

# 3 LIVES

*In search of bliss*

"An inspirational tale that will transform  
the way you look at happiness"

Join the experience

A novel by

SRINI CHANDRA





**3**

**LIVES**

*in search of bliss*



Copyright © 2010 Srini Chandrasekharan

All rights reserved.

ISBN-10: 1463762550

ISBN-13: 978-1463762551



*To my family. Without them, there is no me.*



## **Author's Foreword**

Language is a tool that uses symbols to describe experiences. It has limitations. When experience is translated into words, there is always a loss. If there is imperfect usage of language by the author, the losses can cause insurmountable differences between experience and understanding. It is with this admission that I begin this exercise.

Perfect communication is a shared experience, where no words are required to be said. Until we open ourselves to experience, words will have to suffice.

Happiness is elusive. It is hard to describe. It never lasts. The machinations of a restless mind ensure this. Is there an illusion? What is the illusion? Who is it to say what within this illusion is worth pursuing?

Many questions. No answers.

I hope that reading 3 Lives is as transformational for you as writing it was for me.

In all humility, I invite you to share an experience.





It is due to the will of the universe that this book has come about. Where this book will go, who it will touch and what it will accomplish, I lay in its hands.

Let thy will be done.





*The spirit of the universe dances to its own tune. It connects everything - dust, rocks, plants, animals, men, stars and galaxies - by this mysterious rhythm. The greatest of peace comes from surrendering to its will*





**3**

**LIVES**

*in search of bliss*



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **A long time ago in Brooklyn, New York City**

Death comes in many forms. To Ray Cordoza, it came in the form of a fidgety eighteen year old with thin eyebrows, a gaunt face and sunken eyes that reflected the torment of his soul.

Ray's final act began exactly three hours after midnight on his forty second birthday. It came unannounced and as a matter of fact. He was seated in his cab, stopped at a light. A steady drizzle threatened to take a more substantial turn. Most days tired him. Today was no exception. The comforting embrace of sleep beckoned. A warm bed in his house was fifteen minutes away, and he longed for its softness.

“Go! Go! Step on it!” The boy came running and hurled himself into the car. Ray looked around in surprise.

*Who was this kid? He had come out of nowhere. Where did he come from?*

“Sorry, pal. I'm done for the day. I'll drop you at the corner. Ok?”

Ray looked in the mirror.

The occupant in the back seat edged about nervously, groping his oversize jacket. Something didn't seem right. His instinct was correct.

"Not ok. Keep driving. Unless you want a bullet in the back of your head," the boy's voice quivered.

Ray looked in the mirror again. The neon from the passing building lights glanced off a revolver in the boy's hand which seemed to twitch uncontrollably. The tormented eyes looked straight back at him through the mirror.

"Ok. Ok. Take it easy. Where do you want to go?"

This was no time to be a hero. Ray had never thought of himself as one. In fact, he reveled in the shadows of obscurity, content to be ordinary and unnoticed.

"Just keep driving!" the boy shouted. "No more questions. I am sick and tired of questions. Do you understand?"

The rain was coming down in sheets now. The road was desolate. Not a soul to be found.

"Ok. I get it. No more questions. Calm down, pal. I'll drive you wherever you want. Just be calm, all right?"

Ray's voice was hoarse. He began to feel sick to his stomach, muscles knotting up involuntarily. Fear had begun to take its grip.

“Shut up. Don’t tell me to be calm. You sound like one of them,” the boy shouted.

*Them? Who’s them?*

The boy was crazy. Without doubt, he was intoxicated or on drugs or maybe even both.

“Turn here. Here. Here. Here!”

He had not noticed the alley on the left. The rain was a blinding downpour. The wipers were fighting a battle they couldn’t win. He managed to swerve into the narrow lane, brakes screeching as he tried to avoid the bins lined up on the side. They had entered a dead end. How ironic, he thought. He slowly pulled to a stop.

Now what?

Ray’s throat was dry. Beads of sweat left streaks in their anxiety to escape down his face.

“Get out. Out of the car. Slowly,” the boy growled.

Ray shrugged. He didn’t have a choice. He slowly climbed out.

The dark clouds pouring out their fury took vantage positions to watch him playing out his final moments.

“Take it easy, pal. I won’t tell anyone. Just don’t shoot, ok?” Ray pleaded.

The hazy figure in front of him raised a hand. His hopes sank. Frozen in fear, Ray stood still. He could

barely see in front of him. His mind went blank when he heard the first shot. The bullet struck him in the middle of his broad chest.

“God...damn.”

A second bullet pierced his stomach. Waves of shock cascaded through his body, transforming into pain as they spread.

He felt his knees buckle as he fell to the ground. The world swirled around him. As he lay on his back, rain lashing his face, Ray Cordoza knew that he had but a few minutes left. His breathing became labored and his heart heavy with anger.

“What did I do to deserve this?”

Eyes open, he stared at the skies for an answer. His vision blurred as he fought to stay awake. The faces of Maria and their daughter, Ana floated in front of his mind's eye.

This was not expected. He was not ready to die yet. This was not fair.

His fingers clutched the crucifix that dangled from his neck. He wore it only to remind him of Sister Conway.

“It will protect you from the darkness of evil.”

She had promised. She had been his angel of mercy.

He had long abandoned her God. His prayers had gone unanswered far too many times. But desperation converts even the strongest mind. He prayed one last time.

“God, please save me. Give me another chance. I am begging you,” he gasped.

The eternal night closed in without mercy. Everything began to go black. Sister Conway’s God had abandoned him yet again. As hope evaporated, anger took its place.

“God... damn you. Are you listening? Are you even there? Why me?”

He cursed God for the final time, his cry of anguish echoing through all of space and time.

Somewhere out there in the vast chasm of nothingness, Ray Cordoza’s cry was heard.

An early jogger found his body the next morning.

“Cordoza. Cabby. Brooklyn. Homicide. Cab missing. Presumed stolen.” A police officer called it in.

In the end, that’s what it all comes down to. A few prosaic words suffice to describe a life of forty two years.

The Cordoza’s were a loyal clan. They came to his funeral. Maria spoke of him as a good and decent man.

His friends whispered amongst themselves as they recalled memories.

A freshly dug grave accepted its occupant and closed upon itself without protest.

“Even though I walk through the shadow of the valley of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and thy staff. They comfort me.”

Father Connor’s voice drifted through the gentle drizzle that had set in. He had known Ray since he was a boy.

“Ray, God bless you. May your soul rest in peace.”

Ray Cordoza’s mortal remains thus reached their resting place.



At that moment, Ray was preoccupied with more pressing matters that lie between life and death. He felt himself drifting out of the heaviness of being into light nothingness. It was like he had woken up from a deep slumber inside a dream. He sensed the expanse of nothingness that surrounded him.

*How do you sense nothingness?*

That's when he heard the Voice.

"I heard you, Ray."

It seemed to come from a blanket of serene void. Like a ray of light entering through a crack in the wall, it seemed to have a source but spread everywhere.

The voice startled him. As Ray awakened into his post mortem, he recollected his last moments. He felt himself where the bullets had struck. Funny, there was no pain. He remembered the darkness closing in. And, he could sense the light that had taken its place.

"God... damn you. Are you even there? Are you listening? Why me?"

His final words echoed again in the emptiness.

*Where am I? Surely I must be dead?*

*Wait. Am I in a hospital? Whose voice was that? How did it know what I said? Maybe this is just a dream?*

Thoughts raced. Hope surged.

"Sorry, Ray. You, my friend, are truly and positively dead," the Voice interrupted his rambling thoughts. It sounded apologetic.

Ray was a pragmatic man. The weight of the words sank quickly.

“I am dead. But, where am I? How am I still having thoughts? Whose voice is that?”

“Glad to see you taking it in stride. Many struggle even after dying. You are in what lies after death, Ray.”

“Who are you...? Why can’t I see you?” Ray spoke cautiously.

*Wait. if this is the after-life... Then the Voice? that must be ...  
Could it be?*

Ray was taken aback.

“There is a God? I would have never thought..”

Ray wavered in uncertainty. Nothing disappoints an atheist more than meeting God.

“Now, I’ll pretend I didn’t hear that, Ray. I am quite used to being a figment of imagination,” the Voice was amused.

Ray had never given much thought to the afterlife. He recalled Sister Conway again, and her words every Sunday in church.

“Heaven awaits ye who perfect the love for God in your hearts”.

“Wondering if you should have paid more attention to her, Ray?” the Voice chuckled.

“I guess I should have. Though, I can hardly be blamed,” Ray was defensive.

“Blame? We don’t use that word around here. There are no mistakes, Ray. There are only experiences.”

“I lost faith in the God I was taught to believe in a long time back. Here I am now. It seems that I have put myself at the wrong end of a big bet.”

“I am merely curious to know if you have changed your mind. That option is always available at any given moment. Surely you know that.”

“I am not sure if I have changed my mind about anything. But, tell me this. What happens to me now? Is this Judgment Day? Am I going to Hell?”

Ray’s discomfort was palpable.

“Judgment Day? Hell? I guess those are good enough reasons to lose one’s faith. Don’t worry, my friend. You’re not going anywhere. There is nowhere to go, not just yet.” The Voice chuckled.

“Okay. That’s good to know. But, I am curious. What happens now?”;

“I can see that curiosity continues to linger long after demise. You are free now, Ray. Free from the immediate obligations of a mortal existence. You are free to think. And, to ask the questions which have always been on your mind, but never had the time to ask. How do you

feel about spending quality time with me? We have eternity at our disposal.”

Ray smiled. He had not expected a benevolent God. His worries began to recede. And confidence emerged.

“A chance to talk to God himself! Who would turn down an offer like that?”

“Truth be told, it is a lot easier to get people’s attention after they are dead. I’ve noticed that most find it difficult to listen when they are alive.”

“That is not true. What about my prayers? You never answered them. I tried to get your attention every day. I never heard back from you. Why?”

“Oh, I answered them, Ray. Maybe, you didn’t notice. Maybe, you weren’t listening. Maybe, you didn’t like the answers. But, trust me, I answered them.”

Ray was surprised. He would have surely noticed if God had been speaking to him. Had he been too busy to listen? He wondered if he had not listened hard enough.

“Why did you not save me when I cried for help? You let me die, alone, in a dark alley. What did I do to deserve that? I never harmed anyone. Why was I murdered? Did I deserve such a fate? Where were you when I called for help?”

Ray’s anger rose.

“Let me ask you. Have you seen anyone live forever? Is it not obvious that death is inevitable?”

“I see where you are going with this. I guess no one lives forever. And, everyone has to die. I understand that. I do not have a problem with that. But you have not answered my question. Didn't I deserve a suitable end?”

“If death is inevitable, does it matter how it comes, Ray? Why this predilection for a suitable end? It is intriguing. I do not understand your question.”

The Voice was genuinely curious.

“Don't you see the injustice in your creation? Why do bad things happen to good people? Is this not unfair?”

“What is good? And, what is bad? Do you really believe that you know enough to tell the difference, Ray?”

“You answer questions with questions. Where are the answers?”

Ray's frustration was evident.

“What would you like to know, Ray?” the Voice asked softly.

“Why is the world unfair? Why are some more fortunate than others? What did I do to deserve my destiny? Why is happiness hard to find? What is the purpose of it all?”

“Excellent questions, Ray. I expected nothing less. I hope that I can help you find the answers. But, first, tell me about your life. Were you happy?”

“My life?”

Ray halted.

At first, all he could remember was the struggle. He did not remember being happy.





*Hope you enjoyed reading this excerpt from the book.*

*You can buy the full book from Kindle store at*

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B005EM6XUK>

**Other useful links:**

Author home page

<http://srinic.in>

Video trailers of book

<http://www.youtube.com/user/3LivesTheBook>

Book website

<http://3lives.in>

Join hundreds of book fans on Facebook at

<http://www.facebook.com/3LivesTheBook>

