

Ascension Notes



Love Story

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One simple event stands out in my memory as a most delightful example of the reality of love in action. It is all the more powerful because there was no fanfare, no organized meeting, no ritual or notice that it was occurring. It required no drama or staging. There were no signs or wonders to behold, no miracles. I may have been the only person who even noticed. It happened on a local bus ride one weekday, mid-morning.

That day I had risen early in my rural home outside of Santa Cruz and, on a whim, set out to visit friends in Palo Alto. My journey required riding three busses and took about three and a half hours. The third stage of this little adventure was an hour and a half on the number 22 bus from San Jose to Palo Alto. It was a normal crowd for that time of day. Rush hour was over and the work crowd had diminished to a trickle. Shoppers and those out of work took up only part of the slack so the bus was about half full.

For the first fifteen minutes of the ride we passengers were immersed, each in our individual isolation bubbles, protected from interaction by the cocoon of our thoughts. Only one or two seats were shared by couples who would occasionally murmur some bit of conversation to one another; otherwise the bus was internally quiet. It was an absolutely normal day on route 22.

Then an elderly couple boarded who must have been in their seventies. As they passed down the aisle, it seemed to me that they weren't holding hands exactly but still maintained contact with one another. During their progression toward the back of the bus they made some brief eye contact with each of the passengers. In the glance bestowed on me I had the impression that the couple was completely at peace with themselves and each other. Possibly they shared a joke between them or perhaps it was joy that lent the twinkle in their eyes.

It was as if their passage through the bus had awakened all the passengers. We began looking at one another. Moments later we were chatting with those about us without the defenses of our normal class/prejudice social filters coming into play. In five minutes there was noticeable widespread laughter. The quiet hubbub increased. I looked about in amazement. Everyone on the bus was talking, laughing and smiling. Our internalized isolation had vanished completely.

You know, it's funny but I didn't notice that pair again until I saw them leave the bus about twenty minutes later. Nor did I connect them to the events transpiring around me. I was too busy enjoying the company of a couple of newfound, temporary acquaintances. Within minutes of their departure, the laughter stopped, we each seemed to have run out of topics of conversation and once again we had turned inward. The spirit was gone. I was aware that something special had occurred but it took me the rest of the ride to realize what I had just witnessed. It was Love in action. That couple had been the wellspring.