

MUFFLED SOUNDS
by Diana Durbin

FINAL CHAPTER, AND EPILOGUE
(PART 1, is available at www.muffledsounds.com)

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CHAPTER TWELVE

Felix was walking on the street where he lived. He was cold. Snowflakes had begun to fall. His clothes were torn. He saw blood on his hands and on his torso, still warm and sticky, not fully dried. He did not feel any pain. Every few yards he passed an onlooker, some he recognized as neighbors, others were strangers. Each one smiled and wished him a happy birthday. Nothing made sense. He could hear the sound of the woman. She was singing her lullaby. This time the sound did not come from every direction, it was coming from his building. It was time to find out why so many things had no explanation over the past several months; the unending summer, the voices, the experience at the train station when he went for the original interview with the Wilhelms, the dreams, the incident at the swimming pool, a new date of birth, so many unanswered questions, so many things unresolved.

The stress caused by all this confusion had been mounting in him, as the summer air becomes more and more charged in the hours before a thunderstorm. And just as the rain itself brings swift relief, it all disappeared in an instant at the train station minutes before as he fled from the policeman. He knew now he was close to understanding it all. He was ready. He was clear.

He took the elevator to their apartment. He turned the key in the lock and opened their front door. The sound of the lullaby was very close. He stepped inside and followed the sound into the living room. Sarah sat reclined on their sofa, gently rubbing her stomach and singing to the child inside her. She looked up and smiled at him.

"Sarah, it was you all along."

"Yes, Felix."

The apartment was warm, in contrast to the biting cold outside. He stood before her, saying nothing.

"Felix, sit down, my love."

He sat beside her, and turned to face her.

"Sarah, why do I have another birthday now?"

She took his hand. The blood had dried now.

"Because, Felix, if you are to live more than one life, it makes sense that you will have more than one birthday." She laughed, sweetly. Felix looked bewildered. "Oh my poor Felix, don't worry, it will all start to make sense now."

"What have I been living these past months? Am I in a dream?"

"Yes, and no." She laughed again. "Sorry, that's not a great answer, is it?"

"No, please Sarah, help me understand."

She reached up and ran her fingers through his hair. Then she pulled his head towards her and kissed him on the forehead. She released her grip on him and the tension in his body brought him upright again.

"Do you remember when you went to interview with the Wilhelms, that something strange overcame you at the train station?"

"Yes, I never told you about that. How did you know?"

"We'll get to me shortly, be patient," she scolded him gently. "Now, here's what you need to grasp.. get ready."

"Tell me," Felix said, nervously.

Sarah paused for the briefest of moments and continued. "That incident at the train station all those months ago was the moment of conception of your new physical life."

To Felix, these words felt as powerful as the train that had run over him a short time earlier. Sarah waited a moment before she went on.

"The voices you began to hear, those muffled sounds, more and more as the months progressed, the lullaby, were because you, the spirit you, was fusing with your new body as it

developed in the womb, and starting to hear what was going on around you in the physical world. The boundary between your spiritual and physical conscience often gets blurred. It's normal."

She paused again.

"Sarah," he asked anxiously, "are you my mother?"

"No. I'm the spirit of your new mother in the physical world. She's ready to give birth to her new baby, any time soon." Sarah laughed again, this time in excited anticipation.

"The baby is me."

"No. The baby will have you as its soul."

He was silent. "You have questions, Felix, just let them flow."

He pulled on from the many jockeying in his mind. "The swimming pool. What was that?"

"Physically, you've been in water for many months now, your mother's water. That day just got a little out-of-hand, so to speak. You temporarily crossed the line from spiritual to physical. It was too soon, but you got through it."

"And now, when I'm born, is the right time to cross that line?"

"Yes."

"And the never-ending summer?"

"It sounds silly but you're so warm and toasty in the womb, it feels like summer all the time. It gets very confusing for babies being born into really cold climates. I get a real kick out of that one!" Sarah laughed, this time quite heartily.

"The weather outside is as it should be now," Felix said, looking out the window. The snow was falling more heavily.

"Yes, we're getting close."

"The other voices, the man and the child?"

"That will be your father, and your brother, in your new life. Guess who your older brother is going to be this time."

"Somehow, and I don't know how I know, that question can have only one answer. Steven."

"Correct, except he'll have another name, just as you will, but that's not important."

"So I get to have a family this time."

"Yes," Sarah answered. "But the truth is you were not an orphan before."

"Then, what was all that about St. Myrtle's?"

"Window dressing, Felix."

"What?"

"Window dressing. In between the moment of your physical conception, which happened for you at the train station that day, and your birth, which is right around the corner, there's a drama, a simulation, that plays out. For your benefit, in this case. All the spirits agree to participate, even you and I. We even work on the script together. So, you see, there are no accidents of birth, or paths of life that happen haphazardly. It's all about choices." She smiled. She felt like she was helping him open his presents on Christmas morning.

"In the drama," she continued, "are things that you need to know for your life ahead. It's not a total replay of a past life. Sometimes it's a combination of past lives. So certain things get thrown into the mix. Being an orphan is a common device. You noticed it didn't exactly break your heart to have no father or mother, right? Having parents can complicate things. When you're getting ready for a new life, you need to focus on the most important things. In your case that's Steven, as you know him right now, but soon you'll have to deal with him as the favored older sibling. Plus, I'm getting that you're going to be born premature, which also gives him more of a head start. You'll be fine, you'll just be a little weak, physically, in your childhood. By the way, Charlie is an angel, we needed somebody to fill in the gaps in your lesson reinforcement and he volunteered. That's why his world, the port city, may have seemed even less real than the rest."

"I need some time for this to sink in, Sarah"

"Sorry, time is almost up," Sarah teased. "The roller coaster of a new life is about to begin for you. You have to get with the program!"

"Sarah, please, I'm all jittery with nerves!"

"Don't be. With me as the spirit of your new mother, you'll have lots of help."

"What are you? An angel too?"

"No, but I am an advanced soul. That's why your new mother will be known as a psychic. She'll be getting signals from me. They'll be clearer signals than a physical person normally gets, because I'm so wise. It's much more fun than being an angel." Another little chuckle.

"Don't forget, Felix, your physical life will be full of muffled sounds as you, the spirit you, tries to stay in touch with it. Your physical mind's ability to hear them, and make out what they mean, is a measure of how clear you are."

"What about those dreams?"

"More devices in the drama. In the womb you've had dreams within dreams. They get stuck in there to increase your familiarity with your new physical surroundings. In your past lives there were no computers, or airplanes, and people never called their bosses by their first names. You had to come up to speed on things like that."

"And the dream of the board meeting?"

"Well, that was to let you know you had done wrong. That the Wilhelms were not corrupt as you had wanted to believe. If you think about it, the only one who led you down that path was Gloria. But you went there willingly."

"Yes, I know, and I regretted it. It almost destroyed everything that mattered to me. But now I know that none of it was real."

"It was real," Sarah said, "but in your past lives. I know for a fact that you got killed under a train in one, fleeing from the law. You have chosen this new life as a way to prove you have learned your lesson. What has unfolded while you are in the womb is to help you. These past few months, I'm afraid, show you still have a lesson to learn, but I'll be there for you. I tried not to influence you, I only stepped in to calm you down at different times, because the more stressed you got the more threat there was to the physical baby. In fact, today's big event, getting killed over at the train station is going to cause your physical mother to go into labor early, but everything should go OK. Sadly, some babies don't make it because of all this spiritual trauma."

They both were silent now, watching the snow fall.

"What is the lesson I must learn, Sarah?"

"You tell me."

"Not to let my pride push me to do wrong."

"Yes. One of the more difficult temptations to resist. If Steven Wilhelm did you wrong, and perhaps he did, but nothing as great as you imagined, you needed to forgive him and move on. Instead, you resented the gifts you perceived him to have, his authority over you because of them, and you yielded to the temptation of hurting him. Now you have to deal with him all over again, until you do the right thing."

"What lesson does he have to learn?"

"I can't talk about anyone else's path with you but yours. Steven, that's the name you know him by, is already running around as a toddler. He knows what he has to learn now, but in a few years he'll forget and have to begin the long road back to clarity again. You'll go through that process too, of course."

"What about Gloria? Will I be seeing her again?"

"No, the spirit known to you as Gloria Silvestri is gone from your lives. She too volunteered to help you, but only now, not in your new life, because you had already moved on from her, as you probably gathered. You weren't really that upset at her for tricking you into erasing those documents, right?"

"No, come to think of it."

Sarah held his hand again. "Tell yourself to keep your ears open for those muffled sounds. Don't be like so many others, only hearing what they want to hear, only seeing what they want to see. Like when photos get passed around the week after a party, people only look for pictures of themselves. But you have had many past lives, Felix. You are becoming an advanced soul. Don't be afraid."

The snow was coming down very heavily now.

"A preemie, born in a snowstorm," she said. "You're going to have an interesting start to another interesting life. Happy birthday, Felix! Are you ready?"

Felix looked out of their living room window at the falling snow.

"Yes," he told her. "I'm ready."

EPILOGUE

The news on the radio today, for February 5th, included the following short piece:

"A sudden and unexpected heavy snowstorm in the city today did not stop Emilio Diaz making a surprise early entry into the world, four weeks prematurely. A team of emergency medical staff delivered Emilio in the ambulance on the way to St. Myrtle's Hospital at 4:11 p.m. this afternoon. Thankfully, all accounts are that little Emilio and his mom, Elaine, are doing just fine. Emilio's older brother and his dad are said to be over the moon to have a new addition to their little family."

IMPORTANT: PART 1 is available at www.muffledsounds.com