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Eva Koleva Timothy

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Wake Up and Dream

Eva Koleva Timothy

The cover piece, *Star Stretching*, was inspired by a favorite saying of my mission president, Elder Ronald Rasband: “It is better to aim for the stars and drag your feet in the treetops than to aim for the treetops and drag your feet in the mud.”

Aiming high and dreaming big is something I learned early on in life.

I was born as the only child to two amazing parents in Sofia, Bulgaria, in the midst of Communism and the Cold War. We were a tight family that lived on dreams of freedom and not much else.

I never knew my grandfather Peter, a prominent newspaperman at the end of World War II who refused to publish propaganda for the Communists when they came into power. Shortly thereafter, he was taken from his wife and seven children by a couple of men in a black car and imprisoned for a period of years in a concentration camp for his beliefs. Our family was blacklisted from that point on.

My father was a talented artist and painter in his own right, but without party favor he could never gain admittance to the university to pursue a career, so he did autobody work and drove a taxi to keep us fed. He also painted a mural of the Beatles across the entire kitchen wall of our small studio apartment as a reminder of the West and the freedom we longed for.

In the midst of all that poverty, oppression, and darkness, I learned that the light is always there if you learn to look for it. At times it would show up in small details like a flower growing through a crack in the cement. At times it was an ability to belly laugh at the ludicrousness of

the world around us. And at those most difficult moments, it was the light from a dream for a better future.

Following those dreams and by God's grace, I discovered the restored gospel, made wonderful friends throughout the world, and came to study film and photography in the USA. So many of my deepest hopes and dreams have been realized; still, I've learned that one cannot afford to go through life dreamless.

Looking back on missions accomplished brings gratitude, but it is heeding the calls to face fears, overcome failure, and truly stretch ourselves and our capacities that makes life a wonderful and fulfilling adventure.

This is the notion that inspired this particular piece and the overarching project *Awake* in the midst of a worldwide crisis. I believe we are most awake when immersed in our dreams. So I've taken a fanciful dive into the symbols and emotions of a visionary life: reaching and dancing, flying and falling, fleeing and facing, seeing and imagining, wishing and pleading.

It's a message that feels particularly pertinent as so much of the status quo is upended and things seem so upside-down. People are sincerely looking for light and need the beacon of daring dreamers. Such dramatic change also has the power to pique our senses and readies our souls to make, create, and do the kinds of things that light up our small corner of the world.

May you awake to your dreams!