

Somewhere Along the Line.

The man had been in deep thought for several days. His thoughts, existential in pertinence, were testing the authenticity of his proclaimed happiness; something he had not encountered in many years. He succeeded in editing out the thoughts that lacked relevance, for instance, caring about what others thought, wondering if his happiness was genuine or just a mask that allowed him to live without having to delve back into the pit of shame he had successfully extricated himself from decades earlier.

He landed on the question: How did I get to where I am? He recapped his life as best he could, using his now-edited thoughts to painstakingly create a mental video of his life, then choosing only the memories tied to his current quandary. The recap, in the form of a video, was quite informative and helped to refresh his life's story.

Early on in his life, when he was a toddler, he was sitting alone, badly beaten and sexually abused. But there was a lull happening. The man watched as the three-year-old stopped his crying, cleaned himself, and pulled himself into a better state of being. The video kept playing, and he watched as the little boy, on a different night, heard the man coming down the stairs again. The boy was physically helpless to defend himself.

Afterwards, the boy, having been brutally violated once again, would pull himself together.

The man, at first, could only sense the connection between the video he was watching and how it might connect to his quandary. He switched his attention back to the video playing in his mind and saw his father ordering him out of his home. The seventeen-year-old, crying and bleeding from the beating he had just received, obeyed. He walked out, walking the two miles to a friend's house without shoes, where he asked if he could stay for a bit.

The video played on and on, in intricate detail, showing many times in his life when an innate sense told him to surrender while being overpowered, followed by a never-before-known path he instinctively followed that led to a safe outcome.

The man watched as the video stopped, leaving him with his thoughts. The man thought about how much he had loved being alone as a child. Being alone meant safety from the abuse of some grown-ups. Of course, the boy, then the young man, and eventually the adult, tried things that hurt him. Some things he did, like riding his bicycle down the steepest hills he could find without using his brakes, caused him terrible crashes, injuries, and he was even knocked out on several occasions.

Somehow, the boy found that he belonged out in the wild places of the earth. There, he was safe from people. While still a boy, he would wander alone along dried-up creek beds in remote mountains where his family rented a cabin. As the boy wandered in open spaces, he felt more and more deeply that he was a part of them. His movements slowed to match the pace of the land around him.

Occasionally, he took others with him, but he soon learned he needed to go back alone to reestablish his rapport with the earth.

Again, he watched the video playing inside him, and playing were his relationships and marriages, most of which had failed, but also playing in those reels, prior to the failures, was the fact that every relationship and marriage was a success until it wasn't. The man was happy knowing there had been successes. After the relationships and marriages ended, the video showed the man seeking refuge by walking on beaches, in mountains and forests, watching rivers flow towards their destinations, listening to the wind blow through the trees, and, again, becoming in sync with his surroundings.

Finally, the video ended with him where he now lived- in a cabin in the woods. In the quiet and peace of solitude, he would feel and hear things ancient and rarely spoken. He would hear the sounds of the universe, of silence, and he experienced peace. Now, the unspoken knowledge that the earth had always been his home was said aloud to him.

The man was home, and his quandary was over: once a person crosses the line to hear the universe, feel peace, and know the joy of the quiet, there is no returning to a tedious life, and there is only wanting more of what there is when one crosses the line.

Written by Peter Skeels © 5-26-2026