

*I*n the rain forests of Peru, an ancient manuscript has been discovered. Within its pages are 9 key insights into life itself – insights each human being is predicted to grasp sequentially, one insight then another, as we move toward a completely spiritual culture on Earth.

THE CELESTINE PROPHECY

AN ADVENTURE

James Redfield

“A fabulous book about experiencing life—I couldn’t put it down.”

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D.

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An Adventure

JAMES REDFIELD



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*For
Sarah Virginia Redfield*



And those who have insight will
shine brightly like the brightness of
the expanse of Heaven, and those who
lead the many to righteousness, like the
stars forever and ever.

But for you, Daniel, conceal these
words and seal up the book until the end
of time. Many will go back and forth,
and knowledge will increase.

DANIEL 12:3-4

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

For half a century now, a new consciousness has been entering the human world, a new awareness that can only be called transcendent, spiritual. If you find yourself reading this book, then perhaps you already sense what is happening, already feel it inside.

It begins with a heightened perception of the way our lives move forward. We notice those chance events that occur at just the right moment, and bring forth just the right individuals, to suddenly send our lives in a new and important direction. Perhaps more than any other people in any other time, we intuit higher meaning in these mysterious happenings.

We know that life is really about a spiritual unfolding that is personal and enchanting—an unfolding that no science or philosophy or religion has yet fully clarified. And we know something else as well: we know that once we do understand what is happening, how to engage this allusive process and maximize its occurrence in our lives, human society will take a quantum leap into a whole new way of life—one that realizes the best of our tradition—and creates a culture that has been the goal of history all along.

The following story is offered toward this new understanding. If it touches you, if it crystalizes something that you perceive in life, then pass on what you see to another—for I think our new awareness of the spiritual is expanding in exactly this way, no longer through hype nor fad, but personally, through a kind of positive psychological contagion among people.

All that any of us have to do is suspend our doubts and distractions just long enough . . . and miraculously, this reality can be our own.

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A CRITICAL MASS

I drove up to the restaurant and parked, then leaned back in my seat to think for a moment. Charlene, I knew, would already be inside, waiting to talk with me. But why? I hadn't heard a word from her in six years. Why would she have shown up now, just when I had sequestered myself in the woods for a week?

I stepped out of the truck and walked toward the restaurant. Behind me, the last glow of a sunset sank in the west and cast highlights of golden amber across the wet parking lot. Everything had been drenched an hour earlier by a brief thunderstorm, and now the summer evening felt cool and renewed, and because of the fading light, almost surreal. A half moon hung overhead.

As I walked, old images of Charlene filled my mind. Was she still beautiful, intense? How would time have changed her? And what was I to think of this manuscript she had mentioned—this ancient artifact found in South America that she couldn't wait to tell me about?

"I have a two-hour layover at the airport," she had said on the telephone. "Can you meet me for dinner? You're going to love what this manuscript says—it's just your kind of mystery."

My kind of mystery? What did she mean by that?

Inside, the restaurant was crowded. Several couples waited for tables. When I found the hostess, she told me Charlene had already been seated

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and directed me toward a terraced area above the main dining room.

I walked up the steps and became aware of a crowd of people surrounding one of the tables. The crowd included two policemen. Suddenly, the policemen turned and rushed past me and down the steps. As the rest of the people dispersed, I could see past them to the person who seemed to have been the center of attention—a woman, still seated at the table . . . Charlene!

I quickly walked up to her. "Charlene, what's going on? Is anything wrong?"

She tossed her head back in mock exasperation and stood up, flashing her famous smile. I noticed that her hair was perhaps different, but her face was exactly as I remembered: small delicate features, wide mouth, huge blue eyes.

"You wouldn't believe it," she said, pulling me into a friendly hug. "I went to the rest room a few minutes ago and while I was gone, someone stole my briefcase."

"What was in it?"

"Nothing of importance, just some books and magazines I was taking along for the trip. It's crazy. The people at the other tables told me someone just walked in, picked it up, and walked out. They gave the police a description and the officers said they would search the area."

"Maybe I should help them look?"

"No, no. Let's forget about it. I don't have much time and I want to talk with you."

I nodded and Charlene suggested we sit down. A waiter approached so we looked over the menu and gave him our order. Afterward, we spent ten or fifteen minutes chatting in general. I tried to underplay my self-imposed isolation but Charlene picked up on my vagueness. She leaned over and gave me that smile again.

"So what's *really* going on with you?" she asked.

I looked at her eyes, at the intense way she was looking at me. "You want the whole story immediately, don't you?"

"Always," she said.

"Well, the truth is, I'm taking some time for myself right now and stay-

ing at the lake. I've been working hard and I'm thinking about changing directions in my life."

"I remember you talking about that lake. I thought you and your sister had to sell it."

"Not yet, but the problem is property taxes. Because the land is so close to the city, the taxes keep increasing."

She nodded. "So what are you going to do next?"

"I don't know yet. Something different."

She gave me an intriguing look. "Sounds as if you're as restless as everyone else."

"I suppose," I said. "Why do you ask?"

"It's in the Manuscript."

There was silence as I returned her gaze.

"Tell me about this Manuscript," I said.

She leaned back in her chair as if to gather her thoughts, then looked me in the eye again. "I mentioned on the phone, I think, that I left the newspaper several years ago and joined a research firm that investigates cultural and demographic changes for the U.N. My last assignment was in Peru.

"While I was there, completing some research at the University of Lima, I kept hearing rumors about an old manuscript that had been discovered—only no one could give me any of the details, not even at the departments of archeology or anthropology. And when I contacted the government about it, they denied any knowledge whatsoever.

"One person told me that the government was actually working to suppress this document for some reason. Although, again, he had no direct knowledge.

"You know me," she continued. "I'm curious. When my assignment was over, I decided to stay around for a couple of days to see what I could find out. At first, every lead I pursued turned out to be another dead end, but then while I was eating lunch in a cafe outside of Lima, I noticed a priest watching me. After a few minutes, he walked over and admitted that he had heard me inquiring about the Manuscript earlier in the day. He wouldn't reveal his name but he agreed to answer all my questions."

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She hesitated for a moment, still looking at me intensely. "He said the Manuscript dates back to about 600 B.C. It predicts a massive transformation in human society."

"Beginning when?" I asked.

"In the last decades of the twentieth century."

"Now?!"

"Yes, now."

"What kind of transformation is it supposed to be?" I asked.

She looked embarrassed for a moment, then with force said, "The priest told me it's a kind of renaissance in consciousness, occurring very slowly. It's not religious in nature, but it is spiritual. We're discovering something new about human life on this planet, about what our existence means, and according to the priest, this knowledge will alter human culture dramatically."

She paused again, then added, "The priest told me the Manuscript is divided into segments, or chapters, each devoted to a particular insight into life. The Manuscript predicts that in this time period human beings will begin to grasp these insights sequentially, one insight then another, as we move from where we are now to a completely spiritual culture on Earth."

I shook my head and raised an eyebrow cynically. "Do you really believe all this?"

"Well," she said. "I think. . ."

"Look around," I interrupted, pointing at the crowd sitting in the room below us. "This is the real world. Do you see anything changing out there?"

Just as I said that, an angry remark erupted from a table near the far wall, a remark I couldn't understand, but which was loud enough to hush the entire room. At first I thought the disturbance was another robbery, but then I realized it was only an argument. A woman appearing to be in her thirties was standing up and staring indignantly at a man seated across from her.

"No," she yelled. "The problem is that this relationship is not happening the way I wanted! Do you understand? It's not happening!" She composed herself, tossed her napkin on the table, and walked out.

Charlene and I stared at each other, shocked that the outburst had occurred at the very moment we were discussing the people below us. Finally Charlene nodded toward the table where the man remained alone and said, "It's the real world that's changing."

"How?" I asked, still off balance.

"The transformation is beginning with the First Insight, and according to the priest, this insight always surfaces unconsciously at first, as a profound sense of restlessness."

"Restlessness?"

"Yes."

"What are we looking for?"

"That's just it! At first we aren't sure. According to the Manuscript, we're beginning to glimpse an alternative kind of experience. . . moments in our lives that feel different somehow, more intense and inspiring. But we don't know what this experience is or how to make it last, and when it ends we're left feeling dissatisfied and restless with a life that seems ordinary again."

"You think this restlessness was behind the woman's anger?"

"Yes. She's just like the rest of us. We're all looking for more fulfillment in our lives, and we won't put up with anything that seems to bring us down. This restless searching is what's behind the 'me-first' attitude that has characterized recent decades, and it's affecting everyone, from Wall Street to street gangs."

She looked directly at me. "And when it comes to relationships, we're so demanding that we're making them near impossible."

Her remark brought back the memory of my last two relationships. Both had begun intensely and both within a year had failed. When I focused on Charlene again, she was waiting patiently.

"What exactly are we doing to our romantic relationships?" I asked.

"I talked with the priest a long time about this," she replied. "He said that when both partners in a relationship are overly demanding, when each expects the other to live in his or her world, to always be there to join in his or her chosen activities, an ego battle inevitably develops."

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What she said struck home. My last two relationships had indeed degenerated into power struggles. In both situations, we had found ourselves in a conflict of agendas. The pace had been too fast. We had too little time to coordinate our different ideas about what to do, where to go, what interests to pursue. In the end, the issue of who would lead, who would determine the direction for the day, had become an irresolvable difficulty.

"Because of this control battle," Charlene continued, "the Manuscript says we will find it very difficult to stay with the same person for any length of time."

"That doesn't seem very spiritual," I said.

"That's exactly what I told the priest," she replied. "He said to remember that while most of society's recent ills can be traced to this restlessness and searching, this problem is temporary, and will come to an end. We're finally becoming conscious of what we're actually looking for, of what this other, more fulfilling experience really is. When we grasp it fully, we'll have attained the First Insight."

Our dinner arrived so we paused for several minutes as the waiter poured more wine, and to taste each other's food. When she reached across the table to take a bite of salmon from my plate, Charlene wrinkled her nose and giggled. I realized how easy it was to be with her.

"Okay," I said. "What is this experience we're looking for? What is the First Insight?"

She hesitated, as though unsure how to begin.

"This is hard to explain," she said. "But the priest put it this way. He said the First Insight occurs when we become conscious of the *coincidences* in our lives."

She leaned toward me. "Have you ever had a hunch or intuition concerning something you wanted to do? Some course you wanted to take in your life? And wondered how it might happen? And then, after you had half forgotten about it and focused on other things, you suddenly met someone or read something or went somewhere that led to the very opportunity you envisioned?"

"Well," she continued, "according to the priest, these coincidences are

happening more and more frequently and that, when they do, they strike us as beyond what would be expected by pure chance. They feel destined, as though our lives had been guided by some unexplained force. The experience induces a feeling of mystery and excitement and, as a result, we feel more alive.

"The priest told me that this is the experience that we've glimpsed and that we're now trying to manifest all the time. More people every day are convinced that this mysterious movement is real and that it means something, that something else is going on beneath everyday life. This awareness is the First Insight.

She looked at me expectantly, but I said nothing.

"Don't you see?" she asked. "The First Insight is a reconsideration of the inherent mystery that surrounds our individual lives on this planet. We are experiencing these mysterious coincidences, and even though we don't understand them yet, we know they are real. We are sensing again, as in childhood, that there is another side of life that we have yet to discover, some other process operating behind the scenes."

Charlene was leaning further toward me, gesturing with her hands as she spoke.

"You're really into this, aren't you?" I asked.

"I can remember a time," she said, sternly, "when you talked about these kinds of experiences."

Her comment jolted me. She was right. There had been a period in my life when I had indeed experienced such coincidences and had even tried to understand them psychologically. Somewhere along the way, my view had changed. I had begun to regard such perceptions as immature and unrealistic for some reason, and I had stopped even noticing.

I looked directly at Charlene, then said defensively, "I was probably reading Eastern Philosophy or Christian Mysticism at that time. That's what you remember. Anyway, what you're calling the First Insight has been written about many times, Charlene. What's different now? How is a perception of mysterious occurrences going to lead to a cultural transformation?"

Charlene looked down at the table for an instant and then back at me.

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"Don't misunderstand," she said. "Certainly this consciousness has been experienced and described before. In fact, the priest made a point to say that the first insight wasn't new. He said individuals have been aware of these unexplained coincidences throughout history, that this has been the perception behind many great attempts at philosophy and religion. But the difference now lies in the numbers. According to the priest, the transformation is occurring now because of the number of individuals having this awareness all at the same time."

"What did he mean, exactly?" I asked.

"He told me the Manuscript says the number of people who are conscious of such coincidences would begin to grow dramatically in the sixth decade of the twentieth century. He said that this growth would continue until sometime near the beginning of the following century, when we would reach a specific level of such individuals—a level I think of as a critical mass.

"The Manuscript predicts," she went on, "that once we reach this critical mass, the entire culture will begin to take these coincidental experiences seriously. We will wonder, in mass, what mysterious process underlies human life on this planet. And it will be this question, asked at the same time by enough people, that will allow the other insights to also come into consciousness—because according to the Manuscript, when a sufficient number of individuals seriously question what's going on in life, we will begin to find out. The other insights will be revealed. . . one after the other."

She paused to take a bite of food.

"And when we grasp the other insights," I asked, "then the culture will shift?"

"That's what the priest told me," she said.

I looked at her for a moment, contemplating the idea of a critical mass, then said, "You know, all this sounds awfully sophisticated for a Manuscript written in 600 B.C."

"I know," she replied. "I raised the question myself. But the priest assured me that the scholars who first translated the Manuscript were absolutely convinced of its authenticity. Mainly because it was written in Aramaic, the same language in which much of the Old Testament was writ-

ten."

"Aramaic in South America? How did it get there in 600 B.C.?"

"The priest didn't know."

"Does his church support the Manuscript?" I asked.

"No," she said. "He told me that most of the clergy were bitterly trying to suppress the Manuscript. That's why he couldn't tell me his name. Apparently talking about it at all was very dangerous for him."

"Did he say why most church officials were fighting against it?"

"Yes, because it challenges the completeness of their religion."

"How?"

"I don't know exactly. He didn't discuss it much, but apparently the other insights extend some of the church's traditional ideas in a way that alarms the church elders, who think things are fine the way they are."

"I see."

"The priest did say," Charlene went on, "that he doesn't think the Manuscript undermines any of the church's principles. If anything, it clarifies exactly what is meant by these spiritual truths. He felt strongly that the church leaders would see this fact if they would try to see life as a mystery again and then proceed through the other insights."

"Did he tell you how many insights there were?"

"No, but he did mention the Second Insight. He told me it is a more correct interpretation of recent history, one that further clarifies the transformation."

"Did he elaborate on that?"

"No, he didn't have time. He said he had to leave to take care of some business. We agreed to meet back at his house that afternoon, but when I arrived he wasn't there. I waited three hours and he still didn't show up. Finally, I had to leave to catch my flight home."

"You mean you weren't able to talk with him any more?"

"That's right. I never saw him again."

"And you never received any confirmation about the Manuscript from the government?"

"None."

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"And how long ago did this take place?"

"About a month and a half."

For several minutes we ate in silence. Finally Charlene looked up and asked, "So what do you think?"

"I don't know," I said. Part of me remained skeptical of the idea that human beings could really change. But another part of me was amazed to think that a Manuscript which spoke in these terms might actually exist.

"Did he show you a copy or anything?" I asked.

"No. All I have are my notes."

Again we were silent.

"You know," she said, "I had thought you would be really excited by these ideas."

I looked at her. "I guess I need some proof that what this Manuscript says is true."

She smiled broadly again.

"What?" I asked.

"That's exactly what I said, too."

"To whom, the priest?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He said that experience is the evidence."

"What did he mean by that?"

"He meant that our experience validates what the Manuscript says. When we truly reflect on how we feel inside, on how our lives are proceeding at this point in history, we can see that the ideas in the Manuscript make sense, that they ring true." She hesitated. "Does it make sense to you?"

I thought for a moment. Does it make sense? Is everyone as restless as me, and if so, does our restlessness result from the simple insight—the simple awareness built up for thirty years—that there is really more to life than we know, more that we can experience?

"I'm not sure," I finally said, "I guess I need some time to think about it."