

“AN ACCIDENT, CONSCIOUSNESS ARISING”

1 INTRODUCTION

Catchphrase...

An (un)fortunate accident
A collision of cars. A collision of cultures
A reset of life
It's a fine line between serendipity
And tragedy.
An epic exploration of luck and Love

Dear Reader,

Thank you for opening this website. “Consciousness Arising” is the first book in a trilogy of novels. They describe the struggles of a woman who in a terrible accident loses her beloved husband and only son. As only survivor she chooses a journey of psychological and mental struggles and help, to create a new life at peace with her Innermost Being.

Kind regards,

Rob Docters van Leeuwen

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2 SUMMARY

Ueda Kayoko is an independent, kind, obliging woman her late-thirties. Born in Japan and living in Vancouver she feels more Canadian than Japanese. Trained as a psychotherapist she meets Mitchell at a skiing holiday in Weed. They marry and move to Oregon where Mitchell manages a wood mill. After three years their adored son Alwin is born. On a Saturday afternoon they have a barbecue with friends.

On Sunday the family drives to San Francisco where on Monday Mitchell will attend company meetings about its wood mills. Whilst driving they listen to music and talk.

About halfway, in Weed close to Mount Shasta they are T-boned by a 4WD.

Kayoko's husband and son die within minutes. She survives injured.

In deepest grief her raw questions are “Why am I still here?”

We had it so good! Now I'm all by myself. Why all this? What now?

The impressive Canadian-English-Japanese funeral rubs in her loneliness.

Her house is unliveable. She puts it up for sale.

She has lucid dreams. Visions show her a Japanese flute and a Zen Centre.

She interprets them to mean to learn to play the shakuhachi and spend some time in a Zen Centre.

She chooses a Centre North of Vancouver and drives there in her new car.

The Zen Centre receives her empathetically. The Abbot and the Zen gardener train her in Zazen. And meditation.

The Abbot organises a shakuhachi teacher for her.

Kayoko gradually feels that she could return to the world as psychotherapist. But she also realises she needs peace and time to work on her spiritual development.

In the Zen Centre she discovers she may be pregnant of her deceased husband.

The Abbott organises a test in a Maternity Clinic in North Vancouver. Her flute teacher guides her to the Maternity Clinic.

In the motel where they are staying they talk about their lives, she about her accident and he about his divorce. Kayoko dreams of a woman standing in a snowy landscape under a birch tree holding a baby girl by the hand.

Whilst waiting for the tests, near the hospital she finds a labyrinth which she walks. In its central flower garden she thinks about the shakuhachi teacher. She feels there is a connection.

The tests confirm her pregnancy with a due date in August.

She strongly feels it will be a girl and names her Yume (dream).

She tells the Abbot she is pregnant, evaluates her marriage and realises that her spiritual development is very important for her.

The Abbot convinces her “there is ample time to prepare for the future.”

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3 FOREWORD

Philosophy is *not* an elite thing. It is out here, in everyday life and in this trilogy I try to point this out. This is why Zen Master Hakuin went to fields where he spoke and laughed with ordinary workers. During the last half of the second millennium A.D. scientists and philosophers have logically dissected this age-old science of life into an unapproachable carcass covered by too many words and books removed from everyday life,

Alain de Botton *The Consolations of Philosophy and The Course of Love, The Architecture of Happiness* and other titles, crafted bridges between life and philosophy showing that philosophy can be ordinary and useful. In this trilogy I have included some life depicting poems in free verse, shared by a friend.

In this trilogy of novels I attempt to go a step further in opening doors to thinking and philosophy by building a bridge of thoughts and new life, the bridge “*Beginning Anew*” resting on its two pillars, “*An Accident*” and “*Breakthrough*”. The story throughout these three books plays out during nine months of Kayoko Ueda’s life of struggle, new insights, new love and a new life.

Trained as a psychotherapist she marries Mitchell O’Brien, manager of a wood mill and becomes his secretary. Fate presents her with a shocking life experience which she survives but does not understand why it happened. Through pure willpower and questioning she gradually overcomes her guilt feelings, anger and grief relentlessly asking “why?”. Gradually she realises that it is our consciousness that determines how we ‘see’ and act at things and make things happen. Her spiritual development becomes very important to her and consequently her consciousness elevates and her insights and decisions widen. Guided by her visions and synchronicities she comes to realise where she is now and why things happened. She decides to venture into new love and live in agreement with her Innermost Being. Thus she arrives at unseen realms of existence and Enlightenment...

This work may be seen as a symphony of thoughts. The characters in this book do not shy away from asking difficult questions propose ideas, express emotions and use psychology, philosophy, religion, metaphysics and consultative tools to acquire new perspectives and ideas to complete a soul’s tasks for life.

In closing, I am in accord with Michel Eyquem de Montaigne who said about his Essays:

*“I have no more made my book than my book has made me: ‘tis a book consubstantial with the author: who touches the one, touches the other.”*¹

“Rob A W Docters van Leeuwen, Freshwater Bay, Perth, 2023

¹ “*A Summer with Montaigne, On the Art of Living Well*”, by Antoine Compagnon, published in English by Europa Editions, New York, 2019, p. 74.

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4 EXCERPT

(Kayoko has decided to enter ea Zen Centre. It takes her two-days drive up there from Springfield in Oregon. We pick up the story in Gibsons, a harbour village at the east side of Horseshoe Bay))

===== Beginning of Excerpt =====

A strong black morning coffee in the small and cosy Gibsons Harbour Restaurant gives her a kick. She has thought for days how to enter the Centre. What to wear? She did not want to be a visitor wrapped up in heavy winter clothing; neither did she want to wear jeans or holiday gear. She decided that she will go lightly dressed without carrying anything and with simple footwear. It is the beginning of her new life. The I Ching consultation had said “the young seedling is vulnerable while it pushes through the earth...”

Plonks her carry bag on the back seat, gets into the car.

(“*All by myself*” Eric Carmen’s song, she thinks.)

She closes her eyes and becomes very calm.

God help me, I am walking in Your Hand – Mitchell’s said that, too...

At peace with herself, around 8:30 am she resolutely drives off. The Zen Centre was another sixty km east – through Sechelt – and easy to find. She enters the Centre’s empty parking lot and parks as close as possible to the reception building.

(Thinks, I am at the bridge between my old and my new life...)

I don’t want to wear a coat or shoes or stockings. I need to feel the ice-cold wind, and snow under my feet, ground myself - this is who and where I am now! And I will not carry *anything* when I am going in.

She realises that she cannot lock the car, and places the keys under the passenger’s seat doormat. Sitting with her legs out of the car her coat and shoes go off and back in the car.

Sitting barefoot in the warm Volvo, she sees the Zen centre’s porch, five half-snowed under wooden steps.

She steps out of the car onto the frozen, snow-covered tarmac. Ice-cold. Ice bites her feet and cold air envelopes her. No wind, only dry frost. In the zone of arrival she does not shiver. Looks up. Nice morning, dissolving clouds: God’s canvas on which he never stops painting...

Immediately, the cold snow on the tarmac stings her feet. Her lightly dressed body hurts from the light frosty wind. Takes a deep breath....

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Go, go, go, girl!, she fires herself up, Mitchy is watching over you...

Swift but careful the pale-dark-haired-lithe woman elegantly runs tiptoed over the frozen snow to the porch of the reception building.

A warm welcome

She quickly reaches and steps up the snowed-under five wooden stairs.

A soft, very cold breeze whooshes by. A lonely seagull crosses the sky and disappears behind the trees.

Would that be Mitchell's spirit?

Could be...

Gee, it *is* cold here!

The front door opens and Abbot Kobayashi Kenji Roshi steps out.

'Welcome in this Zen Centre, Mrs Kayoko O'Brien. Please come in.

She bows. Their eyes meet.

He looks me straight in the eyes with his friendly, warm-brown eyes. Looks a bit like uncle Ueda Saburo. Strange – people come in types she thinks...

Thank you, Kobayashi Roshi.

Hopping from one foot on the other she steps inside. The Abbot hands to her leather sandals and a grey guest's habit which she puts on over her thin clothing. What a difference, she thinks. The Abbot gestures to follow.

'I will show you your guest room first. There, you can refresh yourself and have a warm shower. See me in my office when you are ready to fulfil a few formalities.

The Abbot shows her room on the floor plan of the reception building, then takes her to her room. .

She bows. Thank you Kobayashi Roshi for your welcome.

In her bedroom which has been armed up with a blow-heater she rubs and warms her feet and tries to digest how the Abbot had looked at her. Maybe he saw my soul, the totality of me...

After having inspected the 3 by 4 m guest room she realises that everything is still in her Volvo. So she goes out on her sandals and in her lay-person's habit and makes a few trips back and forth to get her stuff into her room.

Half an hour later she sits in the Abbot's little office. She wears the lay-person's dark grey habit and socks in her sandals.

He sits at his wooden desk, an old IBM Selectric typewriter and a boxy IBM PC. The wooden-walled office is sparsely decorated. On the filing cabinet a small Buddha sculpture and a bonsai,

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some books on a shelf, a portrait of a very cross-eyed Zen Master whom she recognised as Hakuin from one of her books she has at home. There is also the photograph from the brochure of a white haired master playing a large flute in the landscape. She waits until the Abbot starts speaking.

‘Dear Mrs O’Brien, could you please explain why you undertook this journey down from Eugene to visit and stay with us for some time?’

Please call me Kayoko.

‘That is affirmative, Kayoko san, and you may call me Kobayashi Roshi.’

Thank you, Kobayashi Roshi.

She briefly repeats how she lost her husband and her only child about four weeks ago in a car accident by a speeding driver who ran a red light. She talks about her profound sadness, and being lost completely without Mitchell and Alwin. About the carnage and stupidity of traffic accidents. About her incessant question why this has happened to her, her husband and her child? Why were they taken away?

Her quandary how to live on without them. And how to find her equilibrium and a goal and life that will befit her. That she is like a seed in the ground that has silently started to germinate.

The Zen-master listens intently.

Whilst talking her grief overwhelms her she tries to suppress, yet tears are rolling down... She has not cried this intensely since the accident... The Abbot waits patiently and compassionately. When her crying abates she dries her tears and apologises for the outburst.

You Have Been Loved...

‘I understand your sorrow, Mrs O’Brien. You have been through a terrible and shocking time.’

He pauses a moment...

‘Music has a great potential to comfort us. I would like to play a song for you about a woman who went through something similar. He gives her the lyrics typed on paper. It is a song by George Michael named, “*You have been loved*”.

He calmly presses the play-button.

In a lamenting minor key the song develops.

*“She takes the back road and the lane
Past the school that has not changed
In all this time,
She thinks of when the boy was young*

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*All the battles she had won
Just to give him life ...*

*That man
She loved that man
For all his life,
But now we meet to bring him flowers
And only God knows why...*

*For what's the use in pressing palms
When children fade in mother's arms,
It's a cruel world
We've so much to lose
And what we have to learn we rarely choose*

*So if it's God who took her son
He cannot be the one living in her mind*

*Take care my love, she said
Don't think that God is dead
Take care my love, she said
You have been loved*

*If I was weak, forgive me
But I was terrified
You brushed my eyes with angels wings, full of love
The kind that makes devils cry*

*So these days
My life has changed
And I'll be fine...*

*But she just sits and counts the hours
Searching for her crime...*

*So what's the use of pressing palms
If you won't keep such love from harm,
It's a cruel world
You've so much to prove
And heaven helps the ones
Who wait for you*

*Well I've no daughters, I've no sons
Guess I'm the only one
Living in my life*

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*Take care my love, he said
Don't think that God is dead
Take care my love, he said
You have been loved...*

*Composed, written and performed by George Michael,
From his album: "Ladies and gentlemen: For the Heart"²*

Kayoko cries whilst the song goes on, first silently but then lets go completely. The floodgates explode to let go of her grief that she had valiantly bottled up for so long...

After the song she calms down and apologises still sniffing...

I can't help it, Kobayashi Roshi, I have to cry. It is the first time really, I can't stop it. I have to let go...

The Abbot compassionately nods at her.

Without a word the Abbot places his hands over the hands of the still sobbing woman. She feels his warm glow.

'George Michael wrote this song after some very painful years in which he lost not only his great love but also the court case against Sony, but he won his war for freedom. He lost his great love Anselmo Feleppa in March 1993, and his mother diagnosed with cancer. He *knew loss, suffering, and soul pain* and expressed them in unsurpassed ways through his songs with which he helped countless peoples to cope better...

Why did you play this song for me, Kobayashi Roshi?

'Because I *do* understand the grief for the great loss of your husband and son. I myself also lost a child when I was young...

She looks up very surprised. You too?

'Yes, my daughter Naomi, from leukaemia. Sometime later I lost my wife too, she could not get over the loss. So, I do know. George Michael's song depicts my suffering as well...

(Kayoko thinks, how sad is that. What a drama.)

Did you go into a Zen Centre, too?

'Indeed, but not immediately. Having lost everything I had enough of life. I had worked so hard and had ended up with nothing. I almost ended up ending my life...

What happened then?, Kobayashi Roshi?

² George Michael, artists and producer of the album "Ladies and Gentlemen, The Best of George Michael", CD 1, released 1 December 1998, EPIC Records.

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‘After the deaths of my daughter and my wife I tried to get over it by drowning myself in my work *and* finding relief in the Indian religious texts, the Vedas and Upanishads. They gave me insights which I still cherish, but were also wordy. The *Dhammapada* is shorter, just under 400 aphorisms and the *Tao Te Ching* just 81. They helped me, but my suffering continued.

(Mitchell had *The Dhammapada* in his library! I glanced through it then. Should have taken it with me in my suitcase, she thinks.)

‘Kayoko san, I did not go into a Zen Centre immediately and continued working. Tried to lose myself in my work. Not surprisingly, after half a year I was completely overworked. I *had* to drop it all, including doing yoga which had been giving me incomprehensible but compelling visions. I had to face double grief then! When I spoke with a Jewish colleague - a good lawyer in family law - about my sorrows he recommended books about Zen, Zen had helped him a lot.

‘I was surprised to hear that from my friend - him being Jewish - but I started reading some of the Zen books he had suggested. I was surprised how much Zen there is in Northern America. I was very impressed by my friend’s explanations and found myself gradually going deeper and deeper into the world of Zen. Koans and haikus gave me peace. At the same time I sought help from a Jungian psychologist. He helped me discover my Shadow and the subconscious contents that controlled my behaviour. After a year of effective treatment with him it became clear that I needed Zen to become a more authentic person. I entered this Zen Centre and have been here ever since...

Kayoko nods.

‘I understand why you chose to be in Zen.

At the Bottom of the Valley...

Kobayashi Roshi, was there any way my accident could have been prevented? And what is my crime? What am I guilty of?

The Abbot pauses for a moment, then with a warm voice says, ‘Kayoko san, you have done *nothing* wrong and you did *not* commit a crime. However, there are higher reasons why your accident had to happen and therefore it was not preventable.

(Kayoko thinks, *why* then?)

‘Your feeling of guilt is not uncommon, the “why am I alive and not dead too?” I will tell you something you may not know. In 1987 Jennifer Grey, the main character in the movie “*Dirty*

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Dancing”, was seemingly the sole survivor of a fatal head-on car crash between her rented BMW and a Volvo in Northern Ireland. Her partner, Martin Broderick had veered to the wrong side of the road. The accident killed the two persons in the Volvo instantly. Jennifer got terrible whiplash and her lover Martin Broderick seemed dead as well. This all happened just after the very successful movie was released and spoiled most of its fun. Jennifer had terrible survivor guilt and also asked “what is my crime” and “why am I still alive?” She said that you do not get out of such a thing the same and that this accident had changed her life forever ³.

Kayoko, teary-eyed looks at the Abbot and he nods...

‘Dear Kayoko san, this real-life story does not lessen your suffering and guilt feelings. But you know now that you are not the only one. It was a very wise decision Kayoko to go to a Zen Centre. You are psychologically wounded – it’s not your fault – but you need assistance to get beyond it. I believe that your stay here will help you recovery and open new perspectives to life.

I realise that too Kayoko murmurs...

===== End of Excerpt =====

³ Jennifer Grey’s book “*Out of the Corner, A Memoir*”, which includes her car accident, has been published by book Penguin-Random House, May 2022, ISBN 9780593356708

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5 “AN ACCIDENT”

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Book 1 Cover: Kayoko shocked after the accident and realising its devastating enormity, reflects on her Japanese and Canadian life so far and heartbroken ruminates "*How to go on?*"

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6 BEGINNING ANEW

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Book 2 Cover: Kayoko and Alex sitting together in blossoming Spring, sharing togetherness, their history and beliefs and trying to understand all that has happened and how to move forward.

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7 BREAKTHROUGH

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Book 3 Cover: Immobilised in hospital Kayoko - as psychotherapist - creates a healing tale for grieving parents about the soul of their stillborn baby boy. *In Heaven its soul meets Mr. Nemo who names him Peter. After many talks with Mr. Nemo, and visions, Peter decides to become a cave painter. Having left Heaven and walked over fields, Peter finds and climbs into Akasha, a vessel that will bring Peter to 'another shore' . Found by its parents for Tanar a new life begins.*

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8 WRITING CONSCIOUSNESS ARISING

Creating “Consciousness Arising”

When I decided in 2005 to write this book I had had to finish the book “Hortus Spiritualis” first. Then until 2010 I had a other commitments and false starts trying to figure how to write it. In 2010 I commenced writing in earnest and finished it in 2023. The beginning and the end I did in the first month. The beginning was related to my own almost deadly pushbike accident in 2004. The core of the end via an amazing synchronicity was gracefully passed on to me, in 2010. Guided by knowledge and insights I filled in the great void in-between with stories and insights wherever they looked right. It gradually appeared like a photographic image in a developer bath. However, within three years “An Accident” had grown way beyond the size of a normal book without it having reached the end satisfactorily. I then split it into three volumes: “An Accident”, “Beginning Anew” and “Breakthrough”, a trilogy. I had a graphical designer to develop the three catching covers of the three volumes and developed the website for “Consciousness Arising”.

The Stream of Consciousness style

I wrote “Consciousness Arising” in Stream of Consciousness style. This style aims to capture natural flows of events and thought processes. Such text present speed, subtlety and openness of mind and incorporates snatches of thought, ungrammatical constructions, and free associations of ideas, images and words.

The term for this style was first used by the psychologist William James in ‘The Principles of Psychology’ (1890). He stated that consciousness cannot be represented as a fragmented chain but as a constant flowing stream. James Joyce used his style in his novel ‘Ulysses’ and Dylan Thomas used it his stunning BBC radio play ‘Under Milkwood’. Not surprisingly I have included parts of the latter ‘Beginning Anew’.

Other developers of the stream of consciousness style and the importance of intuition were Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson. Bergson pointed out that one can analyse or intuit things, and that writing in a stream of consciousness style sketches our continuous sense of time in which past, present and future merge. Streams of consciousness are the fluid life at the heart of our identity and at the centre of every object and every person.

Is your consciousness inside your brain, or is your brain inside your consciousness?

Does Zen promise an afterlife? No, but it does away with death.

To do Zen, just breathe, that’s enough.⁴

RDvL

⁴ Zen quotes from “A Thousand Paths to Zen”, by Robert Allen, (2003), MQ Publications Ltd, London, UK.