

The author of this book is suggesting that most of man's inhumanity to man is created by the opinions of people. Those opinions make compassion, contribution, and patience useless words. Words used in beautiful sentences filled with ideas about understanding and love. Sentences ending with "But if they could only see it my way, the world would be okay." Even the author of this book is certain if you see it his way, the world will be okay.

Human beings cannot escape being right and making others wrong. It is part of being human. We gather evidence to support our opinions. We find people who agree with us about our opinions and avoid or confront those who do not. How come our evidence doesn't convince the other side? People even hire lawyers to prove their point. Lawyers are paid to be right, yet this lawyer didn't even know he was the victim of the same human dynamic. He "righted" himself out of a relationship.

Chapter 10

COST OF BEING RIGHT

When my sister and I were little, our uncle would often make plans to take us for the day. We were always excited about being with him. We rarely saw him, and he always took us someplace special. Unfortunately, he also failed to show up at most of the scheduled appointments. He rarely called to cancel.

My mother was disappointed for us. She saw her children get excited and then let down. Several times she yelled at my uncle telling him how he let down the children. She told him he should be more responsible and he should do what he says he is going to do. She told him he was disappointing the children. He never followed her advice. She always made him wrong and tried to change him. He never changed. My mother suffered.

I know my mother yelled at my uncle because she told me about it after I grew up. But I don't remember my mother yelling at or about my uncle. That's because my mother started to respond to my uncle as he was-not as she thought he should be. When he called to say he was going to take my sister and I for the day, Mom didn't tell us. She didn't tell us, because if he didn't show up we wouldn't be disappointed. When he did show up, it was a nice surprise for my sister and I. The times he did show up, it never conflicted with something else my sister and I were doing. Mom worked that out on her own.

My mother stopped telling my uncle how he should behave with his niece and nephew. She started dealing with how he did behave. The minute my mother stopped making him wrong, my mother stopped being upset. I have only the finest memories of my uncle. Thanks Mom. I wish I had followed your lead.

I met the most beautiful and creative woman in the world. On our first date I wore black pants and a white shirt. She wore white pants and a black shirt. We matched perfectly. We went out on a Sunday morning to a concert of classical music. Then we went to a restaurant with a brunch buffet. We drank orange juice and champagne. We compared techniques of hand massage. On the way home we stopped at an open house in a brand new and very expensive loft. We toured the loft, met another couple and had a wonderful time.

We could see each other everyday and have fresh, exciting conversation. If we did not see each other for a while, it didn't matter because soon we would be together, and our conversation would be as fresh as ever. I not only loved her, I liked her. She challenged and stimulated my creativity. I respected her. For me, there was no uncertainty or jealousy. I do not know what there was for her, but I assumed she felt the same. She was, after all, there with me.

Four months after I met her, I knew I wanted to marry her. I asked her to marry me. I wanted her to say yes, no or even maybe. She wouldn't say it. So I kept asking her for at least a maybe. She refused. She left me shortly after I asked her to marry me.

Then for three years she would call me or I would call her. She would call for some minor made-up reason. I would get mad and yell at her then call back to say I was sorry and to get her to say maybe. Once in that three-year time, we actually got together for a few hours. We had dinner and cuddled in my car. But I still wanted a maybe and she still refused to say it. I have not seen her since.

What I asked of her was simple. If I knew where our relationship stood, I could have dealt with it. It never really occurred to me that each time she called she was demonstrating "maybe". And she never said, "Get a clue, idiot".

We loved each other enough to keep coming back. No matter how great the anger or how deep the humiliation, we kept coming back. We kept coming back until the pain got too great. Then we parted with finality and certainty. We parted believing we did the right thing in not getting married.

We loved each other enough to keep coming back, but we kept coming back only to see if the other person had changed. Being right about what I wanted from her helped me survive the isolation and loneliness. But being right also caused me to be isolated and alone.

This book is a long-winded way of telling her I am sorry. I know that I have said that before. But I wanted her to say it back. Even in my apology I found a way to make her wrong. When I said I would do anything for her, I was lying. I wouldn't do the one thing she really wanted me to do: to accept her and be with her.

If I had not been so stuck in my idea of the right way to do things, I would have noticed her courage. The courage to keep coming back time after time. It never occurred to me that if I had

been different, she would have found the freedom to express her love. It never occurred to me that this wasn't about my knowing where our relationship stood. It was about my need to have things my way. That need cost me her love.

I missed her for a very long time. I missed the way we gave each other new ideas. I enjoyed the way we held each other. For a very long time, I wondered why she thought she would be happier if I wasn't in her life. I now wonder why I thought I offered her fulfillment. Even with all she meant to me, it wasn't enough. How could she be fulfilled, with me reminding her that I don't approve of the way she did things?

This is not about sadness or despair. There was tremendous sadness and despair, but I don't enjoy it any more. This is about the possibility that I, and I alone, make a difference. But here is the weird part: she once told me that I blew the relationship. I totally agree with her. She, of course, decided that I blew it. I could not have blown it, unless she said so.

In the world, people are hurting themselves and each other. Joy, self-expression and contribution become suppressed by great pain, complacency, justification, invalidation, resignation, and comfort. I see the uselessness of that pain. The desire to do anything to make it go away. To do anything, except the one thing you know the other person really wants.

A woman says she wishes to leave her husband. He starts crying and screaming that he loves her and he can't live without her, as he beats her senseless. A woman sets her husband on fire as he sleeps, because he has been beating her for years. People opposed to murder shoot abortionists. People who wish to save the environment throw paint on people wearing fur coats. Parents disown their children for marrying outside the religion. And I yelled at the woman I hoped to marry for calling me for the wrong reason.

If you take away the reasons, the excuses, the justifications, the only thing happening is a man is beating a woman, a woman is burning a man, people are shooting people, people are throwing paint on people, parents are disowning their children, and I yelled at a woman I love. We had better be right.

Being so certain you are right about something that you are justified in making another person wrong may even co-exist with loving that person. Maybe the reason love is not enough,

maybe the reason most people fight, maybe the reason there is so much pain in the world, is because being right is more important than being in relationships.

Jesus, Ghandi and Martin Luther King talked about peace, forgiveness and generosity. They were all killed. It seems people would rather kill than admit they are wrong. God, I hope we are right. God I hope we are wrong.

Dear woman I asked to marry, this book is dedicated to you. It is also dedicated to the people in the year 2094. That is the year in which the technologies of science, math, computers, listening, agriculture, medicine and others create a world where people can work, where they want to work, and people work where they find joy, self-expression and contribution to others.

Dear woman I asked to marry, it has been a very long time since you and I had a conversation of joy, self-expression and contribution to each other. I would very much like to have that again. If that is not possible, will you give me your forgiveness?

Dear man I considered marrying:

Yes would have been a lie and made us both unhappy.

No would have hurt you and we could no longer be friends.

Maybe would have given you false hope.

Why couldn't we have just left things as they were? Why couldn't you have given me time to decide if our marriage was the right decision? I have made so many wrong decisions in the past. If you truly meant all those glorious things that you said, why did it matter if sometimes I was a little late, or sometimes I didn't tell you exactly what was on my mind or if sometimes I didn't follow thru with a project?

Can you see that in trying to make me understand how much you have changed you are trying to dominate me once again?

When I was feeling depressed or unloved, when some other relationship went sour and I lost a little of my self-confidence, I came to see you because I knew you still wanted me. There is ultimate satisfaction in that knowledge. It was an ego booster. That is all I wanted or needed from you.

I must decline the dedication to your book. I must ask you to dedicate your book to the possibility of your vision of the future and the life it gives you today. By dedicating your book to me, you are trapped in the very trap you have written about. You will be writing and living to compensate for the loss you believe you had when I left. No matter how successful your book is financially or towards its goal of peace, you will never be fulfilled.

Actions driven to compensate for a past loss simply will not compensate. You will however find fulfillment if you live your life towards the fulfillment of your vision. AND Please remember, you must never forget that this is your handwriting and thoughts, not mine. I know you do not agree with my version of yes, no, or maybe. But it is the first time you considered my view in a very long time. Yes I forgive you. Do you forgive yourself? My grandfather was

attacked by the Nazis in World War II. He spent years in Auschwitz. I told him about us. He wrote me about forgiveness. Read what he wrote. Maybe there is nothing for either one of us to forgive.

Chapter 11

GENEROSITY

My Dear Granddaughter,

I fought for Germany in World War I. I lived in trenches for 2 1/2 years. Trenches filled with mud, rats, the occasional body part blown or shot away from its owner and overlooked by clean-up crews, and of course, blood. Once I watched a rat eat at the fingers of what was left of a hand. I wondered if its former owner was German, or the enemy.

I wondered why I was ready to die for Germany, when my country's enemy, composed of men living in trenches a few hundred yards away, were ready to die for what they believed. I wondered how they could be so misguided to cause such awful destruction.

I wondered why men with wives and children would want to kill my wife, my children, why such men wished to destroy Germany, the land where I was born, the land I would die for. I wondered if I was born in the place and time of my enemy's birth, if I could have been a positive influence in their lives. Years later, the Nazis came into power.

I was a Jew who became proud to arrive in Auschwitz. The Nazis killed my wife and son. Four of them tied me down. My son, my nine-year-old son, was tied by his feet and dangled upside down. They spun him and they spun him, until he ... until he died.

They doused me with gasoline. They told my wife if she did what they wanted, they wouldn't burn me. She undressed. Some sergeant said, "Make love to this", and stabbed her with a bayonet. She bled to death screaming on the floor. The sergeant asked me if she moved like that for me. After she died, they started throwing lit matches at me from across the room.

Then some lieutenant came in. He stopped them, ordering them back into the truck. He said, "I'm going to let you live, Jew", but he whispered it. He put his gun next to my ear. He pointed it in the air, and pulled the trigger, again and again he pulled the trigger.

I can't hear out of my right ear now.

After they left, I freed myself from the ropes. I sat on the floor. I sat next to my dead son and wife. I wanted to die. I stared at the used matches on the floor of my house. I didn't have any

to light. If I had seen one, I would have lit it and burned. I wanted to light a match and feel my skin burn.

Two weeks later, I killed the man who made me deaf in one ear. I cared for nothing else but to kill all of the men responsible. I could have attempted to leave the country and join an army. But I wanted revenge. I knew if I got my revenge on one, I could seek it against two, then maybe I could kill a third Nazi.

I hit the bastard that killed my wife and son. I hit him in the head with a brick. His friends heard our struggle. A dozen swarmed me. They beat me. They wanted revenge for the death of their comrade as much as I wanted revenge for the death of my family. They kicked and stomped me, but only my arms and legs. After they finished, I would live, but the pain would last long after I arrived in Auschwitz.

When I first arrived in Auschwitz, the Nazis gave me paper and pencil. I was told to write a letter that would be sent to my family and friends so they would know I was safe. But I had no one to write to. Everyone I knew, everyone I loved, was dead. So I am writing on the paper they gave me, 50 years after liberation. My heart is beating, my brain is functioning, but my soul has been dead for a very long time.

You may think I am a liar. But I wish I had forgiven them. By not forgiving them, I died a little each day. I festered. I became what I despised. You see, if I had forgiven them, they only could have killed me once. If I had forgiven them, I could have shot them down with no more thought or feeling than if I had to shoot a rabid dog. I would have been able to kill more Nazis than just the one. If I had forgiven them, I might have found Nazis who despised what they had become.

By not forgiving them, a few of them had no choice but to continue what had been started. What I suggest takes courage. The courage to forgive. The courage for a soldier to disobey an immoral order, when his command structure does not believe the order is immoral. The courage not to believe what there is overwhelming evidence to believe. The courage to confront fear. The courage that you might be angry at me for forgiving the Nazis.

My story is not the ramblings of an emaciated living skeleton suffering from dysentery, exposure and a speed castration (2.6 seconds, they timed it). Fifty years ago, my body walked outside of the death camp. Today my mind does.

Three weeks before the Allies liberated Auschwitz, I was standing in my hut. That hut that smelled of urine and burning flesh. That hut that smelled of the dead who were still alive. As I was standing in that hut, I could hear the sounds of war off in the distance, and I watched a rat eating from the leg of a man who was still alive but too weak to fight off the creature. I wondered why I hated the men and women who put us here, but I felt no hatred for the rat. I couldn't say the Nazis should know better. They obviously didn't.

Then a man walked into my hut. He walked in with a Nazi guard. I knew something was odd. The Nazis never came into the hut. They were too afraid of the lice.

The man was strong and virile. In his face I saw the aura of life and purpose. He looked about the hut, then with disgust he slapped the Nazi guard across the face. The Nazi pulled his gun and pointed it at the man. Then the Nazi disappeared.

Suddenly the hut was gone and I was standing in the field where the hut once stood. But the grass was green, not red. The sky was blue not black. The air was fresh. I had not smelled fresh air for so long. I put my face up to the sun. Its warmth embraced my face and I inhaled the fresh air. The air went deep into my lungs and warmed my tired body. I hadn't been warm in years.

I opened my eyes to see the electrified barbed wire fence recede into the ground. The medical facility where experiments created in hell had been conducted, vanished.

The man took me by the hand. His hand was warm. It was safe. He took me back in time. He took me back to the moment - no, he took me back to the moment before I killed the Nazi who killed my wife and son. At that moment I knew I could get my revenge again.

The Nazi's back was to me. I could have escaped. But I picked up that same brick and I bashed in his head a second time. After I watched the man die, I suddenly found myself back in Auschwitz. That stinking rat infested hut was back. I saw the electrified barbed wire fence rise up out of the ground. I ran towards it screaming no - no more. I threw myself on the fence but it was

too late. The power was on and I was thrown to the ground. The ground that was once again red from what was oozing up from the dead.

At that moment I realized I would rather be in hell than forgive. I realized I was hating a man who had been dead for a very long time. The pride in arriving at Auschwitz existed only for me, and it existed only in my opinions and beliefs. I was hating men and women who did not care if I hated them or not. They did not care if I forgave them or not. They were too consumed with their own lives, opinions and beliefs.

I realized something much better and equally much worse. I realized that I killed for my reason and the man I killed, killed for his reason. The only difference between us was that I liked my reason for killing and I did not like the Nazi's reason for killing, and the Nazi liked his reason for killing and his comrades did not like my reason for killing. The only way I could be truly free was if I could have put down that brick and walked away, leaving the Nazi alive. Only if I did not care if he lived or died could I have killed him and not been like him.

I returned to my hut and waited for death. Then a funny thing happened. I was back in my hut, and the man walked in a second time. He was strong and virile. In his face I saw the aura of life and purpose. He slapped my Nazi guard across the face. And I thought oh, thank God, I have another chance. This time I will make a difference. Then the Nazi pulled his gun and shot the man dead.

I may have only been one man against an army. But I could have made - I do make - a difference. I needed to forgive his humanity as I forgave my own. I needed to hold myself accountable as I held him accountable. My dear granddaughter, you have the possibility to discover freedom from the thoughts and memories of your past. You can rediscover the joy you once had to be fully self-expressed, contributing and fulfilled. You must, however, make the discovery yourself. I cannot tell you how. You must face your fear and consider the following observations.

The Nazis thought the Jews were barbarians. Yet the Nazis committed the barbaric acts.

The woman in this book who went on the honeymoon with her husband thought he did not find her attractive, but he did. The truth was that she had doubts about her looks.

The uncle who was going to play hockey with his nephews thought his nephews were little jerks, yet he was the jerk in the events of the story.

The children in the story "Our Parents Love Us, But they Don't Like Us," had parents who liked them. It was the children who did not like their parents.

The little girl in the yellow bikini was afraid men would reject her. Yet it was she who rejected her 2nd and 3rd boyfriends, then blamed them for leaving. Her rejection of them was subtle, and at one time she would deny it. But she discovered the trap.

The little boy, that nobody wanted around, avoided people. It was he that did not want to be around people.

The teacher that seduced the young girl was so afraid he would be alone he kept seducing women and girls. He was gathering evidence to disprove what he believed. It caused him to be alone.

That nice young man that wanted to marry you loved you and liked you. He was afraid that he would become one more thing you walked away from. You did. You may have left him no matter what, but he aided in creating what he was most afraid of. He fought. He tried to change the pieces on the board. He tried to design a scenario acceptable to himself. He tried to change you. There was nothing to change. He now knows that. I hope you know that, too.

If you try to design yourself more acceptable to yourself; if you fight; if you try to change the pieces on the board, you will lose yourself. Look into your heart. What you think of the world will tell you more about your conclusions and beliefs than what it says about the world. That discovery is the first step to transforming your life and the world.

It is a subtle distinction, but if realized, you and the world will become transformed. Choices will exist where before there were only logical explanations for no way to make a significant difference. The most difficult part is to accept the idea that you are accountable for what happens and what you think happened.

Rarely in life does the opportunity to make a difference in the world come as obviously as it came to me. The opportunity will come rarely if we wait for it to come to us. You can, however, create it.

Each time you called the man that wanted to marry you; he chose his hell rather than just let you be who you were. Each time you called him; you knew what he wanted, but refused to provide it. Regrettably, you were both right. Being right does not, however, bring happiness or fulfillment. It does, however, allow you to make the people you love, as well as like, wrong.

What might happen if you gave up being right?