

"WHITE FLOWER"

I lived in Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua. The location of my house was near a mountain that was famous for the findings of Indian idols. In my spare time I went to the mountain in search of Indian artifacts.

As always before my trip, I prepared my backpack with a few tools among them: a small pick ax, shovel, hammer, brush, and a screwdriver. I also had some snacks, and a canteen full of water. My trips were always a day trip. I started to walk away from the house, and I looked back and noticed that someone had put new numbers on the address, 3777 Lezcano Street. I remember that the old numbers had almost faded away. I just laughed and jokingly in my mind I said, "Well now I know where I live."

The mountain was twenty-five miles from my house. I took a bus to the last stop. From there the mountain was about a four mile walk through the woods and small trails. Once I got off the bus, I started to walk toward the mountain. The beginning was always easy, but as you got closer to the mountain, it became harder because it was up-hill. It was a sunny day and a bit hot. I stopped to take a sip of water before starting my climb. I could see that towards my right, Lake Xolotlan, which is also called Lake Managua, looked so brown. The brown color was probably the effect caused by decades of raw sewage being dumped into the lake from the City of Managua.

I knew that I did not have much time to waste if I wanted to look for Pre-Colombia Indian Artifacts, so I continued on my day trip. All of the sudden, I noticed a shining object between the rocks. At first I thought it was a piece of mirror or perhaps a piece of glass. However, what would a piece of glass or mirror be doing all the way up here? I decided to check out what it was. It was a small rock. I tried to pick it up, but it was stuck. I kept on trying until the rock started to move. As it moved, a rumbling sound came from the rocks above me as they began to move also, exposing a tunnel! I was a curious teenager.

The diameter of the tunnel was about six feet high. The structure from the inside looked as if it was made with some sort of machine. I could see the different types of rocks cut perfectly even and the surface was very smooth. My imagination started running wild. Could this be a government secret base? As I started to walk further back into the tunnel, a wonderful fresh air emanated from it. I kept on walking. Is there an end to the tunnel? After I had walked about a quarter of a mile, I could faintly see light in the distance at the other end. Millions of things kept going through my mind. Are there people on the other side, a buried treasure, or maybe government agents? I was afraid, but my curiosity was stronger than my fear. I started to pick up my pace. The fresh clean air continued to flow through my lungs. Once again I wondered if the end of the tunnel would be an immediate drop off. I was finally close to the end. I could see the sunlight coming into the tunnel. I slowed my pace down. The delicious air embodied my whole body. I felt a sense of peace and happiness. The tunnel ended at ground level made out of shiny sand. I could see trees all around me. On my right-hand side was a lake. It looked so blue and clean that I felt like jumping into it. I started to walk towards the forest in front of me. I could see fruit trees of different kinds all over the place. Everything looked so natural. Just as we picture paradise to be. As I kept walking into the forest, I saw on my right-hand side a clearing with many things that looked like Indian teepees.

I started walking toward the teepees. When I got to the center of the area, people who looked like Indians started coming out of the teepees. They had bandannas around their foreheads. I could see tenderness, warmth, and love in their faces. The way they looked at

me reminded me of the way my grandmother used to look at me.

One of the older men in the group, who had white hair, said to me, "we all welcome you." Then he went on and said, "White Flower will show you around."

I was feeling calm and a sense of happiness overcame me. Somehow I felt as if these people were expecting me. Then I felt a warm hand grabbing mine. When I looked, I could not believe my eyes. Holding my hand was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen.

She was followed by a small dog with blond hair, then I heard an angelical voice say, "Christmas say hello." It was White Flower. The little puppy stood on his two back legs, while he made a mumbling sound he extended his paw as if he wanted to shake hands, which I proceeded to do.

My eyes went back to the beautiful girl with the wonderful smile. We looked into each other's eyes. I felt as if some sort of magnetic force was holding my vision. I could not keep my eyes away from those big dark brown eyes.

While gazing into her eyes, I could see that her skin was light and that it was nearly white. Her long, straight, black hair only added to her beauty. She had a bandanna around her forehead. I do not know exactly how long we stared into each other's eyes, but to me it was a wonderful feeling. I felt as if I was hypnotized by those beautiful eyes. Finally the silence was broken by the mumbling sounds coming from Christmas. I guess he wanted attention. White Flower said, "Let me show you around." The sound of her voice was like music to my ears. We walked for a few minutes. The puppy walked between us as if he was protecting her or maybe he was jealous.

I was an amateur geologist and was amazed by the different colors of the rocks on the ground. As we continued through our journey, we passed by a waterfall. Once again I thought this place may be paradise. The water from the waterfall was like spring water. It was the best water I had ever tasted. I did not believe in miracles or love at first sight. However, White Flower and this place made me change my mind. As we walked, we saw all kinds of animals, birds with beautiful colors, white rabbits, and flamingos on the lake. It was starting to get dark and White Flower decided to go back to camp.

When we got back, everyone was sitting around the fire. White Flower pulled my hand gently, and we sat among the other Indians. They were telling stories about how the outside was before the white man destroyed it. All the land, lakes, and animals looked as good as home and to me this was paradise.

They talked about how friendly and helpful they were to the Spaniards at the beginning. However, a couple of months later, the foreigners took over the land and forced the Indians into slavery. Furthermore, they would kill each other for a piece of rock that they called "gold."

I was from a different world, and even though the stories that the Indians were telling me sounded bad they did not have the same shocking effect that it seemed to have on them. An elderly man, talked about the Christmas holidays and how it was celebrated on the outside world. Almost everyone pretended to be nice to each other so that could receive a better gift from the other. There was no sincerity, hardly any love for each other, just plain greed. I asked the older man, why the puppy was named Christmas if the holiday season was such a hypocritical time. He replied, "Because the puppy came at Christmas time, which is a wonderful holiday, and it is the greed in people that ruins its true meaning. I did not

know what time it was, but I knew that it was late. White Flower showed me which teepee was going to be mine, and then she said "goodnight" as she was leaving. I kept thinking about my experience and how difficult it would be for anyone to believe my story. I was so excited that I had trouble falling asleep.

The next morning I was awakened by White Flower. She said, "Breakfast is ready." The food was delicious; however, I did not dare to ask what it was. After breakfast I jumped into the lake with White Flower followed by Christmas. The water was nice and warm; I said to White Flower, what is the name of the Lake? She replied me, "Blue Lake". We played in the water for a long time. When we got out, I felt so refreshed and awake as if I had slept for hours.

I asked White Flower if there was anything that I could do to help. She said that I could help her father who was planting corn. As she led me to where he was, he smiled when he saw us. When I told him that I wanted to help him, he was pleased. My job was to drop corn in the grooves that he made. I felt good that I was doing something for these wonderful people that had welcomed me with open arms.

The days went by. I was so happy that I started losing the notion of time. I was not sure whether I had stayed here six months or a year. Although I was very attached to my parents, I somehow did not miss them.

I had never felt this healthy and so alive in my entire life. Maybe it was the air in this place or the smile of White Flower. Whatever it was, I was feeling great.

The people here were so innocent and nice. I prayed that they would never change. They had a holy look about them in their faces. I felt as if they had an invisible aura that made anyone around them feel good.

In the meantime, I started to fall in love with White Flower. She was tender and warm. In my mind I had no doubt that she was the most beautiful and sweet girl in the world.

I was aware that I had been in this place for a long time. Many corn seasons went by. However, I was not sure if the corn period lasted three months or one year.

Everyday after work White Flower showed me a new area in this fascinating place. This time she was going to show me the "Golden River." We walked about two miles, and then we entered a lower valley that she said was the Golden River. The river was painted golden by the sun. As we got closer to the river, the reflection of the sun faded away.

The river was calm; the water was clean. I thought of myself as being an explorer who had discovered a virgin land never seen before by the white man's eyes.

What amazed me the most was the bottom of the river which had little shiny spots in it. I picked up a handful of sand from the river's bank. The sand had shiny spots throughout it. When I asked White Flower what the shiny spots were, she said that it was gold. For a few seconds I remained quiet. I wanted to scream out the words, "I'm rich!" White Flower looked into my eyes and said, "The look in your eyes scares me." I felt ashamed. How could this metal cause such a reaction in me?

Gold had no value for these people or any other type of material possession for that matter. Maybe I thought that was the reason why they were so happy. I apologized to White Flower and explained how valuable gold was in the outside world. I also mentioned that I had had a

stronger reaction when I first had met her than when we found the gold. She hugged me, and we kissed for the first time. Christmas began to mumble as if he was jealous, we laughed, which made him more upset. It was starting to get dark, and we decided to get back to the village.

She told a few stories about Christmas, how upset he would get if she opened the teepee before he was ready to see sunlight in the mornings and made all kinds of mumbling sounds. I thought it was so funny. White Flower also told me how Christmas would flip over his bowl if he did not like the food.

When we got back, everyone was sitting around the campfire. White Flower and I joined in the circle. This time the stories that were told related to the greed and the moral of the stories showed how avarice destroys peoples' lives. It was a little strange that the subject was greed. I felt as if they were trying to tell me something.

On another occasion, we all got together, but the gathering was more like a celebration to thank mother earth for all the things that they had received from her. They played music, the instruments were a Marimba and drums, the funniest thing was when Christmas started jumping up and down, I asked White Flower, what was wrong with him, and she said, not a thing, he is just dancing to the music.

It was late, and everyone started to walk to their respective teepees. I walked White Flower to her place. We hugged and kissed goodnight. As I walked away from her, I felt sad. Even though my teepee was only about thirty feet away from hers, it felt as if they were thousands of miles apart.

While laying in bed, I felt so happy that White Flower had the same feeling I had for her. I also started thinking about my mother. I wished one day she could meet White Flower. For the first time, I really started to miss my family. I started to wonder if they were well. I knew that sooner or later I had to go back home.

The days went by and the more I got to know White Flower, the more I loved her and this beautiful place that never ceased to amaze me. On one of our daily walks, White Flower said she wanted to show me a place that only few people had seen. She said that it was a cave, but she would not tell me anything more. We were holding hands as we walked toward the cave. After walking a couple of miles, she told me that this was the place. I did not see anything. However, just behind a bunch of trees, I saw the entrance. It was not dark because there was a hole in the ceiling of the cave that was letting the sunlight come through. It looked like a car sunroof.

What I saw was hard to describe. It looked like a discotheque with reflections of different colors. The ground was bumpy. I bent down and picked up one of the stones on the ground. The reflection from the stones blinded me temporary. The stone was the size of a golf ball. I realized that it was either a piece of glass or a diamond. I walked around and picked up another one that was red in color. I asked White Flower what that stone was. She said it was a ruby. I was very excited and said to myself that there are so many things I could get with it. However, the happiness of being in this place and being with White Flower were more fulfilling than the riches of the whole world.

Even though I was so happy, I knew that sooner or later I had to go back home and look for my family. I was not quite sure how much time I had spent in this place that I called paradise. I did not perceive any changes among the people. Everyone looked the same as when I got here.

I had a painful decision to leave this beautiful place, but I knew that I was going to be back.. I knew if I left, I could not leave completely. Somehow I was going to come back. My goal was to bring my family here. I needed to convince them. The whole week the only two things that I thought about were that I had to go back because I owed it to my family and the other was that I did not want to be away from White Flower.

One morning as I was preparing to go to work, I decided that I was going to go back home the next day. On my way to the cornfield, I looked at my surroundings. I was still enchanted with this place. I was also enchanted with White Flower. I was so much in love. I was so very much in love with her. That evening when I came back, she was waiting for me as she always did. I hugged her real hard; I wished that my chest could open up and have her walk inside. I did not want to tell her that I was leaving. However, I could not hide it from her any longer. As I told her what I was going to do the next day, tears came out of her eyes. When I saw her crying, I could not stop the tears as they rolled down out of my eyes. I told her that I had no choice but to go back. I also told her that she was welcome to come with me, but she said she could not. I asked her "why?" But she said, "I do not know why, but I cannot go with you." I told her that I would be away for no more than two days. She replied, "What would happen if you are not able to find your way back?" I told her that I could not live without her and not to worry that I would find my way back. She kissed me. We started to walk towards the caves where I had seen the precious stones. I thought that it would be a good idea to bring some of these precious stones to my family. White Flower was not reluctant to my idea, but she said that her father might not like it. We wrapped the stones up inside a handkerchief and hid them in the bushes. I was going to pick them up on my way to the city the next day. She made me promise not to tell the outside world about where I found the gems. She was afraid that people from the outside world would come and destroy the place including her, her family and friends. I kissed her and told her not to worry that people on the outside were not as bad as in the old days. However, in mind I knew better because people in the outside world will kill for less than a dollar.

We went back to the village. Everyone was sitting around the fire. Telling stories, one of them caught my attention; it was White Flower's father, telling about how mother earth was affected by the extraction of oil by the petroleum companies. He said that everything, every liquid, mineral, animal, plant or material served a purpose to our planet survival. In the case of oil, it's purpose was to sip thru the bed rock into the mantel to keep the molted rock and iron fire going in the center of the earth, it was the fuel that keeps the fire going, this reaction, created the magnetic field that keep the planet alive. To me it sounded like very a credible theory, I just wonder, how these people can know so much.

I told them about my trip home the next day. White Flower's father said that there was a chance that I would not find my way back. Also, he asked me not to tell anyone about the place. I told him he had my word of honor, and no matter what happened, I would find my way back. As the night came down, everyone started heading to bed. I kissed and hugged White Flower as she headed toward her teepee.

As I lay in bed, I pictured her candor and sweetness and that made me smile. It was a smile of happiness. Many times I said to myself how lucky I am to have found White Flower and this place. Unfortunately, my family was not here, which made me sad. I was really sad about leaving White Flower and this wonderful place. Even though it was for only two days.

The next morning the tribe's people were waiting to say goodbye. I said goodbye to everyone, and I hugged and kissed White Flower, Christmas was with her and I also hugged him and kissed him on the cheek. As I walked away he made sounds as if he was crying.

With my heart breaking, and without looking back, I headed towards the city.

I picked up the handkerchief that I had left hidden with the precious stones the day before and continued the journey. I started climbing to the entrance of the tunnel. I finally got to the tunnel. As I entered it, a feeling of anxiety overcame me. After being in such a beautiful place, I did not feel like going back to a world that was the opposite; where greed, selfishness, and jealousy were idolized. I walked and walked towards the other side of the tunnel. As I approached the end of it, it started to get darker because the entrance was closed.

Finally when I got within three feet from the entrance, the rock blocking the entrance opened up by itself. I smelled the change in the air. The air was no longer fresh. I could smell the pollution.

Far away I saw the city and a thick cloud of smog hung over it. When I was a few feet away from the entrance, the big rock moved again to close it. As it closed, exasperation and sadness embodied my mind.

I picked up a small stone and with it; I scratched the big rock to mark where the entrance was. I was leaving paradise but I knew I was going to go back. I started to climb down the mountain which was rocky. I tripped and lost my balance. As I tried to regain my balance, I let the handkerchief come loose. I saw the precious stones run out of it. I knew I was never going to find them because of the steepness of the mountain. To find them would be like finding a needle in a haystack. I was not upset about the fact that I had lost what in the outside world would be considered a fortune. I knew right there that I was a different person.

I saw Lake Xolotlan on my left, and this time, to my surprise it looked black!!!!. I could smell the raw sewage, on the air, what a big difference from Blue Lake. I was sure that Lake Xolotlan looked as beautiful as Blue Lake before the so called civilized world had damaged it. Immediately, I noticed that I did not need to walk far through the forest anymore, the city had moved closer to the mountain. All the trees were now gone, instead I saw houses and desolation. I thought that there are so many changes in such little time. I wanted to run back and tell my Indian friends to be careful because now the city was so close to them and that they might be in danger of being found. Then I said to myself, I am coming back in couple of days it would not make any difference if I tell them now or in two days from now. My walk lasted less than a mile, and I saw a very luminous sign that said bus stop.

I still had some coins that I kept from my trip to the mountain. I counted them. I knew I had more than enough change to pay for my bus fare. It was a very sunny day, but a fresh breeze kept it from being hot. I waited about twenty minutes and finally faraway I saw a big bright and luminous sign, it appeared to be my bus. As it got closer, I noticed the front, which looked more like an airplane, I could not see the driver because the windshield was just a big screen that cover the whole front of the bus, I wonder how the bus driver can see where he is going. It was more like a big television screen that changed as it approached the different cross streets.

The bus did not make any noise, as it pulled into the stop. When I got on the bus, I saw the drivers view for the inside, the screen in front did not make any obstruction. In fact the view was more like a panoramic view. I put the coins into the coin collector and they were kicked out. The bus driver was an older man, he asked me to show him the coins. He said I have not seen them in a long time. I did not pay much attention to his comment. He asked

me if he could keep the coins, and that he would give me a return pass in exchange. I told him that it was OK. I put the token in my pocket and asked him why the bus did not make any noise. He said because it was run by electricity and that it drew it remotely via the antenna on top of the bus.

The people inside the bus were dressed strangely. They were wearing very bright colors and the attire was made of one piece of material that covered the whole body including the hands up to the neck. On the side by the waist, they had a small silver box that kept flashing. I sat next to a girl in her twenties. I asked her what was the box for that kept flashing on her jump suit. She told me that it was a combination of a battery and regulator that control the temperature on the suit.

As I rode on the bus the city looked different. Somehow, it looked as though the buildings had gotten taller, and they were modern from what I could remember. I also saw cars that looked more like something from a science fiction book, I even saw a car parking without backing up because all the wheels turned completely at the same time, and it parked parallel between two other cars in a very tiny space. I made a comment to myself; I guess technology has really advanced.

Then I saw the name of my stop on the billboard. I got off the bus and as I walked towards my house, I had a strange feeling that I was in a different place maybe in a different time. There were big trees that I did not remember seeing before I left.

I was getting closer to my street. I recognized the name of the street. Lezcano Street. However, there were no longer houses but tall buildings instead. I finally came to the house number that I knew so well. Number 3777! The number was right, but instead of a one family home, a four story building had replaced it. I could not comprehend what was going on. I was not lost; I knew the area too well to get disoriented. But it didn't make sense that all the houses that I remembered all seemed to be replaced by buildings.

Across the street from where I was, I saw an old man in a wheelchair. I decided to ask if I was in the wrong place. The old man looked to be in his seventies. I asked if there was any other address nearby here with the same number of 3777 Lezcano Street. He said no. I went on and asked if by any chance he knew a family named Pataky. He said, "let me see," and closed his eyes.

He continued on, "well, many years ago the Pataky family lived across the street, but they all died. As a matter of fact, I used to be a friend of the youngest brother. His name was Morris. I think he went mountain climbing many years ago and never came back. Everyone believes he was killed and nobody ever found his body. If my memory doesn't fail me, he did look a little bit like you."

At this moment my blood was rushing through my body. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to say. I just ran. I just walked away from there, faster and faster, and then I was running looking for the bus stop, as I got there, I saw the bus pulling in at the same time, pulled the token out my pocket and put it into the box and sat down. I was confused, were was I,? Was all this a joke or a twilight episode. All I wanted to do now was to see White Flower. As the bus continued on its way towards the mountain I felt as if the minutes were turning into hours and hours into days. I finally reached my stop, jumped out the bus and just ran and ran, I wanted to get to the mountain. Somehow my energy kept decreasing. I was feeling exhausted. I started climbing the mountain. I kept remembering White Flower's father's words, that there was a chance that I would not find my way back as I continued looking for where I thought I had left the marks and the shiny rock that would

open the door. However, all the rocks looked the same in the mountain. I kept on looking and couldn't see it anywhere and then I saw my hands!!!!. I saw my hands get all wrinkled. I looked at my body and noticed that I was getting old. I could see the big changes in my body. Everything was happening so fast. I started getting weaker and weaker. I kept screaming the name, White Flower. I just wanted to get back to that wonderful place that I had left. I started crawling, still calling White Flower. Without any strength left in my body, I just laid there. As my body got older, hunching up, I started to cry, and the crying became a loud sobbing, all of a sudden I just closed my eyes and everything turned dark.

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