



Choosing The Right Path

**A Vision Quest Tale
by
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Have you ever started out on an afternoon stroll, on a beautiful sunny day, with the temperature a cool but comfortable seventy degrees and not actually have a destination in mind, while being in a locale where there are various options for choosing a path? And then, not to mention that there may be many interesting paths to choose from?

It's a wonderful feeling and a lot of fun and quite surprising as it is a lot like life itself. There are a big wide world of options in life for choosing an allegorical path to trek as well. The key to making that choice is insuring that it is a good

decision because the bad choices are quite often the most attractive possibilities but ultimately become a lot harder to traverse.

I have a story to pass on to you that has to do about making decisions to choose a certain pathway. In this story a pathway is not always something to walk on. It can be a road to drive a car on or even the decision itself to go from here to there. And to make it more complex, there were two of us embarking on this venture and that usually results in making decisions far more difficult to accept and control. No two people think alike or like alike. It's a truism of life. Unfortunately.

This story starts a little bit like a travel guide but don't worry, it will end much different as we progress further into the tale.

We had flown into Cork Airport in County Cork Ireland, rented a car and then drove west to explore the Ring of Kerry, which is a 133 plus or minus mile circular route containing numerous historical and scenic natural attractions in Southwest Ireland. But I think of this drive as a pathway to traverse and I call it an auto-path. Our great impression along this and all subsequent excursions through Ireland was how unbelievably green this country was. I had thought that the image of a Green Ireland was a fabrication by writers of music and books. It was not. The place was far greener than any green imagined by me.



Our first stop was in Bantry Bay at the Ballylickey House that overlooks the Bay. This elegant two story manor style house defines elegance in a wonderfully relaxed way. It is surrounded by beautiful gardens, full of spectacular flowers and of course, lush greenery. Our exceptional guest room was on the top floor and overlooked a view of the gardens and Bantry Bay in the distance. This manor house had an extremely formal but still relaxed dining room with exceptional cuisine and a marvelously appointed after dinner gathering room with leather and polished wood sofas and seats set in front of a cozy fireplace. You would certainly expect that James Joyce would soon be arriving to have a cigar and after dinner drinks with C. S. Lewis, George Bernard Shaw and perhaps Lady Augusta Gregory, all famous Irish literary authors. We imagined that we might be at such a gathering and conversing with such a creative group, but alas, it was just a feeling, albeit a grand one

After two days we departed Ballylickey and drove to Kenmare and decided to traverse the Ring towards Moll's Gap and then onward to Killarney. We had not known that Moll's Gap was going to have such an astounding effect on us.



We anticipated that the Moll's Gap section of the Ring was going to be interesting and beautiful but something about the locale was also having an emotional effect on both of us as we drove along this auto-path. I'm not sure exactly what this feeling was, but it was a unique and invigorating experience. The views were absolutely stunning, especially seeing Carrountoohill, which is Ireland's highest mountain. But the scenery was just one thing as our consciousness was receiving the gift of emerging deeply into the Irish mystique somehow. This place was different and knowledge of the differences permeated our being. We didn't attempt to push the emotion but stopped the car several times and exited in order to become better associated with the clear views and very different scents associated with this mountain environment. We just looked at each other and held hands with common knowledge about what we were feeling without the need of any conversation.

Eventually we moved on and reached Killarney, which is a town that is home to St Mary's Cathedral, Ross Castle, Muckross House and Abbey, the Lakes of Killarney, MacGillycuddy's Reeks, Purple Mountain, Mangerton Mountain, Paps Mountain, the Gap of Dunloe and Torc Waterfall just to name a few wonders. I know that the name Killarney invokes everything Irish to visitors of Irish decent and here we were fresh from the spiritual lift we had gathered while driving through Moll's Gap. Our hearts beat a little faster at the thought that we seem to have descended a bit deeper into the Irish soul in this place. After we checked into the Old Weir Lodge, which is a four star lodge set in mature landscaped gardens on the main Muckross Road, only a few minutes' walk from Killarney Town. We visited a number of attractions in or near Killarney that particularly lured us and then enjoyed a bit of Irish breakfast cuisine before we left that wonderful place.

The next morning we headed out for a longer drive to Dingle Bay on the West Coast. Because we are not composing a travelogue, although it may seem like it so far, I will just skip through descriptions that should not actually be skipped but I feel that I must do that in order to get the reader to where we are headed. But I have to honestly tell you that you should do this Ring of Kerry tour if you have the ability to travel there someday.

In any case, the Southwest Coast of Ireland at Dingle Bay is the most amazing collection of rockiness, extremely high cliffs and bright spots of greenery here and there. The ocean seems to be very angry as it assaults the rocky cliffs as though it wants to invade the mainland of Ireland. But try as it may, the rocky cliffs hold and the huge waves seems to do little more than chip away at them over vast periods of time. We walked along the tops of these cliffs, a little frightened that we

might slip on the lush grass at the top and slide downwards to the cliff top and then plummet over the edge and end up perishing into the angry ocean below. To make that mental scene even more alarming, we saw a pod of orcas patrolling the sea at the base of these cliffs. These killer whales would probably enjoy a snack being



offered from high above them, but we did not want to become that snack, so we got more sensible and moved away from the edge of that abyss.

During our tour of this dramatic coastline, we both began to have a sensory psychic experience like nothing we had ever dealt with before and this starts the real reason for this story. We both suddenly had the word Baile na Fheirtearaigh come to the foreground of our consciousness. I looked at my partner and said, have you ever heard of Baile na something? The reply I received back was, do you mean “Baile na Fheirtearaigh?” I responded, yes, that is the name. We were both silent at this point and then I asked where my partner had heard this name and was told that it just popped up.

We then pulled into a gas station to refuel and asked the attendant where Baile na Fheirtearaigh was. He said that it was just a few miles up to the northwest and wanted to know if we were looking for the Kilmalkedar church. I answered that I suppose we were and we received directions from him. We both knew that this instruction was obviously a psychic message and there was no way we were going to ignore it.

His directions were easy to follow and we soon arrived at the ruins of an old church, which were oddly enough called the Kilmalkedar Church just as the



attendant had said. It was a common enough place that tourists often visited and when we got out of the car to see it, we were certainly charmed by it. But more importantly, both my partner and me began to get the same feeling that we had at Moll's Gap and to a degree at Killarney Town. Perhaps it was even more intense when I come to think about it. There was no doubt about this. There were some unseen Irish souls hereabout and making themselves known to us for some reason.

We spent some time wandering about the site and stopped here and there to admire this gravesite and its headstones as well as some amazing sculptures, crosses and other ancient objects of interest. After doing this for a couple of hours, we left Kilmalkedar and headed back south. We were still in a heightened state of emotion because of those spirits at Kilmalkedar Church that seem to be visiting there and somehow affecting folk like us. We didn't know how we knew this, but we were in agreement that somehow we did.

As we continued the drive south, I didn't need to say where we were going because the name Skellig Michael had risen to dominate both of our thoughts and that urged us to determine this as the next place to drive to. It would be Skellig Michael, on an island off the west coast of Southwest Ireland and about a two hour drive to Portmagee so we could catch a ferry to Great Skellig Island. What was this

influence that had risen to us and bouncing around in our brains? That influence urged us to go to a place we had not thought of or heard about before now. We were agreeing to travel another strange pathway on this trip. We could of course ignore those urges but we were not about to.

When we arrived at Portmagee and boarded the ferry we were both quite excited. I mentioned that it was really very silly to get this excited over something that we had not envisioned or planned to do. We agreed that it was actually quite childlike to do this. And then we realized that perhaps this was the allure. We wanted to be like we were as children when discovery was far more important than almost anything else. We decided we would be children once more and see what we can discover.

The trip on a small ferry boat to the island was fantastic in itself. Somehow we were the only passengers on the boat and we found ourselves braving the angry sea that we both had previously been scared of when seen from up high on the Dingle cliffs, but now it seems that the sea was welcoming us with a kiss of its mist and awarding us with its perfume of salt and algae. Ahead of us, Great Skellig Island was quite imposing and somewhat intimidating as well. Why on earth would the monks of old want to locate way out here and build a monastery on the tops of its cliffs? I assume that this was actually the definition of a monk.



After we disembarked, we began a trek from the shoreline dock to the higher realms on this rocky and dramatic place. We understood the pilot and crew of the ferry would remain behind as they usually did. There was a guide greeting us at a point a little higher up from the shoreline and we were told that we would make our way to the top by ourselves and he gave us directions and safety tips but would not be coming along. He told us to be careful as the hike up could be treacherous and that there were no other visitors on the island today. Also, there would not be a guide at the monastery itself.



We began to be concerned about what we were hearing and doing. We had spent some time investigating Skellig Michael on our smart phones over the internet on the way here and had found out that there is usually many ferry trips per day with large numbers of tourists coming and going and here we were having the island to ourselves for the most part. This was scary and most unsettling.

Then suddenly we were receiving a voice saying “Ná bíodh imní ort!” in Irish with a distinct Irish lilt coming through within our consciousness. Somehow we actually translated it to “Not to Worry” in English. We both decided that we had gone this far paying attention to these feeling so why stop now. We resumed on our trek up the trail largely made up of pure slippery rock steps, sometimes outrageously narrow with precipitous drops on one side off which you could hurtle downward to your doom if you were not exceedingly careful. Occasionally

there were dangling chains connected to posts along the sides of the more scary parts of the path and this offered us some solace, but not so much.

It seems like it took us hours to make the journey from the shoreside landing to the monastery but in our actual time, it was probably only twenty or thirty minutes with stops to catch our breaths and calm our nerves. As the lower level guide said, there was no-one here. We had the place to ourselves and it was amazing. Now we knew why those crazy monks wanted their monastery way out here. The isolation was total and if that was your goal, this was the place to be and just look at the view. The buildings were actually more like beehives and there was no doubt in our mind that they needed a good interior decorator if they wanted us to ever stay here for any length of time.



My partner and I walked all around the monastery grounds and through the beehives. We felt that we were getting a sense of what it may have been like to work and pray in the solitude that this place afforded the monks. We were beginning to be really glad that we did not have other traveling companions along on this venture. It would not have been the same. The otherworldly feeling we had been having ever sense our visit to Moll's Gap was still with us but greatly intensified in this spot. We discussed this fact between us and then suddenly heard a distinctly female Irish voice behind us.

We turned around and our breath quickly drew sharply into our lungs as there before us was a beautiful women gradually transforming and at a stage midway between a black furred animal and a human form. Although we were



alarmed at what we were seeing, a calming influence began to envelope us. This influence was undoubtedly emanating from this woman. She continued smiling and then spoke.

“My Celtic name is Erui and I’m sometimes known as Erie in modern Irish. Welcome to Skellig Michael. I have been following you two since you arrived in Ireland and stayed in Ballylickey. I tapped your consciousness when you passed through Moll’s Gap and found that you, unlike most other folk visiting Ireland were sensitive to the Gaelic because you have a deep appreciation for creation, a sense of the harmony of nature, a vibrant sense of Creations mystical presence, and a rich appreciation for stories and myths as conduits of wisdom to absorbing the spirit of Olde Ireland. That is why you were led to the places you have visited and now find yourself here in Skellig Michael. You both seem quite receptive to the essence of our Celtic mythology and I was sending you bread crumbs to see if you would follow them here for an introduction to me. I could have met you in any of your various stops along the Ring, but felt that this would be the most relevant of the options. It was also important that you two had to pick the path to travel to get here and not follow my urgings because you were forced into it. It was a lure and not a stick you were dealing with.”

I responded to her. “You are intimating that we had to use our free wills in deciding whether or not we would follow your urgings to go somewhere or not. Is that correct?”

“Of course!” Erie said. “What good would it be if you were forced into doing everything that you are urged to do. Multiple pathways to choose from are a great means of learning and growing. It is gratifying when you make a right choice, like this one here. Right?”

“Absolutely, my partner responded. This place is fantastic and so are you. What animal form did you manifest from?”

“An Irish werewolf of course. But we werewolves in Ireland are vastly different from those in mainland Europe. Here, we are the protectors of children, wounded men and lost persons. The most famous of my kind are the mythical Irish werewolves of Ossory, which is now Kilkenny. In the ancient days, we fed from the herds but this was accepted then by the non-werewolf peoples because we watched over wandering children, healed the wounded and guided lost strangers to safety. We never bothered the humans and would never, ever eat them. Now-a-days there are very few of us left and we mostly just attempt to meet souls like you and

let you know that you are not alone and a wee bit more about what you are spiritually. We are here to help you in any way we can and want to use this meeting to let you know that we and other mythical folks still exist.”

“I then asked her.” What about elves and leprechauns? Do they exist?”

“Of course they do. What would Ireland be without them? And there are many more fantastic folk that live in this exceptional country. There are still pixies, sprites, fairies, goblins and many more. However, we try to keep all of our kind secret from the human world. Most of your kind would not accept us as being real and its better for us if it stays that way. And one of our biggest chores is to keep Ireland greener than anywhere else. Don’t you think we have done an excellent job with that?”

“Absolutely! I said. “But I am mystified about the fact that we are alone here on this island. It is a very popular place to explore and we were prepared to see it crowded rather than empty. How is this possible Erie?”

“It is possible because we wanted it that way. In highly spiritual places like this monastery we have the ability to use our magic to control happenings for short bits of time. We haven’t lost our propensity for casting those magical spells when we want or need to, but because our visit needs to end now, I will ask you to glance downward towards the ferry landing docks.”

We walked to the edge of the monastery terrace, looked down and saw that unknown to us several boats had just landed and many people were embarking from them and starting the climb up the rocky pathway towards the monastery.

We then turned to Erie and she said to us. “It is time for me to leave you to finish the rest of your adventure. Remember, as you travel through Ireland that I am only as far away as your thoughts. You need only think of me and I will be there to watch over you during the rest of your journey.”

The she began to transform back in one of the most beautiful black wolves I could imagine and her smile never left her face during the manifestation. We squeezed each others hands, so sorry to see her go as Erie faded and departed , but happy to have had this all too short experience of meeting her.

As we very gingerly walked our way downward, we passed new visitors moving upwards towards the monastery. We saw the look of excitement and

trepidation on their faces as they passed by us on the narrow steps and only glanced overly carefully because of the close quarters. One of the visitors mustered enough courage to ask us how we liked it back there and I responded equally carefully with a thumbs up. It was enough.

