

Fear

A F O U R P A R T G U I D E



*Love is the solution
in which all fear dissolves.*



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H E A R T M I N D

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A Note Before Beginning

I have drawn on Kashmir Shaivism, Advaita Vedanta, Buddhism, Christianity, Sufism, Taoism, the psychology of Carl Jung, and the testimony gathered from near death experience and from Allan Kardec's The Spirits' Book. The paths these traditions walk are not identical, and I do not believe they need to be for what I am about to say to be true. Ask any of them what lies at the very end of their road, and the answer, in one language or another, is love. Christianity states it as an identity: God is love, not merely loving. Sufism calls the same force ishq, the divine desire at the root of creation. Vedanta names ultimate reality sat chit ananda, being, consciousness, bliss, ananda sitting close enough to love that the two are often spoken as one. Kashmir Shaivism speaks of spanda, the pulsation of consciousness, and Chamatkara, the wonder that is the felt texture of that pulsation, both of which read as descriptions of a loving delight rather than a cold metaphysical fact. Even the Buddha, whose language is the most austere of all these voices, made loving kindness inseparable from awakening rather than an accessory to it. Whatever word is used, the traditions gathered in this booklet are, I believe, each reaching toward the same energy behind the word love, however differently they describe the reaching. What follows is my attempt to earn that word honestly, rather than offer it cheaply.

PART ONE

The Body's Alarm

Fear begins in the body. Long before the mind has a word for what is happening, the stomach has already tightened, the breath has already shortened, the heart has already quickened its pace. This is not weakness. It is the body doing exactly what it has done for millions of years: keeping this fragile, mortal creature alive.

The Watchman

We carry, inside us, a very old watchman. It does not read philosophy, it does not know Scripture, it has never heard of Shiva or of Christ. Its only task is survival. When it senses danger, real or imagined, it floods the body with signals: tighten, brace, run, fight, freeze.

In the language of modern brain physiology, this watchman has a name: the amygdala, a small almond shaped structure deep in the brain, present in each of us long before the more recent, more reflective parts of the brain finished forming. I will keep calling it the watchman throughout this booklet, because that is what it is: a sentry that acts first and explains nothing.

This watchman cannot tell the difference between a genuine threat to life and a difficult conversation, a financial worry, a wounded pride. A raised voice in a meeting and a raised fist in an alley pass through the same ancient gate. The watchman does not pause to ask which one is which.

Physiology Hijacks Spirituality

A moment before, the mind might have been still, resting in prayer, in presence, in some still recognition of what it truly is. Then fear arrives,

and the ancient watchman takes the wheel. The racing mind is not the true mind gone wrong. It is the true mind temporarily overridden by a much older, much cruder system that only knows one thing: protect the body at any cost.

The tragedy is not that the body does this. The tragedy is when we mistake the hijacking for the truth of who we are. A person gripped by fear, saying cruel things or making frightened choices, is not showing us their deepest nature. They are showing us their watchman.

A Condition, Not a Flaw

Our humanity is real. Our physical being is real, in the same way that all of manifest existence is real within the teachings of Kashmir Shaivism: an expression of the one consciousness, not a mistake to be corrected but a condition to be understood. Fear is part of that condition.

So much spiritual teaching tacitly assumes the advanced practitioner should no longer feel fear. I do not believe this. I have sat with people who have practised for decades, and the body still tightens in them when the car swerves, when the diagnosis arrives. What changes with practice is not whether fear arises. What changes is what we do in the moment after it does.

Who This Booklet Is Written For

Everything in this booklet assumes a watchman that is working as it should. This is the condition of the great majority of people. It is not the condition of everyone. In psychopathy in particular, and in some presentations of what is popularly called sociopathy, that same alarm system appears to function differently from the ground up, often with a muted or absent fear response rather than an excessive one. That is a different subject, not one this booklet is equipped to hold. What follows is written for the ordinary human heart, the one that startles, that tightens, that fears losing what it loves.

The Two Arrows

The Buddha taught that when an ordinary person is struck by a painful thing, two arrows land, not one. The first arrow is the pain itself: the tightened stomach, the racing thoughts. It is not optional. The second arrow is what we add on top: the story, the resistance, the judgment.

It matters to be precise here, because the first arrow is not mindless. It includes the mind's honest, necessary attempt to understand what just happened and why. That analysis is not the second arrow. It is essential work, and where the mind goes with it, toward clarity or toward the ego, is the whole subject of the next part of this booklet.

Where Practice Begins

The practice begins in the body itself. Not with denial, but with honest attention: where do I feel this, what is happening in my stomach, my chest, my breath. This noticing is the first step in a much longer dissolving. Before fear can meet love, it must first be met by awareness.

PART TWO

The Ego's Fortress

If Part One was about the body, this part is about the fork in the road the mind reaches once the first arrow has landed. Fear does not stay in the stomach for long. It rises into the mind, and there, it can go one of two ways.

The Architect

Carl Jung spent much of his life studying what he called the shadow: everything in us we refuse to look at directly, our envy, our cruelty, our smallness. What we will not face does not disappear. It goes underground, and from there it directs our choices while we remain convinced we are choosing freely.

Every wall we build, every story that casts us as the wronged party, is mortar for a fortress. Fear is the architect. It convinces us we are a separate, isolated thing that must defend its borders.

The Second

The Upanishads name this directly: fear arises only where there is a second, an other. Where there is no second, there is nothing to fear. Advaita Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism both point to the same recognition: the felt sense of being a separate self is itself the contraction from which fear springs.

This is why fear so easily becomes love's opposite, though it does not begin that way. Love opens. Fear closes. The ego, mistaking its fortress for safety, chooses the wall over the reaching, and calls it self preservation.

The Fork in the Road

Here is the point everything else in this part turns on. The first arrow, honestly felt and honestly analysed, is unavoidable and not a problem. What happens next can go one of two ways, and both ways can look, from a distance, almost identical: both involve thinking about the person, and both can end in the same practical decision to keep our distance.

The difference is not whether we think, or even whether we decide to protect ourselves. The difference is what the thinking is for.

Reading the First Arrow Clearly

The wise path begins with honest analysis: what actually happened, whether it is a pattern, what it tells us about whether this person can currently be trusted with our openness. This is diagnostic, not defensive. Done well, it can rightly conclude that distance is needed. That conclusion is not the ego at work. It is the first arrow read all the way through to its practical implications.

One caution belongs here. Fear is capable of disguising itself as clear analysis before we have even reached this step, so that what feels like honest reading of the situation is already quietly serving the fortress. There is no perfect test for this, but there is a useful one: does the conclusion still look the same a week later, once the nervous system has settled, or does it only survive in the heat of the original alarm. Clarity tends to hold its shape once the body has calmed. Fear dressed as clarity often does not.

Where the Ego Takes Over

The ego's path takes that same starting material and does something different with it. Jung called the mechanism projection: the parts of ourselves we cannot bear to own get located in the other person instead. The correct conclusion, this person's behaviour means I need

distance, quietly inflates into this is fundamentally the kind of person they are, and I am entitled to my contempt. The facts have not changed. What has changed is that the thinking has stopped serving clarity and started serving the fortress: the wish to feel certain, righteous, and permanently safe from ever revisiting the question.

A useful sign that this has happened: the story keeps growing after the facts have stopped supplying anything new. Contempt deepens. The account becomes more damning with each retelling.

Turning the Other Cheek

The wise path does not stop at the boundary, though. This is the part most easily missed, because a clean, well reasoned boundary can look like the whole of wisdom. It is only three quarters of it.

Christ's instruction to turn the other cheek was never a demand to stay in harm's way. It was an instruction about the heart, not about proximity. The full shape of the wise path is: feel the first arrow, analyse it honestly, take whatever distance is genuinely needed, and then, having done all of that, still wish the other person well. Not because what they did was acceptable. Not because the relationship must continue. Simply: I hope they find their way to something kinder, even though I am not staying to see it.

This fourth step is where spiritual growth actually happens. The first three steps are good sense; anyone sensible does them. The fourth is harder, and it is the one that keeps the heart open rather than letting it quietly close around the boundary.

A Caution About the Fourth Step Itself

Jung would, I think, want a warning placed exactly here. Wishing someone well is only the fourth step if the first three were genuinely done. Offered too quickly, before the analysis and the boundary have actually been completed, it becomes a new and more sophisticated

form of avoidance: the ego borrowing the language of grace to skip past work it would rather not do. A blessing offered to bypass a difficult conversation is not the fourth step. It is the fortress again, dressed more elegantly.

Jung had a name for the honest version of this: the transcendent function, the mind's capacity to hold two real and opposing truths at once, the truth of harm done and the truth of shared being, without collapsing into either denial on one side or contempt on the other. What emerges from holding both is not a compromise between them. It is something new, born of the tension itself. This is the fourth step done properly: not softness instead of clarity, but clarity that has made room for love without letting go of anything true.

The Brittleness of Bypassing

Jung did not believe the fortress should be stormed or ignored. He believed real transformation came through honest confrontation with what we had buried, individuation, becoming whole rather than merely comfortable. Spiritual practice that leaps straight to love without ever asking who built the fortress and why tends to produce something brittle: the vocabulary of oneness, spoken by someone who still cannot sit through a disagreement without quietly building a case against the other person.

Noticing the Fortress

The practice here is not to attack the fortress, but to notice it, and to notice which of the two paths the mind has taken. To ask, with honesty, what am I protecting, and from what, and then to ask the harder question: have I taken my distance, and can I still, underneath it, wish this person well, and has enough real work been done that the wishing is true rather than convenient.

PART THREE

The Regret of Spirit

There is a strange comfort in imagining that death simply ends the matter, that whatever fear drove us to do or fail to do in life dissolves with the body. Testimony gathered from people who have clinically died and been revived, and, considerably earlier, from Allan Kardec's *The Spirits' Book*, suggests something rather different. I offer this testimony for what it is: a different kind of evidence from the philosophical traditions elsewhere in this booklet, gathered outside any single lineage, worth listening to rather than proof in the way a scripture or a sutra claims to be.

The Life Review

A recurring pattern in these accounts describes a life review, immediate and complete, in which choices are seen again without the confusions the living mind relies on. Within that review, it is very often fear, not malice, that is described as the true cause of harm done.

People describe seeing the moment they withheld love because they feared vulnerability, the harsh word spoken because they feared losing control, the connection avoided because closeness felt dangerous. Fear, seen this way, is the root beneath many disguises: pride, control, contempt, withdrawal, each one fear wearing a different coat.

What Is Actually Regretted

It is worth being precise about what these accounts describe as painful to see, because it does not, as far as this testimony suggests, appear to be the boundaries people set. What is described with anguish is closer to the third step taken without the fourth: the boundary that hardened

into permanent contempt, the withdrawal that curdled into a story carried for years, the door that was rightly closed but whose closing was allowed to close the heart along with it.

Kardec's spirits describe a state in which the excuses fall away, and what remains is a clear seeing of one's own life, most sharply, the moments fear was allowed to win its argument with love, not by causing us to protect ourselves, but by causing us to stop wishing another person well while doing so.

Gethsemane

Christ understood this confrontation intimately. In Gethsemane, his sweat fell like drops of blood, real dread of real suffering, not a spiritual figure serenely untroubled by what was coming. He did not bypass the fear. He stayed with it through the night, until he could say, not my will, but thine, be done.

This is the fourth step under the worst possible pressure. He felt the first arrow in full. He saw with total clarity what was coming and who was responsible for it. And he went to his death asking that those responsible be forgiven, for they did not know what they were doing. First John later distils the far side of this: perfect love casts out fear. Not represses it. Casts it out, the way light displaces darkness by entering the room.

The Single Thread

Between the testimony of the dying and returned, Kardec's spirits, and Christ's garden, one thread runs. Fear faced honestly, analysed clearly, acted on where distance is genuinely needed, and still met with an open heart, becomes the ground of transformation. Fear that stops at the boundary and hardens into a permanent story becomes the thing a soul returns to, afterward, with sorrow.

PART FOUR

The Solution

Love is the solution in which all fear dissolves, in the way a solution in the chemical sense is a medium that holds and receives a substance without destroying it, so that it is no longer a hard, separate thing pressing against everything around it. It is only one way, though, of saying something this booklet has been reaching for by another name throughout: the ocean, and the wave that forgets, for a time, that it was ever anything else.

What This Booklet Has Actually Been Saying

Every part of this booklet has been building toward one working sequence, worth stating plainly here at the end.

First, the watchman sounds, and the first arrow lands. This cannot be avoided, and should not be resisted. Second, the mind analyses honestly what happened and why, checking its own clarity against the passage of time rather than trusting the heat of the moment. This can rightly conclude that distance is required. Third, that distance is taken, cleanly, without more damage than necessary to either party. Fourth, and only once the first three have genuinely been done, the heart is kept open anyway: the other person is wished well, truly, not as a shortcut around the harder work but as its completion.

Skippping straight to the fourth step without the honest work of the second and third is not wisdom. It is fear of conflict, or fear of one's own hardness, wearing gentle language. Stopping at the third step, taking the distance and calling it finished, is not wisdom either, even though it can look like maturity. It is self protection without the further work that makes it whole.

Fana and the Second Arrow

The Sufis speak of fana, the passing away of the separate self into the divine, the same dissolving that every tradition in this booklet has been circling under a different name. What is asked of us in a single act of wishing another well, even briefly, even imperfectly, is that same dissolving in miniature: the small, real death of the separate self's need to be right, making way for the love that was underneath the fear all along. The Buddha's second arrow, in this light, is simply the story we build once the ego, rather than love, takes charge of the first arrow's aftermath. To notice fear without adding that second arrow, or to notice when one has already been added and set it down, is love meeting fear as a solution rather than a battlefield.

Water and Wu Wei

Taoism offers the softest image of this. Water does not fear the rock. It yields, flows around, and in doing so wears away over centuries what force alone could never move. Wu wei, action that does not force, is the fourth step's method as much as it is nature's: firm where firmness is needed, entirely without hardness.

The Practice

When fear arises, notice it, on the physical level, the emotional level, the mental level. Ask honestly what happened and what it means, and let that answer settle before trusting it fully. Take whatever distance is genuinely required, cleanly. Then, deliberately, wish the person well anyway. This last part will not always feel natural. It is not meant to. It is the part that grows something in us that self protection alone cannot, and only once the first three steps have been honestly walked rather than hurried past.

Fear will return, again and again, for as long as we live inside a body. That is not failure. It is what it means to be human, to be spirit wearing

flesh, wave forgetting for a moment that it is ocean. But each time all four steps are walked in full, something of the old contraction loosens.

It is in that fourth step, truly arrived at rather than performed, that something else becomes possible. Kashmir Shaivism calls it Pratyabhijna, recognition, the instant a forgotten truth is suddenly seen again as one's own, the same recognition Christ pointed to, the same fana the Sufis speak of, the same awakening the Buddha taught, each tradition's word for arriving at the one thing beneath all of them. Wishing another person well, even one who has hurt us, even from a clean distance, is very often where this recognition arrives, the seeing that the wave doing the wishing and the wave being wished well were never two things. What follows that recognition, Kashmir Shaivism calls Chamatkara: the wonder, the grace that comes not from performing the recognition, but from having genuinely seen it.

Love is not simply a solution in which fear is received and held. Love is the return itself: the wave, having forgotten for a while, finding its way back to the ocean it never actually left.



With love,
Hosshin

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