

The Metaphysician

Memories of a Psychic Operative

by E. M. Nicolay



Forethought Publishing

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This is a semi-autobiographical work of creative nonfiction. It represents the author's perspective, interpretation and present-day recollections of events over time. Some names, characters, characteristics, dates, locations, corporations, companies, organizations, descriptions and other identifying details have been changed or modified to protect privacy, maintain anonymity and ensure creative literary effect. Some characters, locations and events represented have been compressed, modified, supplemented or fictionalized, and some dialogue has been recreated and is not intended to represent exact conversations or precise descriptions or remembrances. The author has attempted to creatively retell his story in a way that preserves privacy and anonymity, but still evokes the unique feeling, meaning and essence of what he personally experienced and remembers.

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Metaphysician: [medəfə'ziSH(ə)n]

*An expert in the fundamental and energetic principles of a super-reality,
particularly an understanding of abstract concepts related to
the Multidimensional Universe and the nature of Being.*



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1. Oak Lane

At first glance, I could have been driving through any mid-century, upper middle-class suburb in America. The Philadelphia Main Line had a reputation for attitude and snob appeal, but in my opinion, it wasn't a bastion of individuality.

Maybe the sameness was intentional. The monotony of so many similar suburban homes packed together in tight succession was strangely relaxing. Sometimes a house or two would do its best to stand out, but the tidy neatness of all those well-manicured lawns and the uniformity of endless painted perimeter fences, quickly betrayed them. Commonality lay like a blanket across entire swatches of land.

This was a version of America left behind but still straining to be relevant, where everything looked familiar because it was so relentlessly homogenized. As I kept driving, it dawned on me that I had spent years living abroad trying to escape this brand of modern American life. Now, here I was making endless right-hand turns, looking for Oak Lane in a labyrinth of Oak Lanes, each as perfectly mundane as the last.

Turning onto the street I had been trying to find, suddenly something was different. The sameness remained, but there was a strange stillness that permeated this street unlike any of the others.

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It made you squint as if to look for something you thought your eyes were missing, but couldn't quite identify. I shrugged it off telling myself it was just one of those streets where everything gets quiet around midday, with everyone at work, school or out running an errand at the Mall.

Still, the sensation stuck with me as I continued, and the feeling grew more and more demanding. Why was this street, unlike the many others I had already driven down, deserted? Could there really be no cars coming or going down this one lane?

There wasn't a car parked on the street or in any driveway either. In fact, the houses all looked deserted and empty, as if everyone had suddenly drawn the blinds and disappeared in some rap-ture-like event. It was unsettling.

I shook my head back and forth in a soothing gesture, as if to tell myself nothing was wrong here, then turned my attention to the street numbers emblazoned on the mailboxes. But the further I went, the more that odd sensation tugged at me.

How could I be driving down a prosperous, suburban dead-end street with no noticeable signs that anyone lived there? House after house, beautifully maintained, almost unrealistically pristine, with a stillness and silence that hovered over the entire neighborhood, screaming at you to pay attention.

No neighbors looking out from their windows, no kids playing in the yards, no garage doors open, no one out taking a stroll or walking the dog. In fact, there didn't even seem to be the prerequisite squirrel or two chasing each other around the old Oak trees that gave the street its name.

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It was as if every house on the block had gone up for sale simultaneously, and at the same time every inhabitant had moved out. But there were no signs posted anywhere and no indication of that.

Then I realized something even more strange. There were no cleaning services, garbage trucks, plumbers, electricians or repair people anywhere. No cable or utility trucks, no postmen and no deliveries.

For an upper middle-class neighborhood as well-kept as this, those services are a stronghold of daytime activity. Isn't that how they stayed functional and alive? Where was the army of landscapers, pool men, tree trimmers and gardeners essential to daily life in a neighborhood like this? There was no one, anywhere.

The stillness followed me as if it was looking over my shoulder, and it seemed to watch even more closely the further I got down the lane. The street culminated in a cul-de-sac that vaguely felt like a giant boomerang intended to turn you back in case you stumbled on the location by mistake. But before it could sling me back around, there on the last mailbox at the furthest point on Oak Lane, was the house number I was trying to find.

I stopped the car at the curb before passing in front of the driveway and sat there gathering my thoughts, looking up at the house where I was expected momentarily. It was a fairly non-descript 60's or 70's wood and stone-façade structure, the kind they once called a Rancher. The house was painted a dark olive green with brown shutters, and it was neither an attractive nor unattractive house, although it vaguely looked as if it were actively trying not to be noticed, and disappear itself into the background.

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Thick hedges and flowering Rhododendron had grown up all around it, and although well-maintained, they hid the front walkway and front door. You could see high bushes reaching up to almost the eaves of the building, and, except for a few structural elements that peaked out from underneath the vegetation, the house was almost completely camouflaged.

To the rear of the structure was an unclimbable, almost mountainous hill, which rose up behind it blocking access from any side but the front. You couldn't calculate where the house ended, since the entire building seemed to bury itself into the steep hillside at the rear.

I had imagined the meeting would take place in a small office building, or, at least, in some commercial location, so I checked the address one more time just to make sure I hadn't made a mistake. I hadn't. According to the map sitting on the passenger seat next to me, I was in the right place. This was the address I had been given on the phone a few days earlier.



Like most people in those days, I didn't answer calls when the Caller-ID box sitting next to the phone said "Unknown", but for some reason I picked up this time and took the call. I was in the middle of emptying out my suitcase, having just gotten back from Hong Kong, so I probably picked up as a distraction and to take a break from unpacking.

In a slow-paced, officious, almost mechanical voice, the man on the other end introduced himself and asked if could speak with E. M. Nicolay.

"Speaking," I responded casually.

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I didn't catch his name at first, so I listened rather than speak. He began by saying he was an Executive Recruiter and he had heard good things about me.

Holding a wrinkled-shirt I had just pulled out of my valise in one hand and the phone in the other, I was only half listening until his flattery got my attention. I looked out the bedroom window of the Pennsylvania farmhouse I had just finished restoring a few months earlier, and wondered who had been talking to him about me. Then, I started listening in earnest when he added that he thought I would be a great fit for a company he recruited for.

He had my full attention now, and I was curious to see where this would go.

“I know of a full-time career position that might be of interest to you,” he teased. “With your experience and particular skills, we think you could even write your own ticket as a member of this company's International Division. Would you be amenable to finding out more?”

When you're in your 30's, as I was then, you're more adventurous, less cautious and not as inquisitive or concerned with details, particularly when someone uses the magic phrase, “career position”. Then again, all of us were probably fairly naïve in the 1990's, and we weren't as distrustful of people and situations as people are today. Yes, the Internet was starting to exist, in bits and pieces, but verifying things with Search Engines wasn't that common yet, so mostly people relied on what they were told, after it was analyzed through basic instinct and street smarts.

Besides, recruiters called all the time to scout for multi-national companies trying to keep up with globalization trends. The call

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seemed normal enough, even if I didn't know who it was exactly, how they got my name or why, specifically, they were calling.

“Of course,” I said, after he set the scene a bit more telling me it was a privately held, high-tech company operating internationally. “I'd be interested in finding out more.”

“Good,” he said, “Let's start by meeting up. Can you come to me at Noon the day after tomorrow?”

After explaining that he'd rather not mention the name of the company just yet, mixed in with a few other unimportant comments, he passed the phone to his assistant, and I was given a street address and a phone number. The male assistant told me to only use it in the event something came up and I couldn't make it. No need to confirm otherwise.

I was a little surprised when he didn't give me any exact location directions, and he sounded more like he was giving orders rather than arranging an interview. But I decided to let that go, and didn't bother to question anything further. Hanging up, I even wondered if by not giving precise directions, this was some kind of strange initiation to see how well I complied with orders, or to test my resourcefulness.

It was an interesting thought, and even if true, the whole thing sounded like an amusing challenge. I have to admit I was also somewhat intrigued by the idea of a new international career opportunity, especially one that sounded like it was right up my alley.

It wasn't hard to brush off the idea that this might be some strange test, concocted by an eccentric professional recruiter.

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Testing like that by Recruiters in those days wasn't that uncommon, since they were always looking for ways to vet you before introducing you to their clients.

At the same time though, my head filled with questions, any of which I would have asked if I had been invited to or if someone had lingered on the phone just a bit longer. For starters, anyone probably would have asked themselves who the Hell this was, and why were they calling? But, true to character, I meandered down a completely different line of questioning.

Why didn't he ask me more about myself and what I could offer, I wondered? Did he know enough about me that he didn't need to ask anything else, and if he did, how was that possible? And why didn't he want me to send over a resume or a reference of some kind before we met?

LinkedIn and online references weren't a thing yet, so I wondered if he had gotten his hands on an old resume from someone. And he certainly never asked my salary requirements, which is the holy grail of initial questioning by a recruiter. Their commission usually hinged on that.

And why didn't he ask if I had any experience or interest in high-tech? I didn't, so if he had heard about me from someone, he probably already knew that.

I was getting exhausted asking myself questions. With one last hoorah, I asked myself if this was some elaborate prank, or if it would turn out to be a monumental waste of time. After all, the address I was being sent to was over an hour and a half away by car. I hadn't even been told where the company was based, or asked if I was willing to relocate.

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God knows, I had received mystery calls in the past asking me for things some would consider strange. It seemed to be my line of work these days. But I could feel something was out of the ordinary with this one, so it made me hesitate. Still, after all was said and done, I put the questioning aside and decided that finding answers in person is always more of an adventure. Besides, I'd gone much further distances as recently as a month ago in search of lesser possibilities.

In fact, I wondered if this could somehow be connected to the project I had just completed overseas. That project had me in Hong Kong and Macau three weeks before, and that project came in a similar way, via an out-of-the-blue phone call from someone who said they were a friend of a friend.

I had been working as an independent contractor for some time by then, and as long as the airline ticket was waiting for me at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York, which it was, I was game. It turned out to be a completely legitimate consulting project, one unlike any other I had ever done.

Calls like the one I had just received from the recruiter were starting to be routine. Since I didn't have anything else pressing on my calendar, I decided to entertain the possibilities. If it didn't pan out, I was only an hour and a half from home.

To be honest, it felt like the Universe was pushing me in a new direction, and all I needed to do was sit back and say, "Yes." After I hung up, I tossed further trepidation aside, and diligently printed out a fresh copy of my resume, as any good "corporate" person would. Then I put the whole thing out of my mind, until I was sitting there parked in front of the driveway on Oak

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Lane, ready to walk up and go inside.



It always feels awkward when you reach a front door and can't find the doorbell. I looked up and down both sides of the door frame, but there wasn't one I could find. No door knocker either.

For a second, I stood there wondering how hard I would need to knock to make sure whoever was inside heard me, without knocking so loud it would be considered obnoxious. No sooner had I clenched my fist to go for it however, then the door suddenly opened without the need to lay a hand on it.

I was greeted by a tall young man in his mid to late twenties, who introduced himself as Matthew, the assistant who had given me the address and phone number the day before. Once he verified who I was, he acknowledged that I was expected.

Matthew was fairly average looking, with angular features, closely cropped light brown hair and hazel eyes. He clearly wasn't the type who liked to chat or banter beyond what was necessary, so he didn't offer me much by way of introduction or explanation, and I decided not to sound like I was going to interrogate him.

I took note that standing there, dressed in his dark grey slacks and wearing a fitted white Oxford shirt with collegiate striped tie, he looked more like a student from the local private Catholic high school than an executive assistant. His All-American appearance worked well for him though, and it also seemed a perfect fit with the neighborhood and the house.

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He politely asked me how my drive out had been, as he motioned me into the house. I smiled and responded that it was painless enough, then, moving slowly forward, I glanced from left to right as I entered the large foyer of the Rancher. I could feel the brow over my eyes arch because of what I saw next.

In a manner of speaking, I literally saw nothing. The house was completely empty. There wasn't a stick of furniture in the large sunken living room to the left, not a single chair, lamp or table in the entry, and no server, dining room table or chairs in the empty dining room to my right. For as far as you could see, there was absolutely nothing.

And it wasn't just that there were no furnishings or decoration anywhere. There wasn't a desk, a chair, a box, a filing cabinet, a lamp, a typewriter, a computer, a copy machine or a garbage bin anywhere to be seen. Nothing. From the ceiling, to the walls, down to the floor, I was following Matthew deeper and deeper into what looked outside to be an average, suburban Ranch house in a banal neighborhood, that was utterly, completely and devastatingly empty inside.

I always had a talent for being perceptive with little to no outward reaction, almost to a fault. As a child, people thought I must be a little slow, until they realized the bulkhead of information that was perpetually processing inside my silence.

This unnerved family members to no end, and teachers would stand me in the corner endless hours for staring at them "too intensely" without speaking. I was thought to have a "behavior problem". But, did I have a choice? I was picking up a barrage of information and it was confusing, especially when people seemed to become unhinged if they heard me spout their deep-

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est thoughts, or say things they were hiding from the world out loud for everyone to hear.

At the time, I didn't understand what it all meant, and I don't think I ever really rectified the many punishments I endured for providing truths and revelations about people that seemed to just pop into my head unannounced. It took me a long time to realize that there were things unspoken, which were considered secret that people did not want to share.

Perhaps because of that, I appeared to be a stoic child, and I did eventually learn to separate it out from what was acceptable to talk about day to day. Like it or not, my natural intuitive, or psychic abilities were being honed by that observational intensity and silence. As I grew slightly older, it was particularly pronounced when it combined with an ability to leave my physical state on-demand, and return to myself with information I saw from a perspective that no one else could see or understand.

I was the kid who saw and heard things no one else did, which I was told repeatedly was not there. Alone, I had to navigate a learning curve for knowing how to distinguish between the two forms of reality I experienced, as well as when to bottle it up and remain quiet.

How clear I can recall at the age of six, sitting outside on the front steps and seeing my Uncle Don approach me, walking slowly up the long sidewalk. When he reached me, he asked me to tell everyone he was just fine and to not worry about him. I ran inside and told my mother that Uncle Don had just visited, and told me to tell her he was doing fine.

My mother smiled and gave me a pat on the head. Then she

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said, “That’s very nice honey, but you know Uncle Don lives in another state and isn’t outside. You shouldn’t make things like that up.”

Then she added, “And don’t tell your father. He’ll explode if he thinks you’re making up stories or lying about things. Now go outside and ride your bike.”

When the phone rang that evening, I could hear the adults down the hallway from my bedroom moaning as if in pain. Uncle Don had unexpectedly and suddenly died that afternoon of a massive heart attack at the age of 52.

A therapist looking for explanations to all this, probably would have attributed it to the emotional abuse I received from a father who was withdrawn, overly critical and in constant competition with me. I survived by developing the skill to disappear, launching myself into an out-of-body state where time stood still and other dimensions seemed to open me to insights not apparent to the rest of the world.

Seeing things from a unique and different perspective was normal for me, even before I had any real sense of who I was. Without realizing it, by the time I was seven I was already an initiate into a metaphysical world that offered unexplained mysteries most considered to be fiction.

In fact, the more severe and stressful the situations I encountered as a child were, the quicker I learned to control that exit from my physical body, and “journey”, as Shamans say, to investigate what was happening from outside day to day existence. As a youngster, it became a game to delve into the hidden meaning of things.

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In no time not only did I master the art of controlling the protective measures I had discovered, but I developed special talents for understanding people and life from the higher dimensional perspective that came with it. Now I could protect myself from an emotionally and sometimes physically abusive parent, while also gaining truths and insights into others and the world that no one else seemed to have and few could fathom.

Standing in the foyer of that house on Oak Lane, I disappeared myself once more, doing exactly what somehow came naturally to me. Without saying a word, but unafraid and acting as if this was entirely normal, I resolutely followed Matthew through an empty building, almost hovering outside myself.

As I looked out from that semi-altered state, I had a sense of calm, and immediately knew that all was well. In fact, it felt like I had more control over the situation, than the situation had over me.