

Chapter Three

LIFE

IN WHICH...

- Elwood is inspired both by Nattie the barista and the pervasive perennials all around the Spheres
- We see the whole Bible story in terms of life and death
- We frame the good news in terms of life

Elwood said goodbye to the *Corpse Flower* and began weaving through the incoming crowds toward the exit. As he was dodging this way and that, he found himself across the floor from the bustling Spheres coffee station abuzz with the flurry of filling morning orders.

“Hi, Elwood!” a bright cheerful voice called out from behind the coffee counter. Elwood snapped out of his daze to see Nattie waving at him. Nattie had starting working at the Spheres Café a few months earlier, and Elwood and she had met a few weeks back when they inadvertently bumped into one another on the stairs going up the to the third level. Nattie’s tray of four coffees and three muffins had cascaded down the stairs as did all the papers in Elwood’s “autumn checklist” folder. Both profusely apologized to the other and helped one another gather the runaways and clean up the spill. The half-hour that followed had become a favorite day-dream rerun for Elwood, remembering Nattie’s warm easy-going personality and her very cute smile. Since then saying “hello” in passing had become a bit of a ritual, but there had been no intentional follow-up as of yet. Elwood felt a little shy about initiating a get-together, but he kept thinking about it. Each time seeing her across the room made Elwood feel just a little more alive.

“Hi, Nattie!” Elwood waved back.

“You’re up and about early,” she responded above the noisy crowd.

“Tending to the *Corpse Flower*,” Elwood explained.

“Death flowers aren’t known for their sensitivity to the schedules of their caretakers,” she offered with a laugh. “A coffee on the house?”

“Ah, that would be great!” Elwood responded gratefully. She handed him a black coffee over the counter, and his heart jumped as their hands briefly touched in the exchange.

“I’d love to learn more about the Corpse Flower some time from a true inside expert,” she hinted. Elwood, before he knew what he was doing, leapt at the opening.

“How about an infomercial coffee-break tomorrow afternoon? Are you around here then?” Elwood half-mumbled.

“Perfect! I would love that!” Nattie said excitedly. She whirled around to the other customers in line and suddenly Elwood didn’t feel quite as tired as he had just a moment ago.

As he headed again toward the exits, for some reason Elwood began to consciously notice the perennials in bloom around him on every side: variegated begonias, elegant orchids, plush tree ferns, bold yellow aloes, and out-of-this-world pitcher plants. *The Spheres* featured a wide array of perennials, including over 1,000 species from more than 30 countries, Elwood knew, but this morning they were speaking to him loudly. Their imposing presence and uncharacteristic volume in his mind, he mused, must be a reaction against the despair that had washed over him through the night as he sat with the flower of death. (Or was it because he had just touched Nattie’s hand?) Either way, these beautiful strange flowers, he thought to himself, year after year defy the phenomenon of death, rising out of

dormancy again and again to share their vital colors and delicate fragrances with the world. Now here was an alternative picture to consider: resilient life that refuses to succumb to death! He loved the robustness of the perennials. And he loved a good movie where the hero was all but lost, only to make an unbelievable comeback at the end. His favorite movie was *The Matrix*, and he suddenly thought back to the scene where Neo comes back to life after having been shot by Agent Smith, now with an overwhelming power by which he could have his way with the heretofore nearly omnipotent antagonist. Could real life ever be like this? He felt a surge of something like desperate hope for a moment. He thought he would at least go back to the Bible that he had taken home with him from the Bavarian Lodge and see if there might be a section or two that offered a picture of a *perennial* kind of life for humans . But how would he ever go about finding something like that? Walking out of *The Spheres*, he found his car, drove home, and fell into bed exhausted and energized all at the same time.



HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE “LIFE”?

The Biblical Life-Theme Arc:

GENESIS

EXODUS-LEVITICUS

DEUTERONOMY (and the rest of the OT)

GOSPELS

PAUL'S LETTERS

REVELATION

Formulating a Life-Themed Good News Statement

Try It:

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