

## SAMPLE EXCERPT

From *Meetings with Paul: An Atheist Discovers His Guardian Angel*  
[Excerpted from chapter 3, page 24-26]

. . . “How did you get here?” I asked as I walked across the lawn, opened the sliding glass door to the kitchen, and reached for my pack of cigarettes on the counter just inside.

“Why do you ask?” he replied as I returned to the gazebo and lit up a smoke.

“I was just thinking that maybe you rode in on a time warp, or whatever it is that gets you around, and that you’re still stuck in it,” I said playfully.

“What are you talking about? Wait, let me guess—you think you’ve taken up a foreign language. I’m sorry to burst your balloon, but speaking nonsense doesn’t qualify.”

Good old Paul. He can give as well as he gets. I laughed.

“Seriously, though, I understand what you are saying. But let me assure you that I am here because you called me.”

I started to form a rebuttal, but he continued without pause, talking over my aborted response.

“Maybe *called* is the wrong word,” he said. “Actually, you have been radiating vibes for help for several weeks now and it was that inner plea to which I responded.”

I settled back into the seat in the gazebo, blew a plume of tobacco smoke into the darkness of the night, and resigned myself to giving my full attention to his explanation.

He said that I had been sliding headlong into a deeper and deeper funk with each passing day since September 11, although I had been refusing to acknowledge it. Millions of Americans, of course, had been involved in a terrible psychological struggle after that tragic day, and I considered that my feelings were pretty typical of what the average citizen was going through. Surveys had shown a quantum leap in the number of people who were suffering bouts of sleep difficulties.

In addition, the sales of tranquilizers, antidepressants, sleeping pills, and alcohol had all risen dramatically. It was the natural and easily predictable result of the stress that Americans were experiencing as a direct consequence of a devastatingly painful event.

In addition, as I related in my last book, I and thousands of others also were dealing with a related event of almost unimaginable proportions. Although it did not involve the tragic loss of life and crushing economic havoc that were inflicted by the terrorist attacks, the incident was nevertheless a bitter disappointment that compounded and intensified the feelings of loss that we shared with other Americans.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I choose for very sound and specific reasons not to dwell upon or discuss that corollary event here, but for a fuller explanation I refer readers to my publisher’s web site, [originpress.com/contact](http://originpress.com/contact), where they can find free links to early chapters in my last book that will be helpful, and also to the Postscript of this book which gives an update on what I call the “Contact Project.”

“You’re in trouble,” Paul said. “You may not think so, but you are. You are disheartened and morose to the point where it is beginning to suppress your immune system. Depression can do that, you know. Were you aware of that?”

I flicked the cigarette butt into the flames and immediately lit up another. I nodded and replied that I had heard or read about that little bit of medical/psychological theory—or factoid, I suppose, if it is accurate.

“Worry, stress, anxiety—these can all suppress the immune system. And a suppressed immune system leaves a person vulnerable to attack from all kinds of diseases. I think that’s pretty common knowledge,” Paul continued.

I told him that I appreciated his concern for me but that it wasn’t necessary, and assured him that I was fine. I will admit that I had been feeling somewhat melancholy for weeks. And I seemed to be tired more than usual. I was spending a lot of time in bed, suffering headaches, feeling listless. I had lost interest in many of the everyday activities that kept me busy, and some of which actually used to bring me pleasure. These included the weekly mowing of the lawn, my daily walk/jog, doing the grocery shopping, puttering in the garage, and a host of other chores and pastimes. While not all of them typically brought me the same satisfaction as my newspaper and my books, I still had tackled them without hesitation before the funk had set in.

But I figured that my sluggishness was just a symptom of the perilous and challenging times that we were living in.

“And that’s what I meant when I said that you sent for me,” Paul said. “Not consciously, of course. But you were sending out fairly obvious grief signals indicating that you were walking a thin line and needed help. You wouldn’t admit it, naturally; you cling to this anachronistic and mythical notion that it’s unmanly to show feelings that you erroneously interpret as signs of weakness. And so you keep it bottled up inside, as millions of other men do, until it makes you sick or until it becomes too painful to bear and then you do something foolishly stupid and irreversible.”

I leaned forward, rested my forearms on my thighs and stared into the fire. I took a deep drag on my cigarette and blew the smoke out in a stream that glistened white in the light of the flames and then disappeared in a swirl into the darkness.

“Maybe I was broadcasting distress signals, but to no one in particular,” I mumbled, acknowledging for the first time, not only to Paul but to myself as well, that there had been times in the past month when I felt so heartsick that I really had to struggle with the daily demands of life.

“The message was getting louder by the day and I finally decided that I had to answer it, to intervene. You’re feeling lost—and you don’t know where to turn.”

[End of excerpt]