

Introduction to
The Search for 11:11

Celestial Foreword

“This book is the first in a series of accounts that portray the cooperation possible between those of the Temporal Midway Realm and an ordinary mortal. These individuals constitute the 11:11 Emergency Platoon as it is functioning here on Earth. The particular series of episodes of human/celestial cooperation experienced by the author of this book is extraordinary, long lasting, frequently utilized, multifaceted, and intense—and greatly rewarding. Others can also achieve this kind of contact, though perhaps to a more limited degree.

“I am Midwayer Mathew.”

“Mathew,” who uses that name for convenience, communicated the above statement. As is the case with his many Seraphic Superiors, the use of numbers or codes is more common than names, as the former are more speedily communicated.

Mathew’s code-name is 33-333. His presence is frequently made known through time-prompts at 3:33 am or pm precisely, in all time zones across the globe. Mathew is a Spirit Guide, a Planetary Helper who operates in what is called the Midway Realm; therefore, like his counterparts, he is often referred to as a Midwayer.

This amazing being is on long-term but temporary loan to us. Numerous Planetary Helpers, or Celestial Volunteers, are presently on loan to our mortal races for the advancement, or upstepping, of spirituality on this Earth. We are told by Mathew that he is one of a great number of volunteers and new contacts of his kind.

He was sent here by special request—his request to join the 11:11 Platoon.

Author’s Preface

Now that I am in my sixties, I can look back over a lifetime of frequent verbal and visual contact with celestial beings—the kind I describe in this book. Even from my early childhood, I could see these spirit visitors, whom I simply thought of as my family’s “spirit friends,” who regularly visited my home, mostly at mealtimes. But it was obvious to me that our visitors would go to their own homes to eat dinner, since there was no more room at our table. They just seemed to hang around, patiently waiting for the meal to end, as if they wanted to draw my parents aside for casual conversation.

I had no inkling that, of the eight other members in my family, not one was aware of these celestial arrivals, though it did seem strange that no one ever talked with them. And it was hardly my place to address them, for small children were meant to be seen, not heard, at the table.

All throughout my teenage years, I received countless prompts from these beings, and because of the positive advice these prompts contained, I renamed my friends the Spirit Guides. And although I saw them less often, their valuable guidance had a highly positive impact on my life—in my studies for business

management and industrial psychology, in my work, and even in my decision to leave Europe to settle in Australia as a lone migrant at age eighteen. They especially helped me in new business ventures.

From the time I was twenty until I turned thirty-two, as I cared for my young family, my contact with these spirit friends was sporadic. I seldom heard their voices, and yet their subliminal input about the future was an almost daily event. I understood their input to be pure intuition on my part, and all who knew me well pictured me as a talented psychic, capable of hitting the nail on the head when it came to predicting future events.

That conception was about to change-dramatically.

When my seven-year-old daughter—at the insistence of her own “spirit playmate”—saved our entire family from certain demise, it became vital for me to urgently reacquaint myself with the Spirit Guides who, in fact, had never deserted me. Over-committed to both business and clinical work and chronically fatigued, I had utterly failed to notice their persistent 11:11 time-prompt warnings about a grave danger to our young family of five.

It took our daughter’s ability to pick up the message of her unseen playmate for me to realize that I had lost contact with something that was precious to me and that I wanted back. The urgency I felt to rediscover my spirit friends prompted an intensive search to find out where these childhood acquaintances could possibly be in time and space.

I had long assumed there was a simple genetic reason for my extended family’s closeness with these Spirit Guides. My mother often conversed with unseen celestial beings, and her father was widely respected for his having been “a great dowser” in his younger years.

When I finally faced the Spirit Guides myself and looked them in the eyes for the first time, a powerful bond was established, and a remarkable Celestial-Mortal Alliance evolved. I began to count on them for assistance more often, and they more frequently depended on my doing their bidding. As they led me out of danger on a number of occasions, I renamed them the 11:11 Spirit Guardians.

These new spirit friends guarded me closely, and we soon became much more involved with the welfare of those around us. We were, and still are, a Celestial-Mortal Alliance for Progress simply called the unit, or the emergency platoon.

But they were still just my old childhood friends-revisited.

As my contact with the 11:11 Spirit Guardians grew closer, my business ventures picked up even more, and on occasion we boldly took on the task of troubleshooting and breathing new life into near-bankrupt companies. My celestial friends regularly advised me about my personal life and assisted me in countless emergencies that involved many of my patients. They even helped me to design specific therapies for clients in great need.

In 1992, I promised the celestials I would begin the big task of documenting our nearly countless combined endeavors, in order to reveal to others the exciting opportunities for cooperating with these hard-working planetary helpers. They wanted as many people as possible to read about the successes that can be achieved, the wondrous healings that take place with their aid, and the fascinating revelations

about our planet and life in the greater cosmos—as well as about the spiritual advancement an association with them has to offer.

Unlike us “temporary” mortals, who live on Earth for such a short span, the 11:11 Spirit Guardians are the permanent citizens of this planet. They are capable of causing—through you and me—many small and grand events for the benefit of all, today and into the planet’s distant future.

If you yearn for a more rewarding, more spiritual existence, be aware of their 11:11 and other double-digit time-prompts on your clocks, VCRs, microwave ovens. The brilliantly minded 11:11 Spirit Guardians are seeking worldwide human involvement for their task of promoting planetary progress and greater spiritual awareness.

Perhaps you too will join a Celestial-Mortal Alliance for the benefit of all.

Who Are They?

They are only human, still.
Raw products of His creation and evolution—
Flesh-and-blood mortals—who are invited to chart
His seas of affection, His oceans of devotion,
in their shared existence.
Briskly put upon the intricate road to perfection,
but awaiting a warm welcome in Eternity,
these heirs to His universes
fit their appreciation of His great Gifts
in but an egg cup, still.

Part One

The Fourth Generation

For every meal in the Barnard homestead, over a period of more than four years, an extra place was set at the dining room table. This place, directly to George’s right, was for Simone. George never saw Simone eat anything. In fact, he never saw Simone. She was invisible—but not to his eldest daughter.

To the six-and-a-half-year-old, Danielle, Simone was very real. On a few occasions, the advice that was supposed to have come from Danielle’s “invisible sister” made excellent sense.

“Simone suggests you eat at least half of your green beans,” the father jokingly told Danielle at their Saturday evening meal.

The youngster gave him a troubled, sullen look. Then she pounded her little fork down hard on one of the offending beans.

“That one is quite dead now,” George informed her. “You killed it. I think you can safely put it in your mouth now. It won’t be able to get away.”

Her shoulders hunched, her lips pressed tight, Danielle kept glaring at the annoying little green trespassers on her plate. She wasn't going to show him she enjoyed the humor. She simply hated those dreadful beans too much.

The father carried on softly, "When I was little—and I was always very, very little—your grandmother cooked us only one meal per week, on Sundays. And so, on all the other days we had to eat grass, like your pony does. Green beans are ever so much nicer than grass."

The child turned on him in anger and proclaimed loudly, "When you were little—and you were always very, very little—Grandpa forgot to teach you how to walk. And so you skipped around on one leg for the rest of your life. We know that story already, too!"

She was clearly advising her father on behalf of her siblings, and perhaps on behalf of the invisible little Simone, that none of them would believe he was ever forced to eat grass.

"You ask Simone about it," George suggested. "See what she's got to say. She'll soon give you the score."

"She says the tree is going to fall on the house, Daddy," came the immediate but utterly inappropriate reply. It was the second time George had heard that comment. It was no longer a joke. He was beginning to feel uneasy.

From his place at the table, he glanced at the big White Eucalypt. It stood fully forty meters from the homestead, right on their boundary fence. There was no chance of it falling on their home. It was old, big, wide, but not very tall. It did, however, carry some large dead branches.

Perhaps they should be taken down? Be made safe? he mused.

Danielle's remark still bothered him that evening, but even trying hard as he did, he could extract no further information from his Spirit Friends. And to this day, he has no idea why they either did not know, would not tell him, or could not tell him, what he wanted to know about the potential danger with that tree.

Could this failure to obtain psychic information have been caused by fatigue?

1

"Simone Says. . ."

There were many periods during which George Barnard considered himself to be psychically depleted. During times when his firm was financially overextended, or when his workload was committing him to carry on until the early morning hours, it would be more accurate to describe the psychic as intuitively dead.

This was one of those periods.

A new machine-parts manufacture and assembly project would stretch the resources of the Barnards' family company to their very limit. Many months prior to the commencement of the sizable new undertaking, George still had some doubts about signing up for it.

As it was—especially for that time of the year—a seemingly unstoppable flow of orders had kept everyone in the firm on their toes. Tempers were frayed. Along with his workers, Barnard was tired, overworked, and somewhat indecisive.

The machine parts contract would need to be signed within a few months. That huge new commitment will swiftly push the firm's bank balance into a deep pit full of red ink, he thought. Already there was a shortage of funds, although, so far, George was the only one who had missed out on his salary—for five weeks.

Jodi, George's wife of ten years, was finding it tough to make ends meet. She was making some loud noises about being an unseen but important part of his workforce, and about being entitled to receive something extra when his "boatload of outstanding money" finally came in. At least George could charge his hypnotherapy patients for his services, she suggested. Too many of them were never charged a penny if they were rather poor.

Barnard was used to juggling his time between his family, his business, and his hypnotherapy clinic, and moderately successful at serving these three masters. Even then, he still occasionally found time to work on his designs for new machines or cameras. But those drawings had been gathering dust for months. Right now there was simply not a minute to spare.

Kevin Weiss, the firm's production manager, ambled into his boss's workroom, his clenched fists firmly in the pockets of his coveralls—a sure sign of another imminent confrontation between the two men.

No prize for guessing what's on his mind, Barnard thought. Here we go again.

"We're doing far too many different things already," Weiss suggested.

"George, it could break us. We're only just managing what we've got."

Barnard put down his inking pen and ruler. He looked up at the worried production man, frowning, but without saying a word.

"It's outside our area of expertise," Weiss carried on. "Our lunchroom is too small, our toilet facilities are insufficient, factory space is already at a premium, and that stupid old forklift is about to fall apart."

"We would employ five more people, Kev," Barnard suggested. "but we more than double our turnover. This is our opportunity to grow from handkerchief size, bypassing napkin size, to tablecloth size. We gain critical mass to make us infinitely more profitable, better organized, less overworked—hopefully smarter—because we will have time to think, rather than both of us just doing things. It could be a Godsend."

Weiss turned away, shrugged, and walked to the door, his hands still in his pockets. He knew it would upset his employer. "The French are stubborn," he remarked, "and the Dutch can never be convinced of anything. You're half of each and that's what makes you so damned impossible." Weiss was getting personal. "I don't know why they let people like you migrate to Australia . . . allow you into the country."

"Ah! A mongrel! Well! It could be your German ancestry that makes you so rude and bullheaded," Barnard countered, knowing neither of them quite meant what they were saying.

Without the benefit of formal managerial training on his part, the somewhat pessimistic, fearful, but obstinate Kevin Weiss often sought to influence the highly

educated Barnard's more radical schemes and decisions. This time he walked out without a further word, haughty, snubbing his boss.

George's stomach had already been playing up for days because of Kevin's attitude. His appetite was suppressed, and his adrenaline output so high, that he sensed he would soon lose his cool in a most frightful way. The production manager's behavior annoyed him almost daily of late. Few of his staff had ever seen George angry, but when it finally happened, it was not all that pleasant to be too close to their employer's workroom.

Then, Friday's mail arrived. There were so many checks; the firm's financial troubles were instantly over. Everyone they knew must have loved them so dearly that they felt like paying their bills. It was as if all their customers had communicated with each other and fully understood the firm's urgent need.

Amongst the checks in the stack was one of the biggest George would ever put into his business trading account. He laughed almost all the way to the bank. But he had had enough of the factory for the week.

Barnard was on his way home early that afternoon, to take the financial pressure off poor, neglected Jodi and to spend some time playing with his children. They had missed their dad, his jokes and his tricks. It had been obvious for weeks. The telephone would be left off the hook for the rest of the afternoon. "For once, miserable old Kevin can sort things out for himself," Barnard grumbled.

Much of Kevin's considerable technical expertise was imported into the firm. But for his previous boss treating him so very badly, the conscientious though overcautious Weiss would have never joined Barnard. He would have stayed with his old firm. Their loss was Barnard's gain. But if Kevin ever managed to fully mature, he would surely owe that in part to the half-Dutch, half-French "damned impossible mongrel" migrant, George Mathieu Barnard.

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"Now listen, all you kiddies!" George shouted just as soon as he walked through his front door. Instantly they came running. "I've got some wonderful news to tell you." He paused to create suspense, and decided to carefully count them: "One . . . two . . . three! Aha! All present."

All eyes and ears, they waited, eager to hear the news, suspicious of another of his regular stunts. They were clearly holding their breaths.

"We have worked so hard," the father told them. "And we have made so much money! And we loaded all the money into a huge truck. We transported it all to the bank. Now the bank is full. No room for the people even! We are now so incredibly rich; we don't have to go back to work. Ever!" He gave them time to visualize the scenario. Then, he casually but pleadingly asked, "You guys do believe me, don't you?"

The youngest only pouted. The boy shook his head in silent disbelief. But Danielle quickly took on the task of spokesperson for the group. The verdict was loud and decisive. "We have decided! That we . . . will not . . . believe you! Anymore!"

“Too bad. So sad,” he told them all, shaking his head and looking sorry. “That is a crying shame. You see, if all that money is not in the bank, we can’t afford to go to the beach this weekend.”

Quickly, like three little accomplices about to commit an underhanded act, they rushed into a corner of the room. There was a lot of whispering and giggling. Finally, they returned, and Danielle announced, “We will believe you. But only this time.”

“So? All that money is in the bank?” George inquired.

“No, Daddy,” Danielle answered.

“No, Dad,” her brother informed him.

“Uh-uh,” said the little one.

“What? What? What?” he cried, trying hard to put a look of great consternation on his face. “Our money is not in the bank? Oh, no! There goes our Sunday at the beach! What a disaster. . .”

“It’s all there, Daddy,” Danielle assured him with a laugh.

“. . . all in the bank,” the boy quickly agreed, with a hopeful look in his eyes.

“Ah?” made the smallest one. By now, she had clearly lost track of what was going on and which way to vote; one could tell by the confused look on her face as she urgently searched the faces of her siblings. A day at the beach was something that should not be missed. Any pleasing answer would do, just to get there, but what could that answer be?

A priceless reaction!

“Thank heavens it’s all in the bank,” George told them all. “I was so looking forward to a nice day at the beach.” It was difficult not to laugh.

I just purchased three, no, two and a half opinions for the expenditure of a day in the sun, he thought, congratulating himself. When the need is great enough, anyone will believe anything.

But the whole gang swiftly disappeared into a bedroom, and their boisterous laughter could be heard, off and on, from behind the closed door, and for the next hour, as they convinced each other they had won. Fooled their father, too. This time.

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“What does Simon . . . oops! What does Simone say about going to the beach on Sunday?” George asked at the evening meal.

“She says she will come, too,” Danielle answered, “but the tree is going to fall on the house.” Her last remark had been so unemotional, so unreservedly casual.

I live in a different time slot, the father thought. I go and whiz around this universe, looking at the future, and I do a second-rate job in coming back. I’m getting the same dumb, unbecoming answer to the question I asked last weekend. Either that or I’m hearing a strange, long-distance echo. I may be a week out of sync with the rest of the world.

“Leave your dinner, young lady,” he told her. “You, and I, and that big tree over there, are going to have a lengthy discussion.”

As he stood and headed for the door, Danielle slipped down from her chair and followed him. Through the door and down the steps, across the driveway and up the garden steps, then across the expanse of their finely mown lawn, they finally reached the Eucalypt. There, father and daughter faced each other beneath its wide crown. The child was wearing a most thoughtful but somewhat distrustful look.

“This here tree is a White Eucalypt,” George told her as he tapped the bark. “It has been standing right here for a long time, even before you were born. It told me just recently that it likes this particular spot and it does not want to leave us. It’s happy to be part of our family and it grows thousands of leaves out of sheer delight. It’s a clever tree. When there is a drought, it will let some branches die. And when the rains come, it grows new branches. This tree can actually prune itself. Smart, eh? See those dead branches up there? The tree let them die, years ago, when there was no rain.”

The youngster stood staring at the foliage, spotted some dead branches, and nodded energetically.

“So, Danielle Yvette Barnard, you tell me why this blissfully contented, psychologically well-adjusted, emotionally stable tree of highly superior intelligence, standing here, holding its breath, waiting to see if you might perhaps acquire a liking for green beans, should hop all the way across the lawn to jump on your house.”

Always ready to enjoy yet another of her father’s impossible stories, Danielle had listened attentively and not missed a beat. She spared him a genuine smile for his effort, but she seemed hardly impressed. Pointing at the White Eucalypt, she said, “It’s not this tree, Daddy.” She turned on her heels and pointed to another tree. “It’s that tree,” she said. “Simone said so.”

She was keeping her little finger pointed at a towering Gray Eucalypt that leaned slightly over the homestead. Its massive crown provided shade from the hot summer sun for all the bedrooms, as well as the living areas, of the Barnards’ sizable home. Around twenty tons of potential calamity stood poised, ready to crush all occupants, should a northwesterly squall decide to write their death warrants. Only George’s clinic would remain untouched, but the family might all be dead.

She looked up at her father, to see if he was paying attention, but George was stunned into silence. It felt as if a cold hand had reached into his chest and was squeezing his heart to stop it from beating. That little finger was still pointing at the Gray Eucalypt. She was waiting for an acknowledgment from the man.

But George was listening to a loud inner voice, telling him, ordering him, “You have less than a week to down that giant, George Barnard, and you are going to contact a tree doctor now.” The hair on the back of his head and neck was bristling up with the knowledge that this was a deadly serious matter.

“You go and finish your dinner, young lady,” he told Danielle. “Tell Mom your father is going to have a talk with a tree doctor.” He made his way to the clinic, shaken, but determined to make his call in private and to smartly get someone’s attention.

That big tree had to go.

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Shortly after the Gray Eucalypt episode, the Simone phenomenon simply evaporated into thin air. There were now only five places set at the Barnards' dinner table. With the arrival at Danielle's school of a new classmate, Simone—a flesh and blood version to be sure—there no longer seemed to be room for the invisible Simone, who for more than four years chose to share a meal with the Barnards, and was reported to “really, really, really and truly” enjoy, as well as need, their company.

Was Simone a simple concept born from the mind of an imaginative child, or some form of reality? Who knows? The jury may well be out on this kind of thing for another thousand years.

But George still questions: Why? Danielle and her brother were constant companions, inseparable playmates—thick as thieves, one might say. They were what he termed call-just-one-and-two-come-running children. And disagreement between these two was an absolute rarity. It could hardly have been loneliness that had triggered the birth of an imaginary playmate. Some other need? Or a budding psychic ability?

Only time would tell.

But at a time when her father was stressed to the limit, his psychic capacity utterly dysfunctional, urgent and most essential psychic information was passed on via the daughter.

They would all soon learn how they had cheated death.

2

The Grey Eucalypt

By some form of coincidence, the Yellow Pages fell open to the right page. For some reason, George unwittingly picked the first name his eyes fell upon. And by some stroke of luck, the telephone was almost immediately answered by a real person, not some dumb answering machine, even though it was after five-thirty in the afternoon—and on a Friday!

In the rush to get the attention of someone—anyone—who could take that Gray Eucalypt down, the father feverishly moved like a machine, a robot, a servomechanism, programmed to protect his family. Surely, nothing else could have existed in his mind.

Not until many weeks after the event did he begin to realize what had happened. And he needed to sit down and think about it all. “My God!” he heard himself say. “George Mathieu Barnard, what a stupid clod of a slow learner you are! The Spirit Guardians have worked ever so hard to make you take notice.”

Douglas Shannon, tree surgeon, sounded tired but friendly enough. He would be around forty years of age, perhaps a little younger. His deep voice sounded like that of a confident man, a decision maker.

“You caught me in the nick of time, Mr. Barnard,” he informed George. “I was about to close up shop for the day. Two minutes from now, and the gate would have been locked, and I would have been contemplating a large, cold beer.”

Shannon listened to George’s directions, then he cut him short. “I know exactly where your hobby-farm thing is,” he commented, “because I grew up around there when it was practically all still bush. I probably know that very tree. My whole crew will be working most of the weekend, and we will be less than three miles down the road from your place. We are snowed under with work, and the electricity people are pushing us to complete the job so they can hook up another farm.”

He paused. “Does your farm carry livestock?” he asked.

“Two cats, one dog, a duck, two geese, three goldfish, and a pony,” George told him. “Then there is this huge herd of freeloading kangaroos.”

“Bloody city farmers,” Shannon laughed. “Are you growing anything, harvesting anything from the place?” he wanted to know.

“Oxygen,” George told him, “lots of it. Ten hectares were cleared when we got here. The rest is covered with trees, all individually adopted by us, and they can stay. We love trees. But one of them is no longer welcome in this family. We’re divorcing that one.”

“Those bloody city farmers,” Shannon repeated. He was enjoying himself. Serious broad-acre farming might well be in his background, George thought.

“I’ll tell you what I can do,” Shannon said. “I will come and look at your tree first thing in the morning, but it will take us a fair while to drop her, if she needs taking out. I will see you around six-thirty.”

Again he paused. “Now, you had better get yourself ready, Mr. Barnard,” he told George in a most solemn tone of voice. “Start thinking about herding up, and fencing out, your extensive numbers of livestock.” He laughed. “Those city farmers. . .” He rang off.

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“Your dinner is back on the stove, George,” his wife informed him. “What did the tree man say?”

“There is good news and there is bad news, Jodi,” he told her. “He will come and look at our tree tomorrow. That’s the good news. Now for the bad news: The man is a heathen! He gets out of bed before six in the morning, just like you do. That’s revoltingly unchristian! He simply refuses to sleep when civilized people are still in bed.”

“That’s a matter of opinion, Barnard!” she answered him, gruffly. Despite the children’s laughter, she was pinning him down with a long, cold, disapproving stare.

“I will need to break all the rules tomorrow morning,” he told her, “and get up before six, and be fully awake. I will need to convince him to fell that tree, quick

smart. It's urgent. Danielle and Simone have got it right. And I can feel it in my bones. You had better try very hard to bring me back to the land of the living, like . . . really early."

She nodded pensively. "It makes such lovely shade, that tree, and it nearly covers the whole house. We will miss it."

"With a bit of luck, it will miss us, too—on the way down, that is—if he can get it to flip over the other way. Otherwise, it will cover the whole house. Until then, remember you were once a Christian, and keep saying your little prayers, Jodi," George suggested.

"Never a dull moment in this household," she complained. She was giving him that tired, life-can-be-a-struggle look, but he knew she was only having a shot at him, and, likely, a shot at the Spirit Guardians, as well. "Lord only knows what we're in for next."

"Don't complain," he warned her. "A decent fright at regular intervals gives you smooth skin, less freckles, and it reduces your pimples, too."

"I don't have any freckles or pimples," she muttered.

"Shows you it's working already," he assured her.

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George was the only one still finishing his sweets, but they were all still at the table. The children had missed him. It was so obvious.

Their mother liked order; George brought confusion and disorder into their lives. But kids love chaos—at least the Barnards' children always did. Their father was also, unmistakably, reading their mother's mind.

"You fool around endlessly," she complained. "Stop and think about what you are doing to these kiddies' minds. You are confusing them . . . utterly. It's a wonder they remember who they are when they wake up in the morning. It's a miracle these two find their way home from school and kindergarten, with all the crazy stories you tell them about lots of money in the bank and things like that. One day, George Barnard. . . one day, you will need to tell your children something really important, and they won't believe you at all."

"My father tells fibs," the little one chimed in, with that absolute integrity of a three-and-a-half-year-old, "all the time. But not when he says, 'I'm serious, kid!'"

George turned to the little sprite who still needed two pillows on her chair to raise her chin above the table. "What did I tell you about listening to grownup people's talk, nipper? Eh? Your ears will grow as big as my hands, furry and pointy, and they'll flop about in the breeze."

She gave him a cheeky smile because he had not said he was serious.

"That's just what I mean," the mother explained. "George, that's the kind of story that makes them all want to sleep with the lights still on."

Jodi Barnard was worried about that Gray Eucalypt, first and foremost. She was simply having a shot at him. She, herself, often enough joined in the fun, but the mother was on edge, worried about her brood. She did not have her husband's confidence in the Spirit Guardians. She couldn't have that confidence. She didn't know any Spirit Guardians.

“We might get lucky, Jodi,” he suggested. “Lots of clowning around might develop their brains, their minds, and they might even acquire a sense of humor.”

“We already have a sense of humor!” the boy heatedly interjected. His looks were dead-set serious, almost angry.

“Progress being made,” the father told him, trying hard not to laugh, and succeeding admirably.

Only Danielle appeared to be appreciating the ironic aspects of her brother’s behavior and outburst. She was rolling around on the floor now, laughing and holding her belly. Her mom had missed the point entirely.

Having Gray Eucalypts in the family, it seems, can cause lots of stress to mothers.

* * * * *

The converted army “Blitzwagen” had bumped its way into the home yard.

“Thanks for coming,” George told the two men in the cabin.

The driver was obviously the boss, and he appeared to have no intention of either switching off the noisy engine or hopping down to terra firma. He seemed somewhat rushed and preoccupied. His voice was terse as he said, “Was it you I talked to last night?”

“Yeah, sure was, Doug!” George shouted to make himself heard.

“Which tree, mate?” Shannon wanted to know.

“That Gray Eucalypt, next to the house,” Barnard answered loudly.

Shannon casually glanced at it. “Nothing wrong with that!” he barked. “I’m busy! We’re going. I’ll see you later!” He moved to put his stubborn old vehicle into reverse gear, but the gears just wouldn’t engage.

“Doug! Eh, Doug!” George was shouting as hard as he could to make himself heard over the clamor of grating gears. “You’ve come all this way! Can’t you at least take a good close look at it? Just to make sure?”

From his perch up in the cabin, Douglas Shannon looked down on him as if his patience were being sorely tried. His expression seemed to be saying something quite familiar to George’s ears—something about city farmers, and hobby-farm things.

Getting out of bed so early in the morning, George mused, has got to be unhealthy after all. I knew it! What happened to the congenial Douglas Shannon I spoke to last night? He left his sense of humor under his pillow in the rush to get away.

Finally Shannon stalled his engine, grabbed up a large screwdriver, and came down to earth. His young friend stayed in the cabin, grinning from ear to ear. His staying there was a statement: “Hobby farmers know nothing.”

Talking to no one in particular, the tree doctor moved all around the tree, prodding it with the screwdriver, and with great force. He was saying, “Nothing wrong. . . Nothing wrong here. . . That’s okay. . . Bloody nothing wrong. . .” He levered up a large section of bark and made a great show of straightening his back. “There’s nothing bloody well wrong with your tree, Mr. Barnard!”

George took his time to answer him. “Doug, my little girl tells me this tree is going to fall on the house. And when she says this tree is going to fall on the house, then that is what it will do. It will fall. And it will land on the house.”

Shannon was losing his cool. “We’re all bloody experts!” he cried out. “What a load of bullshit!” The angry, frustrated tree surgeon grabbed hold of the loose bark and ripped off a strip to well above their heads.

“Ker . . . rist!” he shouted. As a shower of little white insects landed on their heads, the two men jumped out of the line of fire. Urgently, they brushed the tenacious, biting little pests from their bodies and clothes.

“Shees . . . sus!” said Shannon. Then he stood there in a long, purposeless silence, watching a stream of tiny “timber workers” as they continued to fall in their thousands from a gaping big hole in the monster Gray Eucalypt. Finally, he rediscovered his tongue. His humor as well, so it seemed. “You told me your name was George?” he asked.

“George Mathieu Barnard. That’s what my momma always called me, Doug.”

“Well . . . George Mathieu Barnard. . .” he drawled. “I think this tree is going to fall on your house.”

“It kind of . . . looks like it,” George suggested. He could do that drawl just as well as Shannon could. “What are you . . . uh . . . going to do about it?”

“We can’t fix her. It’s a shame. She still looks good, but she’s too far gone. There are millions and millions and millions of them up there. She’s had it. We’ll have to cut her down.”

He stepped back some more from the trunk and looked up at the foliage, still shaking his head in disbelief. “You would never know. They have done all that in the space of a year, I tell you, and she’s only months away from dropping all her leaves. You know, you could have built a whole house out of what these little blighters have chewed up. What a shame. . .”

He paused. “I could have never picked it,” he admitted. “And your wife knew?”

“No, my little girl knew,” George corrected him. “My daughter, Doug. That’s her, way over there in the sandbox, in her red jumpsuit. She’s probably fabricating some breakfast for me right now. The child simply looks at what will happen tomorrow when it is still yesterday. It’s a bit spooky, but it’s handy to have her around. She has the Gifts of the Ancients. That’s what we sometimes call it.”

Shannon had once again lost his tongue. He was looking at Barnard in disbelief, but since George would only smile and nod his head, the tree doctor must have finally understood it had truly been petite Danielle who had sounded the alarm.

“Feed her regularly,” Shannon suggested, “and when she gets to be twice that size, send her around. I’ll give her a job.” He turned to the young man in the Blitzwagen. “Rodney! Get your lazy butt out here! Something worth looking at!” He turned back to George. “That’s my son and heir. I’ll trade him with you for your little girl.” Then he smiled. “I’m joking, mate. He’s a good one, our Rod.”

“When can you cut her down?” George asked.

“In a week. When we’re finished down the road,” the tree doctor answered.

“No way, Doug. I want her down today. I’d like you to do it, but I will get someone else if I must. I can’t ask my family to keep living under that booby trap.”

“You’re right, I wouldn’t either. Tell you what, we can knock her down now, but we won’t cart her away for at least a week. There’s still more than twenty tons up there. Is that okay with you?”

“Suits me fine, Doug. Just do it,” Barnard suggested.

“Rodney,” Douglas Shannon addressed his son, “get the gear out pronto, or I will ask Mr. Barnard’s little girl tomorrow to do it for me yesterday and in half the time.”

* * * * *

Expertly, the two men attached a heavy steel cable around the trunk at about three and a half to four meters up from the ground. The other end of the cable was hooked onto the winch cable of their ancient Blitzwagen.

Way out in the field, well beyond danger, Rodney Shannon skillfully made the winch increase the tension on the cable. Time and again, Douglas eased the chainsaw into the massive trunk. Slowly, the insect-laden Eucalypt gained the upright position.

Holding on to their cats, dog, and goldfish, the Barnards watched from a safe distance. Their pet duck, geese, and pony were nowhere to be found. Somehow they all knew what was going to happen.

Finally, the tree leaned over the other way, bit by bit, more and more. Then she dropped, flattening the fences and shattering into dozens of huge chunks. The echoes of its eardrum-splitting impact roared and bounced around all through the valley below.

“What are we going to do with all those bits of wood, Daddy?” the little one asked.

“First up, I’m going to telephone the zoo,” George told her. “We will need to borrow at least one hundred big fat South American anteaters, to lap up all those white ants.”

“See you in about a week, George. And look after that little girl of yours,” the tree doctor yelled, as the Blitzwagen grated painfully, then ultimately discovered its first gear. “Feed her regularly.”

“She’s earned her tucker for at least another week!” George yelled back. “Thanks a lot! Both of you!”

The children had spent some twenty minutes scraping, spooning, and brushing the white ants into jars and tins. All that effort expended in inspired anticipation of the arrival of the anteaters. That was fun to watch! Then one of them must have remembered that their dad never told them he was serious.

“They will eat your house!” he heard Jodi argue with them. She sounded desperate. “You can’t keep termites for pets! Oh, Lord, give me strength.” The clinic might well be the best place for me to hide for a while, he thought.

Kids! Chaos!

* * * * *

“You’re just about bankrupt, George,” Jodi told him with a devious smile on her face. “You’ve got no money and no real estate. You’re out of business. And it just goes to show you that what I’ve been telling you all these years is right on the button: You are totally irresponsible with your money.”

Petite Michelle Barnard generally, and for obvious reasons referred to as the Little One, had long ago fallen asleep on the carpet. As always, right underneath the table was her place of choice. Her siblings were wide awake, and together with the mother, they were enjoying the inevitability of George’s financial demise.

“Skid row for me,” he remarked, seeing no way out of the dilemma. “Out on the streets on a Tuesday night when there is a gale blowing. I haven’t really lost. No, sir. I was robbed by a whole family that ganged up on me. There is the irony of it all. This is what I get in return for years of tender loving care.”

“It’s only a monopoly game, Daddy,” Danielle tried to console him. “But Mum and I are winning and . . . we like that!”

“That’s making me feel so much better,” he told her. “Your concern for my welfare has made my day. It touches my heart.”

Moments later, a powerful gust of wind was unleashed on the homestead. Doors and windows shook and rattled violently. Then the storm carried on as it had been blowing all evening.

“That was it, you guys,” George casually noted. “That big blast of fresh air just then, that was the moment our Gray Eucalypt would have flattened us all.”

They all sensed it. They all felt it. They all knew it. There really had been no need for him to say it. But suddenly, they all felt the urge to look under the table to see if little Michelle was okay.

That was strange. Why wouldn’t she be? They were all fine. For some minutes after, they were all still keeping an eye on each other. To George, it felt as though the shock of the realization of their all having cheated death had awakened some primitive, knee-jerk response—a kind of disbelief that they were truly safe.

He excused himself from the game and found a quiet place for a silent prayer.

“You gave Danielle the Gifts of the Ancients. I thank You for that. . .”

* * * * *

Morning light revealed twenty-two smashed roof tiles strewn across the home yard by the previous evening’s savage gust.

“That was it, Jodi. It came precisely from the northwest.”

“I’ve got the feeling They like us up there, George.”

A whole trainload of Spirit Guides has worked their ethereal butts off to make this turn out right. George was sure of it now. Douglas Shannon’s home base was right at the opposite end of town. There was no logic in his picking one of the most distant firms to do the urgent job.

Someone knew Douglas’s crew was working nearby.

“Who Are We?”

Body, Mind, Spirit and Soul,
we occupy Time in Space,
yet we belong to Eternity.
Experiential meets Existential.
Such complex products of Creation and Evolution.
As if caught up in an avalanche of psychic events.
Spinning head over heels and out of control
down a never-ending mountain slope
surrounded by the ever-present powdered snow
of the elusive Spirit World.
Bruised and beaten creatures,
and their victorious Spirit Selves.
He is the heir of our expanding universes.
She is rich beyond her wildest dreams.
And still, so many must ask the question:

“Who Are We?”