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“Gia is going to kill you some day,” Mykonos said. We were sitting on the sand, looking at the ocean water rolling in. Mykonos and I had been getting together almost every day for a number of years now, and he had decided I needed to learn to surf. He was teaching me to boogie board, which is done lying down on a small body board rather than standing up on a regular sized surfboard.

“What?” I asked.

“Gia is going to kill you unless she leaves you alone. She loves you so much, you are going to burn up.”

Lately, my nose had been bleeding, especially while teaching the workshops on sexuality and spirituality that Mykonos had encouraged me to teach. I would sometimes get a high fever that lasted for several days, with no other symptoms. I went to see several doctors and specialists, but they couldn’t find anything wrong with me. Mykonos suggested I had a condition that he called, “Shakti fever.” He seemed to think the internal heat was part of a spiritual process. He also thought that Gia—who was a

“hot” woman, full of fiery passion and urgent love—might be adding to the heat.

“I know you love her, and she loves you. But this isn’t about love, its about a pattern you might not be able to see,” Mykonos said. “Come on, let’s get in the water.”

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We walked down the beach to the ocean’s edge, lay on our boards in the water, and paddled out beyond where the waves were breaking. Rising up and sinking down with each ocean swell, we relaxed on our boards in silence.

“The water is consciousness,” Mykonos said. “Feel it. Everywhere. Hmmm?”

Although we were floating on the ocean, the “water” Mykonos was talking about was obvious. It was as if we were floating, or suspended in, and even made of, *infinite* water, a fullness that felt love-thick yet open. We relaxed without speaking for more than an hour. Then I started to get nervous.

“Well, my friend, are you ready to let go of your relationship with Gia and move on? Are you ready to trust the open water?”

As Mykonos asked his question, my belly and chest tightened. I was stunned, and I immediately felt unwilling to let go of Gia. We were tied together tightly. She and I shared everything. We had been through so much together for more than a decade that I couldn’t imagine living without her. We spent plenty of time apart, teaching, traveling, studying with our teachers, but we always knew we would soon come back together, our relationship renewed. She understood me better than anyone, and she trusted me, as I did her, implicitly.

“Do you really think we should move on?” I asked, feeling somewhat disingenuous—I could already feel what Mykonos was getting at.

“Nothing is permanent,” Mykonos said. “Let her go, and see if she comes back. You two have been together for a long time. Your love is deep and real, deeper than most people will ever experience in their lives. But you are also identified with each other as a couple. The Peepster,”— Mykonos often called Gia the “Peepster” for some reason—“she is identified with being your partner. She wants to be known as yours. It’s important to her. And she idealizes your relationship. She doesn’t understand that what she wants from you, no man could give her.”

We bobbed up and down on the swells as I felt into what Mykonos was saying, knowing that he had hit upon one of my tightest knots of fear.

“And you, you’re afraid to let go of your relationship and be lived by the Great One for real. If you want my gut feeling, it’s time for you and the Peepster to trust deeper than the form of your relationship. Let go of each other while you continue to open your hearts and love. Break the old patterns of relating. Mix it up a little. You don’t have children to worry about. Why not find out what happens? The future can’t be predicted. Maybe you’ll come back together as a couple, maybe you won’t. But it’s time to let go and find out what happens when you open and offer your love without holding onto the past form. That’s my gut feeling, if you want it.”

Mykonos had never given me such direct advice before. Although he frequently suggested practices to me, he had never offered such strong and specific direction about how to live my life. He always left it up to me to feel what was best, perhaps offering subtle hints as to his feeling. I was surprised by the strength of his direct suggestion—and I felt punched in the belly by the thought of possibly losing my relationship with Gia.

“How often do you and the Peepster teach together?” Mykonos asked me.

“Pretty often. Whenever our schedule allows it. Why?”

“Well, I’m not sure it’s a good idea to teach together. You are both identified with being a couple, and the public expects that. At least for a while, maybe you should take a break from teaching together.”

For years—even before meeting Mykonos—Gia and I had taught together, and we made a great team. My mind was trying to grasp the rightness or not of Mykonos’s suggestion, but mostly I felt nauseous and afraid.

Gia and I had recently been feeling a shift deep beneath the surface of our relationship. She and I talked about it at length, but we couldn’t put our finger on it. Until Mykonos offered his gut feeling, I hadn’t allowed myself to feel how reticent I was to plunge this particular depth. I was letting something slide deep down while riding the luxuriance of a fruitful and fulfilling relationship. Mykonos’s suggestion intervened sharply in my laxity.

“Feel the water, my friend,” Mykonos said, looking distantly over the horizon. “Endless water. In that endlessness, we all

make our cults. Our little cults of relationship give us a sense of purpose, comfort, and safety. We are all going to die, but before that, we do everything we can to have it all make sense, to feel loved, to find our place. But there is no place. Hmmm? There is no place! Just the *room* you find yourself in for the present, and even that can be felt beyond, hmmm?"

The thought of risking my relationship with Gia was tightening my gut, closing in my feelers, so I didn't even notice the ocean and sky—let alone the *room* and the deep space of consciousness that Mykonos was indicating. I was thinking of Gia, about how much I loved her, about our incredible time together. I had expected to be with her for the rest of my life. Even so, Mykonos's force of truth was cutting through my worries, opening me to a deep trust that felt utterly free, even as my body and mind panicked.

"Let her go, my friend. Let everything go, and see what remains, hmmm?"

Mykonos paddled to catch the next wave. I watched the curl of water carry him toward the beach. When his ride finished, he slowly paddled back out toward me, stopping about 20 feet away.

I couldn't tell if his distance signaled that the discussion was over, or if he wanted to be alone. I paddled toward him, slowly. He didn't seem to notice. He looked out over the ocean, facing the horizon where the blue water and the blue sky met. I floated on my board, bobbing up and down with the swells, feeling the openness of the water, my insides still churning in turmoil.

“You should find yourself another woman, and Gia should find herself another man. See what happens.”

I was shocked, again, by Mykonos’s atypical directness, and I was turned inside out by his suggestion. My abdominal organs felt grabbed and exposed to the ocean’s slosh. Mykonos’s words seized and revealed the submerged patterns of my bonding with Gia.

I held onto Gia as a precious jewel—perhaps the most precious part of my life. Other people seemed to value our relationship, too. People who attended our workshops often looked to our relationship as an example. I began worrying about the ramifications to others, when Mykonos read my mind.

“Why do you think people come to your workshops?” Mykonos suddenly asked.

“To learn something, to grow, I suppose.”

“Yes, but it has nothing to do with what you say. They come because they feel something from you. They feel your openness, your *yogic disposition*,” Mykonos said with a smile, crinkling his nose, explaining and chiding me at the same time. “All you and Gia can offer is your integrity as practitioners of love. It’s time for you both to live without a safety net, opening to be lived by the Great One, discovering your true form of love as you offer your heart, breath by breath.”

I felt into further repercussions of changing the form of our relationship. I felt how my and Gia’s families might react. I thought of our friends. Our daily life together. Our intimate discussions. Cuddling. I remembered all the times Gia had stayed with me

while I was sick, in the hospital, through every major physical, emotional, and spiritual crisis of my adult life. She had always been with me, through good times and bad, offering me a depth of love, devotion, and wisdom that I had never felt in another woman. Ever. Why would I want to risk that? I would never find another woman like Gia.

“Outside!” Mykonos said, indicating that a large wave was rolling in.

For a while I didn’t move. My attention was locked in a cascade of catastrophe and consequence unfolding in my mind. I snapped out of my reverie just in time to duck under the wave, holding my breath until the water passed over me.

“Love is love. Sex is sex. And bondage—even beautiful bondage—is still bondage. Do you understand?” Mykonos asked.

I could feel what Mykonos was talking about, but I didn’t want to feel it.

“I remember once, many years ago, when my wife and I were living with my teacher and some of his students,” Mykonos recalled, looking out over the horizon. “One night, my teacher knocked on my cabin door. It was late, and I had been sleeping, alone. He was laughing hysterically when I opened the door. I asked him what he wanted, but he just kept laughing, signaling me with his finger to follow him. We walked along the forest trail, past a few cabins, finally stopping outside the window to a cabin of one of my friends. My teacher pressed his ear against the window—the curtain was closed so you couldn’t see inside—and then he fell to the ground laughing.”

Mykonos paused for a few moments as a set of waves rolled beneath us.

“Finally, I pressed my ear against the window of the cabin,” Mykonos continued with his story. “I could hear two people having sex, loudly. The woman, especially, was moaning and screaming in pleasure. And then I realized, it was my wife! My wife was in that cabin having sex with another man. And loving it! She was screaming with pleasure! I remember how offended I was, that my wife could have as much pleasure with another man as with me. And I remember my teacher laughing.”

Mykonos smiled for a moment, and then stopped. He turned to look at me with great love and understanding in his eyes.

“Gia and you share a deep love, but maybe it’s time to break the cult.”

Mykonos rode a wave in toward shore, then paddled back out, and took another wave in. I was too stunned to really get into surfing. I did my best to relax my body in the cool ocean water, draping my arms over the board.

Eventually, Mykonos paddled back out, resting when he was close enough for me to hear him. “Relationship is bondage, unless your love is larger than the cult,” Mykonos said, his voice quiet and sweet. “Are you ready to feel open, as endless and object-free as the water? Perhaps not,” Mykonos smiled, looking tenderly into my eyes.

He took the next wave in to the shore and I followed him. We set our boards down on the beach and sat on the sand, looking out over the ocean.

A man and woman walked by, hand in hand. A bit down the beach, the couple stopped to embrace and kiss, the waves rolling up the beach, swirling around their ankles.

Mykonos nodded toward them. “Most people never get beyond trying to own each other’s love in a kind of contractual bondage. I’m not saying you should have sex with all kinds of people. That would be bondage too—bondage to the vagaries of your desire. When you can stand free and love without ownership, so your entire being is open like water, maybe you choose to be alone or celibate. Maybe you choose to share love in a couple, perhaps raising a family. Maybe you choose to have ten sexual partners. Maybe you are heterosexual or homosexual. Your true form of intimacy must be discovered with real integrity in love.”

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Mykonos continued looking at the couple, holding each other in the shallows as the waves rolled in and back out into the ocean. “Every person needs to find the true form of their intimacy, their way of opening as love to God through sex—and you can choose to have a deep and loving intimate relationship without any sex at all. Whatever form of love you choose, commit to loving without limit, giving yourself entirely. But when a love relationship becomes a stand-in for utter openness—when you are afraid of losing love—then you bind yourself in clinging, enclosing love in a cult of two, engaging your lover in contracts of fear. When a relationship binds your heart in fear of betrayal, then it isn’t an offering of love, it’s a trap.”

I wondered whether I was ready to live by this truth, which seemed so obvious. Part of me certainly felt that Gia was mine. I felt assured in her devotion. I assumed that she would never be with another man. I took great comfort in knowing that Gia was waiting for me when I was traveling, teaching on the road. I carried the knowledge of our relationship like a life preserver, knowing Gia's love would support me if I began to drown, as it had many times.

Mykonos was asking me to risk the safety of the most loving, intimate, and secure relationship I had ever known. He was suggesting that I let go of the woman who was utterly devoted to me, a woman whom I knew was not only irreplaceable, but unique in the depth of her heart's expression. The woman I loved without doubt.

"You don't have to leave her," Mykonos said. "You should do whatever feels right in your deepest heart. Feel deep as consciousness, open as water, now, and feel how to live with a wide-open heart. Feel how to live as love without bondage. Listen to your heart through your fear, and be willing to take the next step without the slightest idea of what will happen when you do. Live true to your deepest integrity of love, offering your entire life as love, opening moment by moment, without protecting your heart in traps of safety. This freedom is the ultimate discipline, my friend."

As he stood up, Mykonos looked at me with a big smile. "And if some people can't deal with it, fuck 'em."

I went home and talked with Gia about the conversation I had with Mykonos. She agreed entirely with what Mykonos had said, which surprised me at first, but then seemed obvious and inevi-

table. For a week, we talked about letting go of our relationship and perhaps finding other partners. We often cried, day and night. We loved each other deep and thick, and yet we both felt a basic pattern in our relationship was genuinely shifting. In some ways, in the center of our hearts, nothing would change because our love couldn't change. We felt our love to be unassailable, and also felt it was time to trust love and move on in open-hearted discovery. Neither of us knew what that would entail.

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