

Love and Freedom

How one day can change your life forever

Gerard Meerstadt

With Illustrations by
Hans Hoog Stoevenbelt

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Another thanks goes out to Suzanne Meijroos, who sent me a poetic text by her hand called 'A stream of light' in Dutch. She allowed me to translate and adapt it for this story. It was exactly the input I needed for chapter seventeen, which carries the same title. This part had to be written by someone else to make it all more real.

And of course I'd like to thank my friend John Wernert, who made the cover design. I told him it reminded me of the freshly washed blue jeans of a beautiful girl on a sunny day.

September 2007, Gerard Meerstadt

Introduction

Everything about this book is a product of what we call ‘flow’. It all just came by itself and we haven’t changed a thing about it.

I was working on a novel in a quiet little town in France, called Les Roises, when suddenly this story of love and freedom came to me. I had to stop working on the novel to first write this story. I had no choice.

It all just kept on coming; the story line, the names, the adventures, everything. At no moment did I know what the next chapter would exactly be like and yet there was never a moment that I had to think of how to proceed. It all just came right in time. All I needed to do was write it down.

As soon as I returned home I met my old friend Hans, who happened to be looking out for an opportunity to illustrate a story. He started working on it immediately and in the same kind of flow he created the physical appearance of Jamie and Sandra, and kept coming up with drawings of scenes of the story. We did not reject any picture. Sometimes I would be surprised and say ‘is this what it looks like?’ because I had different pictures in my mind, that immediately made way for the ones that Hans had created.

Hans made a collection of scenes in color for the front cover and before I could even start thinking

about the cover, I came across my friend John, who is a skilled graphics designer. I sent him the color drawing and asked him for his opinion. As a reply he sent me a complete design that same day. It is the one you are holding now. Again it was perfect for this purpose the first time, just like everything else about this book.

You never know when flow comes to you or where it comes from. It's a wonderful thing to experience and you as the reader become part of it now, because you are holding the result right here in your hands!

We hope you'll read the story in the same flow in which it has been made! No matter how young or old you are, you'll easily identify with Jamie and Sandra and see the worlds in this story through their eyes. We hope it may have the same lasting effect on you as it has had on them.

Enjoy!

This tale of Love and Freedom is dedicated to all people who want to live under a blue sky with white clouds, walking barefoot on lofty green grass, enjoying to be alive, seeing the beauty of things around them, living their playful life effortlessly and joyfully.

Gerard, September 2007

1. A special invitation



IT IS FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING on a beautiful Saturday early in July. It started to dawn a little after four and it's completely light now. The sun is just about to rise above the horizon in a small suburb town, which has beautiful lanes with trees on either side. One of them is Sycamore Lane, where everybody is still asleep at this time of day.

The birds still have the world to themselves and they sing the most beautiful wake up songs one can imagine. Jamie and Sandra, who live at number 14 in Sycamore Lane, don't hear it. They are sound asleep, dreaming about the adventures they hope to encounter in their summer holidays that have just begun.

Next door at number twelve the cat has come home from his nightly adventures and sits patiently at the porch until someone will let him in, which is probably not going to happen for the next two hours, but he is a very patient tabby cat.

Someone who would be awake and listening now, would hear the faint sound of a car in the distance, gradually gaining in volume as it comes closer. Suddenly a van appears and turns into Sycamore Lane. It is a shiny two-tone car in silver and black and it moves slowly and quietly, as not to wake up anybody in this early hour.

It looks like a Postal Service van, which is strange, because carrier services aren't supposed to operate at this hour of day. When the van gets to number 14 it stops in the middle of the road and the driver comes out. He wears an old-fashioned postal uniform, the kind they don't wear anymore these days.

He checks the address on the blue and silver envelope he holds in his hand and walks up to the mailbox of Jamie and Sandra's house. The cat at number 12 comes over and watches as the man drops the letter in the mailbox, turns around, gets back in his van and slowly drives out of Sycamore Lane.

Within seconds it is quiet again except for the birds that are still performing their morning concert. No one has noticed this awkward delivery, except for the cat, but he doesn't care.



*

Two hours later, shortly after seven, the door opens at number 14 and Laura, the mother of Jamie and Sandra comes out to get the morning paper. She sees there may be mail too, so in her pink morning gown she walks up to the mailbox and opens it.

A moment later she is holding a shiny blue and silver envelope in her hand, wondering what it might reveal.



As the sender it says 'The School of Life'. This makes her think back to a conversation she had with the twins earlier this week as she opens the envelope while she's walking back inside. There is a signed letter inside and a coloured brochure.

*

Laura sits at the kitchen table and she wonders about the letter she holds in her hand.

'The School of Life? What is this? I talked to Jamie and Sandra about the school of life this week. I meant life itself, which teaches us everything we need to know. They said to me they'd rather attend this School of Life then go to High School.

Now somebody seems to have taken that literally. I'm holding an invitation here for a one-day special course for Jamie and Sandra at the School of Life!

I haven't talked to anybody else about it. Is this coincidence or what?'

*

Let's get back to last Wednesday afternoon and listen in on that conversation Laura remembers. Jamie and Sandra are sitting at the kitchen table with Laura. They tell her of their anxieties about going to high school.



'We have no idea what is going to happen to us there or what is expected of us, and that is scary!'

'You know kids, you just have to stick to some very simple rules and you can't go wrong. Never worry about your grades, for one thing. Life is here to be enjoyed and not to be spent in worry. Life will never judge you by your grades. Schools should only help you to develop the full potential of the unique individuals you already are. You can't go wrong if you remember a few basics.

The three simple rules for success in school are these: 1) always be open and nice to other people, 2) have fun, and 3) be willing to learn new things. That's all. If you do that, you'll always be successful.

Just love what you're doing and love the people around you, like the birds who are always greeting the new day. Then you can never go wrong.'

'Do you really think it can be that easy?'

'Sure, why make things more complex than they need to be? If learning is fun it'll be so much more effective than when it is a boring or tedious affair.'

'Why don't they tell us things like this in school, mom? That would make our life so much easier.'

'Well, these are the kind of things you learn by experience, I guess. You learn them in the School of Life.'

'Then I'd rather go to the School of Life than to High School!' Jamie responds.

'You will attend that school too, don't worry. Just enjoy your holidays, go to high school and you'll enrol in the school of life as well, that's for sure.'

*

That's what the conversation was about and now here is this invitation. Laura thinks it's strange, but yet she likes what she reads. The brochure looks very attractive and it pictures a unique environment that promises to teach them some real secrets of life that they will not learn in any other school.

Later that morning she shows it to her husband John and they decide to surprise the twins and enlist them for the School of Life, just as they had wished.

*

Laura and John never found out how that invitation had come to them. Some people say that if you really want to attend the School of Life you will always get an invitation . . .

