

## Chapter 25

Chapin, Skeet and Brian had spent their first relaxed day since they had come to Ireland. They had no pub owners to cross examine, no phone books to peruse and no hikes to take looking for Stan. They had all slept in, had wonderful meals, gone shopping and, in the case of Chapin and Skeet, engaged in some particularly naughty activities for a good part of the afternoon.

Chapin walked in the door of the White Lotus Center at eight p.m. with Skeet and Brian. The relaxation of the day gave way to a tension of not really knowing what was going to happen. Chapin detected the distinct smell of incense as she entered. The distinct sandalwood odor relaxed her just a touch.

She had wanted to dress up for the evening since it seemed like it deserved the respect of some formal attire, but Skeet reminded her that trying to sit on a cushion on the floor in a little black dress may be more disrespectful than just wearing jeans. She decided he was right and had simply worn jeans with a black shirt. She had to go shopping for a shirt for Brian as she felt the Pink Floyd t-shirt he had planned to wear wasn't quite appropriate.

They were greeted by Loden Jinpa when they entered. He offered them a seat and made them tea.

“Rinpoche has been in retreat all day. I haven't seen him at all,” he said. “Have any of you heard from Holly?”

“No, not a word. I really hope she shows up,” Chapin said. “I mean, what do we do if she doesn't?”

“In all honesty, Rinpoche can do this without her, or any of us for that matter. It's just easier this way,” Loden Jinpa said, sipping his tea.

Chapin stared at him blankly. “What do you mean? Then why are we here?”

“Rinpoche can easily help Stan move forward. The reason you and hopefully Holly are here, is to help YOU move forward.”

The front door opened and Holly appeared. As she walked toward them, they all stood up.

“Rinpoche will be so glad you have come,” Loden Jinpa said.

“I wasn't sure you were going to make it,” Brian said. “I know this must be very difficult for you.”

Holly flashed half a smile. “I wasn't sure I was going to come. But I thought about what you said Brian, and you're right. I love him enough to want to help him, no matter how much it hurts.”

“Stan was a lucky man to have met you,” Skeet said, choking back a tear.

Rinpoche appeared with Loden Jinpa. No one saw him enter, he just seemed to have materialized. He instructed everyone to take a seat and began to explain some basics of what would occur.

“When we are performing the ceremony, you must attempt to maintain your composure. Stan will know what is happening and if any of you are not composed, his moving on will be more difficult for him. “

“As I have said, his inability to move on is based on a lack of focus or misunderstanding of what is happening. Now, did you each bring the pictures I asked for?” Everyone nodded.

“Good, please give them to me now,” he said. They all handed him pictures of Stan.

“This could be a bit more difficult than normal, I just want to warn you. This ceremony is usually done 45 days after the death, but it has been over 90 now, so Stan’s consciousness has probably become quite used to the place he is in at the moment. Convincing him to move on may prove to be a challenge.”

Rinpoche invited everyone into the main shrine room where he lit more incense. He took a seat and invited everyone else to do the same. Rinpoche sat on a raised yellow cushion with a small wooden table in front of him. On the table was a metal bowl filled with sand, a oddly shaped stack of neatly prepared papers that resembled really wide note cards and a small bic lighter. To his right sat a beautiful, large, metal bowl perched on a brocade pillow with a wooden mallet leaning against the inside.

“Rinpoche says it would be best if we meditate first.” Rinpoche picked up the rubber covered wooden mallet and gently struck the edge of the bowl three times. Chapin was amazed at how soothing the sound was. When the sustain from the bowl had all but subsided, Rinpoche returned the mallet, deadened the slight remaining ringing in the bowl and placed his hands gently on his thighs and just sat.

Brian was quite uncomfortable with the whole meditation thing. He might be able to buy the reincarnation thing, the stuck between this life and the next thing and the needing to let go thing. But the sitting cross legged on the floor thing was almost more than he could stand. His body wasn’t built for it and his mind wasn’t prepared for it, but he did his best to at least sit quietly.

Rinpoche sat immobile for almost 20 minutes, then slowly his hand rose, grasped the mallet again and struck the bowl. He let it ring until it had almost stopped naturally, then, again, replaced the mallet. Loden Jinpa began to translate as he talked.

“I would like each of you to tell the story of how you met Stan, please.” He looked at Chapin.

Chapin’s face became flush. “I... uh.... Never met Stan. I’m sorry.” She hung her head.

“That’s fine.” Rinpoche said in a consoling manner through Loden Jinpa. “There is nothing to be upset about.”

She took his cue, righted herself and put her game face back on.

Rinpoche motioned to Skeet. He cleared his throat and swallowed hard. It was going to be difficult to tell his story without losing it, but he was going to give it a shot.

“I met Stan when I was living in an orphanage in Mississippi. I snuck into a club to see him play one evening and was just blown away. I mean, he was incredible. Luckily I got to sit in with him that night and I was really able to discover what musical chemistry was. We had it in spades and it was something I had never experienced before.” Skeet paused and took a deep breath before continuing. “He asked me to go on the road with him that night and we were together for years.”

“Thank you,” Rinpoche said, then motioned to Brian.

“Well let’s see. When I was a kid, I was friends with Skeet. We grew up in the same area but I was a couple of years older than him and I kinda took care of him, nothing major, I just kinda watched out for him. When he got the gig with Stan, he was nervous and wanted me there with him. I was pretty good with my hands, you know, woodworking and electrical and stuff, so I kinda signed on to keep his basses in good shape, but it was more to keep him outta trouble. That’s where I met Stan. It was getting on the tour bus the first night and Skeet was dragging me along. He asked Skeet who in the hell I was and Skeet told him I was his bass tech. I remember Stan smiled and looked at me and said ‘Cool’ and then invited us to join the rolling poker game that was going on in the back. That’s where we started having poker games every week and we still do to this day.”

“Very good. Thank you,” Rinpoche said and motioned to Holly. She dabbed her eyes with a tissue she was holding and took a deep breath before she began.

“I met him on Kilakee in November, I think it was. I remember it was cold out. I was an avid photographer and my friend Sara and I went to Kilakee to take pictures of the wild life. We were about halfway through our hike when I spotted this man in the distance playing a little acoustic guitar. Just sitting in the middle of nowhere, playing and singing. I wanted to take his picture playing the guitar with the stark background so we walked over and he obliged us. We began talking and before any of us realized, it began to get dark, so we quickly packed up and headed back. About halfway through our hike back, he reached out and gently took my hand. I fell for him right there.”

Chapin wiped away a tear. She had tried to hold her decorum, but hearing Holly’s romantic story reminded her of her own story with Skeet. She couldn’t imagine what she would do if he passed away. She looked at him and thought how grateful she was to be with him and hoping she wouldn’t have to go through what Holly was any time soon.

Suddenly, two metal bowls that had been sitting on the shrine in the front of the room tumbled to the floor with a loud clang. Holly, Chapin, Brian and Skeet jumped. Rinpoche calmed them. Loden Jinpa translated. "It's all right. He's expressing his desire to stay. He still doesn't quite realize he has passed on." Rinpoche began to speak calmly in Tibetan and Loden Jinpa offered no more translation. Two more bowls fell to the floor. Rinpoche slowly closed his eyes and began to chant in a very low, guttural tone. Loden Jinpa sat quietly. A metal bowl that sat across the room that seemed to be a smaller version of the one that Rinpoche had hit with the mallet, began to hum and an incense holder fell from its perch at the front of the room. A bell that had been sitting with the water bowls began to ring spontaneously. Rinpoche continued to chant.

Loden Jinpa picked up the pictures and placed them next to Rinpoche. Rinpoche opened his eyes but continued to chant. He picked up the first picture and the little bic lighter and ceremoniously set the picture on fire. He started the flame at the lower corner and only when the flame was almost nipping at his fingers did he set the burning paper into the bowl of sand in front of him. As the flames rose, the activity in the room seemed to slowly subside. He repeated the same procedure with the remaining five photographs and with each, the room became more and more calm.

Chapin noticed that a very fine mist seemed to appear in the room. She wondered if this was somehow representative of crying, but she kept silent. A wave of peace and calm passed over all of them and Rinpoche picked up the mallet and struck the bowl lightly three more times. He allowed the ringing to almost subside completely before replacing the mallet and deadening what little sound remained. He sat silently for about a minute afterwards.

"We should have some tea now," Rinpoche said suddenly, without any interpretation from Loden Jinpa. He stood up and began to walk away.

"That's it? We're done?" Brian asked.

"Yes, we are done. It's time for tea," Rinpoche said, again without interpretation.

"Umm...ok...tea time then, I guess."

They all stood and began to leave with the exception of Chapin, whose gaze seemed to be affixed to something in the front of the room.

"Come on, Chapin," Skeet said. "It's tea time." She didn't respond. "Chapin?" he said again. She slowly raised her hand and pointed to the front of the room where she had been staring. Skeet followed where she was pointing and drew a slight gasp.

"Rinpoche?" he called. Rinpoche and Loden Jinpa turned around and stood beside them. Like Chapin, Skeet pointed toward the front of the room. Loden Jinpa caught his breath.

"Very auspicious! Very auspicious indeed! It is as I thought! This is wonderful," Rinpoche exclaimed and turned again to leave.

They all continued to stand in silence, finally being broken by Brian. “Am I the only one who sees a double rainbow **INSIDE THE FREAKING ROOM?** How do you get a double rainbow **INSIDE THE FREAKING ROOM?**”