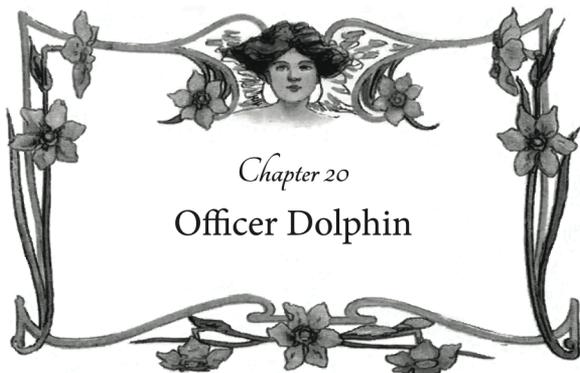
A surreal landscape featuring a single tree on a golden, curved hill. The hill and sky are mirrored, creating a symmetrical, tunnel-like effect. The sky is filled with clouds and stars, and the ground is a golden field with visible furrows.

*Swedenborg's
Daughter
Memoirs of a Mystic*

Donna Wolfe Gatti



Chapter 20
Officer Dolphin

*We will feed your hunger and quench your thirst, and
you will want no more.*

—Angel Dalia

After moving to The Woods, I started gaining weight and couldn't stop. No matter what I did to get in shape, the pounds kept piling on. Mild exercise increased my appetite, and vigorous workouts gave me back pain, strained muscles, and blisters on my hands and feet. Dieting didn't help. I'd lose a few pounds, but the loss was always temporary. After each diet, the weight returned and the numbers on the scale continued to climb upward.

I felt frustrated and embarrassed. My old clothes were too tight, but I couldn't face the dressing room mirrors at the mall. So I went to a dollar store and bought some extra large tee shirts and roomy pants with elastic waistbands. The granny garments fit, but they didn't hug my curves and improve my appearance. Instead, they accentuated the hidden rolls of fat and made me look like a stack of hamburgers with an olive on top.

My embarrassment escalated to feelings of shame and humiliation. I was also angry, and carrying such a heavy

emotional burden was debilitating. How could I work as a spiritual counselor and talk about creating Heaven on Earth, when I had created a version of hell for myself?

I wondered if my weight problem was some kind of spiritual test. Did I need to overcome the sins of vanity and pride? Or was it karmic payback for a long-forgotten offense in the past? Regardless of the cause, I had to get control of my emotions and stop obsessing over the size of my body. If I couldn't win the battle of the bulge, it was time to give up the fight. If Spirit wanted me to live life as an obese blob, then I'd accept my fate and quit complaining.

So I threw in the towel, and then stretched out on the couch to relax. I felt fine about my decision. The worry was gone, and there was nothing to do but think about nice things. Naturally, the angels came to mind.

I reflected on my near-death experience and the cute little Escort Angels who came to collect me. Then I thought about the Parking Angels, and how they always managed to find a place to park my car. There were Shopping Angels, Kitchen Angels, Intellectual Angels and Healing Angels. So, why weren't there any Diet Angels?

Darn! Less than two minutes had passed since I'd vowed to forget about the flab. I guess the issue, like my body, was too big to ignore. Anyway, it was a good question. Were there Diet Angels in Heaven?

For many years I had relied on the angels for guidance in every aspect of my life, but I'd never asked them to solve my most persistent problem. If I wanted their help, I had to ask in the right way. A message from Sabat, the Angel of Mecca, came to mind.

"It is essential to surrender your desires to the Creator. Deliverance begins once you do so. After you place your

sorrows, desires, hopes and dreams upon the altar of light, then and only then can Spirit come forth to comfort and direct you. Your rewards come after you surrender.

“We will answer your questions. But remember, my beloved, that an answer cannot be given until a question has been asked, nor can Spirit mend a broken heart until the heart has been surrendered for the mending. Thus it is so and thus it shall always be.”

I got down on my knees and prayed. “Angels, I don’t know what to do. I have honestly tried my best. I have dieted and exercised, but nothing works. Please, help me lose weight.”

When I stood up and started to walk, I couldn’t move. Invisible hands held me in place. I was caught in a dimensional warp, where time and space didn’t exist. Before I could react and succumb to fear, a vision of the ocean appeared in front of my eyes. A dolphin leapt in the air, and rays from the morning sun danced on the dark blue sea. It was a perfect day in paradise.

All of a sudden, the dolphin began speeding through the water like a shark going after prey. Stopping within inches of my body, he rose up, halfway out of the water, and looked me straight in the eye. Then he yelled at me as if I were a hardened criminal.

“DON’T EAT ANIMALS!”

I was utterly dumbfounded. Less than a minute ago, I had called on the angels, hoping to receive a kind word from a friendly cherub or a white-gowned celestial. Now I was involved in a face-to-face confrontation with a big gray dolphin.

His relentless gaze made me nervous. I wanted to run away, but the unseen hands refused to release me. Even

though I couldn't escape, I could think, and my thoughts ran to Flipper, the smart bottlenose dolphin that became a movie star. He was famous for helping the marine warden keep the peace. So, I figured that dolphins were the animal kingdom's police force and I was under arrest.

If he was reading my mind, he didn't let on. He just stared at me, waiting for a reply. What could I say?

"Yes, Officer Dolphin, I eat meat. Guilty as charged."

In retrospect, that would have been a good thing to do. Instead, I acted like a speeder trying to talk my way out of a ticket. With a defiant attitude, I spoke to him through mental telepathy.

"What am I supposed to do with all that food in my pantry? The beef stew, chicken soup, tuna and salmon?"

He looked somber, like a weary cop who had had enough of my nonsense. I thought he was going to give me a lecture, starting with, "Listen up, little lady." But he didn't. He just asked a simple question.

"How would you like to be stuffed in a can and put on a shelf?"

I felt ashamed. "You're right," I said. "It's disgusting."

Officer Dolphin nodded in agreement and swam away.

The invisible hands let me go and I returned to the third dimension. After taking a few deep breaths to calm myself, I went to the kitchen cupboard to take inventory. I counted twenty-three cans of meat and fish. Throwing away edible food seemed wrong, so I boxed up the tins and put them in the garage. I wasn't fully committed to vegetarianism, but Officer Dolphin had made an impact on me. I vowed not to buy any more meat, which was the first step to following the advice I had asked for.

Cutting out meat would reduce my fat and calorie intake, but not enough. In order to lose a lot of weight, I needed to do some other things as well. Because I had called on the angels for help, an endless stream of guidance poured forth from the spiritual realm.

That night I had a dream that played out like a cartoon. The scene took place in a sun-lit kitchen, complete with a steaming cherry pie and bluebirds chirping on the windowsill. A white bunny ran around in circles, going nowhere fast. I watched him for a while, until a replica of Mickey Mouse came into view. He began jumping up and down, higher and higher, until he finally landed on the counter. Giving me a wicked smile, he turned sideways and opened a cupboard door.

He pulled out a bottle and held it up for me to see. It was marked "CORN SYRUP." A bright red X had been painted over the label, as if it were rat poison. Mickey's clone pointed to the bottle and squealed, "NO! NO! NO!" Then the show was over and the screen faded to black.

In the morning I researched corn syrup on the Internet. I learned that high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is used to sweeten a wide variety of processed foods. In fact, it's used in everything from juice and soft drinks to ketchup, jam, bread, crackers, cereal, peanut butter, applesauce, salad dressings, frozen foods, packaged desserts, granola bars and even so-called "health foods." Manufacturers love it because it's cheap, it's sweeter than sugar, and it keeps baked goods moist.

HFCS is highly caloric and contains no nutritional value. It's far worse than sugar because it's not natural. Since it doesn't come from Mother Nature, the brain rejects it. Bodies crave real food, not artificial substitutes. So, after consuming

a full meal you still feel hungry. Some critics claim that it's addictive, like a drug. The more you eat, the more you want.

HFCS was introduced in the 1970s. Since that time, there's been a dramatic rise in the rate of obesity. It could be a coincidence, or a matter of cause and effect. Anyway, after reading the mountain of evidence against HFCS, I checked the labels on everything in my refrigerator and pantry. With a sense of relief, I disposed of another boxful of fattening products.

The dream, as well as the encounter with Officer Dolphin, changed my lifestyle. I began reading labels in the supermarket, taking care not to buy anything that contained corn syrup. And I stopped eating meat, poultry and fish.

My body isn't thin, but I'm not as fat as I used to be. Since becoming a vegetarian, I feel lighter in body, mind and spirit.

Angels love animals and they support a flesh-free diet. Archangel Gabriel said, "It is imperative that mankind look upon all living creatures as co-inhabitants and not as food or game to be hunted, for everything upon this planet is endangered."

Officer Dolphin communicated with me on a spiritual level, so I know he has a soul. Maybe his soul is more evolved than mine. If so, does he eat fish? Or is he dining on seaweed and preaching vegetarianism at underwater churches?

Even if he isn't a vegetarian, he values life. And I'm grateful to him for making me aware of the plight of animals. As a human being with plenty of food choices, it's a mistake to think that I have to eat meat.

Henry David Thoreau, my spiritual companion in the woods, wrote a piercing statement about vegetarianism. The book was *Walden* and the year was 1854.

“Whatever my own practice may be, I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other when they came in contact with the more civilized.”



Excerpt from "Swedenborg's Daughter: Memoirs of a Mystic," by Donna Wolfe Gatti.
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