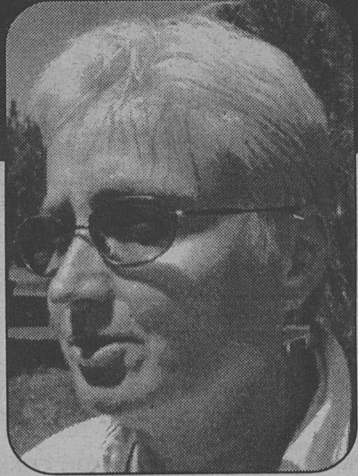


Ma Vie En Jade

by Jade Wolfe



Emmie and the Unseeing

Many of our hands are now turning pages that read 2002. Layers of resolutions are forming clouds of intentions over our homes. My own weather front began as a tiny afterthought. Musing over recent choices, I de-constructed actions and words. A comforting realization took shape. I had allowed myself to stray from 'being' into the outer realms of 'doing'. A memory came into view of a petite, pleasant-faced woman named (name changed to protect people once challenged by my momentary choices) Emmie. The last time we saw each other, it was a hot, humid summer in the late 70's. Our mental health crisis team had been 'remanded' to temporarily 'cover' 500 mental health clients and 400 MARC clients. There had been a contract failure between government funders and the attending psychiatrists. The shrinks bailed. While silent scrambling of funding occurred behind closed doors, all nine hundred ex-patients were cut loose.

We had been warned of these psychiatrists' impending 'prima donna' exit. But when that first morning came, it was scary. Nine hundred people on different combinations of medications would now depend on us to ensure state and federal mandates of 'monitoring'. That feeling of 'scary' did not level out as the day wore on and, as usual on a Friday, we were bombarded. It was first come, first serve. By end of day, I was on my way across town to meet Emmie. She lived in public housing down the street from the city mission. Her aide had delivered Emmie's medication. She noticed several pills leftover in the container. "God has cured me", Emmie commented, smiling sweetly, refusing to take her medication that day. Thus, we had occasion to meet one another. Emmie was in her mid-fifties, diagnosed with mild retardation and needing minimal supervision. She worked three days a week receiving social security and reduced housing costs. Emmie was under care for epilepsy.

Her pleasant searching eyes twinkled at me as she repeated her declaration "God cured me".

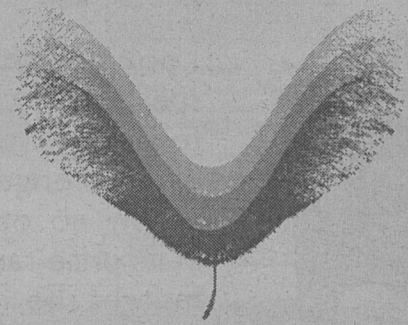
"Well, for some reason they don't have enough faith. And we don't want them to keep on worrying about you day and night, do we?" he asked. Her head gently nodded no. "So, for their sake, will you promise me that from now on, you will take the medication?", the judge asked.

Our initial talk resulted in me hearing myself explain the merits of daily health care, drug interactions and benefits as it relates to epilepsy. By Monday, Emmie and I were at best 'agreeing to disagree'. The tumblers of the local court system lumbered at a snail's pace, having speeded up several light years, and by Thursday a court hearing had been scheduled. Too little sleep combined with too much bad coffee found me sitting in the back of an empty courtroom waiting for Judge Somners. Emmie sat straight in her defendants chair smiling at the newly instated lawyer pacing back and forth. The judge came in, we rose, sat and began listening to a zealous monologue regarding Emmie.

Periodically she would turn in her chair, wait for eye contact and wave happily at us. And, all of us would good-naturedly, smile back. The lawyer finally stopped to breath and the judge sat back looking out at all of us. "Miss Emmie", he said finally, "you and I know that God has cured you of your epilepsy. But, you see those tired looking people in the back of the room?" he pointed at us. Emmie turned spotting our faces again and smiled. She nodded yes to the judge. "Well, for some reason they don't have enough faith. And we don't want them to keep on worrying about you day and night, do we?" he asked. Her head gently nodded no. "So, for their sake, will you promise me that from now on, you will take the medication?", the judge asked.

Emmie agreed that day. As far as I know, she did resume the medication. I was so busy 'doing my job' that I hadn't really 'done my job'. The job persona took over too much of my humanity that week. Fear of what could happen (both on the larger scale and the individual case) dictated my choices. Emmie had needed personal contact from me, not a mini-workshop on medication guidelines. Although I may have portrayed my most professional mental health worker image, it had lacked 'me'. Now, this judge, previously on 'not a friendly' list of mine, had reminded me of what a few moments of human contact will accomplish. I'd like to say that during the next election I voted for him. Since this stray bit of data escapes me, let's imagine that I did.

Clouds of 'risky living' feel more at home now, overhead. I am not alone in this quest. One friend in particular comes to mind. My courageous woman-friend, Marcy has ventured into the abyss of openness. Her business card states her name and indicates her profession as: person. A daunting prospect, to knowingly present oneself minus a comforting title. Meeting one another person to person before worrying ourselves with titles or categories can improve our self-image and invite the same in others. We work and live best, when from the inside out. And in a diverse community, 'out' isn't that unrealistic, as a state of being.



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Fletcher Free Library
Brattleboro: January 17th (6:30 - 8:30)
Brattleboro Savings and Loan

Grant Writing Sessions

Burlington: February 13th (6:30 - 8:30)
Fletcher Free Library
Brattleboro: February 13th (6:30 - 8:30)
Brattleboro Savings and Loan

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The Samara Foundation of Vermont is a charitable foundation whose mission is to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities today and build an endowment for tomorrow.

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