

**A  
Vision Quest Tale  
by  
Dan Ford**



**EPISODE SEVEN**

**A Future is Created  
from the Past**

I was sixteen years old when I decided that my life was not going in any meaningful direction that I wanted it to go in. Apparently, I had not been brilliant after I entered my teens because I didn't seem to want to make any plans for myself. I guess I had assumed that my parents or teachers or at least some adult would take over that responsibility. I was wrong.

It wasn't until much later that I realized that you have to do most of that planning for yourself. You may get help from others, but essentially you have to determine what journey you will take on your own. If others choose those plans, it probably won't work out well for you in the long run because you will have to live with their decision and not yours. You are to become whatever you study and work for, and someone else isn't competent to make that choice for you.

One summer morning, I was tossing that question around in my mind while I was out on the Kissimmee River. My parents owned a waterfront lot on a canal that adjoined that beautiful river in the River Ranch community, a western-themed dude-ranch style resort in Central Florida. This community was reportedly the largest dude-ranch east of the Mississippi. It's probably true because the entire place is very, very cowboy-oriented. American bison, horses and all kinds of other animals roam freely around the community. They even have very large and exciting rodeos every weekend and a pretty good resort hotel and saloon. Everyone strolls around in boots, cowboy-style hats, belts, and clothing. I like it a lot.

The Kissimmee River began at East Lake Tohopekaliga, south of Orlando. It flows south through Lake Kissimmee into the more extensive but shallow Lake Okeechobee. We had a pontoon boat docked at our lot in the River Ranch Resort, and it was a quick, easy, and enjoyable task to launch the boat and head out towards the main river.

I tended to wake up much earlier than my parents do, mainly when we were at the resort property, and this morning was no exception. There was a lot of fog suspended over the water in the channel leading to the Kissimmee River. Even in Florida, the warmer morning temperatures reacted with the colder water of the river to create this blanket of silver river clouds which were enough to hide the otherwise clear blue sky overhead. Even so, the temperature felt quite comfortable, and it had a soothing, excellent effect on my somewhat warmer body.

As I took the boat out into the main section of the river, my thoughts turned away from introspection. I began to focus on the various creatures that lived on, in, or around this river. Numerous flocks of water birds, such as egrets, herons, and cormorants, were starting to soar in and out of the fog banks. I wondered if they were trying to take advantage of their prey's activity in the early morning. I could see fish breaking the surface of the water and figured that their action may alert fishing birds to consider the possibility of a quick breakfast.

I decided to bring the boat closer to the shoreline to see what kind of a haul the various birds could gather. Most birds used overhanging tree limbs as springboards to launch themselves at the fish. As it happened, I banked my boat under a large oak tree that had well over half of its roots embedded into the shallow wet portion of the riverbank. After securing the pontoon boat to the oak tree, I looked upward into the oak canopy and saw a magnificent caracara. The caracaras, unlike most raptors, eat carrion as well as anything they can catch. They perch on a tree or any high structure and scan for living or dead prey or even for vultures working on a carcass. I read that they favored early mornings forage, and here we were. Both of us were lurking in the quiet dense fogginess. The caracara was looking for breakfast, and I was looking for new experiences. I had satisfied my need by seeing this magnificent black and white raptor for the first time, and the caracara fulfilled his when he saw a small alligator moving through the high grass at the water's edge. Unlike the falcons, he flew to the ground, walked over to the little gator, and grabbed it. I had never seen a bird walk like that, and he seemed to saunter as he closed in on his prey. I was fascinated.

The caracara glanced over towards me with gator in beak and then ambled off into the dense riverbank foliage. The raptor wanted privacy while eating and had no intention of sharing the catch with me. I understood and pondered what I wanted to do next. I could get back into the boat and head out into the river or investigate this riverine environment. I figured that staying on the banks of the Kissimmee River would offer me some exciting alternatives. I had no idea how right I was to be in this conclusion.

I started to carefully walk the more open areas on the bank, figuring that I would see more than I would if I invaded the thickets, where almost anything could be hiding, including snakes and rodents and God knows what else.

Even though most of the ground at the riverfront was relatively clear and open, there were unseen obstacles here and there. In some spots, it was pretty marshy, and it was easy to sink into a wet boggy mess. There were also limbs and

stuff half buried that you could trip on, and then there were the snakes that loved this environment but didn't like intruders and liked to bite said intruders. And I found out the gigantic alligators adored these almost open banks to climb up on and sun themselves in the cool of the morning. Being cold-blooded, they were pretty uncomfortable in the morning, even here in Florida. Sunbathing was their favorite thing, next to eating, mating, and grabbing unsuspecting stupid boys who liked to wander on their turf. And when I say gigantic, I mean massive gators. It appears that they have plenty to eat here on the Kissimmee River.

Several people had informed me that further down from the River Ranch property on the river was a place where the snakes, mainly very poisonous water moccasins, hang from the tree limbs over the water and drop on unsuspecting boaters. I decided not to test that story and stayed away from that reported locale. At least I will hold that idea for another time.

For now, I was happy to be meandering along the shoreline. I also investigated the land further away from the river once in a while. I pushed my way through some brambles and flushed out a family of wild boars. A mother and six little piglets took off in a flash of flesh and a cacophony of squeals, but not without making me jump pretty high from the scare.

But then, as I was descending back into a dumb boy walking along the riverside, I heard a voice directing a question at me. It said, "I see you are enjoying a walk into the nature of this place. But I might suggest that you alter your cadence and begin to walk with the nature of this place. You are not in sync with this environment unless you are a part of the environment. You are acting as if you are a tourist."

I turned around to see a boy, or perhaps a young man, and the closer I looked, it was a replica of me, and yet it didn't look exactly like me. He was wearing different clothes and had a different color and hair style. He was like me but not me. I was confused. I asked this person. "Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

He answered, "I am Jooral, and I am here in this place by the river, doing the same thing that you are doing here in this place. Do I not belong here?"

I kept staring at him for a few seconds but answered, "I guess so. I'm just shocked to see someone here and particularly someone that looks like me."

He said. "I don't think I look like you at all. I'm much better looking and built better as well. I spent a good amount of time examining you and decided that I could do much better than looking like you."

I was taken aback by this guy's accusations and considered that I might also be losing my mind. Why was I standing in the middle of nowhere, or more precisely on a riverbank where no other people and few large animals other than the alligators were evident. And I was meeting someone who was not likely to be at this place, who looked a little, if not a lot, like me. And he was pretty snippy in his remarks about me. What's going on here?

Because I was thinking a lot and saying nothing, this interloper, obviously intent of shocking my mind and my solitude, decided to say something else. "I bet you think that I am here in this place to screw up your solitude, dude. I am not desirous of doing that, but I have come here intending to change your focus. How about that, Jackson?"

And once again, he came close to knocking me off of my feet with his remarks. I walked over to him and stood as close to his face as I could manage and said. "What the Hell is this? And how do you know my name? Are you even real, or are you a figment of my imagination?"

Never hesitating, Jooral said to me, "The answer to some of those questions is, Yes! I know your name because I have been following you closely, and I am real and not a figment of your imagination. But I am unsure how to answer the question, "What the Hell is this?" That is because Hell had nothing to do with arranging this meeting, and as you know, Hell does not exist anyway."

I answered, "How would I know whether Hell exists or not? It's just a mild curse-like word to me. But I am more concerned about any reason you would be following me in the first place. I consider that unacceptable. What possible reason would you have to follow me to this place or anywhere else."

I am following you because you arranged to meet in a previous existence. I would not do it without your permission. And I have the right to look a lot like you because I am you to a degree, and you are me to a degree as well, but I decided that I wanted to be better looking than you, so here I am. Don't you agree that I am a better specimen?"

"I disagree, I replied in the most active voice I could muster. And why are you out here on this isolated riverfront? Did you walk here across the pastures and swamps, or do you have a boat hidden somewhere?"

"You ask terrible questions Jackson. You left out asking me if I came here on a horse. Did you forget where we are? This area of Florida contained cowboys and Indians before they were dominant in the Wild West."

"No! But did you come here on a horse then?"

"No Jackson, you forgot to ask me the obvious. And that is, did you just appear here in this place from somewhere else?"

"Did you?" I then replied.

"Yes!" he answered. "See how easy that was Jackson?"

"OK!" I stammered out to Jooral. "Enough of this question and answer routine. I will ask one more blanket question and hear your response to it. There has to be a good reason why you have appeared here to me, out of nowhere. Please tell me what it is."

"Finally!" Jooral said. "Why didn't you ask that question right from the start? I will honor your request to fill you in on the entire story and reasons for me to be here with you without a horse." Jooral then settled down on the trunk of a fallen tree and began his explanations.

"Well, let's see Jackson. The first thing you need to know is who I am and my relationship with you. Once you know those things, the rest will tumble into place.

"You, like every soul you know or ever knew, are the Creation of Supreme Consciousness. Supreme Consciousness is the source of all that is, and all that ever was, and all that will ever be. You cannot relate to this while living in your Obstructed Universe, where everything you are familiar with appears to begin as something and ends as something else and is a part of the never-ending cycle of change. Souls are immortal and therefore permanent and change through evolution. And that evolution is achieved through their personal experiences in Obstructed Realms like this one. Supreme Consciousness absorbs all that individual souls

absorb, but cannot change, for it is Absolute Creation. You cannot fully understand the reality of this from your current perspective. Do you understand this?"

"I think so." I replied. "But I can't believe that I came across a Jehovah's Witness here on the wilds of the Kissimmee River."

Jooral ignored that remark and smiled at me. He then continued. "Now, as regards us Jackson. Supreme Consciousness simultaneously creates many new souls, known as Interconnected Souls. You and I are such Interconnected Souls and therefore similar to each other in many ways. We experience things, deal with them, learn from them, and evolve because of them. And through these different life experiences, we can share because of our Connectedness. We are unique, but we are also the same in many spiritual ways. I look somewhat like you but much better looking than you, by the way, because we are connected in that manner. And also, by the way, you don't see any literature on me to hand out, do you?"

I decided to ignore his remarks as payback but then said. "Assuming I can accept all of what you said, I am still wondering why we are meeting in such a remote, isolated place such as this riverbank?"

"That's because I wanted a location that was relatively free from distractions when we were to meet. Truly natural surroundings are almost always such places. Nature is Creation at its finest, and I stand a better chance at getting an important message through your Monkey Mindedness brain structure, and that is what we previously agreed that I would do. Right?"

"I do not have a monkey mind Jooral. But you are probably right about getting my full attention at this location. You also said that this meeting had been pre-agreed upon between us. When and where was that?"

"In what is called the Transition Realm, where we all end up between incarnations, or reincarnations or lives, as you prefer."

"I'm not sure what I prefer. But this entire meeting is making me reconsider a lot of my previous thinking."

Jooral did a little light laughing at Jackson's statement, but he added. "Well, accept for the time being that what I am saying is correct, which it is. I have shown up here to help you because you, Jackson, were not headed in your Quest in the

right direction. Like most people, you require a little help from time to time, and here I am."

I thought this through for a moment and then answered, "Saying I am on a Quest sounds a bit medieval Jooral. Couldn't you call my goals or life's expectations something else?"

"The more accurate phrase would be to call it a Vision Quest. Because you, Jackson should be creating a vision for the goals you want to reach on any given life experience. And Quest is a search, and therefore a Vision Quest is quite appropriate. Don't you agree?"

"I guess so, but perhaps the American Indians won't like it as they have their very own, specific Vision Quests that are quite intensive and probably more so than I am likely to embark on."

"That's not exactly true, my brother. The American Indians are well known for their Vision Quests, and theirs are often solemn and intensive spiritual and physical acts, but Vision Quests are not exclusive to them. Many cultures worldwide have their own kind of Vision Quests that they take seriously. No one person or culture owns the concept, and each Vision Quest is as sincere and valuable as the seeker embarking on one puts into it."

"Now, you call me a brother Jooral. So, in addition to that, you are a teacher and a connected soul. Is there anything else I am going to learn about you?"

"Ooh yes! You can learn many other things about me, but not on this occasion. When you or I have both need to know, it will happen."

And just at that moment, the largest alligator that I have ever seen came up out of the river onto the bank. It must have been nearly seventeen feet long. It stood up relatively high on its four legs as it left the water and headed straight for us. Jooral stood up from the tree trunk he had been sitting on and walked to meet the gator. Jooral brought his hand down when they reached each other and gave the gator a slight pat on his head. I was astounded. I asked Jooral if he had lost his mind.

Jooral answered, "No, of course not. We are all communing in a spiritual union at present. And within that spiritual union, all living things understand that all is well and good while embraced in the union. No conscious entity is angry in



any way, and no consciousness entity is hungry. There is no need for defending or offending each other when these spiritual unions are in session. Come over here Jackson, and meet another consciousness being without any need for fear."

I could not believe that I would do this, but I walked over to greet this monster creature and reached down to place my hand on his head. According to the person I was when I first arrived, I felt a kinship where no kinship should have been. Jooral smiled and said. "Remember, my brother, that you must be within a spiritual union to do this. Otherwise, you are likely to lose an arm or worse."

Following this strange and wonderful spiritual gesture, the alligator turned around and walked back into the river. I watched, and almost, but not totally, was sorry to see it leave us. I tuned to Jooral and asked him, "Will that gator remember this meeting?"

"No! He has no reason to do so. He is alive within this natural environment but lives according to his role in the natural world. The spiritual session was a temporary overlay to his Consciousness. It is now gone. You, however, have had a more permanent overlay to your Consciousness, but it is not yet permanent. You can ignore it if you wish to, but you can also remember it, accept it and the more you do so, make it a more permanent aspect of your Consciousness.

Very interesting, I thought to myself, and of course, Jooral somehow heard my thoughts, and he said, "Yes, it is interesting but far more critical than that; I am here to teach you that your thoughts and your experiences are not things to be ignored. You came here today because you had not made the critical decisions needed to plan for your future. If I have done my job, you now know that no one but you, including me, will make those choices for you. It must be you and you alone to do that. Now, with that, I am going to leave you.

"Will I see you again Jooral?"

"As I told you before when you have a need, and I also agree that you have a need, I will appear, but not until then. Your evolution must stem from your thoughts and efforts and not from others. So now I leave you, my boy."

"Wait! Now, in addition to the other references, I am your boy. What else am I to you, and how did you get that name of Jooral. It sounds familiar to me?"

"I am more things to you than you can imagine. You will find that out eventually. And I'm glad you mentioned my choice of name. I knew you have always liked Superman, so I chose his father's name of Jor-El, but just replaced the hyphen with another o, because it is hard for you to pronounce Jor-El in your limited language accurately. So bye-bye, son.. Love Ya" And with that, Jooral ceased to be there.

I suddenly felt very alone and certainly did not feel that I was a Superman in any way. I sensed that I had met and then lost someone essential to me. But Jooral had said that I could meet him again if needed. Perhaps that was the way with everyone we have as part of our lives but then lost, but we will meet again when needed. Now that was a great thought.

I also felt relatively isolated at the moment and wanted to get back with my family at River Ranch. I walked back to my boat, jumped in, and launched it back into the river. Without starting the motor, I let it drift for a bit and noticed that I was headed toward that giant alligator. He saw me and slowly sank into the deep water. No sense of familiarity from him, but I was glad to see him anyway, which I would not have before this spiritual meeting.

I started the motor and turned the boat towards the River Ranch marina inlet. I had always enjoyed watching nature on the Kissimmee Lake and River system, but now I was even more aware of just how much wildlife there was there. The fog had lifted, and the sun was climbing higher in the bright and clear blue sky. There were constant and densely packed flocks of birds moving about in the sky and many groups of herons and egrets strolling the river banks. Herds of cattle were grazing on the pastureland. And some of them were wading in the shallow parts of the river bank. I even saw some large male bulls standing on some higher banks, looking longingly at the lovely heifers on the other side of the river. These were undoubtedly some of the athletic males that would be throwing the bull riders about at the rodeos in River Ranch this weekend.

I turned into the entry canal that led to the marina and continued to notice many more small alligators, herons, falcons, and even an owl in the overhanging tree limbs. I knew there was much more that I could not see but was content to know that they were there anyway.

As I turned past the marina to head to our dock, several people waved hello to me, and I considered just how lucky I was to be a part of all this. As I pulled up

to the dock, jumped out, and started to tie the boat onto the dock cleats, my mother called to me and said that breakfast was on the table.

Once again, my heart swelled with the knowledge of my good fortune, and I now included that wonderful feeling that I would no longer be a budding failure of a young man. I would work on my future with confidence that I was also far better aware of the present and the past and could use that experience to make my decisions for the future.