



What Now?

by David Franklin Farkas

We see life as a novel, with a beginning and an ending and a story that flows reasonably and understandably between them in a fairly predictable way. In reality, life is a series of only loosely related short stories...

'Truth *is* stranger than fiction, but that is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't' ~ Mark Twain

About ten years ago my family experienced a period of over a year of one awful event after another. It reminded me of the children's book, *'Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day.'*

Among many other things, a close relative died unexpectedly. Another close relative became seriously ill and required extensive treatment. My then spouse required surgery. And... I had a major revelation about having been abused as a child.

When things settled down and there was nobody else to take care of, I had, as someone put it, time to get sick.

And, I managed to get really, really sick. I was as sick as I have ever been. The wonderful truth is that I have rarely been sick and the injuries I've had along the way have, thankfully, been minor.

This time, I got shingles. For those of you who have not experienced shingles, it's caused by the chicken pox virus, herpes zoster. It's actually very common.

It's like having poison ivy with nerve pain. It hurts badly enough to require heavy duty pain meds. And since in my case the shingles ran across my head to near my eye, I was also given anti-viral medication.

Typically, I take no medications I can avoid, especially since I am very sensitive to almost any drug and need about half the usual dose for a man my size.

I was totally zonked. I slept most of the day and the few hours I was awake I worked on client projects with tight deadlines. It was not pretty. I was miserable and feeling sorry for myself.

Then it occurred to me... this will NOT kill me. This will not leave me permanently disabled. This will not leave much more than a few pock marks on my head, which might even add character to my baby face.

I started feeling lucky.

All I had to do was get through this. I had to wait it out. I had to let go of complaining, because I really couldn't justify it and it didn't help anyway. I had to let it be OK that some people were more annoyed by my illness than I was and annoyed that I would not match their sense of angst.

I thought... people die all the time of diseases, starvation, crime and war and I was, temporarily miserable and inconvenienced. I just needed to get through this.

And I was sick long enough for it be really challenging. It was three or four months before I had my strength back and had no oozing lesions. It took several years before my head no longer had obvious marks or weird random tingling sensations.

But it changed my whole perspective on Life.

Most of the difficulties we experience in life are exactly like my experience with shingles. There is no obvious quick fix. It's embarrassing or miserable or inconvenient or all of that and more. But... it will not kill you and things will, inevitably, change.

Goethe said, 'What does not kill me makes me stronger.' Hemingway remarked that, 'The world breaks everyone, and afterwards, some are strong at the broken places.'

Exactly! Besides... the more you complain the more miserable you are and the more you are given to complain about!

Life is about experiences. Stories. The best stories are the ones that have taken us somewhere we didn't expect to go to learn things we did not even know could be learned. And we came away stronger. Sometimes temporarily sad, hurt or confused, but always stronger.

I often reflect on my father's life. He was an immigrant child who grew up on the lower east side of Manhattan. He lived through the Great Depression... which lasted fully ten years. He was a lumber jack in the Civilian Conservation Corps. He hoboed to the west coast. He was a labor organizer when that was a very dangerous activity. He served for several years in Europe during World War II. Then, he returned from the horror of war to the horrors of the McCarthy era.

He came through it all stronger in most of the broken places, with amazing stories and a profound respect for the fact the every person has endured struggles, and has broken places and stories to tell... if you will listen.

So, here we are. Lots of people have financial and other challenges they never expected to have. Playing by the rules did not turn out as we were lead to believe it would. It's not fair.

As we enter this time of great changes it seems that everywhere profound lies are being exposed. Old systems and institutions are crumbling and nobody knows how it will all work out.

And yet... we're still here, inconvenienced and occasionally miserable, but with so much to be thankful for.

The one thing we know for sure is that things will change. They always do. And we will prevail... because that's what people have always done.

It's the old glass half full or glass half empty dilemma. I think the real question is whether you see your glass as emptying or filling.

I worked in Haiti for several months, decades ago, during the dictatorship of 'Baby Doc' Duvalier. Living in a military dictatorship run by ruthless paramilitary henchman really changes one's perspective.

The Haitian people taught me so much about being good to each other in the worst of times. When it seems you have nothing... when you really do have nothing.

When you greet someone in Haiti, the most common response, in Creole, is 'Mwen La.' It means 'I'm here.' Sometimes it is said with a shoulder shrug and a twinge of hopelessness, more often with defiance. I'm still here. I'm still alive.

I would add to that... now what?

OK, I'm here... Now what?

Perhaps said as a prayer... now, what would you have me do? Whether said as a question to yourself or to a higher power, to guides, or to the wind. What now? Because that question, is really all you can ask in any moment. What now? What next?

Most indigenous cultures have a concept of the vision quest or walkabout. All great teachers have had some dark night of the soul when they went alone into the literal or figurative wilderness to pine for answers and find themselves, find their connection to Spirit, find their path.

Before walkabout, you give away, or walk away from, everything that ties you to your former life. That might be by design as part of a tradition, ritual or ceremony. But often, it just happens. You find yourself with little or nothing left wondering, 'how did I get here. What now?'

Our culture provides lots of distractions from inner work, lots of ways to escape from despair or other difficult feelings. Television, drugs, video games, internet porn, gambling, food, gangs, extreme sports, constant 'news' broadcasts... are all distractions from walkabout. Lots of people will help us get into trouble, for a price.

Some of us know we are on walkabout. Life is walkabout.

Most people don't know, or struggle to avoid knowing, at all costs. Most people would think it's crazy. If being like most people is 'sane' then actually looking at yourself, questioning deeply and asking what to do next is certainly at least eccentric.

Meanwhile... I'm here. There is much to enjoy here. There are many simple pleasures here. Am I appreciating what I have? Am I enjoying this moment... this time in my life?

Like many of us I'm confused by the changes in my life in the past year. I did not expect my circumstances to look this way. How did this happen?

And then other questions start to flow... why did this happen? What does this mean? What did I do wrong? Bla bla bla. Those unanswerable questions make people crazy.

I'm here. I'm OK. I'm listening and watching for what's next as things change all around me in unpredictable ways. I am taking 'next steps' as I am led to them by inspiration. And... I'm having a wonderful time.

I hope you are too.

May you live in interesting times ~ Chinese curse

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David Franklin Farkas is a professional house healer and ghost rescuer. He provides remote healing and clearing for real estate, people, business and situations including travel and negotiations. Please visit the recently launched www.HouseHealing.com version 2.0.

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