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A DEAD−END BOOK COVER, A LAPIS LAZULI MOMENT, A SACRED SUNRISE

By Rolf Gompertz

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A creative dead end can produce wonders.

That was proved to me once again in a most dramatic way. It involved the cover design of my new book, a provocative biblical novel, titled, "Abraham, The Dreamer / An Erotic and Sacred Love Story."

I had submitted my thoughts for the cover design to the publisher (iUniverse.com). I explained that the story is about a love triangle, involving Abraham, his wife Sarah, and her handmaid, Hagar, "the other woman." I suggested that the cover capture that relationship.

Of course, there's much more to the story, and I filled in the details at some length. After all, this is not a contemporary novel in a contemporary setting. We are talking about life 4000 years ago, with its many gods and goddesses, its child sacrifices and erotic Sacred Marriage Rites. Abraham's wife, Sarah, could very well have been, what I portray her to be, a high priestess serving Inanna, the great goddess of Love and War. We have Abraham, who turned against his society to follow a new and different God. What made him do that, I wondered, as I tried to recreate his life and tell his story. Furthermore, what made him transfer his love from Sarah to Hagar?

I tried to give the designer a sense of the individuals and of the story that lay hidden in the laconic biblical account.

When the cover design came back to me I knew I was in trouble. The artwork suggested a knightly romance set in England during the Middle Ages. But the story is about Sumer, Canaan and Egypt, and nomadic, biblical characters who lived some three thousand years before the Middle Ages. How could the designers have been so far off the mark? I learned, what I had not known before, that the design department was not set up to provide original artwork. The designers could only work with existing stock art and clip art. Though plentiful, this art could not produce the "look" that I was looking for.

I was now faced with two problems. First, a deadline. I had about two weeks to come up with an idea that could be made to work. Otherwise, the book would be canceled and I would have to start with it all over again as a "new" project.

Second, I didn't know if I could come up with a satisfactory, workable cover idea. I considered hiring an outside graphic artist. A quick check indicated that there would not be enough time for this and that it would be costly, if not prohibitive.

So I did what was only proper under such circumstances: I freaked out! Or, to be perfectly honest, I freaked out −− some more! I was desperate. I knew I had to stop thinking about the original cover concept. I had to stop my circular thinking, or, to put it another way, I had to start thinking outside the box. In short, I had to think creatively.

The creative process itself is elusive. It works in a most mysterious way. It usually consists of stating the problem, defining it and turning it over to your mind to think about and solve. I have often found that the answer, the solution comes to me when the mind is relaxed and at rest. Invariably, I wake up at two or three in the morning. At first I'm annoyed. I wonder why I woke up. Then I lie quietly. Presently, I become conscious of some answer or solution to a "problem" floating into view.

The first thought that came this way was "lapis lazuli." I had used lapis lazuli jewelry in the book on several significant occasions. The gold−speckled, deep−blue gemstone was highly prized in those times. In the book, it is presented as a gift to Sarah, the high priestess, during the Sacred Marriage Rite. Elsewhere, I have Abraham giving Hagar a lapis lazuli necklace and matching earrings upon consummating their love. A lapis lazuli−colored scarf also figures meaningfully in the story.

"Yes," I thought to myself. "That's it! That's my cover. A lapis lazuli necklace and earrings and a lapis lazuli scarf. A perfect metaphor for the full story."

I was elated, exhilarated. I loved the simplicity of the idea, the richness of the deep−blue color, the poetic symbolism.

But there was only one problem: I could not locate images of the scarf and jewelry. I even had trouble locating an image of a lapis lazuli gemstone. Though I still had a couple of days left to find the right image, I now feared that my book would be canceled since I had nothing for the cover.

I paced nervously through the house that evening, going back and forth between bedroom and study. I paused before my nature pictures which cover the walls, photographs that I had taken of sunrises and sunsets, lakes and oceans, trees, flowers and clouds. I don't know why I turned to these images −− perhaps to relax me, to comfort me, to inspire me, which they have always done. Suddenly, my eyes fixed on a blazing red sunrise, with a white cloud spiraling into the sky, hovering over a dark lake.

Whenever I looked at that spectacular image, in the past, it always left me awed and breathless. This time, however, the sunrise addressed me in a new way −− its blazing colors spoke to me of erotic passions, its cloud spiraling upwards spoke to me of the sacred and the heavenly, of dreams and

dreamers, the fiery pillar emerging out of the darkness spoke to me of the immanent and transcendent God, the great Mystery, the awesome Mystery, the holy Mystery, the loving Mystery in which we move and live and have our being.

Yes, this was the cover! This was my cover! It had emerged from the wondrous mystery of the creative process. It reminded me, once more, to stay loose, remain flexible and trust that process, that Mystery, in all its creative variations.

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Rolf Gompertz is the author of eight books, including, "Abraham, The Dreamer/An Erotic and Sacred Love Story," a biblical paperback novel about the turbulent relationship between Abraham, his wife, Sarah, and "the other woman," Hagar. It may be browsed and ordered online at www.iUniverse.com, www.amazon.com, from any bookstore or iUniverse's toll free number 1/877/823−9235.Author contact: mailto rolfgompertz@yahoo.com

Making Space for Sacred Space

By Stephanie Yeh

When you read a great inspirational book, prayer, or article, don't you think to yourself, "What a great idea! I should do more daily rituals, prayer, meditation."? It always seems like a great idea, right? We know that sacred practices and sacred space bring peace, harmony, joy, and ease into our lives. Sounds like a great idea!

The problem is that the impulse to add more sacred activity into our lives only lasts for a few moments−then life intrudes and we forget all about it until the next time we read something inspiring. So how can we really make space for sacred space in our lives? Luckily it's not as hard as you think. Check out these simple ways you can expand the sacred in your life:

1) Be Simple and Consistent: Consistency in creating sacred space is much more important than quantity. Choose one sacred practice you will do every day, and do it every day. Even if you just sit and breathe for 3 minutes in silence, you'll feel the benefit of those 3 minutes throughout your day.

2) Clear Out the Clutter: Sacred space means actually having a space where you can be in the sacred. Dedicate one area of your house to the sacred by clearing out all the excess junk, creating an altar or space for sacred objects there, and keeping it fresh with incense, candles, or plants. Keep the area energetically clean with by smudging (get instructions by sending a blank email to

).*

3) Have Great Beginnings or Endings: Putting sacred practice at the beginning or end of your day will make it easier to remember and do. Starting your day with sacred practice will bring you peace and awareness throughout the day. Ending your day with sacred practice will help you rest deeply and beneficially.

4) Take Your Sacred Space Outdoors: There's nothing like nature to bring the sacred into our awareness. If you find it difficult to get out of your daily routine indoors, spend a few moments outdoors each day, greeting the sky and earth. You'll be amazed at how fast you connect to the sacred.

5) Move in Sacredness: For those of us who can't sit still long enough to meditate, walking can also be a way to create the sacred. Walking and praying, or walking and talking with our higher powers can create sacred space around you, plus you can take it with you everywhere you go!

Stephanie Yeh is co−founder of the Esoteric School of Shamanism and Magic (

). Through this online school she helps clients use magical and

shamanic techniques to manifest their desires. She teaches clients to use a variety of soft magic (meditation, angels, animal totems, visualization) and hard magic (energy handling, sonics, spellwork,

and tarot) techniques to improve many aspects of life and work, including career, health, relationships, and prosperity. Stephanie has created several online and video classes in conjunction with the telecourse format the school utilizes in her attempt to make this valuable information accessible to as many people as possible.

Stephanie is deeply committed to the study and experience of prosperity and to helping other people achieve and experience prosperity. Through the study and application of spiritual principles, which she is involved with through the Esoteric School and with the help of a strong 15−year network marketing business, Stephanie and her partner have helped many people achieve their prosperity goals. Through her site, Prosperity Abounds (

), she helps others learn to create

abundant health and wealth with spiritual and practical resources including Super Blue Green Algae from Cell Tech.

Currently Stephanie continues her quest to share information with her latest project, a free teleconference series sponsored by the Esoteric School on a variety of magickal and shamanic topics with guest speakers from different spiritual communities.

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