



# Miracles

Classroom for the Universal Course

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*The Ego  
Retirees,  
— p. 11*

# DANCE ME THROUGH THE PANIC TILL I'M GATHERED SAFELY IN

*by Allan Ishac*

**I**n the fall of 2022, I had just finished the spiritual adventure novel that I spent 10 years writing. I had a wonderful agent who was sending the finished manuscript to publishers, and we were both optimistic that a publishing house would acquire it.



A week after he started mailing out the book, I came down with Covid. I quickly developed breathing difficulties and sleep problems, followed by extended bouts of anxiety. Within weeks I started feeling lethargic, uninspired, anti-social, agoraphobic, and depressed.

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**Then, my entire life began to unravel.**

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Then, my entire life began to unravel. My physical health began to fail. I lost my mental acuity, writing ability, a vibrant social network, sexual desire, several longtime friends, my enthusiasm for life, and all my passions and interests. I went through much of my savings, too, along with the financial resources to pay the rent on my longtime New York City apartment.

In desperation, I tried everything I could to restore my vitality and get upright again: first, with the psychedelics



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MDMA and ketamine, then anti-depressants, alternative healing therapies, EMDR, electrical impulse stimulation, and brain-restoring diets. I saw a traditional therapist and multiple psychiatrists, watched Jonah Hill's "Stutz" film a handful of times, read books about depression and mental disorders, listened to related podcasts, wrote in a journal, and meditated, meditated, meditated.

Despite all that, the near constant panic continued to consume my days and destroy my nights. I have heard three a.m. called "the hour of the wolves," and I understand. I was howling and hurting every night; the despondency and resignation leading to thoughts of an early exit.

Luckily, none of the remedies I tried worked... *because none of them were supposed to work.* Had any of my sought after "cures" magically pulled me out of my deep funk, if I had found relief in any of those potions or professionals, I would



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I look back on my life now and realize that I spent most of it taking every possible detour to avoid what Jesus and Spirit gently ask of us.

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have surely fixated on them for my salvation, following yet another futile, thousand-year path to an illusory promised land that doesn't exist.

I look back on my life now and realize that I spent most of it taking every possible detour to avoid what Jesus and Spirit gently ask of us—to give up our death-grip on control and allow them to take our hand and guide us with their infallible, ever-present love.

I spent almost a year in that living hell, certain that I was permanently stained and ruined. I lost faith in the teachings of *A Course In Miracles* to bring me solace. Any hope that my novel—the book I came to write—would get published, also seemed forever dashed.

Then, mysteriously, the unbearable blackness began to lift. My energy came back, my interests were reignited, and my commitment to ACIM mind-training returned, along with my network of mighty companions. I picked up my novel

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## My journey is written about in all the great mythologies.

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again (which had not been sold) and understood that the insights I received during my revealing inner journey needed to find their way into the book. I spent three months revising the manuscript, decided that I loved the story and its message too much to let it languish, and set out to self-publish it. That novel, *The Mystic In The Mews*, the first spiritual adventure story inspired by *A Course In Miracles*, came out in June.

The past year no longer feels like a curse to me; a miserable, capricious, nasty turn of life. While I still feel some hesitancy going public with my apparent impotence in the face of being wrenched from all I thought was essentially, indispensably “me,” I also know that my journey was not unique or uncharted. In fact, it is written about in all the great mythologies; a necessary odyssey that is made through the “Valley of the Shadow of Death,” through our personal dark night of the soul, to return to all that is valuable, to what truly matters, to the blessed heart of things.

The 16<sup>th</sup>-century, Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross was the first to use the term “dark night of the soul.” It is often described as a rite of spiritual passage marked by disorder, paralysis, and breakdown. One definition describes it as a period of final “unselfing”—an extremely difficult and painful period ultimately leading to liberation and absolute clarity on a meaningful life purpose.

The great Sufi pioneer and poet Inayat Khan wrote insightfully of this paradoxical experience: “There can be no rebirth without a dark night of the soul, a total annihilation of all that you believed in and thought that you were.” It was also the focus of Joseph Campbell’s magnum opus, *The Hero’s Journey*: “The dark night of the soul [is when] everything is

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## If I had not lost everything, I would never have found the only thing that matters. My Self.

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lost, and all seems darkness... then comes the new life and all that is needed.”

It turns out that the hero—and we are all the heroes of our unique stories and personal legends—only becomes one after facing the fire-breathing dragons and vicious vipers standing watch over the angelic heroine, the holy treasure, the hidden gold. The hero must rise above the worldly battleground and prevail; a classic metaphor for confronting, then transcending, our mad, ego-driven impulses.

When one reads about the hero’s journey, it can sound brave, noble, even exciting. Stories of righteous warriors, Jedi knights, and guardians of the galaxy prevailing against a relentless, multi-headed, cosmic collection of wicked villains and deplorable bad guys are often compelling and powerful.

It’s not until you’re in it that you realize the journey into the deep dark, into the realm of one’s snarling, snapping inner demons, does not feel brave, heroic, or courageous at all. It is marked by crippling confusion, grueling trials and, at least for me, terror.

During an arduous year that I am now sincerely grateful for, I stumbled through the thorny brambles of my life and came out cut and bruised, but not broken. Spirit was always there, opening me to a merciful healing through forgiveness and acceptance that could never have happened without that blessed, brutal journey. If I had not lost everything, I would never have found the only thing that matters. My Self.

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*Allan Ishac is the best-selling author of [New York’s 50 Best Places To Find Peace And Quiet](#). He has been an ACIM student since 1986. [The Mystic In The Mews](#) is his debut novel. \*The title of this article is taken from a lyric from Leonard Cohen’s “Dance Me To The End of Love.”*