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VISIONS of GOLDEN LIGHT and COLD BEER

Now that we were hopelessly lost and trapped in a raging blizzard, I felt like kicking myself for not having paid more attention to the uneasy premonitions I'd had as we'd been climbing the mountain. I am always amazed at how suddenly a seemingly modest adventure can turn into a nightmare. A delightful day hike in the springtime Arizona sun with my wife, Linnea, and our eight-year-old son, Devan, was now an urgent struggle to stay alive in a sudden mountain snowstorm with no warm clothes, shelter, or food.

As the pitch-black night descended upon us, we quickly gathered pine needles and logs for a makeshift lean-to shelter that faced our campfire, so that Linnea and Devan could get some relief from the driving snowstorm. I realized I would need to keep awake all night in order to keep the fire going, so I decided to meditate for a half-hour to gain some rest, then add more wood to the fire, then go back into meditation. As I sat facing the fire, my face and hands were fairly warm, but my back was drenched with the cold, wet snow, so I turned my back to the fire to dry it out. After about ten minutes I noticed that the smoke from the fire had a strange odor. I soon realized that the back of my jacket was burning, so I quickly lay down in the snow to put out the fire and then turned around to face the fire again. This time I noticed my hiking boots were smoldering.

After long hours of alternating between facing the fire and then drying my back, I mastered the technique of keeping fairly dry by switching from front to back just as the steam from my clothes would

change to smoke. As the interminable night wore on, I began drifting in and out of consciousness. Suddenly I found myself enveloped by an extremely comfortable, brilliant golden sunlight. I had a vague feeling of being in the past rather than the present. Then some past events began to manifest. I thought, *Maybe I am dead, and this is the video of my life that is supposed to play before I pass over to the "other side."* As the golden light began to transform into a clear image, my awareness was drawn toward a brilliant summer sun radiating light and warmth, illuminating what appeared to be a shining golden and reddish mountain. I shifted my attention to the mountain and it became clearer. It now resembled a huge mound of beer cans piled three stories high—glinting in the blinding sunlight. This visual sensation of a specific place now became supplemented by a growing sense of time. Then, like a computer turning on, I realized this was my own past. It was 1958 outside a dump in a small town about twenty miles from Boston, Massachusetts. My consciousness continued to contract from a transcendental state of universal oneness to a progressively more localized and focused awareness, until I was sitting in my 1949 Ford with three of my high-school buddies. Now I was reliving a memory stored on my mental "hard drive" for more than thirty years.

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