



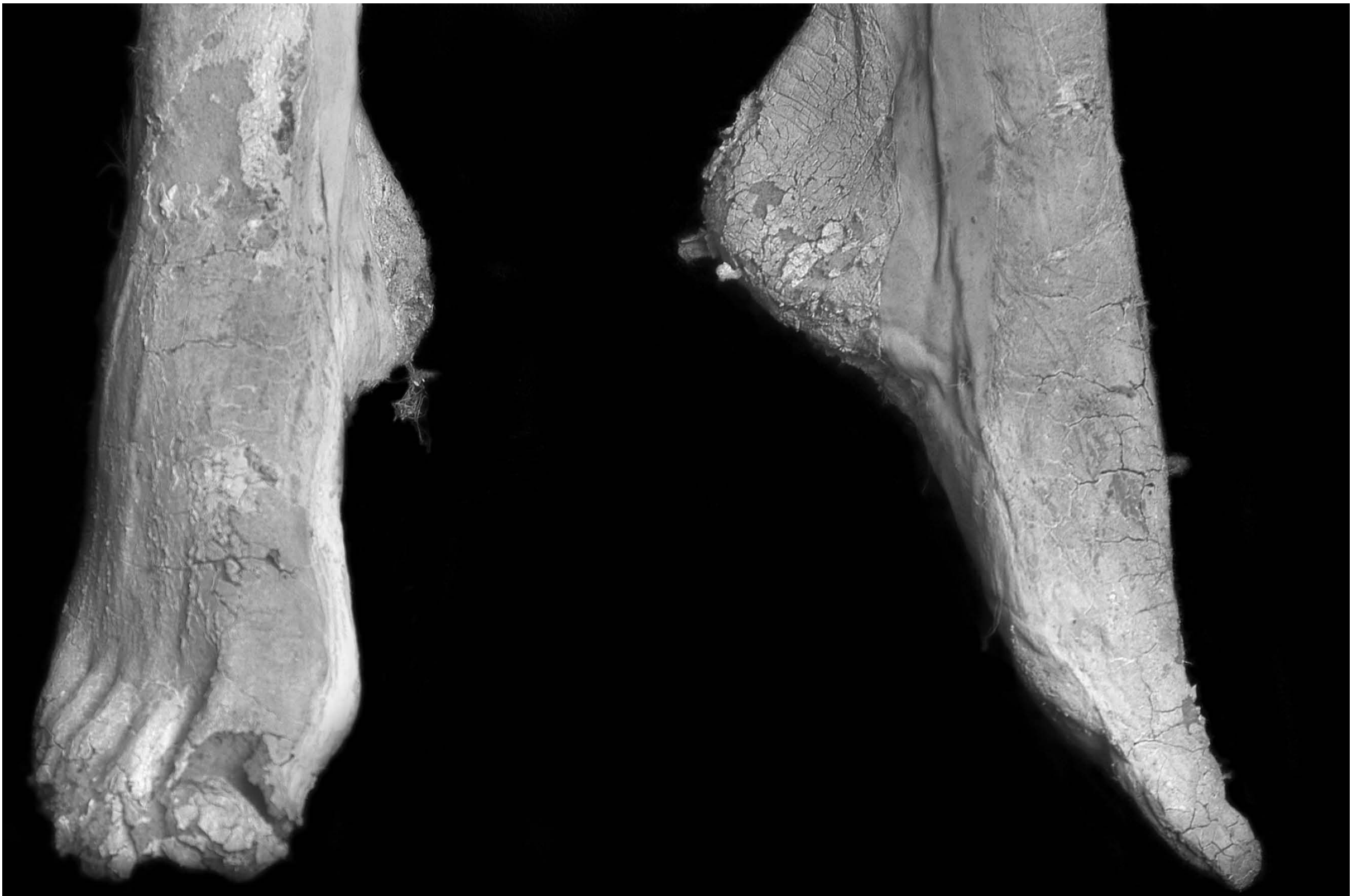
*"It wasn't only wickedness and scheming  
that made people unhappy; it was confusion  
and misunderstanding; above all,  
it was the failure to grasp the simple truth  
that other people are as real as you."  
— Tan Meiwan in Atonement*

## The Adjacent Possible

by Dolores Wilber









The postcard read B C A left to right.  
Un remarkable landscape except for the  
letters indicating something not known.  
Important marks but god knows why.

## THE ADJACENT POSSIBLE

by Dolores Wilber

Read by 10-year old Alex Schorsch

The three laws of thermodynamics have been explained as: 1 – You can't win; 2 – You can't break even; 3 – You can't get out of the game.

This sounds like some people's definition of hell, but it's other people's explanation of life on earth – or how energy happens, how things change. In modern times, thermodynamics has been based on theories of mixing. When you mix cream into your coffee, the coffee and cream come into an equilibrium. The energy dissipates, it falls apart, but it doesn't disappear. The swirls in your coffee, the tempest in your teapot are fractals.

Fractals are units of measurement in geometry. They are irregular shapes, self-similar bits, that look like the whole of a thing but are independent of scale. They look similar, no matter how microscopically small they are, yet they all differ in shape and size. This phenomenon is almost more than a person can grasp. Each one is different and each one is the same. Like snow. Or mountains, Or clouds. Maybe even like you or me.

The second law of thermodynamics –you can't break even – is entropy—things fall apart, always. There's disorder. And some say, the inevitable increasing disorder that leads to the inevitable heat death of the universe.

Someone

has proposed a 4th law which is this. The game keeps getting more and more complicated and there are always different ways to play. This has led to an idea called "the adjacent possible."

A leap. A leap away and out of that inevitable disorder. Or maybe just a leap out of the game. It's chancy but consider this. It's like the first flying squirrel (and this isn't my metaphor, others have used it). Maybe that first flying squirrel just had ugly flaps of skin that came in handy when she jumped. Maybe there wasn't anything inevitable in her genetic encoding or the way her squirrel family raised her that taught her to fly. Maybe she just jumped into another trail of stars.

Can't we all just jump—leap—into the adjacent possible?

Will you jump with me? Or am I alone in this game?

Transcribed and edited excerpts from *Death in Gaza* by James Miller

AHMED	A	A	M	M	M	A
I'm Ahmed.	It's not good	The hand	It's not	I worry	I would like	So even if
I'm 12-years	here. There's	grenade,	possible to	about	him to be	your mother
old. I like	lots of	it can't hurt a	have peace.	Ahmed.	martyred	is sad, you
playing with	shooting.	tank or a	Because	I worry	and me as	want to die
my friends.	Tanks	bulldozer.	they	about him	well. I don't	with me?
I want to be	come every	But if it was	have killed	as much	want one of	
like all the	other day.	near to an	so many	as I worry	us to be	M
kids on my	The paramili-	enemy, it	people.	about	martyred	Yes.
street. I don't	taries	might kill him.		myself.	without the	
like fighting	say	A piece of	A		other.	I'm not
with anyone.	'When tanks	shrapnel	We're the	A	I always	better than
	come into	could go into	same.	He worries	want to be	anyone else.
MOHAMMED	our where	his eye, his	Exactly like	about	with him.	Let every
I'm	we live.	head, into an	each other.	everyone,	And he feels	house give
Mohammed.	'We must	organ of an		he worries.	the same	a martyr.
I was born	blow some-	enemy body.	M		way. Yes,	
here and	thing up.'	Maybe	Neither of us	M	because I'm	I want
I didn't know		his heart.	is stronger.	Why do I	always with	to do
any of my	M	It might kill		worry about	him. I don't	whatever
friends. So	This is a	him. That's	We're the	Ahmed?	like being	Ahmed
I started	hand	why we	same in		without him.	does.
growing and	grenade,	ribbed it like	everything.	I'm afraid	Most of the	
growing.	made	this, with a		that he will	time, you'll	
And I got to	of iron,	machine.	He and I are	be martyred.	find me	James Miller
know my	sulfur		friends to	That he will	with him.	was killed
friends.	and sugar	This other	the bone, like	die and	I'm with	while filming
	and	one stays in	brothers.	I won't.	Ahmed.	the documentary.
I got to know	charcoal.	one piece.		I worry so	You always	
Ahmed.		It might	What he	much about	find me with	
He's so nice	A	break in two,	does,	him.	him. I go to	
to me. He's	For throwing	but most of	I want to be		school with	
like my	at the	it stays	like him.	A	him. I go to	
brother.	enemy.	together.	If he dies,	He worries	football.	
He's my very			I want to die	about me, I	I go to . . .	
best friend.	M	This one flies	after him.	worry about	anywhere	
Because he's	This is to	apart.	And he's like	him.	I'm going I	
better than	protect us, to	I mean it	that too.		go with him.	
the others.	make the	fragments.				
He isn't	bulldozers go	All these	The one			
greedy.	away.	bits, they	who gets			
He's so nice		all fly at	martyred is			
to me.		the enemy.	very happy.			
I want to be		If it landed	He goes to			
nice to		near them,	heaven and			
everyone,		I mean.	sees all his			
all the world.			martyr			
Apart from			friends.			
our enemies.						

## Impertinent Punishment

If a boy's fault is one of wrong physical response, the correction may perhaps be made by physical means. But disobedience, carelessness, thoughtlessness are not primarily wrong physical responses. They are a failure of the boy's heart and mind to correlate and respond properly. Correction then should be directed at influencing these attitudes, changing the heart and mind feelings.

Spanking a boy in a horizontal position in a more or less sensitive region is not a direct approach to the desired result—does not lead even indirectly to influencing attitudes of the heart. The approach is so roundabout that he boy will seldom make the correct interpretation of its significance.

The contact is too far from the heart . . . There is no logical connection between the cause and the result.

If punishment is to be effective, there must be an intelligent connection between the failure on the boy's part and the correction administered. The penalty must fit the wrong. The boy must see the significance of his error and the justice of the correction. The punishment must teach what we want it to teach, or else it is completely impertinent. To attempt to punish a boy for disobedience and thereby merely teach him dislike of the one administering the treatment is worse than no punishment.

The punishment needs to be understood by the boy and accepted as fair and fitting. He must understand its purpose. At least he must recognize down in his heart that it contains an element of justice—that he deserves it.

—*Scout Leaders in Action* by Walter G. MacPeck, Abingdon Press 1969

