

**Nine Stories of Truth, Choice & Destiny**



# **A Life Rooted in Core Values**

**by Earth Light Workers Enterprise**

**A Life Rooted in Core Values: Nine  
Stories of Truth, Choice and Destiny**

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# Information

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# A Goody Two-Shoes Mission

**The world needs to lighten up...seriously!  
That's who we are at Earth Lightworkers (ELW).**

Are you one of us who prefers large doses of love, humour and positivity? We believe in having strong core values as they are the foundation of creating a **world based on love, oneness and expansion**. We choose to change the old narrative of fear, separation and contraction.

**ELW** is a community of like-minded souls who aim to live in an honest and kind world, one that is built on integrity. Our **publications are designed to expand consciousness**, offering insights on more joyful ways of living. Let's make that happen.



We hope these stories inspire you, and we thank you for choosing to spend time immersed in our world. If you enjoy our book, we would **appreciate your written testimonial (website address below)**, so we get to share these stories with other readers far and wide.

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# Introduction

Life can feel like we're constantly juggling many duties and trying not to tank at any of them. With the many demands and sudden surprises, it can feel unsettling. In times like this, we instinctively search for a solid anchor that grounds us and keeps us true to who we are - and this is where holding fast to our inner truth matters most. It's about keeping our core beliefs in sync with what we say, do, and how we show up in the world. Even when fear, pain, or envy tries to yank us off track, we stay rooted in living from our hearts and choosing to live with honesty and integrity.

Spiritual integrity isn't about being perfect or having all the answers. It's about building a strong inner core based on values so deeply rooted in who we are that we remain centred no matter how strong the winds of fear, pain, or uncertainty blow. So, when life throws curveballs (uh huh!), we don't lose ourselves. These values are not shallow indulgences or convenient beliefs adopted during good times or moments of guilt or fear. These truths define us. It is crucial to uphold these non-negotiable principles no matter the cost.

Our values help navigate life's twists and turns like a built-in GPS. This core becomes our compass, our anchor, and our shield

- reminding us to act with kindness and integrity, even when taking shortcuts or giving in to negativity might seem easier.

Our actions reflect our inner core values. When we compromise them, we compromise our integrity. Those who have solid inner convictions don't waver. They don't crack under pressure or change with every whim. They are loyal and steady in keeping their optimism and kindness intact, no matter how rough or unjust life gets. This book is a reminder to help us find our way back to our true selves, the person we were before the world told us who to be. Through its stories, it invites us to explore and examine our core values because those values define who we truly are. Are our beliefs genuinely ours, or have they conformed to suit society, family, or that one celebrity we secretly admire a little too much? It's easy to take on ideas without questioning them. However, true liberation comes from knowing what we stand for because it resonates with who we are at our core. So, let's jump in and poke around and have a good laugh at ourselves along the way. By showing up daily and staying committed to our values, we reconnect with the person we were always meant to be - living authentically, with kindness, and with a sense of inner peace. As we turn these pages, may we feel motivated to live a life that matches who we really are, a life where our core values shine brightly, giving us resilience and uplifting those around us. Welcome to the journey of becoming unshakable.

# 1 ~ Rooted at the Core

The road to town stretched ahead, golden under the afternoon sun, but the weather can be unpredictable as clouds loom on the horizon, forecasting rain. Jon walked steadily, unperturbed by the faraway rumbling of the sky. Whistling to himself, he continued to count the simple rhythm of boots against gravel while enjoying the sight around him.

He wasn't alone for long, though. A voice called out. "Fine day for a walk, isn't it?"

Jon turned to see Gregg approaching, his pack slung over one shoulder, grinning like they'd planned to meet. They hadn't, but it didn't matter. Conversation came easy, like it always did between kindred spirits. That's the beauty of companionship. It has a way of making the miles shorter.

They made good time until they met with a fallen oak, thick and gnarled, stretched across the path. Jon exhaled, planting his hands on his hips. "Well, no way around it."

Gregg raised an eyebrow. "Not unless we want to backtrack a good hour."

Jon rolled up his sleeves. "Alright then. I take it you're a team player?"

Gregg shrugged. "Wanna share the blisters?" Gregg replied, with both hands already on the trunk of the tree.

Jon chuckled, "Why not?"

Jon braced himself and hoisted Gregg up. Gregg, lighter and nimbler, scrambled over, then reached down and hauled Jon up after him. A solid nod passed between them once they were safely over. Trust, they realised, was the second gift of the road. As they walked on, the sky darkened. The first raindrops fell, then more, until the drizzle turned into a full downpour. They pulled on their coats. Jon's sturdy waxed canvas held up well, but Gregg's thin linen offered little protection.

Jon frowned. "You're soaked through."

Gregg shrugged. "Not the first time."

Jon unscrewed his flask, the faint scent of coffee curling into the cold air. "Here. Better than catching pneumonia."

Gregg hesitated only a second before taking it. The warmth spread through his fingers and down to his core. "Owe you one."

Jon waved him off. "It's just coffee."

But they both knew it wasn't just coffee. Some things didn't need explaining. Generosity, after all, was the third gift.

By the time they reached town, they were cold and tired but in good spirits. They parted ways, Jon heading home to his stocked pantry, Gregg to his small attic room. It should have been the end of their journey.

Then the flood came.

The river swelled, swallowing streets and homes. Sirens howled through the night. By morning, the town was in chaos. Jon did what he could, hauling supplies and organising rations. Gregg

was in the thick of it too, waist-deep in water, pulling people to safety, carrying the frail on his back. Neither of them slept much. There wasn't time.

Days blurred together, food grew scarce, and tempers frayed. One evening, Jon found Gregg near the makeshift supply station. His voice was sharp, edged with exhaustion. "Where's the flour I gave you?"

Gregg, soaked and shivering, met his gaze evenly. "Fed Mrs Harlow's twins this morning. You can check her pantry."

Jon folded his arms. "And the lantern oil?"

"Lit the clinic's basement. Ask the doctor."

The accusation lingered between them, heavy and sour. But Gregg didn't argue. He just turned back to work hauling debris, tending wounds, and sharing his food even when it meant going hungry. When the flood finally receded, the town gathered in the mud-caked square, exhausted but standing.

The mayor approached Gregg, pressing a document into his blistered hands. "For your service. A plot of land, yours."

Someone in the crowd muttered, "Why bother? Jon nearly called you a thief."

Gregg glanced at Jon, then shrugged. "It's easy to do the right thing when life is comfortable. The real test is when everything's falling apart."

A pause. Then someone asked, "The right thing, according to who...or what?"



Gregg paused for a moment before replying, "Staying true to your spiritual integrity. Remaining faithful to who we are at our core. Values lose their meaning if they bend in difficult times."

Jon stepped forward, his expression unreadable. "And if they do? What are they?"

Gregg met his gaze. "Then they weren't values, just indulgences...conveniences. If they don't stop us from harming others, whether through words or actions, they were never real to begin with."

A murmur rippled through the crowd. Then a clap. And another. Until the square was filled with applause. Finally, Jon extended his hand, acknowledging the lesson learned. Without hesitation, Gregg clasped it firmly.

Jon and Gregg stood side by side, the weight of the past few days settling in.

Maybe, Gregg thought, there was a fourth gift in all this: redemption.

***Integrity isn't just for easy days.***

***It's the compass that guides you through the storm.***

## 2 ~ The Honest Job Interview

Raj, a young man in his early 30s, sat nervously in a sleek leather chair. Across the desk, Mr. Whitmore, a no-nonsense-looking man in what looked like an expensive suit, peered at him behind his glasses as he skimmed through Raj's resume. The office was beautifully modern, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the city skyline.

"So, Raj, tell me why did you apply for this position."

Raj took a deep breath. He had vowed to be honest today instead of trying to say what he thought employers wanted to hear.

"To be honest, I have bills to pay," Raj said. "My rental has gone up, and I'm done living off instant noodles."

Mr. Whitmore blinked, surprised. "That's...an unexpected answer but refreshingly direct."

"I didn't think you'd believe me if I've given the 'lifelong passion for data entry' speech." Raj shrugged. "I need a job, period. And I'd like to think I'd be good at this one", and flashed him a smile.

"Good to know," Mr. Whitmore said, suppressing a chuckle. "It says here in your resume you're proficient in Excel. Care to elaborate?"

Raj paused. "Truthfully? I'm pretty good at basic formulas. If you are asking for more, I'm efficient in learning from YouTube tutorials with in-between snack breaks."

Whitmore grinned. "Fair enough. And your biggest weakness? Do you have one?"

Raj stopped for a moment. "I sometimes take longer than expected to complete tasks because I'm such a perfectionist. I like to double or triple-check my work. I'll tell myself to finish something quickly, but I get caught up making sure everything is just right."



Mr Whitmore laughed out loud. "I admire your honesty, Raj, for not trying to disguise your weakness as strength."

"You'll see right through me, wouldn't you, Mr. Whitmore?" Raj explained.

"Indeed." Mr. Whitmore leaned closer. "One last question. Why should I hire you?"

Raj met his gaze. "Because I won't pretend to be something I'm not. I'll work hard, I'll own up to mistakes, and I won't waste your time with nonsense. Plus, now you know I'm at least somewhat entertaining."

A slight pause. Then Mr. Whitmore reached out his hand. "Welcome to the team, Raj."

Raj blinked. "Seriously?"

Whitmore nodded. "Honestly? I think you'll fit in nicely here."

Raj instantly shook his hand. "Thank you! And...I assume there's coffee in the break room? Because... I'm going to need a lot of it."

Whitmore patted Raj on the shoulder. "Plenty of coffee, Raj. And when things are done right, checking it twice is more than enough."

Raj sighed dramatically. "Fine. If I feel the need for the third... I'll make sure to check it during my lunch break."

As he left the office, Raj was still a little shocked. He'd finally landed a job just by being himself. Maybe, just maybe, honesty, like some say, was the best policy.

***Being honest might not always be the easiest choice,  
but it's always the right one.***

### 3 ~ Where Compassion Blooms

Kai Ming looked down at the injured soldier lying on her cot, his breaths ragged and shallow. His face was pale with lines of sorrow and fear etched deep into his brow. The uniform he has on clearly marked him as an enemy. Her people found him a couple of days ago by the river. However, at this moment, Kai Ming only sees a man in pain, and Jia Hao is his name.

Jia Hao has been unconscious, mumbling inaudibly for days. Kai Ming had given up trying to understand him. She was washing her hands by the basin when he groaned, his voice barely above a whisper, "If I die, tell my family, I... hated turnips."

Kai Ming blinked, tilted her head towards him, and said, "That's your dying wish?"

Still with his eyes closed, he cracked a weak smile. "They keep forcing me to eat them."

Kai Ming let out a small laugh despite herself.

She walked over to him. "I guess that's enough motivation to keep you alive," bemused as she adjusted the cloth on his forehead.

Amid war, it's easy to be consumed by division and forget that we all belong to the same human race. For Kai Ming, caring for Jia Hao is more than just an act of kindness. It's a lifeline, a desperate reminder that she is still capable of compassion, even in the darkest times.

A sudden commotion outside jolted her back to the present. She glanced toward the door. Behind it, she could hear voices talking over each other, along with the shuffling of feet. Then came a sharp knock.

Someone bellowed. "He's the enemy!"

"Why are you nursing him?" another voice cried out, thick with grief and fury. "Throw him out, or you will be exiled!"

Kai Ming took a steady breath and stepped outside. The night air was heavy with smoke from the torches, their flickering light casting shadows on the hardened faces of her people.

"He is hurt." Her voice was gentle yet firm. "Pain has no sides."

Silence overcame the crowd, as some shifted uncomfortably, while others clenched their fists.

Then, an older woman named Xie protested. Her voice cried with grief, "He's one of them, Kai Ming! They razed our fields!"

Meeting the woman's gaze, Kai Ming interrupted gently, "I was there too. I know what we have lost." She reached out and cradled Xie's hands in hers. "Our wounds are deep. But giving into hatred will not heal them. Compassion might."

The village blacksmith crossed his arms and scoffed. "Compassion won't bring back the dead."

"No," Kai Ming agreed. "But I hope it might keep others from joining them."

The villagers exchanged uncertain glances. Several were murmuring in discontent, while others were lost in thought. The

blacksmith hesitated for a moment. Disgruntled, he swore under his breath before turning away.

Kai Ming stepped back inside and let out a sigh of relief. Jia Hao, sitting up on the bed, witnessed the exchange.

He looked up at Kai Ming and said, "You're fearless," he murmured.

She shook her head as she put her trembling hand on her chest. "Hardly. You should've seen how badly my legs were shaking."

Jia Hao smiled. Curious, he asked, "Why help me?"

She dipped the cloth into fresh water and gently wrung it out. Then, she carefully dabbed it against his wounds with steady hands. "Because you needed it."

Many days passed. Jia Hao grew stronger. Some villagers still eyed him with suspicion, yet they could not ignore Kai Ming's quiet, consistent example. They watched as she tended to him, treating him as though he was simply one of them, a friend from the village and not a symbol of their suffering.

Slowly, something shifted. Kai Ming found a bowl of stew left on her doorstep by the blacksmith's wife one evening. A young boy peeked through the window the next morning; curiosity took over instead of fear.

That afternoon, Jia Hao sat up with determination in his gaze. "When I return to my people, I will speak on your behalf," he told Kai Ming. "We don't all want war. Hopefully, we can change things."

She hesitated. "Will they listen to you?"

A wry smile. "That...I suppose we'll find out."

It wasn't an easy task. He wrote letter after letter, but all seemed to be falling on deaf ears. Jia Hao refused to give up. He was hellbent on keeping his word. Eventually, his effort bore fruit, and a tentative peace was born. As the borders eased and change took root, the villagers, once hardened by grief, slowly began to look beyond their pain, finding hope once more.

However, not everyone can release the past.

It was an exceptionally dark and cold night. A villager named Ding Pang, who had lost his brother to the war, crept into Kai Ming's home with a dagger in hand. In a twist of rage and sorrow, he stood over the sleeping soldier. Raising the blade, he whispered, "This is for my family".

"Ding Pang, don't," Kai Ming's voice, calm but firm, emerged from the shadows of the room.

"He doesn't deserve your kindness, or anyone's at that," Ding Pang spat. "He deserves to die!"

She softly placed a hand on his while lowering the dagger. "And will this bring your brother back?"

Ding Pang's breath hitched. His hands trembled.

"Let go," Kai Ming whispered. "Not for him, but for yourself."

A deafening silence hung between them. At last, Ding Pang let the dagger slip from his grasp. The fallen blade sliced through the stillness. Weeping, he turned and disappeared into the night.

Word of his actions spread. While Kai Ming's compassion united the village, Ding Pang's thirst for vengeance left him isolated, unable to forgive a past the others were beginning to let go of.

One evening, as Kai Ming and Jia Hao sat outside watching the sunset, he turned to her apologetically. "I don't think I've thanked you for saving me," he said.

She smiled, nudging his shoulder lightly. "Well, you saved us all." He laughed. "So, what now?"



Kai Ming stretched and sighed. "I guess I'll continue to patch people up when needed. Maybe one day, people will stop trying to kill each other and instead enjoy the view."

Jia Hao nodded and grinned. "A lofty dream."

"One that is worth making it real". She replied with a smile.

In a world torn apart by war and hatred, Kai Ming showed that compassion could be the key to unity.

***Compassion heals wounds and brings people together.***

## 4 ~ No Longer Bound

The conflict between Lila and Maya had been seething for months. Hidden tension festered beneath what was once an unbreakable friendship - a betrayal that still lingered like a stubborn wound.

Lila had always been the kind of friend who showed up, not with grand gestures, but with quiet, unwavering support. Whether it was staying up late to help Maya prepare for an interview or offering comfort when life turned cruel, she had always been there. So, when she learned that Maya had belittled her kindness, reducing her value to the size of her wallet, it felt like a slap in the face.

"Lila's great and all, but honestly, what has she really done for me?" Maya had reportedly told a mutual friend. "People who are considered to be helping don't just listen and give advice. They must also step up financially. Words don't pay rent."

And just like that, the bedrock of their friendship shattered. Lila could have endured the words, painful as they were, but Maya didn't stop at that. She twisted reality to suit her whims. Portraying Lila as spoilt and a freeloader, whispering half-truths that circulated like wildfire. Quite soon after, there were sidelong glances at gatherings, half smiles that didn't quite reach people's eyes. The betrayal was no longer personal. Maya had made it public.

As Lila sat in her favourite café, absentmindedly stirring her now-cold latte, a wave of bitterness settled in her gut like a lingering ache. She tightened her jaw with frustration. How could Maya do this? For what? Lila just couldn't understand the reason. Had their years of friendship meant nothing? She has thoughts of confronting her with sharp and precise words, even rehearsing the exchange in her head. She pictured Maya stunned and scrambling to apologise with words that would never be enough.

Then, like a whisper, she heard her grandmother's voice lovingly say, "Holding on to anger is like drinking poison but waiting for the other to die."

Lila sighed as she leaned back in her chair. She hated to admit it but knew her grandmother was right like she always was. She could spend forever stewing in resentment or fantasising about the perfect takedown, but in the end, who would suffer most? Not Maya, who was likely out there, unbothered. It would be her, Lila, caught up in bitterness that will eat away her peace. Just then, she recalled stumbling upon an Instagram post a few days back. It said something like: thank those who gossip or speak ill of you because they have unknowingly helped you break free from your blocks and limits.

Lila burst into a quick laugh.

"Geez..." she mumbled, stifling another giggle as a grin crept onto her face. "I need to quit spending my time scheming revenge like some pathetic complainer."

Lila shut her eyes and pressed her fingers to her temples. Maybe facing Maya might feel good for a moment, but would it change her? Hard to tell. Could it erase the pain? Maybe a little.

Even so, Lila knew her energy was better spent elsewhere.



A clear, refreshing understanding sank in, steadying Lila from within. She didn't need an apology or anyone's approval. What she truly needed was to reclaim and own her energy. It's time to

stop letting Maya's actions control her peace and feelings. If Maya couldn't see the worth of her help, that was her view, her own decision. Maya's decisions defined her, just as Lila's defined her own path. And that burden wasn't Lila's to bear.

"This is me. Yep, this is who I am," Lila affirmed, more to herself than anyone else, as she squared her shoulders. "I help because I want to. It's just who I am. Not because I owe anyone anything or need a thank-you."

As Lila prepared to leave, she considered giving it one last chance. She picked up her phone and scrolled through her list of messages. No new texts from Maya, predictably. A part of her still hoped that Maya would one day understand the impact of her actions. But whether that happened or not, Lila had already made her decision.

Forgiveness didn't excuse the act. However, it freed her from being a victim.

And Lila had no intention of being anyone's pushover.

***Forgiveness doesn't justify the wrongdoing. It frees you from the chains of victimhood.***

## 5 ~ Giving Without Measure

Ana sat on the cold pavement, her back pressed against the rough brick wall of an old building. The city around her bustled with life, the hurried footsteps of pedestrians echoing against the concrete. She pulled her threadbare coat tighter around her shoulders, though it did little to shield her from the biting wind. In her hands, she held her last burrito wrapped in crinkled foil, still warm from the generosity of a kind-hearted café owner who sometimes slipped her a meal.

Beside her sat Burrito, a scruffy mutt with soulful brown eyes and fur that looked like it had never known a brush. His tail thumped against the ground as he eyed the foil-wrapped treasure in Ana's hands. She smiled and unwrapped the burrito, peeling back the foil to reveal layers of beans, cheese, and lettuce. Burrito sniffed, then gave the leafy greens a look of pure betrayal.

"Yeah, I know," Ana chuckled, nudging his side playfully. "Lettuce is an insult to burritos." Burrito huffed loudly and plopped his head on her lap, clearly unimpressed.

Just then, a man in a trendy jacket and expensive sneakers strode past. He stopped abruptly, wrinkling his nose at the sight of Ana and her furry companion. With a sneer, he scoffed, "Why waste food on a dog?"

Ana met his gaze with unperturbed calm. Taking a deliberate bite into her burrito, she crinkled her nose at Burrito. With her mouth full, she grimaced, "Ugh! Smell something rotten, Burrito?"

The man's smirk faltered with embarrassment. His karma-themed t-shirt, which boldly read "Be the Good You Wish to See," suddenly seemed to shrink under the weight of its own hypocrisy. Without another word, he turned on his heels and walked away.

Burrito let out a short bark as if in agreement. Ana chuckled, ruffling his ears. "Guess some people don't get it, huh?"

Across the street, a baker named Mr Grimbly stood behind the counter of his bakery, watching the exchange from the window. He was known for his stinginess, and his shop had a sign that read "No Samples" in bold, unfriendly letters. He shook his head at the interaction, muttering, "Soft hearts don't fill bellies."

But later that evening, as he wiped down his counter, Ana's words stuck in his mind. He thought of the countless times he had chased away hungry eyes pressed against his bakery window, the way he hoarded his goods as if kindness were a limited resource. He sighed, rubbing the back of his neck, and looked at the leftover bread and pastries that would inevitably go to waste. With a decisive nod, he grabbed a marker and pulled down the "No Samples" sign. In its place, he wrote in bold letters: "Free Burritos (No Lettuce)."

The next morning, Ana passed by the bakery and blinked at the new sign. Burrito sniffed the air eagerly, picking up the scent of



freshly baked bread. She pushed open the door, hesitant. Mr Grimble stood behind the counter, arms crossed, with a gruff expression. "You gonna stand there gawking, or are you gonna take a burrito?" he grumbled, motioning to a tray of freshly made ones wrapped neatly in foil.

Ana grinned and grabbed one, handing a piece to Burrito before taking a bite herself. "No lettuce?" she asked, raising an eyebrow. Mr. Grimble smirked. "Figured even a dog's got standards."

As days passed, Burrito became a beloved fixture outside the bakery, his wagging tail greeting customers who often stopped to give him a scratch behind the ears. Soon, the once-intimidating Mr Grimble found himself slipping extra treats to

children who came in with wide eyes and empty pockets or quietly handing a warm loaf to an older man who came in from the cold.

One evening, Ana sat outside the café where Burrito had charmed his way into becoming the unofficial mascot. A barista had set down a bowl of water and a small plate of leftover chicken beside him. The café regulars had even added a humorous review for him online: "0/10 lettuce. 12/10 love."

As she watched the world move around her, Ana realised generosity wasn't always about grand gestures or material wealth. It was in the warm burrito handed to someone in need. In the effort of a tired baker choosing kindness over profit. In the patience of a café worker who took a moment to show love to a stray dog.

It was in a smile, in a kind word, in the way people treated not just each other but the world around them. She scratched behind Burrito's ears and whispered, "See? Kindness is contagious."

And in that moment, with the city lights glowing softly around them, Ana felt rich beyond measure.

***Generosity wears many faces. Seek them with wonder.***

## 6 ~ The Pure One

In the harsh city of Terra, kindness was rare. The Council ruled through lies on screens, and people clung to survival by trading secrets. But Adam was different. He tended a rooftop garden, growing sunflowers in cracked concrete. His hands were rough, his boots worn, but his smile never faded, even when others mocked him.

One evening, as Adam worked on his tomatoes, a thug approached. "Hand over the rations, *Saint*," he sneered, flashing a knife. Adam reached into his pockets and pulled out a week's worth of algae wafers, tossing them over.

"Take the kale, too," he said, handing over a bunch. "It's good for your liver."

The thug hesitated. "What's wrong with you?"

Adam just shrugged. "Nothing. You?"

Muttering, the thug walked away, confused.

Aliyah, a smuggler who had been watching Adam for weeks, scoffed. "You're either brilliant or completely nuts. Why don't you fight back?"

Adam wiped dirt from his brow. "Violence just makes better liars. My tomatoes need care, not my grudges."

Word spread. People whispered about the "Green Fool" who shared water during droughts, who comforted scared kids, who

refused to give in to cruelty. When the Council cut power to his district, Adam rigged bicycle-powered lanterns.

"Pedal for light, pedal for warmth!" he announced. Neighbours groaned but joined in.



The Council retaliated. They bulldozed his garden, leaving only wreckage. Aliyah found him kneeling in the rubble, gently replanting a single surviving seedling in an old soup can.

"You're *still* not giving up?" she asked.

"Roots run deeper than rubble," he said simply.

That night, something changed. A child brought a salvaged shovel. A former thief hung fairy lights. By dawn, the garden was growing again. When the enforcers arrived, they expected riots. Instead, they found people laughing, sharing tea, and standing together.

A Council officer frowned. "What... what is this?"

Aliyah grinned. "A revolution. And it runs on niceness."

The rebellion wasn't loud. It was in shared meals, repaired friendships, and a city learning to care again. Adam never claimed to be a leader.

"I'm just a gardener," he said, even as sunflowers filled the walls of Terra.

Years later, when asked how the city healed, elders laughed. "Turns out, you can't control people who choose kindness. Also, kale is weirdly inspiring."

Adam's legacy was simple: in a world full of darkness, kindness is not weakness. It's unstoppable.

***The purest hearts grow gardens in a barren land.***

## 7 ~ Courage to Love

Lena had given up on love. After one too many heartbreaks, she decided it wasn't worth the hassle. "Love is like trying to pet a porcupine," she joked. "Sure, it *might* not stab you, but why risk it?" Safe but lonely, she focused on work, Netflix, and takeout.

Then came Max.

A scruffy dog with a limp, sitting in the rain. He had eyes that looked like they'd seen too much. She almost kept walking, but his whimper stopped her. "Fine," she sighed. But you're just a roommate, got it?"

Max didn't care about her rules. He wagged his tail, snored loudly, and somehow made her laugh when she didn't want to. Slowly, he had wormed his way into her guarded heart. Lena's walls began to crack. She found herself opening up and she kind of liked it. She started taking Max to the dog park, chatting with strangers, and even smiling at silly things like Max chasing his tail.

One day, Max bolted straight toward a man holding an umbrella. "Max! Seriously?" Lena shouted, chasing after him.

The guy chuckled as Max jumped up, leaving muddy paw prints on his jeans. "Friendly little guy", he said, scratching Max behind the ears. His name was Ryan, and his dog, Bella, had just stolen Max's ball.

It all started as awkward small talk, which turned into coffee, then dinner, then hours of laughing over silly dog memes. Neither was perfect, but that's okay. Love wasn't about



perfection. It happened by showing up. Max opened the lid to Lena's heart, and through that gap, Ryan walked in. It isn't that love erased her past pain. It just made the future brighter.

Lena, though cautious, found comfort in his honesty. Ryan listened without judgment, laughed at her sarcastic jokes, and gave her space when she needed it. Love, she realised, wasn't just in grand gestures or perfect endings. It's in everyday moments like sharing a meal, comforting each other after a bad day, laughing together, and the precious shared silences that feel safe.

One night, as they walked their dogs, Ryan spoke thoughtfully, "It's not love that hurt us. What hurts is when we stop *being*

loved. I believe love heals...because I know I healed better when there was love. And now, I have you... and Max."

Lena sat quietly as she watched Max playfully nudged Bella. She then reached for Ryan's hand, holding it gently. As she glanced at him with a soft smile, she nodded slowly. "You may be right. Love has given me the courage to trust again... to open my heart. I do think it's worth the risk." Ryan gently pinched her nose, making her laugh. At that moment, they both realised that love, despite its uncertainties, was what makes life worth living.

Even though Lena's scars still exist, she decided to remain hopeful. It began with Max's unconditional loyalty and then Ryan's patient understanding, eventually giving Lena the courage to try again. She realised that love wasn't all about romance. It can be found in every act of generosity and in the connection she made. There was no looking for it. It was already within her control and became more important when she decided to share it. Now, Lena viewed love as the unseen thread that binds this messy yet beautiful world together. The glue that held everything together. And yes, sometimes, a scruffy mutt and a man with an umbrella were all she needed to remind her of that.

***Loving takes courage, and it's always worth the risk.***

## 8 ~ Beyond Money and Might

Right in the heart of Riverton stood Ronin Hayes's auto shop. It's approaching seven in the evening as he tightened the last bolt on a rebuilt engine. At 65, he has hands thick with calluses, and his arms show the strength of years spent fixing cars and generously helping neighbours. To him, he sees his shop as more than just a business. He relates it to being part of the backbone of the community. This was not a place where people just sent their cars for repairs. It's more than that. It involved human connection through bits of advice and support given, as well as some harmless poking of random well-aimed jokes.

A day like any other came a luxury SUV with a polished exterior reflecting the city lights. The back door opened, and out stepped Reginald Lee. He is known to be a wealthy investor and is always seen with his aides, Kumar and Eddie. Lee, dressed immaculately in a tailored suit, showed slight impatience and mild distaste as he glanced around the garage steadily in quick strides and headed towards Ronin.

"Mr. Hayes," Lee said smoothly. "We've got a lucrative proposition to offer you."

Ronin squinted his eyes at Lee as he wiped the grease from his hands. Bemused, he asked. "Let me guess. You want to turn my shop into a high-rise?"

Lee chuckled. "Not quite. We're proposing a partnership. An exclusive corporate deal. Supply our fleet, and you will be very...let me rephrase that; extremely wealthy. You will have influence and prestige, too."

Ronin grinned. "Prestige? Look around you. I think I'm doing pretty well." He nodded toward the waiting area. We see workers and customers mingling, laughing together. "Hard pass", he replied.

"You're refusing real power?" Kumar scoffed, incredulous.

Ronin set the wrench he was holding down. He turned to look at the younger man.

With piercing eyes, he said, "You think having a title or a fat bank account is power? No. Real power is knowing your work makes life better. It's people like old Freya, who cooks meals for struggling families, or Javon, who fixes heating systems for people who can't afford repairs. They are the ones who are powerful."

Eddie sneered. "Wake up. 'Ideals' don't pay the bills."

"Invest in trust, and it will," Ronin countered and put a spark plug in Lee's hand. "But trust has to be earned. It's not something you can pitch." He gestured to the garage. "But this...", pointing at his shop, "This could keep a city running for generations."

Not bothering to even look at the spark plug in his hand, Lee tossed it aside. "Enjoy it while it lasts, old man."

Months later, winter has settled over Riverton. Upon opening the door for business, Ronin found the trio at his shop...again. But to his surprise, Lee's suit was wrinkled, Kumar's shoes were scuffed, and Eddie looked pale in the cold.

Evidently, their corporate expansion had collapsed because of shoddy deals, unkept promises, and irresponsible workers. Now, they were left with nothing.



"We need your help. Will you help us?" Lee pleaded, feeling defeated. Ronin took a slow sip of coffee. "Help with what?"

Kumar sighed. "You were right. We get it now. Will you help us rebuild?"

Without another thought, Ronin handed them coveralls. "Let's get working."

Desperate and feeling lost, they quietly followed him into the shop. Curious neighbours slowly trickled in and before long, they were all working together.

Javon repaired broken furnaces, and Freya brought warm meals to everyone. By nightfall, their trios' backs were sore, and their hands were raw and blistered.

Eddie winced at a fresh cut. "How is this helping us?"

"You want change, do it," Ronin said. "You want to make amends? Prove it with actions. They are louder than words."

When the following winter came about, the failed expansion had been transformed into a thriving community service garage, a place where apprentices trained and quality, honest work thrived.

Lee, now a modest city planner, kneeled next to Ronin as he tightened a bolt. "Do you still think I'm a nutjob?" the mechanic asked, passing him a wrench.

"Worse. You were right." Lee chuckled. "What's the secret? How did you know this would succeed?"

"I didn't," Ronin grinned. "You just build strength where it's needed. It's the same with people."

***True power is meant to be shared. Together, we can make  
the impossible possible.***

## 9 ~ The Wandering Souls of the Ego-Driven World

In this world, there lived two groups of people. The ones who seek wealth and power at all costs, and those who focus on creating something meaningful, like peace and harmony. Though they lived alongside each other, their experiences couldn't have been more different.

Leo, now the head of a large corporation, had made a name for himself and was well known for his ruthless decisions and sharp business shrewdness. "Kindness is for sissies. Fear gets results...fast," he often said.

Sienna, on the other hand, was once an avid believer in following your bliss, but now, she had decided to spend her days in meetings and spreadsheets, sacrificing passion for success. "Emotions get in the way. Slows you down," she'd say.

Then there was Jake. A former musician who didn't get a break no matter how hard he tried and the experience had turned him bitter. "Life is unfair. So, why bother?" he grumbled.

Together, they were the epitome of the Ego World. A place where ambition ruled, doing what you must and not what you love was the way to go, a place where happiness was but a fleeting feeling and hard to find.

However, the winds of change were afoot. Who would take notice?

It was an evening like any other, yet something felt off as Leo gazed out of his office window. "Why does everything look so dull?" he wondered aloud.

"It's always been like this," Sienna replied, glancing at him.

"Yup. Like everything else," Jake muttered.

Across the city, there was Maya, humming to a tune and tending to her small community garden with her loyal dog, Finn, by her side. Though her hands were often dirty, her heart was full. She believed in the power of love, unity, and creating something beautiful. When others chased wealth, she planted seeds instead. For those who knew her, her seeds were planted in both the ground and in the hearts of those around her.

"Why waste your time here when you could be rich and powerful?" Leo had once asked.

Maya had smiled, wiping sweat from her brow. "Rich in what? Power over whom? I'd rather grow something that brings people together than tear them apart."

As Leo, Sienna, and Jake left their office that evening, they started noticing how bleak everything seemed. People were everywhere, but no one smiled. The air was thick with tension, and even the neon lights felt harsh and uninviting.

"Ugh, this city is so cold," Sienna muttered, side-stepping over a puddle.

"Yeah, well, we're part of it," Jake replied with a shrug.

Leo said nothing. But their words haunted him throughout the night.

It took Leo a week to pluck up the courage to wander into Maya's garden. He wasn't sure why. Maybe he was curious, or maybe he just needed a break from the grey. As he stepped inside, he was struck by the vibrant colours, the scent of blooming flowers, and the sound of laughter.

"Grab a shovel," Maya said warmly.

"I'm not the gardening type," Leo replied.

Maya grinned. "There's a first time for everything. Besides, it's hard to feel stressed when you're up to your elbows in soil."

Hesitant at first, Leo decided to join her. As he worked, he realised how different this place felt. People genuinely smiled at each other. Strangers would gladly help one another. The place carried an air filled with warmth and joy. So distinct was the contrast to the cold, corrupt energy he was used to.

When he returned to the office, Sienna and Jake were surprised.

"Gardening? Seriously?" Sienna asked.

"Yup'," Victor admitted, bracing himself for their laughter; instead, their faces showed curiosity. "It actually felt good", he added.

The next day, Sienna and Jake decided to visit the garden themselves. What started as a light-hearted joke soon turned into something more meaningful. As they tended to the plants, they found solace in nurturing life, realising how much beauty they had overlooked in their relentless pursuit of prestige. They began to appreciate the warmth of the sun, the way laughter could brighten a room, the quiet joy of helping others, and the deep peace that came from owning their choices.



That night, as they sat in the garden, Sienna sighed. "You know, I used to think success was about having more than everyone else.

But now... I'm not so sure. There seems to be more satisfaction in creating something meaningful."

Jake nodded. "Yeah. It's funny how much better life feels when you're not always trying to outdo everyone."

Leo smiled. "Maybe we've been looking at the world all wrong. Maybe it's not about what we can take, but what we can give."

Maya smiled, handing each of them a flower. "We shape our world by how we treat it and each other. The world mirrors what you put into it. Plant love and kindness, and you'll live in a world full of such beauty."

***Our world mirrors our choices. Greed casts shadows, while kindness brings light. Always choose goodness.***



*"A divine soul rises above ego-driven existence. Power isn't found in wealth or status. It's in the strength to do what's right when no one is watching. Those rooted in values don't just endure. They give others the tools to build something greater."*

## Ending

Before we close the book on these nine stories, let's take a moment to treasure the simple truth they present and how much more enjoyable life is when we live with our hearts. Whether it's a little extra kindness, big-hearted forgiveness, or a shower of love, these values aren't just nice-to-haves; they're the link that connects us.

Consider this book as a gentle nudge (or maybe a friendly elbow jab) to keep choosing...

...compassion over indifference

...generosity over greed

...unity over division.

And hey, if you ever forget, this book is a great reminder that even the smallest act of goodness may brighten someone's day or even ripple out to change the world.

So, keep going. Be kind, do good, and don't skip the laughter. After all, a life filled with love, kindness, generosity, and some good old fun is one worth living.

Until next time, keep your heart light and your spirit bright. The world needs you...the beautiful gems that you are.

With a wink and a smile, we at Endless River Publishing House bid you a good day. ***But before you go...***



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## Earth Lightworkers...

Life will test you. Storms will come, and the world will try to shape you into something you're not. But when your **core values** are strong, nothing can shake you.

This book isn't about playing nice or making you into a doormat. It is about showing you what it is like being **unshakable**. When you know who you are and have no doubt about what you stand for, tough decisions become easier, external pressures will barely move you, and you navigate life with confidence and surety.

Through heart-warming stories that are easily real-life events, humour, and powerful insights, **this book** helps you build a firm foundation of integrity, love, and truth. No more second-guessing. No more bending to fit expectations.

When you stand firm in your values, you are playing your role in building a **world** where **kindness and goodness** become the ultimate force.

Be **steadfast**. Be the real **you**. And let's model something extraordinary together. A world that is aligned with **love, oneness and expansion** – leaving behind the archaic ways of fear, separation and contraction.

Enjoy!

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