satisfy me and I have never met a better man.” Persephone said, “Why not try online dating? You’ve got nothing to lose.” Vera said, “But if he would find out he would probably dump me!” I asked her, “How do you spend your time when he’s not around? Vera said, “I like to collect coins and do crossword puzzles.” I said, “You are wasting your time.” Vera said, “Everyone is just killing time, waiting for death.”

Tonda, 40, from Scotland, told us, “I am very clever. I skipped two grades in elementary school, but then dropped out in grade 11. I can’t find a good job as my beauty fades and so I will have to go back to school. I suppose I could be a surgeon. I am certainly clever enough. But the whole thing depresses me, and I have lost my lust for life. I am now 40 and have no kids and everything bores me.” I told her, “If I were you, “I’d take methamphetamines to get high and enjoy life!” She said, “You are asking me to break the law?” I said, “One day soon they will

legalize all drugs. And just possessing small amounts is a calculated risk you have to take.” So, she tried it, and told me she lived for these drugs and no longer was depressed.

Scarlet, a Japanese tourist, of aged 30, said, “I wear a lot of make-up, and attract a lot of men, but when they see me without my make-up, they dump me.” I said, “Try plastic surgery and try traveling and meeting with kindred spirits. Don’t stay here in the city. Go to the South Pacific and get jobs on yachts and perk up your life. It seems like you are bored in NYC!” Scarlet said, “Brilliant ideas. They are what I will do!”

Lynn, a black American said, “I had taken the virginity of 10 boys in my youth. Now, at 30, I was still loving men of 17 and 18. I was addicted to youth.” I replied, “Youth is good for sex, but these young boys don’t know much and conversation with them must be dull.” She answered, saying, “Not at all, they give me energy and inspiration.” I told her, “You are like a vampire!” She said, “The young men benefit from my experience and wisdom.” I said, “Many men like girls much younger than them, so I suppose it’s OK. But I still think you are a vampire.” She said, “I have use!”

Dorota, a 48-year-old from Slovakia, told us, “I am an alcoholic and fat due to all the beer I drink. But many drunken men love me all the same. I’d like to quit drinking, but the only time I am happy is when I am drunk.” I said, “Yours is no disgrace. If it makes you happy then go for it!” She said, “But I have no use, no purpose in life. I make a living collecting garbage for the city. I am the lowest of the low. I said, “Why not try doing some charitable work, work at which you can drink at. Or try to find a man Online, who truly loves you for your pleasant personality.

She said, “The charity work idea is a good one. I could drink whiskey while I worked. I am certainly a functional alcoholic.”

Astrid, 28 from Sweden was with her friend Maja, 31. Astrid told us, “We are bisexual lovers who wanted to love Persephone and you.” We agreed and it was frantic and wild. I asked them what they did for a living?” They said, “They mostly did menage a trois with rich men who supported their rich lifestyle.” I asked them, “But surely there is more to life than sex?” Maja said, “We made a lot of people happy, and this was our goal in life. Persephone said, “But what will you do when you become old?” Astrid said, “We have a nice nest egg saved up!”

Aswol, 28, from Taiwan, said, “I am totally useless. I go to bars and never meet nice men. I’ve even been raped by a few.” I said, “Your face looks kind of mean and evil, but your solution is to find men Online.” She said, “Of course I’ve tried that, but without success. I am doomed to be lonely and miserable!” Persephone asked her, “What do you do for a living?” Aswol said, “I am a travel agent and go on free trips quite often. I wanted to see the World, but now I have seen that no one likes me. Men say I am cold-hearted and miserable and make them feel depressed.” I said, “You need drugs to make you happier and more boisterous. Try all drugs and see what works for you.” She said, “I’ve tried most drugs and they don’t help me.” So, we set her up with Milo from Croatia and they hit it off and had bliss for a while.

Brianna, a white American, of 60, said, I have traveled to 190 countries and have been kidnapped, raped, shot, got malaria, got arrested many times, nearly drowned in a gale, got STD’s, loved rich and poor alike and so on. And I asked her, “What have you learned from your

travels?” She told us, “I’d learned that I am too clever for my own good. I tried to join political parties in various countries, but most people said I was superfluous. And that good ideas only made for trouble.” I said, “I know what you mean. Persephone and I tried politics and were warned away from it.” Persephone said, “Life is angst!”

Jimmy, a Panamanian, of 45, said, “I am a drug dealer. I’ve already spent five years in a Thai prison. I am used to the high life and there’s no way I could be so rich any other way.” I asked, “Is that the meaning of life then, to be rich and comfortable?” He said, “With money you can buy love, comfort for your mind, posh homes and party boats and of course endless parties.” Debauchery all around.” I said, “You sound like you are on a big ego trip, but without money you are nothing. Just like you imply.” He said, “Maybe they’ll catch me one day, but until then I am a King.” Persephone said, “Jimmy, people like you don’t matter. Your life is just an empty façade.” He said, “F--- you!”

Barney, a black American of 28, told us, “I am a giant among men! I am the defending champion Olympic gold medalist in lightweight boxing. I still make a lot of money off commercials and promotions, enough to give me a comfortable life and I coach boxing.” I told him, “You are a dinosaur. A relic of the past. The future will all be about peace and love, not fighting!” He replied, “Oh, people will never stop fighting and competing. We live in a dog-eat-dog World, haven’t you noticed?” I said, “People today are becoming more and more progressive in their thinking and don’t want their children to play violent sports. And the competition amongst mankind is every year more civilized.” He said, “I haven’t noticed.” I said, “But surely you have noticed that boxing is less and less popular.” He said, “But many people

watch the mixed martial arts fighting and many people of the future will gamble on sports and try and interest their children in sports.” I said, “Sports are like war.” Persephone said, “On TV I never watch sports; they are boring. I’d rather watch something that gives me knowledge or inspiration.” Barney said, “I can’t believe you two!”

CHAPTER 9

Ned, a 60-year-old Hispanic American said, “I run a brothel. It is cold times these days not like the late 60’s. The cops have closed me down several times, but I have thus far avoided jailtime with good lawyers. The police realize though that I provide a valuable service; without me, many men would go insane.” I said, “You are not helping these men, only burying them deeper into a miasma of misery. There’s no love here, only money. You are without use.” He said, “At least I am happy, and my sex workers are content and respect me!”

Kay said, “I am just a Filipino baker of 45. I make bread and pastries and cakes etc. and I think they are very high quality. But I wish my life had more meaning.” I said, “But someone has to do the baking. We all eat.” But Kay said, “I don’t love my husband and of course I love

my 3 kids. But the kids are growing up to be their own persons and my influence on them is limited. And I am afraid they will grow up to be useless, just like my husband. He works as a salesman and does nothing but drink beer and watch TV!" I said, "What do you do besides baking?" She said, "I volunteer for my Church events to feed the poor and am in charge of food procurement." I said "You'd be better off without your husband, why don't you leave him? You'll get custody of the kids." She said, "But there's no other men in my life and I am already 45, kind of old to start again." Persephone said, "Maybe not in your Church, but I am sure you could find another man, online."

Deborah a 40-year-old white American, said, "I am a hair stylist and feel my life lacks meaning." Persephone asked her, "What would give you meaning in your life? Debbie replied, "I just want to fall in love!" I asked, "How many times have you fallen in love?" She said, "I've had some boyfriends, but I didn't love any of them." I replied, "Love is just strong attraction. Why not simply go Online and find a man who attracts you and has similar interests? What are your interests, by the way?" She said, "I like to go to bars with my friends and play pool and dance." I asked, "But you live in a small town, right?" She said, "Yes, I live in Rochester." I told her, "If you want action you should move to NYC, no doubt about it."

Liz, a Chinese American of 32, said, "I liked watching 'Sex and the City.' But in my personal life, my sex life sucks. My boyfriend is a loser and has no job and I have to work two jobs to pay the bills." I asked her, "What do you do for a living?" She replied saying, "My day job is a gardener in a greenhouse. At night I work as a server." Persephone said, "But surely you meet a lot of men in your night job?" Liz answered, "I have my regulars, but when they find out I

live with my boyfriend they tend to lose interest. I know that I should dump the loser, but then he would have no one to take care of him!" I said, "Then don't tell them about your boyfriend and say you live with your mother instead?" She said, "I am not a deceiver." Persephone said, "Then you have to get rid of your boyfriend right now. You are not getting any younger!"

Ana a white American of 30, said, "She'd studied all the philosophers and decided we live in a crazy World of no meaning. It is hard for me to stop laughing at all the losers all around me." Persephone said, "So you think that life is a joke?" Ana said, "For me yes, and I am so good looking I always have plenty of lovers to amuse me, pathetic as they are." I said, "Don't you believe in improving the World?" Ana replied, "I am not so naïve to think that I can change the World in any meaningful way. Virtually everyone I have met in my 30 years of living is completely useless and pathetic." I asked her, "Wasn't there anyone who you liked?" She said, "I have a female friend who I am very close to and have had a few cool lovers. But people as a whole depress me!"

Roxanne, a white American of 30, told us, "I am depressed. I just proposed marriage to my lesbian lover, and she turned me down." Persephone said, "You are far better off without being married. Don't even live with your lover." Roxanne said, "But if you really love someone, you want to be with them as often as possible." I said, "Better to have a number of lovers at the same time. And your lovers will just have to live with that." She said, "I have an acquaintance who I like and respect, maybe I could ask him out. And tell my lover, 'I want freedom.'" I replied, "As the Beatles song goes, 'One thing I can tell you is you got to be free...'"

Rudy, white American of 28, was telling us, “No one respected me. I made my living selling cars” And said, “Girls, in particular whom I like, don’t respect me and tell me that I am a loser. But I am a good salesman and a good guy who always treats women nicely.” I told him, “Perhaps you are setting the bar too high! Why not just go out with ordinary women? All love is good. Some people always want the ones they can’t have.” Persephone added, “Lots of girls want to go out with a nice guy. Nice guys finish first!”

Jo a white American of 43, said, “I am a leading scientist researching cell regeneration with a view to creating eternal youth and immortality.” And she said, “Many of the best researchers in my field leave and join the government secret program. I’ll bet they already have eternal youth but are hiding it from the people.” I replied, “That’s quite a dramatic conspiracy theory. If what you say is true, perhaps the government feels it may be a shock to society. And would only lead to upheaval.” And she said, “I feel the research I am doing has already been done secretly and I am just wasting my time.” Persephone asked, “Why don’t you get a lover to cheer you up?” Jo said, “I’ve been working overtime for years and haven’t had time for a boyfriend. But now I’m thinking of changing jobs and researching Covid-series viruses with a view to killing all viruses. And I’ll just work 9-5.”

JP, a Laotian, of 34, said, I feel nauseous all the time. My job in the meat packing plant makes me sick to my stomach. And my girlfriend is an evil bitch who treats me cruelly. And my best friend is a heroin addict.” I said, “Sounds like you are all messed up. Why not move somewhere else and start anew?” He said, “You give me confidence to start fresh. My life couldn’t be any worse than it is now. But it is hard to get visas, so I think I will stay here in the US. Just move to

another city.” Persephone said, “In this era of perpetual change, it is important to keep changing your life for the better.”

Lars, a Chinese of 50, told us, “I am a pilot for a big commercial airline. I only work part time so that I can have long layovers and really party down in exotic cities. And I have lovers and friends in every city I go too. But lately, I’ve been feeling bored. I suppose I am spoiled by my easy life. I have decided to join the air force and marry one of my lovers.” I said, “But you’ll miss all your other lovers.” He said, “But the air force presents a challenge, and I am now 50 and its time to settle down and have kids with my 32-year-old wife.” I told him, “Sounds like you have the tiger by the tail. Challenging jobs are always good, and you could rise up the ranks in the air force and help protect our country.”

Gulliver, British man of 27, told us, “I tried being an astronomer, but we live in a period where we are not going to Space, and I wondered why bother spending your life trying to discover Earth-like planets in other Solar Systems if we have no intention or ability to go there. So, I became a science fiction writer, and have written several novels. I tried to write like Arthur C. Clarke, but publishers said my characters were too stiff and even nerdy. But I am a scientist and of course many scientists are nerds and geeks.” I said, “Why don’t you spend more time at parties and get to know clever people better and then include them in your novels!” He said, “My girlfriend is a computer geek and I suppose I am too. We don’t care for parties.” Persephone said, “You need to spice your books up a bit with love and romance and have characters with large faults and strong personalities, as well as being brainy.” He said, “He would base his next books on the personalities of famous philosophers.” I said, “Most philosophers had quite a dull

life actually.” He said, “I’ll write then about a villain who is an evil scientist who is in love with another evil scientist.” I said, “Now you are talking!”

MJ, a white American of 50, said, “I am a high school math teacher. But it seems to me students could just learn from an e-book and no need of a teacher or classroom. I feel I am useless.” I said, “Society is undergoing great changes, but it takes time for society to get used to the new Reality. Anyway, you will be retiring soon, and won’t have to worry about being redundant with your nice pension.” He said, “But I am disturbed I have lived my whole life in vain. And none of my students turned out to be anything special.” I replied, “Few people can really do something special and even they are quite limited, though people say the sky is the limit.” Persephone added, “All it takes is one good teacher to inspire some people to do great deeds when they are older.”

Lena a Hispanic of about 30, told us, she worked in Yankee stadium selling beer. She said, “I love sports, especially baseball and have met most of the Yankee stars.” She said, “My dream is to marry a professional baseball player. But I feel I am wasting my time selling beer, and my other job is a custodian, I don’t feel that is very important either. I’d like to do something meaningful, but I don’t know what!” I told her, “Why don’t you try the peace corps or something like that? A job in which you help a lot of people and meet a lot of good people. Your current jobs are dead ends, and you should quit them. Travel the World instead.” She said, “You give me confidence to become a volunteer. Thank you.” Persephone said, “You are good looking and fluent in English; the World is your oyster.”

Then we met, Frances, a white American of 25; she was a beautiful star in alternative movies. She said, “I was having a hard time surviving. I had to work my day job as a secretary to pay the bills. But it is all worth it!” And she said, “Some of my movies are on a rock bottom budget, others have a modest budget. But at 25, I figured I had a bright future.” I said, “Why don’t you move to LA where there is more opportunity and more money and fame awaiting you?” She told me, “There’s plenty of action here in New York and I now have a lot of connections here. I just need more money is all...” Persephone said, “I like your movies, they are so dramatic and full of tragedy. Whatever you do, don’t give up!”

RJ, a white American of 29, told us, “I am a sell out. I was a struggling writer of high-class fantasy but sold out to the big studios to write cheap, foolish scripts for mass consumption. I am just a hack, now.” I said, “At least you are making a living writing. Maybe as your fame grows, you could return to the style of writing you want.” He said, “That’s what I keep telling myself, but as a hack I am writing 60 hours a week and have no time for other writing. To be honest I’d rather just be a drunkard than struggle as a hack.” Persephone responded, saying, “It is dog eat dog, here in NYC. The strong survive.”

Linda, a Chinese American of about 30, told us, “I am a struggling musician. I can’t sell my original music!” I said, “Why don’t you busk your way around the World and at least travel and get paid for it. Maybe you could have a hit or two in other countries, who knows?” Linda said, “But I’d hate to leave my parents behind, I am the light of their life!” I said, “It’s 2028, you can video chat with them every day!” She said, “You make it sound so easy. Sure, I’ll give it a try

and I'll write a song for you two!" Persephone said, "Your music is good and you are good-looking, I am sure you'll succeed eventually."

Theo, a Quebec Frenchman of 55, said, "French is a beautiful language, but unfortunately is on the decline." I said, "It is not that beautiful that one needs a year of study to pick it up. Far better for everyone to speak English. He said, "I am a French tutor, here in NYC, but all my students are forced to learn French by their parents, and don't care for the language. I feel I am wasting my time, kids these days don't appreciate beauty." I said, "Why don't you travel the World teaching English?" He said, "I happen to have a bachelor's degree in English, so I could certainly do that. I just feel that it is a pity. And TV and movies are mostly for the masses and real good shows from countries that don't have English as a first language, don't make it these days."

Althea, a Chinese American, of 30, said to us, "I used to work as a taxi dispatcher, but now have been made redundant by computers. I need a job to pay for my singing career." I said, "Why not work as a server and collect big tips. She said, "But I don't have experience and I am not that good looking, so it is tough to get such a job." Persephone said, "Most artists struggle, at least at first. Why don't you travel the country singing, 'God Bless America' at sporting events or something?" She said, "It is a very competitive market, but I am convinced my singing is superior," and she sang some classic songs for us. She was quite talented. She could alter her voice to sound like the original.

Mira, a woman of about 50, from Ukraine, told us, “I wanted to be elected President of Ukraine.” Ukraine of course was torn apart by Russian troops dividing the country into Russian controlled areas and Ukrainian areas, according to ethnic composition. I asked her, “Why would you want such a job?” She said, “I have abundant political experience and I believe I can make a difference.” Persephone said, “The country is breaking up and it is futile to do anything about it. Why not live in America instead and try US politics?” Mira said, “I can’t just run away and leave my country at such a crucial time.”

Jenny, an American from India of about 40, said, “All religion is foolishness. We should teach the youth to each have their own philosophy instead of religion. Life believing in non-existent Gods is futile and useless.” I said, “I agree. But many people say without religion, life has no meaning.” He said, “People form relationships and do work that has use and meaning. You can make anything you want into your meaning in life. Whatever is important to you is your meaning.” Persephone said, “Anyway religion is on the way out.”

Peter, a 58-year-old aboriginal from Nebraska, said, “The white man has forced us to assimilate into American society. But I have to admit, life today is far better than it was before the white man came. It is now a global village and economies are growing on reserves and in most countries on the whole.” I replied, “We are haphazardly building Utopias. Maybe one day the people will proclaim we live in Heaven.” He said, “I sent both my kids to good universities and their future looks bright. But I am divorced. And for me, living on the reserve, I feel I am useless to stop band members from getting all messed up with drugs, alcohol, gambling, teen pregnancy, prostitution and so on.” Persephone said, “There are 12 million aboriginals in

America today. If more of them would vote, they'd be a formidable voting block. You should try and get band members to get politically involved!"

Layla, a black Englishwoman of about 22, said, "I came to NYC to seek my fortune. But I fell in with the wrong crowd and got addicted to heroin. And then I had to work as a prostitute to pay for my addiction. My life is debauched, and I feel useless. Persephone said, "Why not try to be a functional alcoholic and ditch the heroin addiction? It is clear that you are vulnerable to addiction and need to take something." I said, "I recommend smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol. And taking crystal meth."

Patricia, a Nepalese American, of about 30, told us, "Nepal is like Cuba. All goods are scarce. And nearly everyone is poor. But at least Nepal gets a lot of tourists. I came to America with just a hundred dollars in my pocket and have finally made it with a company that employs artists to copy famous art works in oil and watercolor. It's a good business and I paint too. But it constantly gnaws on me that I could have done something better with my life." I said, "It sounds like you are a great example of the American dream come true. You are doing what you enjoy and pleasing many people. Persephone said, "Perhaps in time, you will paint original works and become well-known."

Rhialto, a man of grim disposition and a white American of 40, said, "I am a magician. I do all the regular tricks and do stage hypnotism. And I hypnotized all my lovers to love me more. But it caused some of them to go psycho on me and I can't handle it. They are so psychotic; I wish I was dead." I said, "Then run away to another country where your mad lovers can't find

you!’ Almost every country would welcome you as a magician.” Persephone said, “Yes, but it would be cruel to leave your lovers in their current state of mind.” He said, “Maybe I’ll go to Canada and change my name and picture. I’m sure the hypnosis will gradually wear off on these girls, anyway!”

Jack a white American of about 50, said, I am a writer of adult fairy tales that I think are good, but can’t find a publisher. For instance, “Once there was a girl who was wandering lost in the forest and she came upon a group of gypsies. The gypsies decided she was too beautiful to let go. So, they trained her as a dancer, and she traveled with the troupe. But she was constantly abused and raped and finally a traveling salesman bought her from the gypsies and made her his sex slave and she became pregnant. But one day she escaped and found her way back to her people. Only to find that their camp had burned down, and their charred remains were scattered about. So, she went to the castle of the baron and asked for refuge, but she was pregnant and considered damaged goods, so they employed her as a cleaner. But she was so beautiful the other women were jealous and sold her baby when she finally gave birth. But then one day the Prince of the Realm arrived looking for staff and he saw the beautiful girl and took her to live in his palace.” I said, “It sounds pretty grim, but not bad. I recommend that you keep writing.

Persephone said, “I love fairy tales and fables and such. I wish there were far more.”

Cornelius, a German American of about 40, said to us, “Not many people are emigrating from Germany these days. It is such a prosperous country.” I said, “Germans elected Hitler, and the World will never forget it. Germans have this black stain on their nation. But it could have happened anywhere. Lots of bad populist leaders get elected or put into power during a

revolution, often to the detriment of most of their population. Tyrants.” Cornelius said, “But we all speak English which is basically a Germanic language and Germans populated America almost as much as Britain did. Germans are a successful people.” I said, “True many great peoples in history died out.” He said, “But my feeling in America is one of uselessness. I tried running as the Republican party’s nominee in a Congressional seat, but few voted for me. I take the rejection personally.” I said, “Just because you can’t win a popularity contest doesn’t mean you are useless. Most of the best people would probably not win election. And wouldn’t want to run in the first place. Democracy is far from perfect. Better to have the true elite rule, but that’s not going to happen any time soon. It’s rule by the masses...”

CHAPTER 10

Ed, a white American of about 40 said, “I feel superfluous. I am rich and have so much money, I don’t know what to do with it.” I said, “Of course I am going to ask, why you don’t give it to charity?” He said, “Most charities are bogged down by administrative costs and salaries and don’t address the roots of the problems which are almost always political malfeasance and incompetence.” I said, “Well you have to back someone?” He said, “I am a rebel without a cause. That’s just the way it is.” I said, “But you can’t just give up on humanity. Why don’t you

run for politics yourself?” He replied, “I doubt I’d win no matter how much I spent.” I said, “Well I’m sorry to meet you.” Persephone said, “Be a philanthropist and select causes that are dear to you!”

Jazz, a black American of about 40, said, “I don’t like rap nearly as much as jazz or blues.” I said, “It won’t be long before a new type of music appears. I think rap combined with jazz or blues would be good for instance.” He replied, “I think jazz fusion shows promise, but it is hard for those musicians to get noticed by big record companies.” I said, “Yes, it’s the same old story of struggling artists.” He said, “Anyway I am an architect who designs modern skyscrapers. I beautify the landscape of various cities, but sometimes wish I was a successful musician. Music really speaks to the heart more than buildings...” I said, “Actually you are doing quite well for yourself as far as I can see.” He said, “But I could have been truly famous... and this rankles me.” Persephone replied, “No point dwelling in the past. Look instead towards your promising future.”

Marjorie, a Chinese American, said, “China’s star is rising these days. But as always China is ruled by a tyrant. But free Chinese people in various Western countries are an integral part of the global civilization. I am expecting to see great things from Chinese Americans in the Arts, Science and Business.” I said, “China built up many great civilizations/dynasties. And I am sure China will build another glorious civilization in addition to the work of overseas Chinese, particularly in business/entrepreneurship. The enterprising Chinese...” Marjorie said, “My father raised me to be an entrepreneur and I have made big money on trading companies. My family is very pleased with me. But I wish I’d been able to follow my love of playing the violin. I am

happy but am sorry about the person I could have been.” Persephone said, “I too, am expecting great things from Chinese in the near future. Maybe your children will be artists.” She said, “Yes, I have 3 kids and am hoping for the best!”

Nora, a white American of about 50 said, “I was born poor in Harlem. But I managed to get an education and have become a philosopher of fables. I believe fables can link us to nature and give moral instruction to our children. Everyone should learn to write fables in school.” I said, “There’s room in the literary market for more fables. If everyone wrote fables, the World would be a more artistic, and cool place. I think it is possible for millions of fables to be published one day.” She said, “One of her fables was about ‘The Lion and the Tiger. One day a male tiger met a female lion and though they could both interbreed, they fought one another. The result was they both died from their wounds. Such a pity. And the moral was animals, like people, often do the wrong thing.” I said, “Your fables are pretty good, Nora. Keep trying to publish them!” She said, “I feel my messages fall on deaf ears. And feel powerless to change that.”

Daisy, an indigenous American, of 40 said, “It’s a dog-eat-dog World, with little compassion or kindness. You cannot say America is a kind, caring, clever society.” I said, “What about Scandinavia?” She replied, “Scandinavia, looks after its poor, and has had stalwarts such as Nobel and ABBA, but it is a long dark winter there, and many of the citizens there are depressed. Anyway, I’d rather live in say Sweden than in America which despite unparalleled wealth, can’t look after its poor. And few new immigrants want to come to Scandinavia; they mostly all want to come to America. They think that is where the opportunity is to get rich. Many poor people are obsessed with the idea of becoming rich. And feel they will be lucky in the USA.”

Persephone said, “One day America will finally become socialist and that will be a great thing for the World!”

Edward, a Chinese/Japanese American of about 25, said, “I believe I am superfluous. I am a talented scientist but am forced to toil on the projects my bosses want that are lucrative in their opinion. I’d like to found my own pharmaceutical firm, but lack the capital.” I said, “But you can still do great work where you are now!” He replied, “I find myself just doing repetitious experiments that are not sound, scientifically.” Persephone said, “Maybe it is best to put in your time loyally and get promoted to a position of relative power. Capitalism favors great ideas, in the end.”

Winnie, an American Chinese/White of about 50. She said, “I spent most of my life with one man and in the end it didn’t work out. I wish I had played the field and dated more interesting men, and many of them. Now I am not so attractive, so it is pretty much too late.” I said, “It is never too late for love. Why not spend your golden years with a number of men? You can find all sorts of men on the Internet dating sites.” Persephone said, “You are only as old as you feel. It is all in your mind.” Winnie retorted, “But I am feeling my age and can’t party like I used to. I am too old for bars and have had no luck in Internet dating.” I said, “Try writing better letters about yourself Online. I know you will succeed in the end.”

Morley, a black American of about 45 told us, “I am a golf course architect. My latest project is a Japanese golf course along some mountain sides, creating new level land. I am rolling in dough. But I am weary of golf and no longer play or watch it on TV and wish I’d picked another

career.” I told him, “Why not open a bar and be King.” He said, “It’s a good idea and doesn’t require a very large investment if I take over an existing bar. Yes, you’ve convinced me, I’ll give it a whirl. And hopefully meet a lot of new friends and lovers.”

Alexis a gypsy of about 55 said, “I am a fortune teller.” And she said, “I am a good judge of character and try to give people hope. Sometimes I hypnotise them and learn all about them.” I said, “I sure wouldn’t want to be hypnotized by anyone. It is too much power! Anyway, if you try to give them hope that’s good. But few clever people believe in fortune tellers prognosticating the future!” She said, “But many clever people have seen a stage hypnotist and realize the power of hypnotism. However, I am getting sick of telling people their future and just want to sell my house for big bucks and run away to a warm beach in a cheap country and live out my days in warmth and comfort and I don’t want to do any more work. I don’t want to be useful, let people sort out their own problems.” Persephone said, “In the near future life will all be preordained. And there will be no need of fortune telling.”

Cherry, a white/black woman of about 45 told us, she gave voices to cartoons and had many different voices for the characters. I said, “I always liked cartoons. Even as an adult, I enjoyed ‘Beavis and Butthead.’” Persephone said, “Cartoons give endless entertainment to children, but I feel that many of them are too violent.” Cherry said, “But I am tired of childish cartoons and feel superfluous. I said, “Why don’t you try your hand at becoming a filmmaker or an actor?” She said, “Yes, I’ve contemplated being an actor, but I am not very good looking, so could never be a star, I figure. So, there’s no point.” I said, “There’s plenty of ordinary looking people who are

stars on TV sitcoms and such.” She replied, “But it is such a struggle to land roles, and I don’t want to be a starving artist. So, I will probably just continue doing voices.”

Terri, a Fijian American of about 50, said, “I came to America to get a better life for my children. And they are both in university now. But I still have to work two jobs to pay the bills; I am a single mother and my kids borrowed big money from the bank for school. My jobs are secretarial, and the pay is low, but I don’t even have a high school education, so I am quite limited as to what I can do. I feel I am very clever, but superfluous.” Persephone said, “Find a clever lover and your life will be sublime.” She said, “I’ve gone on a lot of dates, but can’t seem to find Mr. Right.” So, we set her up with Theo, the Quebecer and they made a nice pair.

Sherry a white/Chinese woman of 25, told us, “I know I am beautiful, but I can’t seem to win any beauty contests. I tried Ms. Universe and Ms. World and registered for many others such as Ms. New York, Ms. East Coast, Ms. Oktoberfest around the World and so on.’ And she said, “I tell the judges I want to dedicate my life to charity and say I value imagination above all else. But I never win. Maybe most men don’t think I am beautiful. But my friends all do and many men have said to me I am extraordinarily beautiful.” Persephone said, “It sounds like you are greedy for fame!” I said, “I think you are a rare kind of beauty. Not a classical beauty but a beauty, nevertheless. I am sure that many men would go crazy for you!”

Christine a white/aboriginal American of 25, said, “Men just love me for my boobs. They are all so shallow! I said, “I read somewhere that 10% of women have back problems due to heavy breasts.” Persephone said, “The vast majority of women have shapely breasts when they are

young.” Christine said, “I feel I am superfluous. I am very clever, but my job is just a secretary. I feel I could do so much more. But there’s nothing I want to do. So I came to NYC to find a job that is useful. I am thinking of working for the Salvation Army, part time.” I said, “Good for you! Maybe you can rise up the ranks of that charity and really do some good and you would no doubt meet some men who value your mind.”

Jeanette, a Brazilian American woman of about 50, told us, “I did the best I could to raise my three daughters as a single mom. But all 3 turned into criminals. Two were prostitutes and the other was a drug dealer.” And she said, “I am powerless to do anything about it. My American dream turned into an American nightmare. My daughters don’t even talk to me.” I said, “It is just bad luck is all. They probably all took after their father?” She responded, “Their father was a hard-working man, but he gambled and that’s what finally drove us apart. But he didn’t break the law except for illegal gambling... and whoring probably.” Persephone said, “At least your daughters are alive and kicking. You could work for charities to help you feel better about life.” She said, “My three daughters are superfluous cases; they need counselling.”

Jose from Mexico, about 30 years old, told us, “Mexico is torn apart by gangster Cartels and corruption. Why don’t they legalize drugs in the USA for heaven sakes?” I said, “Because many people are intolerant of drugs. But of course, if they were legal the Cartels would go away and Mexico could grow a regular, peaceful economy. And the USA doesn’t see Cartel violence.” I asked him, “What do you do for a living?” He said, “I’m just a farm laborer, I feel I am clever, but don’t speak good English and have almost no education. And I can’t find a woman for me. I

feel I am useless.” I said, “Get a job helping people who are even worse off than you! Drug addicts and homeless people need your help!”

Josie from Philippines, about 25 years old, told us, “I wanted to marry a rich man.” She was very beautiful and seemed clever too. She said, “I am a nurse.” But she said, “Many of the doctors where she worked wanted to date her, but none wanted to marry her.” I said, “Anyway many rich men have many lovers. Try marrying an ordinary man and perhaps you will be happy.” Persephone said, “Get a part time job working in bars and maybe you will meet a rich man!” Josie said, “It’s a good idea. I enjoy drinking, myself.”

Miranda, a Portuguese American of about 55, said, “I’ve always been a tomboy, and work as a handyman here in NYC.” And she said, “I’d always been popular with men, but now I’ve reached menopause and have no children. I regret this deeply.” Persephone said, “Why don’t you adopt a child or two and really make a difference in their lives.” She said, “I’m not interested in raising other peoples’ children. My bloodline ends with me. It’s a tragedy!” I said, “Everyone has regrets and life goes on.”

Mirave, an American Jew of about 50 told us, “I believe strongly in Yahweh! But I think he is a cruel God to allow so many people to be poor and miserable. And where was Yahweh during the holocaust?” I said, “The truth is there is no God except the Superhumans we will make in the future.” She said, “There has to be a creator!” I said, “If there’s a creator, he/she doesn’t care about humans, just as you say, so why pray to him? Admit it your life is pointless and all you can do is try and make your fellow humans less miserable.” Persephone said, “Les Misérables.”

Alberto, a Mexican American of 51, said, "I'd led a charmed life as an architect here on the East Coast of the USA. I'd married a wonderful white American woman, also an architect and had four sons. My sons all turned out very well and were successful." I said, "The American dream lives on." He said, "I was now building very tiny apartments with room for just two people that were reasonably priced in the suburbs." Persephone said, "We need better planning in our cities these days. Such as we need more subways in NYC suburbs." Alberto said, "Many of the World's finest people live here in NYC! But I feel I am going through a mid-life crisis. And am losing my hair and gaining weight and don't love my wife like I used to. I worry that I am largely superfluous, and my buildings haven't made much of a difference."

Carlie, a Bangladeshi American woman of 55, said, "I run a factory in Brooklyn where we produce clothes for the poor. It is a non-profit venture. But I employ hundreds of Bangladeshi women and give them a living wage." I said, "People like you, make the World go round. Persephone asked, "Is there anything we could do for you?" She said, "I would like to meet any race of American man to marry. I am not religious." So, we introduced her to Peter, the aboriginal from Nebraska and they seemed to get along well.

Manuel, an Argentinian American of about 55, said to us, "I have had a difficult time handling my wife's mental illness. She is a paranoid schizophrenic and a manic depressive all in one. I feel powerless to help her and she's getting worse. I said, "Well if she can't function in society, you must put her in a mental hospital. You could visit her everyday and she would be well looked after." He said, "If I did that, she'd probably kill herself and I'd never forgive

myself.” He said, “My profession is a medical doctor and I have a social worker stay with her everyday when I’m not there and I am also seeing another doctor who works at the hospital. She is only 33 and brings joy to my otherwise dismal life! I think I am going through a mid-life crisis!” I said, “We all have our crosses to bear, only with some it is worse than others.”

CHAPTER 11

Harlan, a white/Chinese American of 32, said, “I wanted to write scripts for Hollywood. I figured I could write anything, but so far have struggled and work two shifts a day to pay bills in a factory. So, I didn’t have much time to write. I am tired and miserable and don’t even have time to find a girlfriend. I said “Why don’t you go teach English in another country. You would work far less hours and live like a King and so have time for your writing.” He said, “I’d always dreamed of making it as a writer in NYC, but the dream was slipping away. Anything would be better than this.” So, he made plans to go to China and we wished him good luck.

Paul, a white American of 36, said, “I just want a normal, good life. But my fate so far is to have a life of madness. All my friends and lovers are crazy, and sometimes I feel I am the only sane one around. It’s a World of madness, I tell you.” Persephone replied, “In the country of the

mad the sane man is King.” He replied, “I really don’t think so, none of my crazy friends and lovers really like me, I am just an amusement to them. They laugh at my sanity.” I asked, “How do you know you are sane?” He said, “Because I don’t do things that are considered crazy.” I told him, “A little madness never hurts; it breaks up the monotony and dullness of the Real World.” He said, “But the Real World is the only World we have, and we all have to live in it. It’s not all fun and games, life is serious.” I said, “Truly serious people are rare. Most people feel life is in the hands of God or see life as a joke these days. And are not very serious. I notice just in the last 6 years more and more people consider themselves mad or admit life is madness.” Persephone said, “The whole idea of civilization is crazy.”

April, a white woman of about 55, told us, “I knew you Tom from university. We had different majors and were barely acquainted.” I said, “I remember you: you were the girl who took all of your clothes off in a bar one night.” I asked her, “How have you been?” She said, “I haven’t been well, I am having a nervous breakdown. I am a teacher, and the kids drive me crazy. I am totally burnt out.” Persephone said, “The World does not look kindly on sensitive types like you, April.” April said, “Anyway I am going to retire at the end of this year and will try and meditate and put my life back together.” Persephone said, “Many people have recommended meditation to me, I will definitely try it.” I said, “Some say the future of education is in virtual learning but parents now typically both work so they can’t leave their children alone at home.” She asked, “So teachers will kind of be babysitters?” I replied, “Yes, but I think young students are becoming more and more difficult to get them to behave. They are spoiled and undisciplined.”

Juniper, a white New Zealander, of 27, told us, “I am frustrated by modern love. Modern day people don’t take love seriously.” I said, “Love is just a fun way to pass the time for most. It has become an entertainment for the masses. And its tit for tat, arguments abound and there is a lot of drama.” She said, “I don’t want to play such roles. I just want a serious man who doesn’t play games or have secret lovers, a man who would like to have a family. An old-fashioned man essentially with a useful job.” Persephone said, “Such men still exist I think, especially in small towns. Maybe you should move to a small town or simply try harder to find a lover Online.” Juniper said, “Most men in Online dating are playing the field and are a waste of my time. And I wouldn’t want to waste away in a small town. I may be lost and useless now, but I am optimistic I can have a family man to love and cherish. But as for now I am superfluous!”

Joyce, a black American of 30, told us, “Blacks are only 14% of the US population, but in the downtowns of the cities, blacks predominate. I said, “I read somewhere that 13% of black men who are over 7 feet tall play pro basketball.” Joyce said, “In some sports blacks dominate. But this ‘Black Lives Matter’ campaign is a real step forward for black people and brown people too. They are finally rectifying the evils of the past.” I said, “But in most countries blacks are poor and uneducated and we aren’t doing much about it.” She said, “So I got a job in NYC working for the UN and am trying to help.” I said, “One abuse is eliminated, but four pop up in its place.” She said, “But like Martin Luther King, I have a dream, for prosperity and happiness for all.” I said, “However, black and brown nations’ economies are growing fast, finally so, perhaps there is truly light at the end of the tunnel.” Persephone added, “So you don’t think you are superfluous?” Joyce said, “Maybe now I am not making much of a difference, but I am still young!”

Dwight, a Chinese American of 44, said, "I am truly a loser. I gambled on pro sports and in casinos and lost my house, car and everything and my wife left me. For a while I was winning, but then gradually started to lose it all." I said, "But it is an opportunity for a fresh start." He said, "Most people seem to have addictions, addictions to love, money, food, drink etc. And I can't break my addiction. I wish there was some radical drug out there that could cure my gambling vice." I said, "You need to find a woman who will control your spending and give you no outlet for gambling." Persephone asked, "What are you trying to prove with your gambling, Dwight?" He replied, I guess I am trying to prove that I know sports better than everyone else. With regard to a woman, it is hard to find a frugal, clever woman these days. Most women want to live it up and have a lover who'll pay for it." Persephone said, "On the contrary most women want their finances to be sound. You are talking about fast women the kind you meet in a casino. Don't go to a casino looking for love."

Mark, a Burman American of about 55, said to us, "I am unlucky in love. Most girls want to meet a man who is well off, and I live in a tiny hole in the suburbs and can't even afford a date in a reasonable restaurant. I work 60 hours a week to pay for my hole I live in and my drinking addiction. And I am tired/hungover all the time." I asked, "What do you do?" He said, "I am a taxi driver and get little pleasure from it." So, we introduced him to Carlie, the Bangladeshi factory owner and they seemed to like each other, at least at first. Persephone said, "It's a great feeling to play Cupid!"

Helen, an Irish tourist of about 45, said, “I love America. There’s so much opportunity here. It is a wonder that all of Ireland didn’t come here.” I said, “But the Irish economy is booming now, and Ireland is the only English-speaking state in the EU. Its future looks bright.” She said, “But the heart of Ireland left, and we have to acknowledge that we live in a global village now.” “But” she said, “Everyone in America loves money too much. And many Americans are so greedy! I said, “That’s capitalism for you. Everyone wants more. The middle class is not happy unless they each have a large home in the suburbs, and each have a car and have money for vacations and addictions.” She said, “I don’t know if they can sustain it?” Persephone said, “America is founded on a good foundation and has survived many challenges. And in this global village, they are the greediest people anywhere and so will prosper.”

Sonny, a 35-year-old black man from Mozambique, said, “Malaria killed off a quarter billion people in the last century alone. Why has it taken so long for the scientists and governments to get serious about it.” I said, “There is malaria medication, which is effective but has side effects, but it often doesn’t reach the people who are in danger.” He said, “I have found use speaking about stopping malaria and inventing new better drugs. But mostly my words fall on deaf ears, I am not so good at promoting my cause and I wonder if I will fail to inspire action on this issue.” I said, “Just be glad you are in America.” Persephone added, “You may feel that you are not making a difference now, but you might well do it in the future.”

Reggie, a black American of about 40 said, “I was named after Reggie Jackson, the great ballplayer. But couldn’t realize my dream of playing pro ball and that left me feeling I lived my life in vain.” I said, “There must be something you like other than baseball?” He said, “I coach

little league and was hoping to be a big-league manager and had a son of 15 who showed a lot of promise.” I told him, “Dreams spring eternal.” Persephone said, “Millions and millions of Americans dream of the big leagues. It inspires them to live on and live for something!”

Kyle, a white American of 65 said, “I am a professor of Sociology. And I worried about our modern society. I feel there’s not enough youth and those that are youthful are interested mainly in an easy life.” I said, “Yes, parents spoil their kids these days, not like previous generations who had to work hard to succeed.” And I said, “American opportunity is unparalleled in this modern World despite the fact that many poor nations are growing fast now. They’ll never catch up with America, the land of the greedy. And though they may be spoiled, they will still be greedy for more and more.”

Karen, a white woman of 50, said, “I am an American philosopher who believes in maximum freedom.” I said, “You mean like anarchy?” She replied, “I believed in Panarchy which was the rule of sections of people from every city or settlement. Let people everywhere choose their leadership!” I said, “It sounds chaotic!” She said, “I also believe in imaginative rulers for all. Let the best authors, musicians, painters, scientists and imaginative businesspeople rule!” I said, “It sounds futuristic. I believe there is no limit to human imagination!” Karen said, “Yes, let there be light! But I feel truly imaginative people are on the fringes of society and mostly don’t succeed. They are too sensitive and uninspired by modern day society. And this was always the case. Look at history, most of historical societies had very limited prospects for the imaginative. But episodes like the late 60’s in America or the Classical Greeks show that far more creativity is

possible. But I feel that, my words are lost in the chaos of the modern day and my ideas are not circulated widely. It takes a big societal change to create conditions ripe for imagination.”

Cindy, a white American, of 65, said “I tried to live my life to the full, but I can’t seem to ignore a strong feeling of emptiness. Now that I am older and have time to reflect, I should have lived my life helping people instead of just having a good time, all the time.” I said, “It’s not too late; why don’t you help in Africa?” Persephone entered the conversation, saying, “At least you had a full life, not many people can say that!” Cindy said, “I am retired now from teaching high school. And am too old to go and make a fresh start. But I do donate money to UNICEF!” I replied, “No need to feel empty about your life, many of us feel our life is empty, just keep active and banish such thoughts from your mind.”

Amy, a white American of about 55 said, “I am a music lover. But I regret I’d never tried to be a musician. My family couldn’t afford music lessons in my youth and in my adult life I’ve been too busy in my secretarial jobs and had no time for lessons. Most musicians do their best work in their 20’s and 30’s, so it is too late now for me.” I said, “Few people achieve their dreams. But dreams inspire us and help us get through the day.” Persephone said, “The delights of what might have been, gnaw at our soul and can make us miserable. I recommend, you try a singing career, I can tell you have a nice voice. Make time for it and maybe join a band.” She said, “I agree I should do something, but I really don’t have any musical connections, other than my cousin who plays the flute and one of my friends who busks. I am hopeless, I think.”

Sue, a white American of about 50, told us, “I had sold my soul as a painter, and just painted portraits of rich people to survive.” Persephone said, “At least you are making a living as a painter, not many people can say that. Many of history’s best paintings were portraits painted of rich people!” Sue replied, “There are so many paintings I want to paint and am in the prime of my career but am busy with portraits instead.” I said, “Many great artists struggle to survive; few had the luxury to paint whatever they wanted full time.”

Hugh, a Chinese American, of 55 said, “My life has been up and down. Down more than up. And I feel, compared with my friends that I am a loser. I have no money and am stuck in a dead-end job and am divorced twice but have no kids.” I said, “Count your blessings! You lived to 55 and have a lot of experiences.” He said, “My life is empty, and I am suicidal.” I said, “Go to the doctor and get some opiates to make you feel better.” Persephone said, “Anyway life is short. You might as well live it out to the end. Perhaps you can find a good woman who will be the light of your life!”

Graham, a white Canadian tourist of about 55, told us, “I’ve traveled the World, but feel I like NYC best. But I am a futurist and feel Manhattan should give free food and lodging to struggling artists to come to NYC and make it a Supercity.” I said, “That’s a good idea!” Persephone said, “There is such a synergy in NYC among the art community. It truly is Bohemia already.” But Graham said, “There is so much poverty in NYC though. They should pass a law requiring all citizens to help the poor by educating them/ donating to charity/ creating jobs for them.” Persephone said, “That is also a good idea.” He said, “I have a lot of good ideas and write books. But can’t find a major publisher.” Persephone said, “Maybe posterity will be kind to you!”

Cain, an Indian American of 52, told us, “I was born in Delhi with its pollution and widespread poverty. I am glad I got out of there. I am an architect based in D.C. and have built a lot of great skyscrapers. And now I am designing high rises in India’s burgeoning cities...But I suffer from depression and alcoholism and am miserable most of the time. Nothing satisfies me except alcohol. I said, “You just need a hard loving woman!” He said, “I’m gay and have a lover, but I don’t love him. I feel I am just a waster.” Persephone said, “Some people are destined to be unhappy. Despite being successful. That’s just the way it is.”

Neil, a white American of 56, told us, “I am a professional photographer and am semi-famous, but ultimately I am tired of photography. I said, “Most people are tired of their jobs, you know it is true. But if I was a photographer, I’d photograph nude women and would never get tired of that.” He said, “I’ve photographed a lot of nude women and loved many of them. But now I am losing interest and feel my life force, my lust for life, is fading away. I find it hard to get out of bed in the morning.” Persephone said, “It sounds like a mid-life crisis to me. I am sure you’ll overcome it.

Kim, a white Australian male tourist of 50, said, “I work for an oil company in Australia. But they are laying me off next week. I am redundant it seems. But I feel I’ve made the company a lot of money through successful advertising. I feel many good people are redundant and have no use. I don’t know where I’ll get another job.” I said, “Here in NYC there’s a lot of advertising work opportunities!” He responded, “That’s why I am here. But I feel I am of little use to my

fellow human.” Persephone said, “Above all be useful to yourself. If you think you are useful, then you most certainly are!”

Grant a Thai American of 55, told us, “I suffer from unrequited love. The girl I love refuses to go out with me, and I work with her everyday and am filled with lust.” I said, “That’s happened to me before, some girls just don’t like you. Best to move on to another.” He said, “I must have her love, or I will surely kill myself.” I asked, “At your age, seriously?” He said, “I’ve never wanted a woman like this before!” I said, “Why not ask her why she doesn’t want you?” He replied, “I have, and she said, ‘Leave me alone.’” I said, “You’re hopeless!” Persephone said, “I think you are very foolish, Grant.”

Ford, a white American of 60 said, “America’s day in the sun is just beginning. America will lead the World in high tech including weapons and the economy will grow and grow. I said, “But China and India and the EU all have far more people than America and in China and India’s case, they will in a few decades catch up economically per capita.” Persephone said, “It will be a while before China and India catch up militarily, but they will eventually, and Russia is very powerful too.” Ford said, “America gets most of the brightest students from all countries. There’s no way other nations can compete with that. It is a nearly complete brain drain.” I said, “But universities in these powerful nations are improving fast and soon will be able to outbid America for professors and brilliant students.” He said, “I find that highly unlikely and anyway I won’t be here to see what happens. I will die a proud American.” Persephone said, “You are hopeless, totally brainwashed by American propaganda.”

Larry, a white/Chinese American of 40, said, "I don't want to know my future, but my girlfriend keeps telling me I am destined to be a total loser and a bankrupt. She nags me constantly and makes me miserable and am afraid to leave her lest she try and kill me and/or herself. She is psycho!" I said, "She needs tranquilizers and needs to see a shrink." He said, "But she won't go!" So, I said, "Leave her and disappear to another city and start afresh." He said, "Perhaps I should try, but she'll probably find me!" Persephone said, "Go for it!"

CHAPTER 12

Auston, a Hispanic American of 50, said, "My life is chaos. I've got two girlfriends and they don't know about each other. I've had to tell a web of lies to them both and I am afraid when they discover the truth, they'll both leave me. All this keeps me busy and involved in life, but I am a manic depressive and have tried to kill myself with drug overdoses several times. I really don't know why I go on living." I said, "Only you can decide whether to go on living. Life is not for everyone, that's for sure. But you will only live another 10-20 years with your smoking addiction so you might as well play out your life. You only live once." Persephone said, "Maybe you should dump both of your girlfriends and start afresh." He said, "But I do love them both."

Vicky, a Jewish American of 40 said, “I could have been a successful piano player, but I married at age 20 to a poor Jew and was forced to work 2 jobs in my twenties and thirties and now I am too old to succeed with the piano.” I said, “Most great musicians excel in their twenties and thirties and their work tails off after that. But it is not written in stone that you can’t succeed in your forties.” Persephone said, “No matter what always follow your dreams!”

Kathy, a white American of 30, said, “I work on Wall St and have invested my money wisely. But I feel empty buying and selling stocks all the time. I wish I’d been a research scientist who could have really made a difference.” Persephone said, “You have money saved so clearly you should go back to school and train as a scientist. If you don’t do it now, you will forever lament your failure to follow your dream.” I said, “But on the other hand if you become really rich you can support promising scientists to research anything you like. If you have a lot of money, you will have power.”

Hubert, a white American of 40 said, “My whole life I have done whatever I liked. And now am a famous chef, but I feel I should settle down, now, and have kids. The problem is I have never met a girl who I’d like to marry!” I said, “No need for you to rush into anything. When you are 50 or 60 you can always marry a pretty Filipino or something like that!” Persephone said, “Why not try a surrogate mother to have your babies and you can hire a maid to help raise your children and have mistresses on the go the whole way.”

Arnold, a white American of 55 said, “I feel like I have lived several lifetimes of fun and excitement. You name it, I’ve done it. But now I have decided to settle down with my girlfriend

of 31. She keeps me feeling young. But my problem is my dysfunctional siblings. My brother is a drug dealer, one of my sister's is evil and the other sister is disabled, and also evil. My able-bodied evil sister has two kids, and they are true hellions. But they are the only family I have." I said, "It is not unusual for families to not get along with each other. If you don't like them simply don't see them anymore. It is not written in stone that you have to get along with your family." Persephone added, "Maybe it will help your case to have children of your own."

Howie, a Hispanic American, of 30, said "I am very rich, I inherited the money from my father. It is good to be rich, but fast women who I seem to meet everywhere just want me for my money!" Persephone asked, "What do you do with your time?" He said, "I don't need to work, so I spend time with my hobbies of reading science fiction and building my wine cellar and leading several charities above all." I said, "Why not hook up with a girl who has a good career of her own, maybe fresh out of university, and full of dreams." Howie replied, "I have been looking for mates Online for some time, and all I seem to interest are fast women. Maybe I prefer fast women, who knows?" I asked, "Do you feel useful?" He said, "Perhaps I am superfluous, but I try with my charities!"

Aphrodite, a white American of 62, said, "I lived a loving life and have no regrets. But my husband and 3 children died in a car accident last year and I am distressed and inconsolable." I said, "Tough break. Maybe you should work for a charity and surround yourself with kind people and take your mind off your loss, while helping others." Persephone said, "Perhaps you could adopt a child of say 8 years old to really be of use to society." Aphrodite said, "I am afraid I am no use to others and am manically depressed." I said, "Why don't you marry again?"

May, a Hispanic American of 20 said, "I am at loose ends, I don't know what I want to do with my life. Persephone said, "But you have your whole life ahead of you. Just study different things at university and find something you are interested in." May replied, "The only thing I like is smoking weed. I am afraid I am destined to just be a waster." I said, "Some good people simply have no use except to themselves; it is no disgrace." Persephone told her, "Surround yourself with other wasters so that you can comfort one another in this cruel World."

Augusta, a white/aboriginal American of about 46 said to us, "My family is a disaster. My father is having an affair and is drunk most of the time, my mother is addicted to heroin, my sister is abused by her boyfriend and my brother is a gambler/ drug dealer and his daughter is a dealer too. I swear they are all going to drag me down with them." Persephone said, "Distance yourself from your family; let them deal with their own problems." I said, "Yes, move to another city to get away from your family." Augusta said, "But they are my family. I can't just up and leave." I said, "Then live in misery, if that's what you want." She said, "That's a cruel thing to say." I quoted the famous song, "You got to be cruel to be kind."

Wilma, a white American of about 25, said, "I am still in university working on my bachelor's degree. I am so drunk most of the time that I can only handle a couple of courses per term (I am studying biology). My grades average B-/C+ and so I can't hope to do a master's degree." I said, "Take your degree and go abroad teaching English. You will be able to just work a few hours a day and will live like a Queen." Persephone said, "You need a steady boyfriend." She replied, "I have a boyfriend, but he is a drunkard just like me. I am on student loans, and he

is working as a server. We drink at home because we can't afford bars. But it's a good idea to go abroad. I'm sick of this country." I said, "It is not well known that teaching English in foreign countries is feasible, but I am telling you it's a good one."

Lorraine, a Chinese American of 30, said to us, "I am tired of being told I am not good enough. I think I am an excellent lawyer but can't get on with a major law firm. I am forced to work out of a tiny office on my own and am virtually starving." I said, probably the major law firms consider you to be a radical who will not toe the line. She answered, "But I am just passionate about the law, and don't want to be corrupted." I said, "Big law firms are all about business that is lucrative, no matter what the truth is. Why not do pro bono work and build up a resume and then run to be a lawmaker!" Persephone said, "Yes get yourself elected on an anti-corruption platform. That would be good!" She said, "In the meantime I am starving and largely superfluous."

Daryll, a white/Chinese American man of about 50, told us, "I am an anarchist. I believe government should be reduced and let the free market decide things. Pure capitalism." I said, "But government provides safety nets for the poor and unfortunate. And democracy provides mostly non-dangerous Presidents. If it were anarchy, evil tyrants would take control. Very few people want anarchy and chaos." Daryl said, "Maximum freedom for the maximum number should be the goal." Persephone said, "Maximum freedom would result in far more gun crimes and total chaos and would undermine the safety of the populace." Daryl said, "I thought the USA

was the land of the free?" I said, "People like you have no use, you just upset people and make them angry and violent."

Diane, a Hispanic American of 30 said, "I am happy to live in America, but it is hard to succeed. I am just getting by with my biology degree, working in a dairy farm. But I dream of getting rich and living like a Queen." I said, "The simplest way to get rich is to marry a rich man!" Persephone added, "Why not go back to school and get your Ph.D.?" Diane said, "Both options are open to me, but as it is I feel I am superfluous."

Shirley a Korean American of 42, said, "I believe in the Chinese concept of Yin Yang. But I feel in my own life I am dominated by males. Now I am too old for childbirth so no Korean man will have me, like my parents wished. I am hopeless." Persephone said, "You can hook up with any man you choose, you are a beautiful, clever girl." Shirley said, "My family thinks I am insane, and I don't even feel they like me anymore." I said, "You need to do what is right for yourself, not what other people wish. Look out for #1!" Persephone and I both agreed this girl was hopeless.

Anna Maria, a Hispanic American from Cuba, said, "I am the lifeline for my family back in Cuba. They have nothing there and are dependent on me for articles of everyday living. Cuba's government needs to be replaced. It will happen sooner or later. I told my family members to come by boat to Florida and save themselves, but they are afraid of the crossing." I said, "Latin America has been plagued by bad government seemingly forever. When will it end?" Persephone said, "We enjoy life in America, but many other places are beset with chronic poverty. Sure, we

still have some poor here, but most of the World is poor.” Anna Maria said, “People in Cuba live like animals and some men even prostitute their wives with tourists to get USD.” I said, “The country is ripe for revolution.”

Fay, a British tourist of 32 said, “I have a long list of complaints with my life in Britain. I am Scottish and am glad we are independent. And cities should build high and concentrate the people in small areas which is conducive to socializing, bars and restaurants etc. And they should get rid of the Queen. And so on.” I said, “Britain did a lot of things right in the past and now we all speak English. And most English-speaking nations were former colonies of Britain and now have democracy and are relatively free.” Persephone said, “I have been to Britain, and I love the British people. Quite friendly folk!” Fay said, “I am from Edinburgh, and wish I lived in America, but it is hard to get a work visa. I said, “Good luck with that!”

George, a white American of 41, said to us, “I am tired of US politics. Everyone has to fit in with one of the two parties and those who claim to be Independents, still vote for one of the two parties.” I said, “Do you want America to be like Israel with many parties, 14 of which have seats and who can’t agree on most things?” George said, “The two parties we have don’t agree on most things. It is often gridlocked! The point is there should be more choice. More ideas, more philosophy.” Persephone said, “All we need is charismatic leaders who are statesmen, not beholden to the extremists of their party.” George said, “I feel hopeless for the future and think America’s day in the sun is almost over.”

Tiffany, a Singaporean Chinese American, of 29, said, “I have traveled to 120 countries and have learned how lucky we are to live in the USA. Its not the best country, but it has a lot of opportunity for immigrants like me! I am an architect and have plenty of work designing mostly houses. In Singapore there weren’t many houses.” And she said, “I love my house and my garden, and my neighbors are nice.” I said, “The modern USA is a nice place for most Americans to live, and we should be thankful. But I’d rather live in a country like Sweden where there are no poor, and everyone speaks English. And the girls are beautiful with many blondes there. Persephone said to me, “Why don’t you go there then?” I said, “My fate is to live in the US.” Tiffany said, “Yes, Sweden is good, but their national debt is very high, and they don’t have as many young immigrants compared to the US to pay for their aging society.” I asked Tiffany, “What do you think about American men?” She said, “It depends where you are. Here in NYC most men are relatively open minded and are good lovers. But dare I say, most American men are losers, greedy, crude, overly masculine and so on. And it is rule of the masses, and the average American man or woman doesn’t interest me. And I find it hard to find Mr. Right in NYC. Maybe I’ll never find him and this kind of shatters my American dream. I have gone through tens of thousands of male profiles living in NYC and none is my Mr. Right. I am hopeless!”

Lucille, a white American of 33, said, “I want to start my own political party, the Rhino party, just like they had in Canada in the 1970’s, who believe politics is a joke. If we win even a handful of seats, we might have the balance of power. For starters, we would find the dumbest man we could and let him dictate some of our policy. And people who are in love, will have to pay a large fee to the state. And we would ask famous comedians to preach the merits of our

party to give us some star power, which would certainly win us some seats. And it will be illegal to say your life has meaning and children will decide how they are to be raised and so on and so forth.” I said, “It’s a big enough joke as it is, I can’t imagine it being any more ridiculous.”

Persephone said, “The Rhinos have my vote. But Lucille, are you truly happy?” She said, “I am married to a ridiculous man and have crazy children and I feel my life is pure madness and superfluity.”

Cleopatra, an Arab American of 23, said, “My family wants me to wear the hajib and marry an Arab. But I don’t want to go along with their wishes.” I said, every ethnic group except the British have had some discrimination and battles with tradition, when they first came to America. Probably for Arabs they will eventually blend in with melting pot that is the US. She said, “Most Arab men are very traditional when it comes to women, and I just want to be free.” I said, “Well then why don’t you try and date a progressive, modern Arab or indeed any man. If your parents don’t like it, tell them that they have to accept it and we all live in America, land of the free now.

Jacques, a white American of 41, said, “I am a gay man, and my parents can’t accept it.” I said, “Have you tried bringing your lovers home to meet them?” He said, “I tried but they won’t agree to it. So, now my parents don’t want to see me anymore. And I feel powerless.”

Persephone said, “Many families don’t get along and are estranged from some family members. It is just the way it is. It is a tragic reality.” Jacques said, “You two are no help.” I said, “Try and help yourself.”

Pete, an Indonesian American of 28, said, “I enjoyed nudism. I liked nude beaches and just plain walking around nude. The police harassed me sometimes, but I was very polite with them and so they usually let me go if I promised to cover up. And I had joined a nudist colony and it was good sex and liked looking at the beautiful girls. And he said, “But my office job requires me to wear clothes even when in the Florida summer. I’d like to set up a company where everyone would be nude. I am thinking about a porn company or a sauna for nudes only.” I said, “Why not?” Persephone said, “I’d like to visit your nudist colony!” But he said, “But my parents and siblings don’t agree with my nudism and my parents have disowned me.” I said, “Tell your parents a lie and say you have given up on nudism and you are sorry for the way you acted. Sometimes you have to tell people what they want to hear.” He replied, “It seems like I have no other choice.”

CHAPTER 13

Uther, an Afghani American of 40, said, “American women are too tough. And even cruel.” I said, “Yes, it’s truly the battle of the sexes with no quarter given.” He said, “I’d like to meet an old-fashioned girl who is humble and nice.” Persephone said, “Few girls these days want to be old-fashioned, but I am sure if you search Online more thoroughly you can find what you are

looking for.” I said, “You can search Afghanistan and elsewhere in Asia where there are plenty of old-fashioned women.” He replied, “You make it sound so easy.”

Serendipity, a White American, of 22, said, “I love surprising men. They look at me and think I look beautiful, but don’t expect me to be so clever. Few men can keep up with me, intellectually. And I know I caused some men to have an inferiority complex. Men and their precious egos.” I said, “There’s a connection between serendipity and superfluity. They can both be surprising.” Persephone said, “Hang out with clever men only. Foolish men will only bring you down and make you feel miserable.” And Serendipity said, “I am a skilled chess player and enjoy beating men. Men to me are toys on the whole without use. I still haven’t found an available man who is as clever as me. It makes me feel like I am a fish out of water.”

Joseph, a 45-year-old, black American, told us, “I never took drugs and kept my nose clean, despite growing up in the ghetto and became a professor of sociology. But I am powerless to stop discrimination against blacks and sometimes I feel nauseous about it.” I said, “But it looks like things are finally improving with the younger generation and the plethora of black and brown-skinned people who have recently arrived in the States.” He said, “Racial equality will perhaps never be fully achieved, but things are improving, just as you say.” Persephone said, “Black men are good lovers, they have a lot of power.”

Evan, an African itinerant worker of 35 said, “I plan to buy a few trees in my boss’s orchard and start a small business.” And he said, “There’s so much money here in America and I hope I can stay here and start a family. But if they deport me, I don’t know what I will do. I worry all

the time about this.” I said, “But your English is good, and you are an enterprising young man, I’m sure you can make it.” Persephone said, “I think you are very handsome.”

Gunther, a white American of 23, said, I am tired of listening to people complain. All my friends and family complain all the time. The US is the land of free complaints.” I said, “Many of the World’s greediest people have come to America and always complain they are not richer, or their marriage didn’t work out or their children didn’t grow up the way they’d like and so on and so forth.” He said, “Exactly. I don’t know how you two can put up with all the complainers who come to you!” Persephone said, “We are glad to try and help them. But the symbol of America should be a pig instead of an eagle.”

Geraldo, a Hispanic American of 29, said, “My true love keeps telling me to make more money. I already work at two jobs, while she doesn’t work and is out chatting with her friends.” I said, “Maybe you two should have a baby.” Persephone said, “Maybe she’s not your true love, you just want her to be.” He said, “When we spend time together it is sublime, she knows me so well and vice versa. I have never liked a woman so much, but I am miserable working 80 h a week. Hard day’s night.”

Naomi, a white American of 28, said to us, “I am sure I could make it as an actress if I moved to Hollywood. I have a very pretty face and a slim body, the kind they like in Hollywood. I’ve acted in some Broadway plays but feel now I am ready for the big time. I want to be rich and famous!” I said, “Take small roles as they are offered and build up your acting history, take your time.” Persephone said, “You have a celebrity complexion and I’ve seen a few of your plays.

You are clearly able to play different characters as opposed to just playing yourself.” She said, “I am reaching my peak now, but I worry I will fail, there’s nothing else I want to do!” Persephone said, “You can succeed as an actress at any age. Keep trying, honing your craft.” Naomi said, “If I don’t succeed by the time, I am 35, I’ll kill myself, literally, as I would be useless otherwise.” Persephone said, “There’s many other things a bright girl like you could do.”

JT, a white American of 31, said to us, “I always wanted to be a hero. At least a hero to my future children and wife and friends and relatives and of course especially to Americans.” I asked, “What kind of hero?” He replied, “Like be President or a governor or senator or a pro ball coach or a rich philanthropist.” He said, “I believe I am special; I am very clever!” I asked, “What have you achieved so far?” He said, “I began my career as a shoe salesman and worked my way up to manager and now am CEO of a small clothing brand.” I asked, “You never went to university?” He said, “I dropped out, it was not for me.” I said, “You may have talent, and you may be clever, but you’ll never rise high without a university degree. You really have to be properly educated. Otherwise, you will be just another superfluous persona.” Persephone said, “Who knows, maybe you could get elected to mayor or city councillor and take it from there?”

Nina, a Hispanic American of 40 said, “I am a deep-sea diver, a treasure hunter. All I need is one great discovery, and I will be rich. But treasure hunting is expensive business with the boat and equipment and all, and I have borrowed up to my ears to finance the project.” I said, “It looks like you will fail. If so, what then?” She said, “If I fail, my life is over. So, I won’t fail.” Persephone said, “Why put all your eggs in one basket?” Nina said, “I am the cleverest person I

know. I know I will succeed.” And that was the last we heard of her. We assumed she failed and was just another superfluous person.

Ike, a white American of 60, said, “I’ve failed at everything I’ve tried. I got fired 15 times, went bankrupt twice got divorced 4 times, had some dysfunctional kids and now I am living in a hovel trying to eke out an existence as a real estate salesman. I feel I am very clever, but just didn’t have any luck.” Persephone said, “I am sorry to see you brought so low. Why don’t you join the UN and work abroad doing charitable works? At least that way you would be useful, and you’d probably have fun doing it. I said, “Maybe you’ll have good luck selling homes? If not try something else that is more meaningful. This is America, there’s plenty of opportunity.”

Dave, a white American of 30 said, “All I know for sure is life is tough and short. I’ve been struggling to succeed as a pro American footballer and currently play pro in Canada. My career as an athlete seems over with torn ligaments in my left knee. I don’t know what else I could do by way of a career, and I am lost. I am clever, but I don’t have any skills and will have to take a low paying job. What a bringdown for me.” I said, “Go back to school then.” He answered, “I hated school and I don’t want to go back.” Persephone said, “Maybe you can work as a American football coach in other countries and help them to set up leagues. Don’t be afraid to be aggressive and clever.”

Stephen, an Arab American of 46, said, “I think NYC is a city of opportunity. But it is too expensive to live downtown. I have to live way out in the suburbs a total 4 hour commute every day. I work as a green energy consultant and feel it is the business of the future. And I have a

good wife and two nice children. But I am not content. I feel like I could do so much more.” I said, “For starters get a job where you can work from home and move out to the countryside. And set up a trading company that imports electrical charging stations, for which there is a dire need and then bring solar power to the Sahara and have them desalinize sea water and other big projects. Think big!” Persephone said, “Yes there is so much room for growth in the renewable power industry and you need to take a chunk of it!” He said, “You two have inspired me to try harder, but I am afraid I will fail.” I said, “Keep trying.”

Malcolm, a black American of 55, said, “I spent my life building up my French and Spanish tutoring service, but now am being squeezed out by new corporate competition. It looks like I will go bankrupt and then what will I do?” I said, “Try teaching French and Spanish in China or some relatively poor country.” He said, “There’s a lot of competition in such countries too, but perhaps I could make a go of it. Thanks for the encouraging advice.” And Persephone added, “Almost one billion people speak French and Spanish, you could teach some of them English!”

Fiona a Chinese Ph.D. student of 25, said, “I have tried dating very successful, handsome men. But I find they have so many love opportunities, she had to share them with others. Maybe I should try a fat and bald, but clever and not so successful man.” Persephone said, “To me, modern love is mostly about greed. Greed for more and more lovers and sex.” I said, “A family man, a kind man is always best for when you want to settle down. But if you don’t want to settle down, why not continue your present course. You know you can have many lovers at the same time too, as a soon to be successful woman.” Fiona said, “I am not used to having more than one lover at one time. But maybe I should try it! “

Hansel, a white American of 60, said, “I have led a wonderful life, as an architect in the New South. But now I am tired of life, and it is time for me to die.” I said, “Why not help out at charities? And surround yourself with kind people who will inspire you to live on and be useful?” He replied, “I am superfluous, and not really needed anywhere.” Persephone said, “Maybe you could run a charity and really make a difference and have camaraderie with your helpers and really make a difference.” He said, “The charities don’t need a man like me.”

Eddie, a white American of 25 said, “My father left me a lot of money 5 years ago and it turns out I have the magic touch with investments such as bitcoin and green technology and now have quite a fortune. But I pinch my pennies and don’t know what to do with the money. I said, “You are helping the World with green tech, why don’t you keep building on that. As for spending money why don’t you give to UNICEF or set up your own charity. He said, “More green technology I can do. But I don’t know about charity. I hear most charities spend the bulk of their donations on staff salaries. But starting my own charity is a good idea. I’d like to help impoverished, clever kids go to school and give them food.”

Betsy, a Hispanic/ white American, of 31, told us, “My family’s business for 3 generations has been to sew US flags and sell them. But recently I started to feel superfluous; I feel I can do so much more with my life, but I am needed at the family business.” Persephone said, “In America you have to follow your dreams. The family business can hire someone to replace you. What is your dream, by the way?” She said, “I’d like to drive race cars or start a business selling

great food or be an actress or a script writer. So many dreams..." I said, "All those dreams are difficult as there is a lot of competition. But pick one and go for it! I am sure your family will support you."

Teresa, a Japanese/white American of 40 said, "I lived in Japan and loved the nightlife, and I feel the Japanese are friendly to foreigners and have an open mind towards them. And Americans are friendly too. I like NYC best; much of the cream of the World's intellects live here. But I can't find a man that wants kids with me. Many men want to date me only. And now I am approaching menopause." I asked, "Why don't you go to the sperm bank and get pregnant with a test tube baby? Take the sperm of a great man." She said, "It will be difficult to raise a child on my own, but I suppose I have no other choice." Persephone said, "As a single mother you can meet single fathers with kids on the Internet."

Enigma, a Taiwanese American of 55, said to us, "I married the wrong man and had a few kids who I adore, but now am finally divorced. I had another lover back when I was in my twenties, but he was unsure if he wanted to settle down, and I didn't ask him to. It was a tragic mistake. But I kept in touch with him and now am going to ask him finally to marry me. I only want him, and my life would be boring without him." So, she asked him to marry her, and he acquiesced and so it was a happy ending. I said, "Love in your golden years can be the best love, but it won't solve all your problems." Persephone said, "The euphoria that might have been haunts us all."

Crystal, a white American of 30 said, "So many men want to marry me, I can't decide. I have a lot of sex appeal I guess, but I am depressed despite everything. No man seems able to help me overcome my depression and the doctor gave me opiates which don't help." I said, "You can't let depression stop you from living your life. Choose the best of your suitors and maybe have children to occupy you and allow you to forget your sadness. It's worth a shot!" Persephone chimed in, saying, "Maybe having kids would only depress you more. And giving up most of your lovers to marry just one, seems unpalatable." Crystal said, "I feel I am descending into madness. I am very sick." I said, "It's a mad World, and being crazy is par for the course. Why not marry the craziest of your suitors?" Persephone said, "That's not very good advice. Better to marry the sanest on your roster of lovers." Crystal said, "I'm probably going to pick the kindest of my lovers to marry."

Christopher, a white American of 54 said, "I am a film maker. I have made some low budget films that were well received such as "Bill's Problems," and "A.D. 2301: The Android Hunters," and "A Grand Parade of Fictitious Modern-Day Intellectuals." Persephone, "And I watched some of your films. They were great." I said, "You'll go far Chris! Persephone added, "Why don't you make a film about 'The Wild East' of Russia. It would make for a good documentary." He said, "I haven't done any documentaries yet. If I was going to do one, I'd probably cover African economies and how they are starting to grow. A story of hope." I said, "We can never have enough alternative movies." However, he said, "I am already 54 and don't look like I can truly succeed in my lifetime." I said, "Such a pity. But perhaps posterity will be kind to you." He said, "There's so many movies being made these days, it is hard to separate the wheat from the chaff. I

need a philanthropist to champion my movies and make me famous. Or marry a famous actress and make movies with her! As it is I am just a superfluous man.”

Sadie, a white American of 41, said to us, “Peoples’ minds are poisoned by Hollywood which causes them to be unrealistic and looking always for happy endings. Sure, some Hollywood films are violent with a bad ending, but these aren’t typical peoples’ lives. Any how most are sappy sweet.” I said, “Most films are just pabulum for the masses. Few people are clever and can rise above this pap. It is bread and circuses.” Persephone said, “But young people dream of success and find role models in Hollywood actors and actresses lives and many Hollywood actresses are of slim build which most girls can be and also many stars wear a lot of make up which many girls can also do. And many of the male stars are handsome, but many are not, so anyone can be a star.” Sadie said, “People need to be taught to analyze movies and not just blindly watch them because there is action or a famous starlet or star.” I said, “The masses can realize reality, it just takes them a little time to catch on, just like the low-level classes in high school. In old age they are all wiser.” Sadie said, “I’ve been trying to make it as an actress for years and they tell me I am too clever for the roles, or I look odd. So, I play in alternative movies, but this hardly pays the bills. I am hopeless!”

CHAPTER 14

Guinevere, a Hispanic American of 35, said to us, I tell myself I am happily married and have 3 nice kids and a kind, clever husband. But my kids are hellions, and my husband has many mistresses. I am in a hopeless situation.” I said, “Guinevere, why don’t you have affairs too? And why not put your kids in a private school that emphasizes discipline.” She said, “My hearts not really into having affairs, I think I will just get a divorce and if the kids grow up undisciplined, it is not my problem.” Persephone said, “But surely you love your children?” She said, “The problem is they don’t love me. I’ve done everything I could for them, but they are not grateful.” I said, “Well why not divorce then, and make a fresh start!”

Mikael, a white American of 40, said, “I grew up in Russia. In Siberia. Some people there don’t even have running water and are hopelessly backwards. But I was a very good student and got some scholarships to come to America. I kind of miss Russia; there’s a lot of opportunity there!” I said, “But you made it to NYC! You hit the big time.” He said, “I run a trading company here importing Russian wood and paper products for American industry and now I finally have enough money to afford a wife and family. My wife is also Russian American, but we’ve tried for several years to have children, but have failed. And my wife wants to live in the countryside and have a quiet life. Whereas I enjoy drinking and partying with my friends downtown. I haven’t realized the American dream.” I said, “Few people do, most people have problems like becoming redundant due to machines or due to cheap labor. Or getting divorced in an ugly way. Or having mental health problems or other health problems. Few people fit the mold of the classic American family, and even for them, it might not last.” Persephone said,

“You can live in the countryside and just come into town on weekends to be with your friends and you could always adopt children. Or you can go to a fertility clinic. Anyway, the countryside is a good place for children to grow up.”

Isobel, a Pakistani American of 37, said, “I’d left my religion when I came to America from Pakistan. My parents back home, are upset about that and won’t let my younger sister come to the US.” Persephone said, “These days religion still creates a lot of problems and heartache. It was only two generations ago in America that everyone went to church on Sundays and now few do. The same will happen with Muslim Americans like you, Isobel.” Isobel said, “I loathe tradition.” I said, “I don’t have much use for tradition either, nor does Persephone.” Isobel said, “But many people in the US are lost and don’t know where or who to turn to. It’s an existentialist dilemma.” I said, “I believe in human imagination and ingenuity and so does Persephone.” Isobel said, “We all want heroes to look up to. Heroes who set an example for how to live. But I must admit I am lost myself, in my life. And there’s no succor in sight!” Persephone said, “Find a lover you like and start a business together!”

Pye, an Arab American of 28 said, “My family came here from Palestine when I was just a kid. We are all glad to live in America and I am a dentist and I have a thriving practice. The problem is one of my kids has leukemia and may not survive. We got her the best doctors, but she is still very ill.” I said, “Everyone you talk to has their problems...” Persephone said, “I think they are making great progress in oncology.” He said, “Of course years ago, few survived leukemia. Now almost two thirds survive. We have opted for some promising experimental therapies and are full of hope.” I said, “Why not have more children?” He said, “My wife and I

have our hands full at the moment.” I said, “I deeply regret not having children, but my sperm is at a sperm bank in NYC. You are lucky to have 3 kids!” He said, “All I can think about is my sick little girl.”

Violet a white American of 75 said, “I’d had an eventful life and am still loving life and have a new boyfriend. My children all turned out successful and I had a great career in real estate in NYC. The problem is my cousin Mitch, got everyone in the family to invest in his trading company business and the venture turned sour and we all lost a lot of money. I am now no longer financially independent and have to rely on my boyfriend for money and he is somewhat cheap.” I said, “At least you are not out on the street homeless. But what about your cousin, Mitch? She said, “I am no longer keeping in touch with him. I don’t care about him.” Persephone added, “You were so greedy!” Violet said, “Greedy, greedy never gets, as the saying goes. But I could have done a lot of good with that money, now I am just a parasite!”

Marvin, a white American of 23 said to us, “I imagine a future in which android love dolls take control of human societies. The loving is so good every human wants a piece of them, and men and women no longer have use for one another.” And he added, “I have written it into a book.” I said, “If one can imagine something, it will happen one day.” Persephone said, “I imagine a future of a love Utopia in which all sex diseases are cured, and everyone loves a new lover every night.” I said, “Persephone, that is very plausible. I wish more scientists would work on curing completely AIDS and herpes. My vision for future love is a World dominated by women and men are their thralls.” Marvin said, “That sounds kinky! But in the future humans will be useless and superfluous. And machines will take over, I’m sure of it.”

Alvin, a white American of 50 said, "I am a pro poker player and have won \$1 million dollars in the last three years. It takes some understanding of peoples' facial expressions and hand gestures to get a sense of when people are bluffing, and you have to play the odds as if you were a computer. But my problem is my woman is a big spender and spends all our money. And now I am desperate to win, and I might go bankrupt soon and lose my house, cars and bank account." I said, "You should get rid of your girlfriend. Women you meet in the casino are fast women and not good for you!" Persephone said, "If you can master poker, surely you can choose a good woman." Alvin said, "I love her, but I guess I'll have to break up with her just like you say!"

Veronica, an American of Indian ancestry and 31-years-old said to us, "I work for NASA, but NASA doesn't have any concrete plans for settling the Moon and Mars. I feel I am superfluous." I said, "Why not write science fiction?" She said, "I am more interested in the technical details of a human settlement in Space and am not skilled in writing." Persephone said, "But NASA has done a lot of good science with their telescopes, such as the Hubble." Veronica said, "Searching for earth-like planets is dull and boring, I prefer concrete action." I said, "Perhaps you are ahead of your time!" Veronica said, "We need private companies to settle Space. NASA is bogged down with administration costs and waste. But I am afraid it will take decades to become Reality.

Horace, an Arab/white American, of 30, said, "I am a poet. But these days there are millions of poets, and it is hard to find great poetry in the cesspool of writing that exists." I said, "Write us a poem." So he wrote, "In the court of Midas/Gold was where it was at/ But then one day/ a

couple of poets came/ and said Gold was just a useless metal/ and everyone in the court was wondering if they were useless/ the couple were preaching love and happiness/And it prevailed.”

I said, “The poem needs to be edited for smoothness of delivery and needs more ideas.”

Persephone said, “Yes you have potential, but like most poets, you are superfluous.” Horace said, “I feel like I am just a waster and work as a useless security guard.”

Harvit, a Sikh American of 35 said, “I came to America as a boy and had high hopes, but I failed in medical school and ended up driving a taxi. And I feel superfluous!” I said, “You need to go back to school and train for something.” He said, “I have a new wife and baby and need to work 60 h a week to make ends meet. I have no time for school.” Persephone said, “Who’d want to drive a taxi in NYC?” He said, “It is not so bad. I just should have done better. But that’s water under the bridge, now.”

Damian, a Jewish American of age 60, said, “I worshipped dutifully the God Yahweh, but I finally realized I was wasting time praying to a God that doesn’t exist. So, I turned to Eastern meditation and realized that wasn’t for me either. Now I feel superfluous, all alone, with a good brain and will die soon no doubt without having ever achieved anything.” I replied, “It is like a disease this superfluidity. And it spreads like wildfire. The whole World is wondering what use humanity has and what, if anything they can contribute.” Persephone said, “You got to be pragmatic.”

JJ, a white American of 55 said, “I set up a business with high class call girls for whom I charged \$3,000 per night. But I had a problem with them falling in love with the Johns and

quitting the job.” I said, “Personally I am against selling sex and love.” Persephone said, “High class call girls serve a useful purpose.” JJ said, “I know many people think I am a slimeball, I am trying hard to make something of myself. And I personally try out each girl before I hire them, only the best are chosen.” I asked him, “What will you do with your wealth? He said, “I’d buy a yacht and go traveling around the World.” Persephone said, “You seem to be useful to me.” He said, “I am trying hard to be useful, but oftentimes I think I should have done better.”

Ralph, an Arab American of 40, said “Much of the Middle East/Afghanistan is on fire. Will they ever stop fighting? I wish there was something I could do to bring peace. I am a middle employee of the UN and serve as a minor diplomat.” I said, “Religion is starting to lose its luster and that will finally end the fighting in a decade or two.” Ralph said, “I don’t think they’ll ever stop fighting in the Middle East and other places too.” I said, “Well couples fight as well, and I suppose it alleviates the boredom of life and many families are estranged from one another. It’s not a harmonious World...” Ralph said, “In history many men lived for war and battles. It’s a bit better now for sure than the bread and circuses days or knights jousting. But I predict that biological warfare will be the end of our modern-day civilization, some day soon. And I feel helpless to stop it. It would be like Covid-19 only far worse.” Persephone said, “The horrors!”

Evan, a white Canadian of 30 said, “I was intrigued by the Canadian university libraries’ restricted section. Books you had to ask for by name and the books weren’t listed in the library database. I thought some must be about guns and bombs and biological warfare and Satanic cults, and spying, but there must be much more. They have stacks and stacks of books. But he was frustrated and couldn’t get hold of any such books.” If you did by chance know of a book

and requested it, they said they'd tell the federal police, the RCMP. I said, "Most dangerous visions don't see the light of day anyways and publishers won't publish them. But we could all profit from such visions, or so I think." Persephone said, "We've had our own run in with the law and had trouble publishing our books or running for office." He said, "I'm not surprised. We are all superfluous!"

Benji, a white American of 31 said to us, "I am embarrassed by my youth. I dated many boys and got drunk every night. Finally, I met Mr. Right 3 years ago. He got me interested in philosophical novels, great literature that was trying to tell us something. And he inspired me to be a writer. I've written a few books since I met him. And he writes too! I've been writing about how our culture supposedly loves heroes, but when a true one comes along, they are left standing naked in the cold wind. I have one protagonist after another try to play the hero and fail. The protagonists are all radical thinkers. I am thinking of giving up and taking an ordinary job and just try to enjoy life rather than try and change it. The way is barred." Persephone said, "I believe people like you and I just need to tone it down a bit and just be a bit of a radical, not a complete one." I said, "We read your books and considered them to be challenging, but hopeless. You write so eloquently of fictitious, imaginative people. But we, and your characters are ultimately superfluous."

Philippa, a Filipino American of 30 said to us, "Filipinos know how to have a good time. Some consider us to be lazy, but we are just fun-loving people." I said, "I've met a lot of Filipinos here in NYC, and they all speak good English and are friendly." Philippa said, I won prizes in Philippines for my writing. I write about how this life is mostly wasted by most people

who don't take time to relax and think about life. You can't just accept modern day culture the way it is, you can't even eat the food or drink the water without thinking, if you are wise."

Persephone said, "But some people think too much and drive themselves mad and we don't hear from them in terms of their art." She said, "Some go mad, it's true. But most thinkers in my view, just give up and conform and just get drunk every night. Persephone said, "That's basically what Tom and I do, get drunk. Our advice is not very highly valued by those who we give it to. But we give it anyways." I said, "It's sad but true, we are useless."

Arthur a white American of 45, said, "I'd been searching my whole life for meaning. And conclude there is no real meaning, but we all create our little bubble in which we consider to be livable and occasionally change bubbles. We need bubbles to help us get through the day and many Americans take prescription opioids or get drunk or get high all the time, anything to help them get through the day. And many have a number of sex partners to break up the monotony. And they judge their own success in terms of how big their house is and what kind of car they drive. Communism failed because humans are greedy for material possessions." I said, "Arthur, most people don't matter; it is the top thinkers that concern us. And these thinkers are having many problems trying to make a difference. World change is very difficult. Many, even minor thinkers, believe that no one person can change the World. But the devil is in the details." Persephone said, "The World is as it is, for reasons that few can even contemplate, but we superfluous people are the losers of our time."

Pauline, a black American of 30, told us, "I am rich in friends and lovers, but always feel bored with them. I go to poetry readings and alternative concerts and try and read books that

seem deep. But I am inevitably bored.” I said, “If one is bored, one typically looks for meaning/purpose and tries new countries and new friends, but are still bored. Everyone is educated to believe they can achieve something great but are crestfallen when they realize it is impossible. It’s a choice between suicide and conforming, many overdose everyday, and many start to toe the line everyday. Persephone said, “Society breaks one’s spirits as if one were a young horse determined to be free.”

Patricia, a white American of 40 said, “I feel like I am God. I create genius faced sculptures of great beauty. I take my models and make them look cleverer. Some want to get plastic surgery to look like that and pay me a commission for my copyrighted faces. Perhaps you’ve heard of me?” I said, “No, but I’d like to take a look at your faces.” So, she showed us some naked Goddesses and Gods, and we were astounded. Some were classical beauties, others were odd types of beauty. Persephone said, “The faces look so clever! Yes, I think you will be rich and famous very soon.” Patricia said, “It’s a new kind of art, ‘ultra beauty art.’ But to tell you the truth my life force is dissipating. I no longer get such joy from life.” I asked her, “Why not take drugs? Or move to another country for a fresh start?” She said, “I think I need a really good lover and need to be lost in love for a while.” So, we set her up with Arthur (see above). And she told us, “I am feeling better now!”

Bert, a black itinerant worker of 27, told us, “The US is a nice country, but everyone is so greedy. Greedy for expensive possessions, greed for love, greed for money itself.” I said, “Of course it is the land of the greedy. Most of the World’s greediest people come here. The economy features things like planned obsolescence, inflation, printing more money and just plain

materialism, all conducive to greed.” He said, “I don’t know about that, but I know I’d like to marry an old-fashioned girl who is not so selfish and greedy and have a family here in the US. But it is hard to find such a girl and I worry I’ll be deported for overstaying my visa. I wouldn’t want to go back to Nigeria. Everyday I fear deportation.” Persephone said, “Keep working hard and impress your boss who can get you a visa and have a child here in the States to make it difficult to deport you!”

Ida, a white American of 34, told us, “I am a lesbian and proud of it. But recently I have tried a test tube baby with the Sperm Bank. But I can’t get pregnant. If I don’t get pregnant soon, I’ll be on the brink of despair.” Persephone said, “Some women are just not fertile, and nothing can be done about it. You can always adopt.” I said, “Babies are not endangered. Many of your relatives will have children to keep the family line going.”

Jonathan, an Arab itinerant worker of 35 said “He was glad to come to America, but couldn’t get his family in Syria, visas.” I said, “Well you can video chat with them everyday if you like.” He said, “But I missed my wife. I send her money, but I feel miserable and hopeless in America. My job is now in sales, instead of picking fruit, but I live in a hovel and can’t send much money back home.” And he said, “I am suicidal.” Persephone said, “Your family needs you and you will probably get your wife over soon. Hang in there!”

Carol, an aboriginal American of 31, said to us, “I left my reserve at 18 and have never looked back, until now, now I am divorced and have 2 kids and no job and am thinking of moving back to the reserve.” I said, “You need to go back to school, not the reserve.” She said,

“I’m a little nervous about going back to school, I am a little old and I worry I won’t be able to pay back my student loans. But I’d like to be a lawyer and fight for indigenous people.”

Persephone said, “Follow your dreams.”

Martin a Hispanic American of 26, said to us, “I was an action movie director who had worked on several films as assistant director and figured my career in films looked bright. But I’d just broken up with my true love and was despondent.” I said, “Best to love any girl who’ll have you for the moment to help you forget!” Persephone said, “Life goes up and down, maybe your next lover will be better than the last. You are only 26, and don’t realize what great women are out there.” And we watched his films, but neither of us cared for them, they were just fodder for the masses.”

Julie, a white American of 35 said to us, “I am a stunt girl in movies; I played in a few hit films recently but want to be a full-fledged actor. But it is hard. People tell me I look like Elizabeth Taylor, but success eludes me. So, I have taken to heavy drinking.” I said, “Go to more Hollywood parties and build up connections.” Persephone said, “Don’t give up on your dreams for anything. But if you find success, it might not turn out to be such a good thing after all. Many stars get into drugs and die of overdoses or drink themselves to death.”

Alistair, a British tourist of 40, told us, “Scotland has broken away from the UK, and I think that is a good thing. In the next decade many countries will break up into pieces and there will be more city states. The smaller the country, the better. But I tried to get into Scottish politics and failed miserably. I wanted to attract EU business now that Scotland was only the second country

to speak English in the EU, and that went over well. But I also wanted everyone in Scotland to have a post secondary school education and tax the rich and become a socialist paradise. But the Labor party voters didn't like me and voted in another candidate. I am dejected. Perhaps you've heard about it." I told him, "In politics, often the defeated, later win." Persephone added, "I think the World should be joining together not splitting up into nationalist pieces. It is time for the global village now!" Alistair said, "By splitting into pieces, we can get rid of provincial/state governments and just have a city state government or a national government of city states. And I am all for a stronger UN."

Keith, a Ukrainian American of 55, said to us, "I think American power has done wonders for democracy. Many states are finally turning to democratic government. Democratic governments are the most successful." I said, "City states like in ancient Greece, are best!" He said, "But city states are defenceless against large nation states." I said, "A city of 3 million could conscript more than a million fighters and be allied with other city states. It would be best if all states were just city states. It is a more manageable government." Persephone said, "I prefer panarchism in which everyone could choose their own preferred type of government." I said, "Panarchy would be chaos." Keith said, "But democracy has proven it works well, certainly better than dictatorship. Most of the World's history has involved tyrants ruling and keeping the population from realizing their potential." I said, "But the Renaissance, the rebirth of Greek traditions happened in city states, and this set the stage for the modern World. Persephone said, "Democracy is OK with me, but I wish there were more parties in the US. Most people are not conservative or liberal per se. They don't fit neatly into the dual categories of modern US politics." Keith said, "But my family back in Ukraine chaff at Russian yolk there. I send them

money, all I can spare, but they are miserable, and this makes me unhappy too. But there's nothing I can do about it."

CHAPTER 15

Lulu, a white American of 45 said, "The birth rate is dropping, and in a few decades, all Americans will choose not to have children. Selfish but true!" I said, "The declining birth rate is obviously a problem in countries like Japan. In America we keep bringing in the breeders but in say 50 years few will have children, just like you say!" Persephone said, "Governments must encourage children with large cash incentives, free daycare, private boarding schools and such." Lulu replied, "Modern people are selfish and greedy, that is the problem." I said, "People all want to be free, and have many love partners and are busy working with no time for children. All women for example now have careers. It is only the poor who want children, and future poor people will realize they can't afford kids." Persephone said, "It will take leadership from the top to stop the trend towards no kids. If they don't have vision, we'll all be miserable." Lulu said, "I tried to have kids but couldn't and feel so despondent and worthless as a result."

Morty, a white American of 60 said, “I am in the restaurant business and allow underage drinking all the time. Being around tasty food all the time, has made me obese and I suppose I will die soon. I am miserable.” Persephone said, “You should be ashamed to be so fat. There are so many obese Americans these days, it astounds me.” I said, “The people are indolent and greedy for food and drink. In past generations food was not so abundant and people had to walk everywhere. Now it’s as if the living system is breaking down.” Morty said, “But I take Viagra and diabetes medication and seem to be healthy.” Persephone said, “It is a twisted reality this life we live in. We keep patching ourselves up with medication and treatment and live on to unheard of ages.” I said, “What gets me is the opiates so many people are prescribed to make a type of ordinary pleasant feeling despite everything.”

Sven, a white American of 56, said, “My lover torments me by seeing other men and demanding sex all the time. She is a nymphomaniac. But I do love her.” Persephone said, “It’s obvious, you need to find another girl.” He said, “I’ve tried but can’t find another woman I love.” I asked, “Why do you love her?” He said, “She is the cleverest woman I have ever met, and the loving is great. Every day we have interesting conversations.” I said, “You are truly a love fool, but there are many who are like you. Lost.” Persephone said, “I still think you can find a better woman. Try harder!”

Kylie, a Hispanic American of 28, told us, “I think love is just a game. Some win and some lose. Some get lucky for a while and then lose their luck. Some are born lucky; others never have luck.” I said, “I suppose, life is but a game and we are all players. But some cheat and others lie, the unsavory characters often find success. It is important to be lucky and one’s luck builds brick

upon brick into something amazing.” I said, “I was born lucky in a good family, but had no luck having children, but was really lucky to meet Persephone.” Persephone said, “We were destined to meet each other, let’s put it that way.” Kylie said, “I was born gorgeous and have had an easy ride in life, too easy in fact, it stunted my ambition. So, I never wear make-up and seldom dress up, I am gorgeous enough.” I asked, “I wonder what it is like to be desired by everyone?”

Georgia, a white American of 79, said, “All I know is the World is changing and AI is taking over and who knows if it will be benevolent or malign. We have to trust scientists to do the right thing. We’ll have functioning AI in 10-20 years. And some time ago they could beat us at chess and ‘Jeopardy.’ And now can win at any game and have now functional love dolls. And perhaps they will create ‘monsters’ like ‘Frankenstein.’ Or ‘Jekyll and Hyde.’” I said, “AI will completely change society freeing people from work and producing deep entertainment, and improved food and drink and drugs and will find perfect lovers for the people.” Persephone said, “AI will take control of the government and unsavory characters will attempt to manipulate the AI government for their own gain and power.” Georgia said, “It sounds like a nightmare, I am glad I won’t be there to see it. I only hope my children will not be redundant and useless. But I am afraid for them and wish I was able to give them more money before I die.”

Tristram, an Indian American of 60 said to us, “India is proving to be skilled in computer science, especially based in Bangalore.” I said, “India is growing fast now but still have a long way to go. Bollywood films are moronic, just foolish dancing and singing. And the widespread poverty has to be overcome.” Persephone said, “People bathing in the Ganges which is basically an open sewer is beyond the pale. My cousin contracted nasty bacteria which caused his spleen

to be removed after visiting India and he has never been the same.” Tristram said, “For sure India will one day clean up the pollution and food supply and become a great civilization. I tried to help by getting involve in politics but couldn’t get elected, so I came to America to be happier. I spend a lot of time in charitable works but there’s only so much one person can do.”

Carling, a Chinese American of 25, said, “I was born in America, so one day could run for President. I want to change America. Like bolster the UN armies with American troops and put an end to war. And find at least one lover for everyone, guaranteed by the State. And speed up the development of Superhumans, who will have a strong imagination and basically be cyborgs. And wipe out poverty in America. And so on.” I said, “Your ideas are sound, but perhaps a bit ahead of our time. But what we need in D.C. is vision for the future and I think you can get elected.” Persephone added, “We need a woman’s hand to guide us into the future peacefully. Men are too violent, and in many countries, tyrannical.” She said, “I wanted to form the ‘Peace party.’” I said, “But mind how you go, if you displease the spies, they might shut you down.” Carling said, “America is a free country and if the spies try and interfere with me, I’ll broadcast it to the World.” And she said, “You two should have done the same.” Persephone said, “You can’t fuck with the powers that be!”

Lance, a white American of 39 said to us, “I am one of the smartest of humans. And I know cars and I predict automatic driving air cars are just around the corner. With supercharged batteries from renewable/nuclear sources. Because they are automatic there won’t be any more car crashes. Also, I think drugs will be automatically scanned for potency and one will not be able to overdose. And no one will die young. And everyone will have an anti-suicide app which

will prevent them from killing themselves. It is plain for me to see!" I said, "Your visions are strong!" Persephone said, "Your visions are inspirational, you should write books!" He said, I am a philosopher but like Jesus and the Buddha I haven't written anything down."

Roberto, a Hispanic American of 75, said, "In my life I've seen war and peace. But it is best to forget the past, I think, and move on towards a progressive future. I think living in America for most approaches Utopia, and few people want to leave the US. And the future looks brighter and brighter with no work to do, pleasant drugs to take and a loving society spurred on by the cure of all sex diseases and no more poverty one day. And many people will be mobile and live in air cars and party all the time at air car hubs." I said, "But for many the future will be dog eat dog and many will be relatively poor. America will continue to be a bastion of capitalism and there will be winners and losers." Persephone said, "America will continue to accept the cream of the crop of other nations' peoples. But the poor will still exist, and few will care about them. You, Roberto are a hopeless dreamer whose ideas are not popular in America.

Darby, a white/Japanese American of 55 said to us, I am just a drunken waster, a man who has no use." I said, "But you enjoy drinking and parties, right?" He said, "Some people consider me to be the life of the party, but without alcohol I would die." Persephone added, "There are worse things than living for parties and fun. Perhaps you brighten the day for some girls you like?" Darby said, "Women come and go, I don't fall in love with them or anything. A few of them are psycho and hard to get rid of. But I don't worry about women." Persephone replied, "We live in a society in which the blind are leading the blind. And you, Darby, are oblivious to Reality."

Israel, a white American of 50 said, "I was inaptly named by my parents who were Christian. Many people think I am a Jew and/or religious. But I hate religion of all kinds. And want to live for the day and leave the past behind in the dust. I go from one ecstasy to the next with women and drugs. I am fully satisfied with my life, but just live for pleasure. I am superfluous."

Persephone said, "I suppose at the heart of it, we all live just for pleasure. We are a race of hedonists. And we are just like the animals." I said, "But one can find pleasure in intellectual discussions and the use of imagination, like art." Israel said, "I like art too. But live for sex. I am a rich car dealer and can afford the best women and drugs."

Yaroslav, a white American of 38 said, "I am a movie critic and love movies. It is a perfect job to just watch movies and talk about them. I typically work in a group of 4 and we share our impressions on our TV show. Some like our controversial opinions; we seldom agree on the use/value of the movies we watch. I personally am sick of action films, but one of our group goes crazy about action movies. I figure we are performing a valuable service to the World community and help them decide how to spend their free time." I said, "Movie critics like most movies and are not very intellectual." Yaroslav retorted, "Most movies we don't like and spend no time discussing them. We are really quite intellectual." Persephone opined, "We live in a World of entertainment and people who help us choose what entertainment we pick are somewhat useful." Yaroslav told us, "I think I am useful anyways, but some think I am just a parasite."

Louis, a black American of 45 said to us, "I've led a charmed life. I was born rich and made some good investments and now am a gentleman of leisure. I just sit back and enjoy life." I said, "You are just a waster, a parasite." He said, "Call me names if you will, but I am enjoying life to the full. I am a man in full." Persephone said, "Sometimes I wish I was a woman of leisure, and some say I already am. But my fate is to be a philosopher of the modern age." I added, "I feel the same, there's no end to modern ideas and we get to interview some of the best idealists among others." Louis said, "We live in a free country, you can do anything you want. If it brings you happiness, I say bring it on."

Rex, a white American of 42, said, "I believe in the Bible, but have no specific Church I attend." I said, "There is some wisdom in the Bible for sure, but in this modern era there are better books to read like classic science fiction of the 1950's and 1960's." He said, "There's no point in dwelling on the future. What comes will come and there's nothing we can do about it. Best to concentrate on the now." I said, "But the Bible is a relic of the past, and aren't you dwelling on that?" Persephone said, "Rex, you are a dinosaur and are redundant. You don't belong in the modern World." He retorted, "You two are the dinosaurs, lost in two-bit philosophy, and of no use to anyone." Persephone said, "We have given a lot of people good advice, and are trying to live in the now," I said, "Rex, you are more useless than us."

Jeremy, a white American of 40, told us, "I am into meditation and seek Nirvana." I asked, "Of what use is your Nirvana to us? He said, "Each person has to look after themselves as they see fit." Persephone said, "You are just greedy for bliss, like an alcoholic, only an alcoholic shares their bliss with others. Or you are like a heroin addict." He said, "I have approached

Nirvana and it is a wonderful thing. Let the outside World look after itself. I can't change the World anyways."

Ernie, a Chinese American of 39 said to us, "I am a mathematician/ meteorologist and am trying to create a model for telling us the weather forecast for a whole year. Previously meteorologists didn't include all the ocean currents and different air masses going up miles into the sky. I think, it is a perfect job for computers. And the next step is to alter the climate for the better." I said, "Ernie it would be lovely if you could do it, it seems like a Utopian dream!" He said, "Utopia is coming to our World. Soon. And all human behavior will be predicted." Persephone said, "Good dreams like that stick with one and stay with one for your entire life."

Lewis, an Indian American of 50, said, "I'd like to travel the World and try to find a better place to stay, but some countries don't like Indians. And India itself is backwards sexually and most don't drink there. Simply put, there's no bliss there." I said, "The ideal would be you help at charities in various countries and get to know all the people and get their warm thanks for helping them out." He said, "You make me feel like I am ashamed, but I don't want to go to any poor countries. Let them look after themselves and choose good leaders. I just want to get my kicks and enjoy what little life I have left." I said, "You are selfish." Persephone said, "Why don't you go into politics in India and change the country, to help modernize it." He said, "I figure I am too old to enter politics." I told him, "You are never too old, as long as you have your mental faculties."

Tracy, a white American of 22, said to us, “I am going to get a Ph.D. in psychiatry and try and help the numerous mentally ill. Modern life is very stressful, and many people are becoming mad and need a shrink to help them out.” I said, “Doubtless it is a mad World, but don’t you feel people should be tougher and not try and get a shrink to pander to them?” Persephone added, “In a mad World the maddest people control things.” Tracy said, “Of course many of our politicians are power-crazed, but I want to help the less fortunate who are poor and miserable.” I said, “I don’t think shrinks do much good. They are superfluous and their patients are hopeless.” Persephone told her, “Why not major in sociology instead and try and design new culture for all the crazy people. Let them be crazy, I say.”

Jacob, a Hispanic American of 50, said to us, “My girlfriend keeps saying I am useless and a fool. She’s hard to get along with, but I love her all the same.” Persephone said, “It seems like your woman doesn’t respect you. I’d dump her if I was you.” I said, “But maybe Jacob, your woman just wants you to try and be better. Do things to impress her like going back to school.” He said, “She earns more money than I do, so maybe she wouldn’t mind if I went back to my studies.” I said, “And be romantic and try harder to satisfy her more sexually.” Jacob said, “But I believe her when she says I am useless. I have got a good brain, but don’t know what to do with it.”

Marcia, a white American of 36, I am a golf pro, but haven’t won anything special and I am nearing the end of my career on the tour. And suppose I will go back to being the pro at one of our local courses. It is an easy life and keeps me in good shape. And I feel we golfers provide good entertainment for the people.” I asked, “Is that the meaning of life to entertain others?” She

said, "Some people do far worse." Persephone said, "I feel that golf is boring, especially to watch it on TV." Marcia said, "In the future sports will be more popular than ever as many people will have more free time. And video game sports will become a big thing to. Humans are by nature competitive. And there will be betting on sports and video sports, and the odds will not be devised to profit the odds makers, so there will be as many winners as losers. Many will be gentleman and ladies of pure leisure." I said, "That sounds very plausible." Persephone said, "Life is a gamble and let the best gamblers win!"

Mary Beth, a white American of 59 said, "I am frustrated trying to get elected mayor of L.A. I have run four times and, last time, lost by only 2,000 votes. I'd like to increase public transit dramatically in this city where everyone drives. And I'd like to encourage investors to build high skyscrapers to make L.A. more modern and build up the downtown. And I'd like to support independent film makers with grants and subsidies. And so on. I have just recently built a brewery in L.A., and I am an outstanding citizen who does a lot of charity work." I said, "I understand your frustration. Just come up with more ideas and you'll be elected." She said, "Maybe it would be better if I had less ideas!" Persephone said, "To eliminate homelessness in L.A. would also be good. And convince some stars to run for council/senate/congress/governor!" Mary Beth said, "I've already put such ideas on my platform. I am thinking next election will be my final try."

Amanda, a white American of 55 said, "I want to hypnotize both of you!" I said, "I know what hypnosis can do, we don't want to be beholden to you, sexy as you are." She said, "I just want to help you to be useful and no longer superfluous." Persephone said, "Oh, we are destined

to be superfluous, that is clear.” Amanda said, “I figure I have use as a hypnotherapist. I have reprogrammed thousands of people to be more useful, at least to themselves.” I said, “Hypnosis is like an altered state when used judiciously, but I wouldn’t trust any hypnotherapist.” Amanda said, “Maybe you are hiding something!” I said, “I have nothing to hide I just don’t want to be programmed like a computer. She said, “All this hypnosis I have done has made me feel useful, but my boyfriend told me I am wasting my time with losers. But I talked to him in his sleep and told him to love me more.” I said, “See you are power-crazed and insane. You are a danger to society!”

CHAPTER 16

Barry, a Chinese American of 29 said, “I have never experienced anything quite like Space. I wanted to go up to at least experience weightlessness as an astronaut but was rejected by NASA. I’ve read all the classic science fiction of the 1950’s and 1960’s and am wondering when private companies will finally settle the Moon and Mars. There are numerous people who would be prepared to spend 10’s of millions of dollars or more for a chance to colonize Space.”

Persephone said, “Before we colonize Space, we should solve our health problems here on Earth. And so guarantee Utopia that lasts. Eternal youth would mean we could easily go on long space

voyages with no worries. And teleportation will eventually become a reality. Space is likely full of surprises and will engage humans in many types of Worlds, maybe even encounter aliens.” I asked, “If people are willing to pay, why hasn’t it happened yet?” Barry said, “I don’t know, it’s a conundrum! But as it is I figure I am superfluous.”

Vincent, a white American of 47, said to us, “I figure China is the future for opportunity. And I have learned Chinese and live there now. So far, I have made a fortune with a trading company, importing oil, metals and wood and exporting manufactured cheap goods. I am very rich and live like a King in Shanghai.” I asked, “But surely there are limits to what your money can buy?” He said, I have so many lovers I can’t manage them all and have the best drugs and friends one could ever wish for.” Persephone asked him, “Don’t you ever feel useless?” He replied, “I feel very useful to the Chinese people, more useful than I ever did in America!” I said, “You’ve done very well. Congratulations! But surely there is more to life than pure wealth?”

Mary Liz, an Australian Chinese, of 27, said, “All it will take is for the next Chinese leader to proclaim a democracy and that would break the back of all World dictatorships. Hong Kong shows that the Chinese people are ready for democracy despite being ruled by tyrants from time immemorial.” I said, “If not many of the best Chinese will continue the brain drain and go abroad to democratic countries and China will be unable to keep up.” She said, “Even if China retains ½ of its best minds, that would be more than America. And now many Chinese are coming back to China after being educated abroad as that is where the opportunity lies.” Persephone opined, “The future is in high tech, which will be dominated by American entrepreneurs, you’ll see! And anyways the idea of nation States is becoming less important as

the World becomes a global village. I added, "But as for you Mary Liz, keep working in useful high tech and your World will turn! But don't be surprised if you encounter a glass ceiling and are unable to be a true power player."

Scott, a black American, of 30, said to us, "I work as a computer scientist at a not so well-known, upcoming firm. But I constantly wonder about my future. I kind of feel lost as to figure out the future of computers. So much can happen, our future hangs in the balance. And not enough people are thinking about it. They just say, 'Bring it on!'" I said, "It is likely that the future will be a surprise to all, not thought about by the best science fiction authors. In any case the best science fiction authors can't get published with a major publisher, in my view."

Persephone said, "Computers are getting too complex, and hackers are starting to have a field day with varying companies whom they hold hostage. It looks like Armageddon to me!"

Nehru, a tourist from India, a man of 34, said, "I can't wait for the future to happen. I feel useless now, but the future will belong to the clever and be a technocracy. I have a Ph.D. in computer science and am thinking of working in America." I asked, "Why don't you?"

Persephone said, "America is not perfect, but it is better than living in India." He said, "But I want to marry an Indian woman; white American girls are so bossy and controlling. A lot of them seem psycho to me." I said, "Modern love is insane, and the craziest prosper and the so-called 'sane' are left behind in the dust. If you marry an Indian in America, you will have a rough ride, harder than you expect." He said, "I am trying to be a good citizen, but even in America, land of plenty, it is a struggle to survive." Persephone said, "Luck favors the mad!"

Ashley, a white American, of 33, said, "Soon Mind Reading Technology (MRT) will come along, and it will make for a more understanding, loving World, and crime will plummet. People will take care of one another." I said, "But perhaps some would be driven insane, and all their secrets will be revealed." Ashley said, "We can take it slow step by step and train lots of psychiatrists." Persephone said, "The World is crazy enough, why make it crazier...?" Ashley said, "Perhaps we could start with the elite..." I said, "But it will give the powers that be too much control." She said, "We can install checks and balances and it would be like a fresh start for humanity. No more deception, no more lies." I said, "It is hard to say whether or not it would be a useful, good thing." And Persephone asked her, "Do you write science fiction?" She replied, "I am more of a futuristic philosopher." I asked, "What other ideas do you have?" She said, "I believe eternal youth will also come soon and together with MRT will create a great Utopia." And everyone will find MRT love Online and will form strong bonds. And new kindred spirits will meet. And people will be freed from having to work and will pursue many hobbies and social activities. It will be endless parties. And so on and so forth." I asked, "Do you really think no work and mind love will make people useful?" Ashley said, "In a Utopia, everyone will be useful to one another. But at present I feel superfluous."

Amber, an Arab American, of 29 said to us, "She left the Muslim religion and now had a great love life, but her life seemed empty without Allah." I said, "Most people would admit deep down that they are empty and superfluous and have nothing useful to do. But still we carry on, waiting for death." She said, "You are a cynic, who laughs at human endeavor. I don't think I want to talk to you anymore." Persephone said, "Great intellectuals tell people what they don't want to hear."

Wanda, a white American of 22, said to us, “I don’t know what to do with my life. People tell me the World is my oyster, but I am lost. I got a degree in creative writing but have no idea what to write and when I try to write I get stuck in the same loop and can’t add to the paltry amount I have written. I feel I am a good person and have much to say, I just can’t get it to come out.”

Persephone said, “Writing is a craft, and it can take years to perfect. Just think of an idea, such as ‘air cars,’ and write down all you can about them and form characters with their own philosophies. And there you will have a story.” I said, “I had writer’s block when I started to write but I kept forcing myself to sit in the computer chair and write, whatever came to mind. Perhaps you will make a good writer, but perhaps you will feel useless, superfluous even, in the end. But take the tiger by the tail and try your best.”

Jim, a black American of 45 said, “I was interested in altered states. I tried sitting in cold water in the dark, I tried LSD and I tried meditation and I tried hypnotizing girlfriends to love me more. All these methods had some merit. And gave me understanding of Shamanism and interconnectedness with nature. But that was the past and now I am ready for the future. My problem is I can make futuristic music but can’t write good lyrics. So, I make instrumental new age music, like Tangerine Dream. Many people tell me it makes them feel good and inspired, but I realize I am not enhancing anyone’s philosophy or anything like that. I am just another entertainer.” I said, “Why don’t you get someone to write lyrics and find a woman to sing.” Jim said, “I don’t work so well in collaborations. But I suppose I could try harder to make it work.”

Persephone said, “Life is but a dream!”

Adam, a white American of 60 said, "I grew up watching "Adam-12," and since then I always wanted to be a police officer. I am now a retired detective and am making a movie about my life. I was a cop right here in NYC and had an exciting career. But looking back I wish I'd been a writer instead of a cop." I replied saying, "But you are making a movie that will entertain people and have some use." He answered, saying, "But I am divorced twice and my only child, I don't think was mine. And he said, "My lack of children gnaws at me. And I think as a detective I just followed the evidence; any other reasonably clever person would have done just as good a job. Persephone said, "Just like Tom and I say, everyone is superfluous."

Billy, a white American of 60 said, "I am at least important to my family, or so they say. But feel if I wasn't there, they'd get along fine without me. My job is in the diamond trade, and I live high. My wife is a lawyer and as for my two sons, one is a successful lawyer and the other a junkie. My wife and I have tried our best with our addict son, but it seems there is nothing we can do. And my lawyer son defends evil criminals in his work of which I don't approve. And although she denies it, I think my wife is having an affair. Now synthetic diamonds are 45% cheaper than real ones and I am being squeezed out of the industry. If I retire now, I'll have nothing to do all day and will be totally useless." I asked, "Why don't you pick up some hobbies?" He said, "I read a lot and do jigsaws and crosswords. But to me I am just killing time. But I don't know what else I can do?" Persephone said, "Maybe you should get rid of your wife who doesn't seem to love you and find a younger girl and change careers to be an art dealer or something. There must be something useful you can do!" He said, "I don't know enough about art to be a dealer, but I've often thought I could sell the jewellery of poor artists as original art to

the rich thereby helping deserving artists as well as myself.” I said, “Do whatever useful thing that makes you happy.”

Jade, a Chinese American of 31, told us, “I want to marry a useful man, one who is a good lover and a good breadwinner. I am a nurse now, but I’d rather not work. Many men think nurses are kind and would like to marry me, but somehow I haven’t found the right chemistry yet.” Persephone said, “You sound lazy to me. Few men these days want to marry a woman who doesn’t work. Jade said, “But many men tell me I am a delight and an inspiration (I am quite witty). Basically, I just want to be rich.” I said, “If you have no work to do, you will be bored and useless.” She said, “No one is useful, we are all parasites of one kind or another. And I could have affairs while married to help pass the time.”

Deirdre, a white Dutch woman of 67, said, “I never stop feeling astounded at this World. I am astounded by how NYC can have so many in abject poverty and so many filthy rich. And I am astounded by how lovers can be so cruel to one another. I spend my time as a psychiatrist, talking with people who feel useless and maladjusted to modern life. I conclude the hardest thing to do is be useful to many and get into politics!” Persephone told her, “If you want real change politics is not for you. The powers that be won’t stand for it. Best that we all try to do our part and help one another.” She said, “Sure if you want to change things they’ll shoot you, you have to tread carefully.” I added, “But it seems to me that things are improving. Economically, charity, the poverty line and so on. But literature is on the decline despite so many people writing it. And the same goes for music. I guess we don’t live in a very inspired time and Covid was depressing for the last few years. It’s not like the late 60’s.”

Belinda, a white American of 44, said to us, "I am a computer engineer. I spend my days trying to stop hackers of whom there are so many. We live in an era in which white collar crime is increasing dramatically. And it only takes one hacker to ruin a whole system." I said, "People like you keep the World growing and progressing." She replied, "It's good to be valued and useful." I asked, "But don't you sometimes think your job is repetitive and boring?" Belinda said, "I regard each hacker as a challenge and enjoy defeating them." Persephone said, "It's just like the age-old battle between good and evil. Only sometimes the big companies are evil, and the hackers are like angels." Belinda said, "Of course some corporations are ruled by immoral people, but greed is good, and if they are too greedy it is good for the corporation and shareholders benefit." I said, "We don't live in a moral World, and I guess we never have. With great wars and abject poverty and rule of the ruthless." Persephone opined, "One day, the Earth will have kind, charitable rulers and the people will live in various Utopias."

Ella, a Hispanic American of 30 told us, "I am a honky cat and love rural life. I have a few horses and live on my parents' ranch. I am looking to marry a cowboy and go to many rodeos and meet a lot of them." I said, "Rural living is impossibly backwards and boring." Persephone said, "I think I'd like to try living in the countryside if I found the right man!" I said, "I thought I was your Mr. Right?" Persephone said, "If you suddenly disappeared from the scene, I would consider it." Ella said, "Cowboys are strong and wild, and I like to drink with them. I can hold my liquor." Persephone said, "Living in NYC is too stressful for me!" I said, "I thought you enjoyed the nightlife and all the interesting people we are meeting?" She said, "As a writer I could make up interesting characters and entertain people and live in the fresh air and quietude."

I said, "I'm disappointed." And that was the beginning of the end for Persephone and I as a couple. And we ceased interviewing superfluous people and went our own separate ways.

ADDENDUM

When it comes right down to it, dear reader, we are all wasters. We are all useless but tell ourselves that we really matter. It is a mind fuck to live in this World. And most of us die unhappy and discontented and yet want to go on living. We are like machines that want to live for no reason, we are programmed to want to live. With hypnosis one can change the program, but inevitably the result is a superfluous individual. Humans went from animals of instinct to creatures that are too clever to live. Probably the best of us, die young.

