

Waiting for Granada's Goddess
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As I was finishing my Ph. D. I tried without success to get a faculty position. I took the next best option – an advanced apprenticeship called a post doc for a year to publish articles to beef up my portfolio or CV. Single and free to go anywhere, I chose to have an adventure at the University of Granada in Spain, where my host, Professor Javier shared my research interests in optics of the atmosphere.

With only high school Spanish, I arrived in July, two months before the postdoc began and enrolled in the Cervantes Institute during the summer weekdays so that I could eventually become fluent. If you know anything about Granada in summer, it is a furnace. So, during the summer weekends I sought relief from the heat at the University pool.

One day that burned into my memory was so wilting hot I had to soak my head and t-shirt on the walk to the pool. Once inside the pool grounds I approached the line for the refreshment stand for a drink. It was then that I saw her. I will call her my Granada Goddess. She had just purchased two drinks, holding one in each hand, and was walking with a girlfriend back to wherever she and her friends were sitting. She looked gorgeous in her bikini, but, uncharacteristic for me, what really magnetized me to her was the extraordinary animation on her face.

Before I continue, I must tell you that though I do not like to brag it is essential you know that I am a clairvoyant. To me a clairvoyant is someone with the rare ability to be conscious of all our inner, profound, and normally unconscious impressions and insights.

I don't remember being a clairvoyant as a kid but then again perhaps it was always in me. Here is how I began to become aware of it. When I was not quite 14 a family of cousins from Israel visited us. Rinna came from Poland and had been trained by a gypsy to read palms. I had only known of such a thing from the film, *From Here to Eternity*, when a gypsy woman read death in the hero's hand.

Rinna's readings were so accurate that I, as a budding scientist and hopeful of getting into girls' minds and hearts, had to learn. With a few hints from Rinna and a few books I began to practice on high school friends. The word got around and kids I didn't know asked for readings. I was besieged in the lunchroom. After several months, I began to get good at it. And what was strange was that I began to get vibes aside from the palm reading. The vibes came from the kids' expressions, and the way it felt when I held their hands, and these vibes merged with my palm readings.

One day, a tough, mean kid who had always made me cringe sat down for his lunchroom palm reading. Something happened to me that I can't quite explain. A moment after I took his hand a channel in my mind opened. I saw the kid's whole being laid out before me. I was surprised I felt pity for this kid who had previously only threatened and intimidated me. It was my gypsy moment.

Other kids had come with him, sat at the table, and still others stood around. I looked up, told them to clear out, and was a bit surprised when they did.

I didn't know what to say to him, yet I did know, and I knew I had to say what I did. I lowered my voice and directed it to him so no one else could possibly hear. I told him I finally understood why he was mean, but that if he didn't try to change he was heading for disaster because he would seek out someone meaner and stronger. I told him that I saw how hopeless he felt, but he was wrong, for there is hope for everyone, no matter how impossible it seems. And the kid's expression softened in front of me.

I must tell you that predictions using palmistry or clairvoyancy reveal only the person's feelings and character. You cannot tell if a person will be hit by a car; you can only tell if that person is accident prone or prone to take insane risks, or hell-bent on self-destruction, and that is what I saw in that boy.

No sooner had I finished reading that kid's palm than other prospective kids converged on the table but I told them I was done for the day. The next day I got similar vibes from several other kids. My vibe channel has widened ever since.

Now, to get back to my Granada Goddess. What I saw in her was a person with a wide-open channel into her soul. Remember that I am as much expert in reading the sky as reading people. Most skies are like most people. They are nondescript, fitting only for background noise or lighting. But every once in a while, the sky puts on a show that no one can ignore. Perhaps it is a spectacular cloud formation. Perhaps it is extraordinary colors, that may be caused for example by stunning rainbows, halos, or sunsets. And there are people like that, who, for various reasons, stand out of the background and demand attention. They may not demand attention from everyone, but this young woman stood out for me. In a world where so many cover up, even from themselves, this pure-hearted beauty felt no danger from opening herself.

I watched where she and her friend were heading. She sat down on the small rise at the far end of the pool under a large umbrella, where she handed one of her drinks to a scruffy looking young man. My heart sank. She was in love, and her love lit her up even brighter – this remarkable woman who could have so enriched my life.

I watched and waited possessed. A couple of hours later she passed by me on the way to the locker room. I had the effrontery to address her, but in English after an apology in Spanish. "You have the incomparable purity and beauty of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. It is a joy just to watch you. You light the life and world of anyone you love."

She didn't understand English but she got the import and she was touched. She smiled a heart-melting, angelic smile at me and passed by. I went for a final swim as a form of self-anointing, and left.

I thought of her often over the next days, weeks, and months. I waited, hoping to see her again, daydreaming that she had broken up with her scruffy boyfriend and was ready to fall in love with handsome, worthy me. As I walked Granada's streets I watched. Granada is small enough so that

you have a chance of seeing random people you have seen before if there is something that stands out about them. Days passed. I waited. I watched. I waited. I watched.

Please though, don't get the wrong idea. I went on with my life pretty much as usual, and my life was good. My concentration during working hours was complete and intense and my research in a subject I loved was, as a result, productive. And I formed enduring friendships. My new colleagues embraced me from the get-go – it helped that I read a few palms.

On weekends I visited the beautiful classical cities of Sevilla, Cordoba, Ronda, Merida, Madrid, Toledo, Sevilla, Segovia, Lorca, Valencia, Barcelona, Zaragoza, and more. I hiked the parks. I met women and socialized happily. The daydream only occupied idle moments, such as when I walked to and from work or along the promenade of Avenida de la Constitución. And even then, I sometimes thought of other things besides her, for example, how to solve various problems I was working on. If the sky were particularly beautiful, I would walk to the nearby train station when I had only a little time, because it offered the best quick view of the Sierra Nevada. If I had enough time, I would climb the hills that abutted the downtown for an even better view of the sky above and the city below.

There was another dream that I pursued – a life quest. Granada's Romanos, known as Gitanos or gypsies, congregate around the gate to the Granada Cathedral, begging and making a general nuisance of themselves. Since my cousin, Rinna had learned her palm reading from a gypsy I thought this the perfect opportunity to see if any had the clairvoyance they are famous for. That meant wading through the phonies or the incompetents.

So, one quiet morning, when the Gitanos were first setting up shop for the day, I approached them. Seeing my interest, several offered me the sprigs that were the so-called good-luck offerings to be exchanged for money. I announced that I would buy a whole tree if they would introduce me to the greatest clairvoyant among them. The rest of the crowd immediately surrounded me, each claiming the title of supreme mind reader. Even though I was sort of ready for that it still surprised me so much that I began to laugh. I think that surprised them.

My laugh was the secret key. An apparent leader stepped forward, peering into my eyes. I noted a look of shocked amazement on her face. Then her business face covered all and she stated that for a service fee of 20 Euros she would try to arrange for Vadoma, the 'knowing one', to see me. The Gitanos made so much of their living by lying, yet I knew she was being honest. I agreed. I paid and she spoke in the Romish language of the Gitanos to one of the boys, perhaps 8 years old, who set off running. She said, "Come back this afternoon after the siesta, whereupon I will inform you of Vadoma's decision."

When I returned that afternoon, the Gitano woman said, "Vadoma, had consented to see you. Return here to the gate of the Cathedral at 10:30 AM three days from now. Getting to see Vadoma is a rare privilege for anyone. You should know that her minimum price is 500 Euros but she has chosen to charge you only 200 Euros. That is an extraordinary honor for you."

I could see that her sales-pitch was not hyperbole.

In three days I returned to the Cathedral gates before 10:30. The Gitano woman saw me approaching the gate and greeted me with a smile. She asked me for the 200 Euros saying that Vadoma never touched money. She then told me to follow the eight-year-old boy who would guide me to her.

The boy walked quickly, leading me up the winding alleys through the Albaicín, with its famed view of the Alhambra, and then beyond, to the Sacramonte, where many Gitanos live. Higher and higher we went. Almost at the base of the great boundary wall, and with a panoramic view of the city and the Alhambra below, we arrived at a row of the cave houses that add to the fame and legends of Sacramonte. A gang of young men milled around as if by random, but they were plainly guards. They eyed me with a strange look midway between suspicion and wonder.

The boy led me, weaving through the men as if they were not there. Unlike the boy, I looked straight into the eyes of each man I passed. It was clear that these men had been told that I possessed some special quality, for their look showed admiration. It gave me such a nice feeling that I almost broke out into a laugh and couldn't help smiling. That increased their look of wonder, and a few returned my smile.

At the highpoint of the alley, near the center of the row of cave homes, the boy stopped. Before he could knock on the door it opened. He told me to wait outside and entered. In a few minutes the boy emerged and motioned for me to enter.

The October morning had turned hot, so the air in the cave home struck me as deliciously cool immediately upon entering. There was also a gentle fragrance of incense. This welcoming room was attractive and simply furnished. The limestone walls were plastered over to a pure white, which showed a few small colorful paintings to advantage. The furniture consisted only of a cobalt blue divan and next to it a standing lamp, and a simple desk chair set up facing the divan.

A dark-skinned woman barely 20 years old of stunning, delicate beauty with black eyes exaggerated by kohl, and dressed flamboyantly like a flamenco dancer, entered the room. I stood in shock. All the Gitanos I had seen up to that time were sturdy and forgive me, ugly. This woman was a freakish anomaly in the best sense.

When she first glanced at me to greet me she could not suppress a momentary gape of shocked surprise, which soon broadened to what seemed to me an understanding smile that faded slowly. She sat down on the divan with legs crossed and motioned for me to sit on the chair facing her. A 4-year-old girl entered the room, sat down at Vadoma's side, and registered the same look of shocked surprise when she looked at me, only her look of wonder persisted unabated until her mother put her arms around the girl's shoulders, after which her wonder moderated very slowly. The girl's eyes were a deeper green than I had ever seen. The woman spoke. "Welcome! I am Vadoma, and this is my daughter, Esmeralda."

Vadoma motioned for me to hold my hands up in front of her. She looked at them for a minute or so. Then she then reached for them, first holding them in her hands, then examining them, looking at the palms, the backs of the hands, and the palms again. When she had finished her silent palm reading she released my hands.

Then, without a word she began scrutinizing me. Her gaze was soft but focused. A minute or two passed in this way, which is a long time for two people to be looking at each other silently and without averting eyes. I began to feel pity for her – this beautiful woman, married so young and a mother. As my feeling congealed her look morphed to something akin to a trance but with intense concentration. I saw she was happy in her life and immensely proud of her ability and her daughter. My sympathy evaporated. She remained in that state almost motionless for at least five minutes, which left me feel free to gaze upon her and her daughter, who also looked silently at me through all this time.

While still in the trancelike state Vadoma began speaking. As she spoke her gaze returned to normal.

“You saw surprise in my expression and in the expression of my daughter when we first saw you. It is because we see that you have the vision. Having the vision is something extremely rare. You have the rarest form. In you it is deep and pure, yet it all lightness in you. That is extraordinary. This vision has washed unnecessary fear from your life. People can feel that fearlessness in you. You have a fine thinking mind, which in most people weakens or blocks the vision, but you use it as an ally to unlock gates and enhance understanding. I have never seen this quality before though I have heard of it. It is this combination of gifts that while you first felt pity for me you then realized that my life is wonderful and I am anointed.”

“It is a great fortune to all that you also have a kind heart and have known instinctively to use the vision only for good. All this makes you blessed beyond gifted. Do not ever change. I do not think you can.”

“You have come to me as a seeker to validate yourself. You still do not fully realize how deep the vision is with you that I confirm to you. You will need time to learn it and embrace it.”

“But you also came for another reason. You came because of love. You love a woman who is not yet in your life. This woman is a miracle to you. She has remained pure in a stained world. With your vision you need a woman of such purity, and she is the first woman pure of spirit that you have ever encountered.”

“You have done more. You have commanded this woman to love you. You must learn to know your power, which is unbounded. Part of this rare power is knowing what a woman wants without her asking. This is a power or quality that women love in men above all other except the gift of children.”

“Your power is calling this woman and she will find herself in pain. She will seek you and if she finds you, which I think she will, you must wait for her through all the healing time she needs. When she is ready, you will know it. From that time, take care to love and honor her always. ‘Then she will be more precious to you than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.’”

“All that I have said is confirmed and written in your hands, in your heart, and in your mind. You will have a good, happy, and productive life. I have said all I have to say. It is my great honor to have seen you on your path.”

Tears flooded my eyes, yet I felt it a gift to look at Vadoma. I stood up and leaving, spoke for the first time. “The honor is all mine. I am astounded at all you see. You see so much more than I do. Better I say no more.”

“You have told me all. As for my vision, I have been groomed and taught and practiced. You have learned everything on your own. It is in you and will ripen in time. Wait and have patience! Fare you well.”

As I exited the cave house back into the heat, which had grown, the boy appeared by my side to guide me back down to the city. All I had in my pocket was a 10 Euro note. I gave it to him, thanked him, and said that I was happy to find my way on my own. The boy was excited at the 10 Euro note, and with that look as thanks, ran ahead and disappeared from sight.

The fact is I was exhilarated, in a state of ecstasy. A tsunami of elation surged and swirled me. I felt like the Chosen One of the fairy tales. Vadoma had elevated to incipient genius this curious talent I had dimly sensed in myself, and perhaps more important, that this special vision would rest lightly on me. (I never did think the wasting exhaustion the psychic convict suffered after his revelations in the film, *The Green Mile* was correct.)

By contrast, after my Ph. D. I felt an anticlimactic letdown. Is that all there is? The world went on rotating and revolving without an iota of change in deference to the new, grand Doctor, relegated to a mere postdoc. This experience was 180° the opposite. This was all potential. And I felt that the transformative love I had always hoped would be mine to fulfil my life was another potential that appeared to be within my reach.

Walking down from the Sacramonte, I saw the normally beautiful view impregnated with a new, inner glow, as if I could see all the immense treasures buried within the Earth. I remember every step of the way back home but as in a dream, and when I reached home exhausted, I fell on the bed and slept dreamless till the next morning.

From that time, I felt a new vibrancy that lightened every step. My Granada Goddess remained hidden but I felt it was only a matter of time. And that time turned out to be Thanksgiving.

I felt it only right to give an American Thanksgiving Dinner of turkey for my Spanish colleagues. I just knew they would clamor that I give a speech in my weak Spanish, so I had scripted one as a joke to be delivered straight faced and memorized it.

The dinner, including the joke-speech was a great success and endeared me to my colleagues. They felt more American and I felt more Spanish. In an ebullient mood after all was over and we had cleaned up, I decided to stroll along the Promenade to savor my success.

And that is when I saw her. About a block ahead she was seated on one of the benches with her boyfriend. Even though her back was to me I recognized her immediately. This time though, I could see from her body language and gestures that her relationship with him was troubled. My feelings were mixed. I didn't want her to feel pain but almost no relationship ends painlessly, and this meant I did have a chance with her. I turned to cross the Promenade so that she could not possibly see me, and climbed the Albaicin, where I sat bathing in the sunset at an overlook, gazing for a much longer time than I ever remained still.

As Christmas approached, several members of the Department insisted that I act as a Swami fortune teller at the Christmas Party and read palms. I agreed. Why not? It was always fun to me and everyone whose palms I read enjoyed the attention. It was no problem that my Spanish was still woeful. If I could not say something in Spanish I would say it in English and Professor Javier among several others could translate.

At the last minute, on the morning of the Christmas party, I decided to buy a Swami's turban to add to my aura. In a trinket shop near the Plaza Nueva I found the perfect turban, complete with a costume jewel and feather. I put it in a bag and walked back toward the University. There on the Promenade, I saw her again on the same bench, this time sitting alone, face down, looking disconsolate. Her boyfriend had left her. This was my grand chance though it was not appropriate for a romantic introduction. What could I say? Fortune favored me doubly; it gave me a brainstorm. I put on the turban, walked over to her, stopping immediately in front of her. This startled her and she looked up. A glimmering of recognition shone in her eyes, which my smile reinforced.

I chose to be gentlemanly, but direct, authoritative, and insistent. "Granada Goddess, I see how unhappy you are. When you are sad the whole world sheds tears. But fortune favors us. I have come at the perfect time for you, for when you are sad you need another to point out the proper choices, and I only know the solution to your problem. The solution will take time and I will tell you now only that it begins with paella – the best in all Spain – and it is my great honor, my destiny to take you there. Come! Join our Christmas party at the University. There, you will lift spirits and I will reveal secrets never before known to human beings."

At least that's what I tried to say. I wanted to sound official and authoritative but my Spanish was still so embryonic that she couldn't suppress a giggle.

Then she said, "I'm sure I've seen you before."

"Yes, and you know me better than you can imagine."

I extended a hand as her invitation. As she took it an electric thrill coursed through my body as if an invisible St. Elmo's Fire had enveloped me. I squeezed her hand just long enough to allow the electricity to pass through to her if she would accept it. I then let go and with a grand gesture, pointed towards our destination.

"Granada Goddess, please tell me your name."

"Elise."

“Yes, it’s a beautiful name.”

“Thank you. Why are you wearing that turban?”

“I am chosen as the Swami at the Christmas Party. Some of the people want me to read their palms and tell their fortunes.”

“What happens if you hurt someone?”

She asked that because she was still in pain. I answered to reassure her, “I read to entertain and to help. I do not hurt.”

“How do you know you won’t hurt anyone?”

“I know. It is my gift. You will see at the party. But now let me take off my turban until the moment of the Swami’s grand entrance.”

No sooner was I turbanless than Elise said, “I remember now where I saw you. It was at the University pool one very hot day last summer. You only spoke English to me then. What did you say? It was something about Botticelli. Did you compare me to his Venus?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Why?”

“I saw in you an extraordinary purity of soul that redoubles your beauty.”

“Thank you.” She blushed and continued. “You said more. What else did you say?”

“What I said was a very great compliment. But, forgive me for not telling you now. I promise I will tell you later.”

“OK, if you think you know me so well, tell me what I do.”

“I’m not sure. Perhaps you’re still a grad student. But when you heard my Spanish, you slowed your speech and spoke more distinctly. That means you have the teaching gene. Perhaps you even teach Spanish. Your Spanish sounds beautiful to me.”

“Oh my, that’s exactly what I do.”

The gloom had lifted from her face. We talked fluff as we continued walking to the party. If I had been on ice skates I could not have glided more smoothly.”

The party would have been wonderful without Elise. The Spaniards know how to work and they know how to celebrate, and they can separate those two sides of their lives. But Elise transformed

it beyond wonderful. She looked and was treated royally, and as it turned out, she had friends and acquaintances in common with several of the grad students in the department, which made her feel at home. And the paella turned out to be everything I had bragged about, and more.

Then, of course, there was my fortune telling. Despite the gaps in my Spanish it was a raving success. First of all, there was the turban, which set the mood and gave everyone a good laugh. But more to the point, I knew how to emphasize the good I saw, lighten burdens and worries, and phrase shortcomings as projects that only required a bit of work to be reversed. As I read, I found myself elevated by the faith everyone put in my readings, and felt my insights begin to grow more profound. I was now growing into clairvoyancy.

All this impressed my colleagues, which made me happy, but it was seeing Elise's joy that made my heart overflow.

As I wrapped up the reading session, one of my colleagues asked, "How about *your* fortune?" All laughed at that and insisted on an answer.

"Ah! We all know that no one is a clear, true mirror to themselves. So, I sought out the Gitano called Vadoma and she opened my eyes into myself."

"Vadoma consented to see you!" exclaimed the wife of one of the guests. "How in the world did you ever get to see Vadoma? She sees very few and charges each a fortune. She is a true wizardess, especially in matters of love. What ever did she tell you?"

"That I would have to wait and be patient but that my life was about to begin."