

# Chapter

## **The Sum Total -The Veil – The Son & The Mother**

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*Have you ever been told you're an old soul?*

*Or watched as your grandmother looked at your child when they were very young, tilted her head slightly, and said, "She's an old soul."*

*You smile...*

*At the exact moment this precious baby slaps a bowl of Cheerios off her highchair and onto the floor... the one you just cleaned up.*

*Old soul, indeed! As you think to yourself... quietly wonder whether she's going to make it through the night.*

*And yet, the phrase lingers...*

Because despite the chaos, despite the noise, despite the very real mess in front of you, something about it feels true. As if wisdom and innocence are somehow sharing the same small body. As if memory exists before language. As if something arrived already knowing, even if it has no way to say so yet.

If you accepted the premise of the previous chapter, then this one is unavoidable... for you have chosen this path, as my father always said!

In *The Soul Contract*, I asked you to consider a difficult idea: that life may be entered into knowingly, not randomly, and that we agree to experience all of it in service of becoming more fully ourselves. Love and joy, betrayal and loss, pleasure and pain, grace and cruelty. Not as punishment. Not by chance. But as a curriculum.

That idea leaves a problem in its wake.

If we truly choose this life with awareness intact, then the experience we are meant to have would collapse under the weight of that knowing. Choice would lose its edge. Pain would soften before it could teach. Love would be diluted by foresight. Growth would become observation rather than participation.

So, something else must also be true.

There must be a mechanism that allows a soul to choose life honestly without destroying the experience it chose. There must be a way to step forward willingly and still live fully inside uncertainty.

This is where "The Veil" appears...

Long before I had language for this idea, others had already circled it. Not as fantasy, and not as doctrine, but as observation. Across cultures and eras, human beings have noticed the same strange phenomenon: we arrive knowing something we cannot remember.

The ancient Greeks called this forgetting Lethe, the river the soul crossed before entering the world, its waters erasing memory so life could be lived without interference from what came before. Plato believed that learning was not acquisition but recollection; the soul already carried truth and spent its lifetime slowly remembering it through experience rather than instruction. Forgetting, in this view, was not ignorance. It was preparation.

In Eastern traditions, particularly within Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, the Veil appears as Maya, the illusion that conceals ultimate reality so consciousness can experience itself as separate, embodied, and finite. Without this illusion, there could be no individuality, no desire, no growth. The forgetting is not deception. It is design.

Mystical Christianity describes the Veil as the distance between the soul and divine knowing, not as punishment, but as mercy. Even Jewish mysticism speaks of a deliberate contraction of divine awareness, a narrowing that allows human choice to exist without overwhelming presence. In each case, the story is the same, even if the language changes. Consciousness must forget in order to choose freely.

Across Indigenous cultures, this idea appears not as theory but as lived understanding. Many Native traditions describe children as arriving “fresh from the other side,” still carrying awareness of the spirit world until time and experience slowly anchor them here. Shamans and elders were not believed to access something supernatural, but to remember how to listen beyond the surface of things, to heal with their hands without understanding why they know how.

Even modern thinkers, stripped of spiritual language, brush against the same conclusion. Carl Jung believed that beneath personal memory lay a collective layer of experience, a shared psychic inheritance that influenced instinct, symbol, and meaning without conscious recall. We feel before we know. We recognize before we understand.

I did not go searching for these ideas. I encountered them later, after the idea had already taken root within me. What struck me was not their authority, but their familiarity. They were not explaining something new. They were naming something I already sensed.

And sometimes, life slips truth to us in the least solemn ways, almost as if it wants to make sure we do not turn mystery into ceremony too quickly.

Years ago, when my children were young, there was a show they loved on Cartoon Network. *Rugrats*. A show about babies moving through the world with unfiltered imagination, where ordinary rooms became vast landscapes, and meaning existed without explanation. The characters’ biggest fear was the moment they would cross over, when one baby’s baby talk would no longer be recognizable, when they would begin to forget.

What was clever about this was the idea that their first fear was the prospect of forgetting everything they had known from birth. Which, in theory, meant they

knew beforehand the inevitability that their evolution was not going to come before they crossed over, but after. And so then began the anxiety of the inevitable.

My kids would laugh and ask me, “Daddy, do you think that’s true?” without realizing how close they were to asking something much bigger.

The unspoken truth of the show was that one day, the world they knew would simply disappear. Not because it was imaginary or childish silliness, but because growing up meant trading possibility for practicality, for the probability that the decisions we would now be asked to make would come not from innocence, but from choice and hidden experiences that become the markers of our future.

Even wrapped in humor and colored animation, it captured something deeply human. There is a moment when the Veil settles, when the boundless perception of childhood quietly gives way to structure and reason. Most of us laughed, and somewhere beneath that laughter felt the recognition of something already lost... and remembered what was to come.

And this is how I have come to understand “The Veil”, how it feels, and how it works.

It is that perfect warm mist, the inevitable step forward that pulls you in because you already chose the path. Fear without consequence, because you will never remember long enough to say, *no... no way*.

To understand why the Veil exists, we have to return to the soul contract itself. If we come here to refine, to grow, to be shaped by experience rather than certainty, then forgetting is not a flaw in the system.

It is the system itself.

If we remembered where we came from, we would not fully invest in where we are. If we remembered why we chose hardship, injustice would lose its emotional force. If we remembered eternity, loss would soften into something manageable rather than something that reshapes us. Certainty would contaminate experience, and growth would be reduced to observation rather than participation.

For that reason, the first requirement of learning is not knowledge but amnesia. Not the erasure of truth, but the suspension of it. A narrowing of awareness that allows experience to unfold without explanation hovering over it, without the answer key already in hand. Imagine that the sum total of everything we are meant to learn in this life depends entirely on our willingness to first forget everything we already know.

Birth, then, is not the beginning of life. It is the beginning of forgetting.

The true crossing does not happen in the delivery room, surrounded by light, noise, and movement. It happens later, quietly and gradually, when consciousness agrees to step behind what I call the Veil. The Veil is not imposed upon us. It is consented to.

It is the moment awareness chooses limitation so that learning can take place without interference.

Before the Veil fully settles, children still seem oriented to something adults can no longer see. They stare into spaces we dismiss. They track movement without objects. They respond to presence without needing form or explanation. We call this imagination, but I believe it is something else entirely.

They are not remembering facts about where they came from. They are remembering how it felt to exist without edges, without hierarchy, without the constant pressure to define and categorize. They still recognize continuity. They still feel the underlying coherence beneath things, the subtle hum that adults learn to ignore as they trade perception for prediction.

Animals, especially cats, never fully pass behind the Veil because they never enter the symbolic cage of identity. They do not build stories about themselves. They do not confuse language with reality. They remain closer to immediate being, closer to experience as it happens rather than experience as it is explained. This is why an animal can fix its attention on something unseen and feel no fear, because it is not perceiving a being so much as it is perceiving process, motion before meaning, change before form.

Adults often find this unsettling because we have trained ourselves to ignore anything that does not serve survival, productivity, or identity. We call that maturity. In truth, it is efficient, and it comes at a cost. The Veil does not descend at the same moment for everyone. For some, it settles early. For others, it lingers. You can sometimes watch it thin in stages as the long stare becomes shorter, the tracking less frequent, and wonder slowly collapses into words.

The soul does not disappear when the Veil settles. It narrows, and that narrowing is necessary. Pain only teaches when it surprises us. Love only transforms when it risks loss. Choice only matters when the outcome is uncertain. If a child remembered choosing their parents, disappointment would lose its power. If they remembered agreeing to hardship, injustice would lose its sting. If they remembered eternity, grief would never fully take hold.

Forgetting, in this sense, is mercy.

Not mercy in a sentimental way, but in a functional way.

If we carried full memory forward, we would struggle to commit to pain, because pain would be explained away by the knowledge that it is temporary. We would struggle to commit to love, because love would be diluted by the knowledge that it is not the first time. We would struggle to take life seriously, not because it would not matter, but because we would already know how it ends. The Veil does not make us ignorant. It makes us invested.

### **Gunner**

During my son Gunner's eulogy, long before I had language for any of this, I found myself saying something I had not fully understood.

As I spoke to the congregation of family and loved ones, I shared that if I could look upon the gates of heaven, even once, just to see my son's face again, I would give everything in my power to do so. Every prayer. Every bargain. Every piece of myself.

And then I said something that came to me without knowing what it would later mean. I said,

*"If I were allowed to see what I was not yet meant to see, I would lose the illusion and the faith. I would lose the mystery that makes love endure beyond death. I would lose the magic of the afterlife, because seeing it too soon would end the work this life is asking of me."*

I did not understand why those words came out of my mouth then. I only knew they were true, and I felt them deep in my soul as if someday I knew I would need to remember them again and the feel and the wanting forever, because that desire, that feeling, never left my soul.

Looking back now, I see that what I was naming was the Veil itself. Not as cruelty, but as protection. Not as denial, but as preservation. Because certainty would have collapsed courage, and proof would have replaced faith. And love, without faith, would have nowhere left to go.

In that moment, grief taught me what philosophy never could. That not seeing is sometimes the deepest mercy we are given.

But the Veil is not a prison. It does not completely seal us off. It protects the experience while providing enough guidance to keep us from losing our way entirely. We may lose the map, but we keep the compass.

This is why intuition exists. Why does instinct speak before logic? Why do certain choices create a pause in the body before the mind can catch up. That pause. That *hmmm*. The gut sense that says something is aligned or something is off before you have evidence.

Those are not accidents.

There are moments in your life that you cannot reconstruct clearly. Days that blur. Seasons that collapse into feeling rather than memory. And yet, when you return to a place, a smell, a sound, something opens.

Not in your mind.

In your body.

In your chest.

You did not remember the day, but you remembered the place the day occupied inside you.

Imagine waking again without recollection of the day before, and yet finding yourself drawn back to the same restaurant. You do not remember the meal, but you remember the satisfaction. You do not remember the route you took, but you

sense that there was traffic last time, so you choose a different way. You cannot explain why. You simply know.

These moments become what I call Place Makers. They are not memories you can summon on demand, but experiences that orient you. They tell you where to begin, where to return, and where not to linger. They shape perception without requiring narrative. They create familiarity without explanation. They are the gut instinct that tells you something is right or wrong before you have evidence, the quiet pause that arrives before the mind catches up.

Learning, at its deepest level, does not disappear when memory fades. It settles. It becomes part of how we move through the world rather than something we can describe. What we forget as story, we carry forward as knowing.

There is another strange thing we all share, though we rarely stop to think about it.

As adults, we cannot remember our own first moments. We do not remember being born. We do not remember our first breath, our first cry, our first steps. Those moments are sealed behind the Veil. And yet, many of us remember those same moments for our children with astonishing clarity. We remember the room, the sound, the way time seemed to slow and thicken in the air. We remember the first time they breathed, the first time they opened their eyes, the first time they stood and took a step toward us. These memories do not fade. They live inside us as if they happened yesterday.

We remember speaking to them before they arrived. Talking to them while they were still in the womb. Saying things like Daddy loves you or Mommy is here, without knowing whether they could hear us, only knowing that it felt right to speak. And when they finally enter the world, we watch something remarkable happen. They turn toward that voice. They settle when they hear it. They recognize something they have never been taught to recognize.

That recognition does not come from memory as we understand it. It does not come from language or story. It comes from familiarity without narrative, from orientation without words. The child does not remember the womb, but the body does. The mind does not recall the voice, but the heart does.

This is not evidence that nothing was experienced. It is evidence that something was experienced so deeply it did not need to be remembered in the way we usually define memory. The experience does not disappear. It moves. It becomes something else. What the child forgets as narrative, the body carries as knowing. What the mind cannot retrieve, the soul retains as orientation.

The Veil does not erase experience. It relocates it.

It is the mother's womb and the father's voice that become the first keys to our beginning. Before language, before memory, before identity takes hold, it is the parents who shape the earliest knowing. They are not just caregivers. They are the first orientation, the first reference point, the first bridge between what the soul was and what it is becoming.

In this way, parents do not simply raise a child. They introduce consciousness into form. The sound of a mother's heartbeat, the rhythm of her body, the familiarity of a father's voice spoken into the quiet of the womb. These are not sentimental moments. They are foundational. They are the earliest markers placed long before the mind is capable of remembering them.

Babies arrive as something closer to angels than we are comfortable admitting. Not because they are perfect, but because they arrive unguarded, aware, and open. They are not blank slates. They are gifts that choose their parents, entering into a relationship that will shape the trajectory of their becoming. And in that choosing, an enormous responsibility is placed upon us.

The responsibility we carry as parents is far greater than we often realize. We are not just protecting or providing. We are delivering a soul into its first experience of the world. We are the first filter. The first construct. The beginning of their knowing. Through our presence, our voices, our care, and even our imperfections, we help determine how safe the world feels, how love is recognized, and how trust takes root.

This is where the Veil begins its work. Not as erasure, but as formation. The earliest experiences do not disappear. They settle. They become the unseen framework upon which everything else is built.

As this relocated knowing begins to express itself over time, it often does so through people.

Some relationships arrive with a sense of familiarity that feels stabilizing rather than disruptive. They support direction. They feel aligned. They walk alongside us without demanding that we dismantle who we already are. These are often described as soulmates — not because they complete us, but because they reinforce the path we are already on.

Other relationships arrive very differently.

They are immediate and unmistakable. Recognition happens before reason has time to intervene. These connections tend to be intense, destabilizing, and impossible to ignore. They surface patterns we thought were resolved and place them directly in front of us. They do not arrive to comfort. They arrive to reveal.

These are often referred to as twin flames.

Within the context of the Veil, the distinction matters. Soulmates stabilize orientation. Twin flames accelerate it. Both arise from the same underlying mechanism: knowing that survives forgetting and seeks expression through relationship.

Intensity does not imply permanence. Some of the most powerful connections are not meant to stay. Their purpose is not union, but clarity. And yet, twin flames carry a deeper implication. They are often understood as reflections of the same spirit, bound to complete their work together, not as two separate paths, but as one truth

seen from different angles. Like a mirror, they do not show us someone else — they show us ourselves, in another form.

And once that framework is laid, the journey does not end there. What begins in one life does not always complete itself in one lifetime.

If reincarnation operates within the framework of a soul contract, then each return is not repetition but revision. Not punishment, but refinement. Each life becomes an opportunity to apply what was learned without remembering how it was learned, to navigate new conditions with instincts shaped by prior experience.

We would choose differently, not because we remembered failure, but because failure shaped us. We would love more wisely, not because we remembered heartbreak, but because heartbreak altered our capacity. We would recognize beauty faster, danger sooner, and truth more quietly, because those Place Makers had already been set.

In this way, forgetting does not erase progress.

It distills it.

Each life lays down new Place Makers, points of reference that guide us forward even in ignorance. We do not start over. We start oriented. Each return brings us back to work with a deeper sense of direction, even if we cannot name it.

Perhaps that is the real mercy of the Veil. It allows learning to remain immersive rather than analytical. It keeps life from becoming a rehearsal rather than participation. It lets experience shape us without burdening us with explanation.

If this is true, then every life is both complete and incomplete. Complete in what it offers. Incomplete in what it prepares us for next. Each contract builds upon the last, not through memory, but through the quiet placement of understanding within the soul.

We wake. We live. We learn. We sleep again.

And each time we return, we do not begin empty.

We begin somewhere.

What this suggests, if you follow it far enough, is that learning does not live where we think it does. It does not live in memory, and it does not live in intellect. It lives somewhere quieter, somewhere less articulate, somewhere that continues to function even when the mind has been asked to forget.

This is where the Sum Total begins to reveal itself.

If each experience places a marker within us, if each life lays down orientation without narrative, then the Sum Total is not a ledger of events or a catalog of accomplishments. It is the accumulation of internal alignment. It is what remains after the details dissolve. It is the way we respond before we have time to think, the way we recognize truth before we can explain it, the way something feels right or wrong without presenting evidence.

That recognition does not come from memory.

It comes from the heart.

The heart, as I understand it, is not sentimental. It is not emotional shorthand. It is perceptual. It is the place where experience is stored without language, where learning survives the Veil intact. When the soul remembers, it does not hand information back to the mind. It signals the heart instead.

This is why the most important moments in our lives rarely announce themselves intellectually. They arrive as resonance. As familiarity. As an unshakable sense of knowing that bypasses explanation. We say things like, “I don’t know why, but I trust this,” or “I can’t explain it, but this feels wrong,” or “I’ve never been here before, yet this feels like home.”

Those moments are not accidents. They are The Sum Total speaking through the only channel that remains open when memory is closed. The Veil does not block truth...It reroutes it.

What we forget in the mind, we retain in the heart. What we cannot recall as a story, we carry as instinct. What we do not remember choosing, we feel compelled to complete. In this way, the heart becomes the interpreter of the soul’s long memory, translating accumulated experience into present-moment guidance.

This is why growth often feels emotional before it feels logical. Why love can feel ancient. Why lessons repeat until they are embodied rather than understood. Why grief can feel disproportionate, and joy can feel earned without knowing why. These are not reactions to isolated events. They are responses informed by a depth of experience we no longer consciously access.

When the soul remembers, it does not look backward.

It recognizes forward.

And when the heart knows, it is not because it has been told.

It is because it has been shaped.

Layer by layer.

Life by life.

Experience by experience.

Until the Sum Total reaches a point where choice begins to feel less random and more aligned.

### **Ansley**

Years later, when I was asked to speak at my mother, Ansley’s, eulogy, I found myself returning to the same inner language. I asked again why. Why did my mother have to leave us so soon?

And what came back was not explanation, but recognition.

My mother lived a life guided by yes. Not loudly. Not performatively. But faithfully, in the quiet sense of the word. When she was asked to run for public office in the

town where she grew up and raised a family, she said, of course, I will. She agreed to do so not because she sought power or recognition. In fact, when I asked her,

**“Mommy, why are you doing this?”**

She said, **“Because they asked me, so I said YES.”**

*When she was asked to serve on the Village Public Library board, where, as a child, I would watch her read to children sitting in a circle, fascinated by every word she said, she simply said, “Because they asked me, so I said YES.”*

*When she was asked to serve on the rosary committee at her church, getting back and forth to the church was so challenging, and she could no longer drive. I asked again, truly already knowing the answer, as I had detected a pattern. But still, I asked why, and she smiled and simply said, “Because they asked me, so I said YES.”*

*These were not obligations. They were responses. Each one felt in her body before it was justified in her mind. She did not debate her purpose. She recognized it.*

*And when the final question came, when the good Lord asked her if she was ready to come home, I imagine, without being rehearsed, she paused the same way she always did. She did not rush. She did not argue. And she smiled and said YES.*

This was not because she knew what came next. But because she knew she was finished **becoming**.

She knew her contract was complete, that her ascension was hers once again, and she was ready to go home.

This is what completion looks like. Not triumphing. Not certainty. But peace that arrives when the work no longer resists itself, when your gut and everything you know and believe tells you it is so.

What remains, then, is the question of with whom we complete these contracts, and why certain souls seem to return to us again and again, across different lives, in different forms, at different moments in time. If the purpose of existence is refinement rather than repetition, then relationships are not accidents.

They are instruments.

Some people enter our lives briefly. They teach a single lesson, place a marker, and move on. Others stay longer, helping shape us through shared experience, shared struggle, shared growth. These are often what we call soulmates. They are aligned companions, souls traveling in similar directions, intersecting at meaningful points to support, challenge, and reflect one another.

And then there are those relationships that do not behave like the others. The ones that feel immediate and ancient at the same time. The ones that do not make sense logically yet refuse to be dismissed. These connections are not always gentle. They can be destabilizing, confrontational, and deeply revealing.

They do not arrive to complete you...They arrive to expose what remains incomplete. They are your mirror...they are your “**Twin Flame.**”

Within the framework of a soul contract, these relationships exist not for comfort, but for acceleration. They activate dormant Place Makers. They stir the Sum Total. They provoke the heart to recognize something the mind cannot yet explain. They often surface at moments when growth has stalled, when avoidance has become a pattern, when healing has been postponed long enough.

This is where the idea of the higher self becomes relevant, not as a distant overseer, but as an integrated future version of who we are becoming. The higher self does not shout. It does not command. It communicates through resonance, through intuition, through subtle messages that are easy to dismiss if we are not listening. A feeling that something is off. The sense that a choice is misaligned. A quiet pull toward a path we are afraid to take.

These are the echoes.

They are not voices from outside us. They are messages from within, shaped by experiences we do not consciously remember but have undeniably lived. They are the Sum Total speaking softly, attempting to guide us away from repeating lessons that have already been learned at great cost.

Often, the people around us hear these messages before we do. Friends notice patterns. Loved ones see cycles repeating. Strangers sometimes say exactly the thing we were avoiding hearing. Even the universe seems to conspire, placing the same themes, the same warnings, the same opportunities in front of us until we choose differently.

This is not punishment...It is persistence. It is the universe's way of trying to course correct, to avoid the path previously taken that did not end well.

Not every life is a complete rewrite. Some lives are refinements. Some are expansions. Some exist to heal what was broken previously, while others exist to experience something entirely new with the same familiar souls, simply arranged differently in time. The cast may remain, but the roles change. Parent becomes child. Lover becomes teacher. Stranger becomes friends...but your true Soul Mate or Twin Flame, well, you know who they are, and inevitably, they are not always the one in this lifetime you were meant to stay with, as you both made choices, and sometimes, they simply didn't align. But that is the beauty, as I believe it!! *You can come back and do it again until you get it right.*

The goal is not perfection in a single lifetime...The goal is completion across lifetimes.

Completion does not mean the absence of pain. It means the integration of it. It means recognizing patterns sooner, choosing differently when given the chance, loving more honestly, and releasing what no longer serves growth. It means listening when the heart knows, trusting when the soul remembers, and acting before regret has time to accumulate.

Human nature ensures that we will still hesitate. We will still doubt. We will still repeat certain mistakes, even when warned. Forgetting is powerful, and fear is convincing. But the guidance never stops. The echoes never cease. They grow louder when ignored and quieter when honored.

To complete a soul contract is not to finish learning. It is to reach a level of consciousness where learning becomes less painful, less reactive, and less entangled in avoidance. It is to ascend not out of the world, but through it, carrying forward a more healed version of the self into whatever comes next.

And when that happens, whether in this life or another, we do not return empty. We return with a new orientation. We return with place markers already set. We return as old souls, with a heart that knows more quickly, a soul that remembers more clearly, and a consciousness prepared to live again, not perfectly, but more awake... because the Sum Total of our life experiences has guided us to this point in time.

This is the work. This is the promise. These are the lessons we have always known... even when we could not see them.

And that... is why the Veil exists.