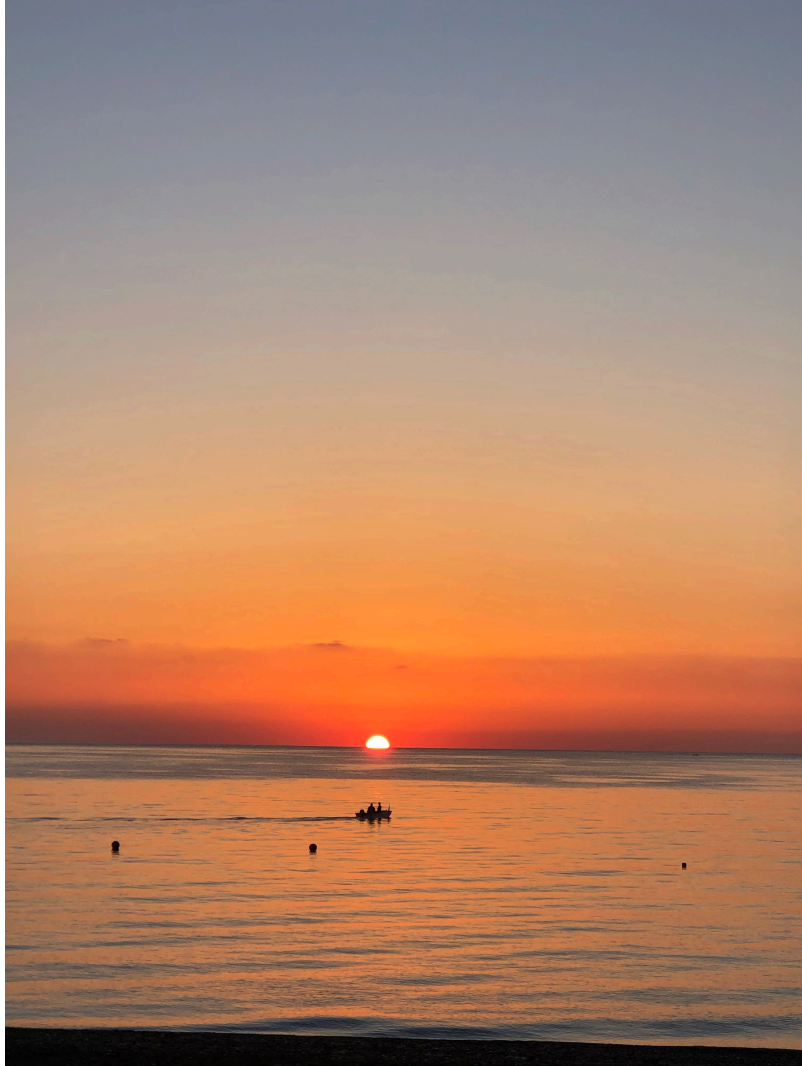


THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER
(A Twin Flame Journey)



07.00 am, Çıralı, Turkey, October 2021.

1. Sensitive

Ah, eyes! Everything started with eyes!

Now, in the south of Anatolia, on this puddle of rocks where the waves hit, I am contemplating the sea and the deserted shore. A long time ago - at least what seems to me a very, very long time ago -, I wasn't alone here. But, far away. I know now that eyes can see what is unseen and what is beyond what is seen. Sun is rising. I witness it as if I accompany a friend. A pinky, orangish confidant. Next to it, is a smile in the form of a long and fluffy cloud. A beloved friend... who is far away. He is absent, but my eyes are still able to touch and sense him in the void in the sky.

Sorry dear reader! I wasn't speaking out loud, I was speaking in my heart, but you didn't notice when you were reading, did you? I have been... **dissociated**. Again. It has been happening to me for a while. My mind goes and comes between memories, it jumps from one thought to another. As a result, I forget the presence of my body.

I become spacey. Time is being stopped. No sign of aliveness. A very interesting state of being! Foggy, disconnected, like I have lost my anchor somewhere.

A lot is happening at these times. But a lot... They are coming: emotions, feelings, ghosts of the past... They are chasing me. Then, I start to feel my feet... the extremities of my body. I feel my arms, fingertips and upper legs as physical sensations. I'm grounding. I'm returning to my body. It is like a veil is lifting from my eyes.

So, if you are curious and want to know about me...

I am one of them.

By many of you, we are called "people with a deep sensitivity".

My language is the language of sensations because when it comes to emotions, I feel them, into their depth.

My superpower is my ability to feel anything to the fullest. When there is a lie going around, or a worn mask... we feel it. When there is a soft touch, a gentle intention, or a sneaky smile, we feel it.

People like me, are also able to see the interior of your bodies. Because we touch what you feel inside and sometimes, it might be the worst scenario. We sense what is going on inside the other person as if they belong to us. Gift or curse? What do you think?

No joke!

But you know... they blamed us. They... a lot of people from my past that I don't want to point fingers at anymore.

They said that we are too "dreamy". And sometimes, you also said it.

Each time, you averted your eyes from us. Why are people so afraid to look each other in the eye?

Sorry! Sometimes I talk too much and I repeat the same thing. Did I already say "sorry!", didn't I? I hesitate to share too much because I feel like I'm stealing your time. But... by the way, I'm Can, a "highly sensitive person", a lost queer dervish, perhaps a reincarnation of Rumi. I am

born in a country that doesn't completely belong neither to the East or the West. But if you open a world map, you can notice that my country is in the center of the map and it looks strangely like an eye. Like my country, I have an in-between personality and I live everything in-between.

Excuse me! But I have to tell you something before starting to entrust you my story. Because each story is intimate: it is a data with soul and you have to take care of it.

In the East, we often cover our eyes because we know the power of the gaze. The gaze is the penetrator. It sees the depth of your soul. And as a highly sensitive person, I want you to know dear reader that I am desperate to make eye contact with you as you read these lines. Through my words, at least this time, can you see me with the eyes with which you read my words? I share my story with you, which means I open myself to you, which means I neither avert my eyes nor hide my eyes from you.

As I told you, the eyes can see very far and they are the penetrator.

Thank you already, by the way, for your care.

2. Touching Eyes

Anyway, I have a story as we all do. It is about the hundred meanings of love. Yaaaayyyyyyy! Isn't that really original? I would like to talk about LOVE! I'm just kidding.

I hope, dear reader, you already experienced love. I mean, I really hope that love touched you. Does your love story still continue or did it have an ending? If it is not the case, maybe you can imagine love as you sense. Actually, your body is always in contact with the vibrations of love. Love... "the glue that holds the world together," said a healer once upon a time. But of course, it depends on what we understand from this four-letter word. As for me, love is a flame within you that sleeps to make you whole, but when it awakens it will burn many parts of you. Exciting or scary?

Well, what about the meaning(s) of love? Imagine now that we are to brainstorm together. So, in that case, which words can you attach to love?

Pain... happiness...

Union... awakening... what else?

Passion... care...?

Disappointment... frustration...?

Eroticism... or maybe excitement?

Intimacy or self-intimacy?

But what about the transformative power of love?

Did love make you a better person? I mean, has love been able to unlock your fake self?

My story began with a huge feeling of void that I felt since my childhood. I don't need so many words to describe this state of being. It is like you are in a very dark room, alone, isolated and there is no touch neither between bodies or with yourself. But I assure you, I tried many... but many things to heal it! Because the heart always wishes to feel itself alive. Life versus Death, a.k.a. state of **dissociation**.

I still make deep philosophic conversations with my friends either at a Starbucks or in a party. But unfortunately, I have not yet found the answers I am looking for. Of course, I tried personal growth books such as *The Law of Attraction*, *The Secret*, or something like *Be Your Own Therapist* or *Meet Your Shadow*. Actually, it has been too easy for me to understand why the personal growth industry is increasing so quickly! In fact, they try to inject upon us the idea that there is something wrong inside of us and that we have absolutely to fix it! Or, they make us believe that we are some kind of god and we have superpowers to make happen everything we wish for! Sorry honey! But things don't work like that, especially when we deny the presence of our physical body. We need to rely more on the body's sensory capacity. Do you know why? There is obviously another world, a realm that I should call as a world of sensations. *A lot is happening* in this area... Thought patterns are diverging from compelling and repressed emotions that we are afraid to touch. It is like an archaeological dig. It is like resetting the whole body system and re-opening to the wider body, which is Life itself. During this journey, I also saw some psychologists. Don't get me wrong, they were all nice but... they were speaking too much for me. Let's say that they have been too "mind-based". Anyway, they couldn't give me the answers I was looking for. One day - it was like the 6th session with a clinical psychologist - I was still talking... of course! but talking too much to my therapist in his room, which was decorated with a dozen red geraniums. He was, as always, too "zen". Then, I asked him: "Can I say something?", "of course!" he said. "Why am I the only one who keeps talking too much and you keep listening to me? I mean I have really deep existential questions about myself, like who am I, why am I on this Earth, what is my purpose?" He looked at me. He is a really good therapist since I can not really understand what he thinks from his face, but I was feeling... like I always did. He looked at his flowers for one second, then, he said: "Can, in clinical psychology we believe that the patient can reach the answers he is looking for by explaining himself." I said just, "OK!" and I continued: "so it actually means that I can reach all the answers I am looking for while I'm chatting with my friends in a Starbucks!" It was the last time I

saw him. After, I started yoga, I still practice it but it became something like a fitness show, with a toxic spirituality. Astrologists? Of course, I had also sessions with them! But now I have enough from my birth chart. Okay, listen! I am Virgo and my rising sign is Scorpio, which is cool... but... Actually I don't see any difference between astrologists and Turkish coffee fortune tellers nowadays... I am so tired of surrendering my own power to others. I still didn't realize then that each time I had to go back to my flesh and bone body.

As you will witness in the following lines my story involves a lot of coincidences and synchronicities. It might look a little bit like a Netflix Series!

Anyway, let's jump back to my story!

Do you remember Samantha from *Sex and The City*? I was quite like her, but more passionate at the spiritual level. You know... because I have Scorpio as my rising sign: passionate, a crisis lover and symbolically I'm a phoenix: I can be dead and to be reborn. So last year, toward the end of August, I watched one episode of *Sex and The City*, in which Samantha complains with a righteous attitude, she says: "I want passion! I want fireworks in my life!" I took her sentences as a reminder signal for what I was looking for. The next day, I watched *Cafe de Flore*, a movie by Jean-Marc Vallée, about soulmates. In the movie, there is a scene that vibrated my heart. Two autistic children, which were supposed to be soulmates, hug each other the first time they see each other. Instinctively! Because you know it at first glance, it doesn't go unnoticed, the eyes don't lie, they catch it and your body... feels it from that tiny flame that starts burning inside the body! And then, the next week, I was in a library and a book about the practice of gaze between the Anatolian Sufi mystic Rumi and his beloved friend Shams fell on my head. It literally fell on my head, like boom! The book talked about how Rumi and Shams had a spiritual/divine experience by looking at each other for a long time. I honestly think that by gazing at each other, their inner spaces touched and mingled with each other. I got goosebumps reading the pages, and I realized that the flame inside me was growing in size.

Three weeks after the fall of the book, I found him. Or he found me.

The one that chased me with his eyes.

In a narrow street of Istanbul where the wind of the Bosphorus penetrates, we were supposed to take a coffee for one hour but instead, we spent eleven hours talking about everything.

Eyes!... Everything started with eyes.

If I should dilate this moment of encounter when he first walked into the café... I stood up when I saw someone with hazel eyes and curly black hair, someone close to my height and even with a face like mine, walked in. The world stopped for a second. Our gazes met and something like a Big Bang happened. It was as if something superior to me but part of me anchored his soul, the same goes for him. I remember being dissociated for a second, it's hard to explain, but I was him, he was me. Just a split-second of perception: I felt that I was everything but at the same time nothing.

A lot... but a lot happened in one second.

I didn't know him, but *my eyes knew*.

And it was for the first time that I said to myself: "it is actually possible to have a deep connection with someone else!" So, what about this huge feeling of the void? Nothing! But nothing!

3. THE HOME

I learned from the book about Rumi and Shams that the practice of gaze is a medium to behold the divine. It seems that Rumi and his friend Shams, meaning the sun, passed forty nights by gazing at each other. No wonder why this book attracted my attention as a highly sensitive person. I was looking for depth. The depth of aliveness.

It is a strange coincidence, isn't it? While I interpreted the gaze as a mystic and spiritual tool, he (the one that chased me with his eyes), who was a video artist thought of the gaze as a weapon of dominance.

No wonder he was heart-broken too.

After one month, when I was still in Istanbul, we met on an airplane! I told you, this story involves a lot of coincidences! To see his eyes again in front of me was shocking! It was like I was hypnotized, but in a good sense. In my head, I found myself somewhere that looked like a shore.

Don't ask me why and how, but we decided to run away to the south of Turkey, *to this puddle of rocks where the waves hit when the pinky and orangish sun is rising*. During one week out of sight, we practiced the gaze. It happened spontaneously. When I asked him if he'd ever experienced anything like this before, he said "no".

To look at someone's eyes for one hour without interruption... It is an amazing sensation! It is like you anchor your soul to the other's body and vice-et-versa. During these moments, I felt that strange feeling when I first met him. When we were side by side, we felt powerful, like we were the world. We were anything, but at the same time we were everything!

A lot happened during this encounter of gazes.

To see someone and to let someone see you.

Completely naked!

Then I remembered something. You know, life is weird and weird things happen in life.

When I was 22 years old, a very young Sufi dervish with deep blue eyes and with a tattoo of a tear under his left eye grabbed me by the arm in a dark street in Istanbul, where queer people hang out in midnight. He said to me: “in your heart, you carry the story of Rumi and Shams and your heart will be expanded but until, it has to be squeezed many times!” Did I pay attention to his words? Of course not, I was drunk and I was going out after a party. But then, on this beach, when I was gazing at my beloved, it started to make sense: the book, Rumi, the gaze, the movie, the feeling of void, everything, even Samantha!

I was on fire and...

I was in love. But more than that, I had found myself in someone's else body. After years, I learned that my story was actually a story of Twin Flames. I can summarize Twin Flames like this: one soul split into two bodies, which means that the consciousness of one soul belongs to two separated human forms. Your Twin Flame enforces you to be awakened! Complicated? I know! Twin Flames is a roller coaster journey with a lot of upside-down. While it pushes you to revisit your dark depths, it also forces you to accept the good parts of yourself, the talents that you have not yet realized and accepted.

I didn't know that sometimes, the body of the other is actually the HOME.

And I needed the other to see myself.

Just like every other morning, we went to the shore to witness the pinky sunrise. But that day, the sky was cloudy. And somehow, we hugged each other for four hours! Oups! Were we too ,sticky? But then I wondered: when two bodies are in love, it is completely normal that there is a flux of energy between them. It is understandable. But what happens around them? I mean if this energy is spreading around and touching other people, could people be drawn to us? Two queer bodies on a shore in the South of Turkey, in the middle of a village, and none of the gazes of others were disturbing. The manager of the hotel invites us to stay two more nights for free. In the pizzeria, the pizzas are coming “as a gift from the house” before we order them, an old lady comes to meet us in the sea... But what was happening?

In recent years, queer people were not looked upon well in Turkey, especially in such a rural area.

Could love embrace and heal our mad home that we call Earth?

Just one question.

Not to start something utopian.

But to understand the essence of love.

4. THE FARTHEST SHORE

As each story has a turning point, I lost him. This sense of loss is a little too heavy to carry, especially when you feel his eyes are still with me.

It is a huge burden to have two souls in one body. No drama, but I was devastated and this is how my states of dissociation started to appear. It's been exactly more than one year and I didn't have a day without thinking of him, which started to distract me from my routine. It is not easy to share your consciousness with someone else! It is like you are two-headed.

In the story of Rumi, it is told that Rumi became the Rumi We Know Now once Shams left him. Then, Rumi started to write his poems and books but also he invented the whirling dance practice. Apparently, the separation phase burnt a candle within him... to behold the divine.

Let me ask one more time: what about the transformative power of love, especially when that tiny flame inside you started to burn your body completely?

We are still separated. Actually, there is a huge Atlantic Ocean between us. I am living in Amsterdam, him in New York.

Insecurities, fears, old mindsets... it is what keeps us apart. I find it ridiculous: when you experience something very intense, why is one afraid of it?

You know, some people prefer to embrace love like throwing themselves into deep water without a second thought. But some are afraid of love because love creates an earthquake inside them. Everything they hold on to materially, every habit and every situation is bound to collapse.

Love is like water, it can surround you and can give you peace, but it can also destroy you when it gets angry and turns into a flood.

Your attitude towards love actually shapes love.

On the last day we were together, he gave me a book as a gift. I'll never know where he found this book in this lonely town. *The Farthest Shore* by the American writer Ursula K. Le Guin. In the book, the protagonist goes to this Farthest Shore, which is the realm of the dead.

Life is sometimes... but sometimes really metaphorical!

Even as I wished to go to the United States, the earliest date I can get a visa from the consulate is a year later, while his green card is still not issued, so he cannot leave the country. I guess it's like the divine system telling us to sit down, isolated from each other. It is like we are forced to think and revisit what we had as an experience.

But I had to visit *the Farthest Shore* and witness the death.

6. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER

One year after, I came to revisit this shore and I still watch the pinky sunrise.

Same place. Because I still want to touch, to feel him. I try to see him again.

Memory can be cruel. I'm here to remind myself, not to forget the mind-blowing experience that both of us shared.

What happened during the first year of separation? Uh!

I entered a seclusion room, exactly as Rumi did after Sham's abandonment.

The seclusion room is a Sufi tradition / ritual, where you isolate yourself to be disconnected from everything to touch God. Let them say God, but I take it as a connection with myself. The aim is to deal with your own sufferings, to be reborn.

So, I found another therapist: a somatic experience therapist, which uses the language of sensations! Her guidance has always taken me back to my body, maybe a hundred times. This is how I started to become a somatic archaeologist to visit my childhood, maybe even other lives I don't remember.

This love, this fucking love, opened up all my wounds. This huge feeling of void is the topic of another story for sure, but for now, we really need to visit our past because there is a big storage of repressed emotions, which block our hearts. But this is also how I met with my psyche, which involves a lot of inner actors, so-called "archetypes".

One heart, but a multitude of dynamics within!

It seems there is a costume party there!

So, I had to introduce myself to all of my archetypes, establish my communication with them, to try to understand them. It was like picking up my missing pieces and putting them together.

Naked and scared, this is how I decided to take this journey in a modern seclusion room in my little apartment in Amsterdam during the Covid pandemic. Real love reveals itself when the lovers are separated from each other and you know, it seems that all the light comes with its darkness. One day you experience something mind-blowing, the other day you have fallen from heaven to earth.

But I had to do something. And what I did was to shift his gaze toward myself. I had to touch this untouchable part of me. And it led me to expand from ME to US.

What a chaos!

Thanks to the actors in my heart, I learned that there was a party to be celebrated there, a very crowded party. And it was my existence, my experience of being not an ideal but a vulnerable human.

Each encountering starts with a gentle gaze. This is how we touch each other. I have been always there, sitting with them. I just witnessed and I waited for them until they opened themselves to me. A winding and intense journey in a maze.

The gaze is what starts every process.

Yesterday, when I was writing these lines by contemplating the sea, a woman, (actually it was the old lady that we met on the shore when I was with my Twin Flame), came next to me in the morning.

She asked: “where is your beloved one?”

I gazed at her. She understood me.

She didn't say anything. Her eyes were speaking. She just pursed his lips.

Looking for other eyes in her eyes, I started to cry.

She felt me and then, she touched my shoulders as if she wanted to console me.

And she gave me a Tarot card.

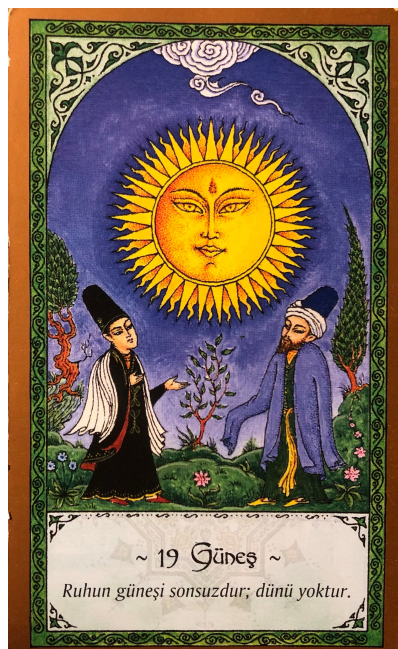
On the card, there was an illustration of Rumi and Shams looking at each other. Apparently, it was a Sufi tarot deck! The first time that I saw something like that! It was the Major Arcana Sun Card in classic tarot.

“You experienced the death of your ego,” she said to me and touched my chin. “My boy, I know you are sad but you are free.”

I didn't understand her words. I wasn't in the mood to understand anyone.

“Your heart is expanded now,” she said and pointed at what was written on the tarot card:

“The sun of the soul is eternal; there is no yesterday. - Rumi.”



I swallowed my words.

I wasn't dissociated anymore.

But it was the first time that I embodied longing as something burning,
because I knew he still had a lot of work to do on his path.

As Rumi wrote in one of his poems: *"I'll be waiting on the other side of the river."*

Please respect my story. Take care of it. It's as much your story as it is mine. Because we are part of the same ecology. It is for our hearts... where the main first condition of being a human resides. Please take care of your heart. Please!

There is a lot happening... but especially a lot when we touch,
with eyes.

The heart space is not an imaginary territory that we can reach by using our minds. It is a soft place and it is simple to touch it. No to the spiritual bypassing! Perhaps, instead of using our thoughts or verbal language, we should gaze at it. As I said, *the gaze is what starts every process*. Take care of your heart and sit with it no matter what happens. The language of the heart is not complicated, we humans are making it inaccessible. The heart speaks with sensations, physical sensations that each body is able to embody. The heart will feel your gaze, in other words, your witnessing presence...

There is *a lot to happen*.

Like an encounter,

Like shedding of the petals of a flower,

Like an invisible but heavy piece of armor disappearing into thin air...

I assure you.

A lot is going to happen.

And then, you'll be remembering my eyes.

Because I know, as you have read my story, that I have reached you through my eyes.

After all, we are all inter-connected since we are a part of a collective whose hearts -even when not wanted- ripple in order to touch each other. The nature of this “glue” that keeps all together is just...

s e n s i t i v e.

October-November 2022,
Istanbul - Arnhem.