

POUL ANDERSON

THE SHRINE FOR LOST CHILDREN

Kamakura

SHE HAD SEEN HIM A hundred times or more -- who has not? -- in travel books, on postcards, as a miniature copy in San Francisco's Japanese Tea Garden. But when he sat before her, seeming to fill half the sky with the mightiness of his peace, she knew that she had never known him.

Her days of fine weather had turned cold, with a sharp little wind. The Great Buddha loomed green-bronze against a gray overcast. Maybe that helped the feeling to well up in her that nothing else mattered, not the low buildings and autumnal trees around nor the other visitors chattering and photographing nor even her own life. Or rather, said a bewildered thought, everything mattered equally, everything was the same, for Amida was in all that was.

From more than six tall man-heights he looked outward and slightly downward, as he had done for more than seven centuries. The smile of compassion barely touched the serenity of his face. His robes flowed to hands lying curled on his lap, the attitude of meditation, as if so bared to the truth that they had no need to grip it, so strong that they would not ever need to wield their power.

She was not religious-- had not been unless as a small girl, sometimes in the dark crying out to Jesus. She only stayed for a while that she did not measure, drawing a kind of silence around herself, gazing, half lost in the presence.

She had seen much beauty thus far, and much charm, and something of a foreign history and the soul within it. Too much too fast, really; it blurred together in her mind. A few things stood clearly forth -- the Temple of the Golden Pavilion mirrored in still water; children taken in bright traditional clothes to their festival at Sumiyoshi Taisha; the Sengakuji like an island in Tokyo's sea of cars and high-rises, forever remembering the Forty-Seven Ronin and their stark story. The image here had immediately joined the foremost.

Are you feeling what I feel, Jenny.\* she wondered. Have you been sharing the journey.\* Has it helped you a little bit.\*

She did not know whether she feared or hoped for an answer. There had been nothing since that last day and night before she left home.

Berkeley

It happened without warning, as it often did. They were taking a coffee break in the office, and Alice Holt mentioned acquiring a kitten. "I think we'll call her Jennyanydots."

Here I am. What can we do?

She lurched at the suddenness of it. The Styrofoam cup almost dropped from her hand. Some of the coffee splashed down onto the floor.

No, Jenny! Not here. Later.

But you called. I heard.

That wasn't me. We can't do anything here. Wait for me.

You're always waiting for me, she thought.

But I'm lonesome.

I know. Frantically: Be good and wait. We'll do things later, I promise. I'll sing you songs, I'll tell you a wonderful story, but I can't right now where I am.

This isn't a nice place?

It is, it is. It's just different from home. We both have to wait a while. I'll call you as soon as I can. I promise. Please.

A hand closed on her arm. "Are you all right?" asked Joe Bowers.

"Yes," she whispered. "Something surprised me, that's all. I'll clean up the mess."

"No, I think you better sit down," said Alice. "We'll take care of it. Don't worry, dear."

Their looks followed her as she -- "groped" was the word -- to her desk, fell into the chair, and drew long slow breaths. Vaguely, she sensed their attention still upon her. She could well imagine their thoughts. This wasn't the first time, in the few months of her employment, they'd seen her stare at what seemed

to them to be nothing. Or else she'd shiver or gasp. Usually it was not when Jenny stirred, simply when memories broke in on her. But of course they didn't know.

You aren't happy.

Later, I told you! she yelled.

She felt the puzzled hurt. Blindly, fleeingly, she attacked her work.

Mr. Robertson came by. He stood for a while looking over her shoulder at the computer screen and down at the papers and printouts. Then he told her to come into his own office. After closing the door, he said, "I'm afraid we'll have to let you go." He sounded more grim than regretful. "You've messed up the accounting again."

She mumbled an apology but didn't ask for another chance. If she'd done that, the tears would probably have started, and in the past several years she'd tried hard to school herself out of crying.

"Frankly, I believe you need help," he said, relief gentling his tone.

"Counseling, maybe therapy. Take care of yourself. We'll mail you your pay and severance with a little extra."

The knowledge came to her: "Thank you, but I won't be at the same address. Could you direct-deposit it in my bank, please? I'll leave the account number on my desk. Thank you. Good-bye."

She didn't tell her workmates why she left early. They doubtless guessed. Outside, the loveliness of Indian summer in the Bay Area, sycamores in the park across the street showing their first gold to a mild sun, barely touched her awareness. It was the same when a city bus set her off in the flatlands and she walked between drab walls to the apartment.

Dave sprawled on the couch amidst general messiness, scribbling one of the poems he read aloud in coffeehouses. He scowled at the interruption. When she told him she'd been fired he exclaimed, "How long have you ever kept any job?"

"How long have you?" she replied wearily.

He rose and came to her. His smile flashed as smoothly as his voice flowed. "Hey, don't get mad, lover. I know you've got problems. I wish you'd tell me what they are, but anyway, I understand." He took her by the shoulders. His

hands might as well have been two beanbags. "Let's crack a beer and smoke a joint and hit the good old futon, okay? Then you won't toss around and moan tonight, will you?"

At least I fake my responses well, she thought.

"You take this pretty easily, don't you?" she said.

"Well, it's not a disaster, is it? We've got a nice cash stash to see us through."

She met his eyes. "We?"

His hands dropped. "Uh, you do. Your divorce settlement, I mean. About fifteen thousand bucks, right?"

"That's what's left. I don't intend to waste any more of it."

He took a step backward. "Huh? What do you mean, waste? We need to eat and pay the rent, don't we?"

She sighed. "Find yourself a job. Or another woman."

He gaped.

"Don't worry," she said. "You will soon enough."

Why had she ever come to California? And why did she take up with this guy? Hoping for -- for what, anyway?

Oh, he was handsome, beguiling, not a dullard. She felt a brief, frozen pity for him as well as that other. "I'll pack my things and clear out," she told him.

"Just like that?"

No, she thought. The decision had come all at once, but it had been building up inside her. Maybe throughout her life.

"Where'll you go?" she heard.

To a motel, she supposed, one with a restaurant and a bar close by, though she'd better not have more than a couple of drinks after forcing down some food. Then in her room she'd do what she had promised Jenny, reach a truce of sorts with

herself, and at last be able to sleep.

"Don't worry," she repeated. "And I'm not angry with you, Dave. We've squabbled, but we've also enjoyed ourselves. Be happy."

She did not think: If only I could be. Endurance was the one defense left to her.

Kamakura

Maybe she had him to thank for getting her interested in Japan. He talked such a lot about Zen. But no. Already before she set off, the reading she did and her conversations with people who were informed had shown how scant his knowledge was, how close to zero his understanding. Zen was a set of attitudes and practices; it had scarcely anything to do with what was in this temple.

Nor did she.

She clutched her purse as if it were the peace that was fading out of her and walked hastily around the courtyard.

A mistake. Seen from behind, Daibutsu was almost featureless, a metal mass. A booth at the side gave access, for a fee, to the interior. Obviously no worshipper considered the idea sacrilegious -- it must be like an American's attitude at the Statue of Liberty-- but she didn't want to enter. What she saw might well wreck her memory of the mood she had lost.

Better go. She glanced at her watch. Yes. She also meant to see the other temple, Hase-dera, before returning to her lodgings. According to the guidebook, at this time of year it closed at five, and the afternoon was wearing on.

Or should she make the visit? That shrine--

Well, she could pass by it and head straight for the famous things. Roy wasn't here to call her a neurotic coward. Nobody was.

She went from the Great Buddha, never looking back.

Phoenix

Summer laid even an extravagantly well-watered suburb in a furnace. The window out which she stared seemed an ice-fragile barrier. It would shatter if she touched it, and her conditioned air spill forth to be devoured by the

heat-shimmers on the pavement. No. Ridiculous. This moment in time was the glass that was breaking apart. Her gaze went between a pair of neighbor houses, to the desert beyond.

"I loved you. I did. Once," Roy said.

Or you loved the girl who tumbled from junior college into marriage four years ago because a man asked her, she thought. If I could have changed--

He'd said essentially the same thing earlier this afternoon, when the words had been harder. If she'd pull herself together and overcome her moodiness, her sloppiness, yes, her frigidity. If she'd simply put on enough of a mask that they could have a decent social life. That was important for business too. The business was going to hell. He couldn't concentrate on it, the way things were. And lately he'd found another woman. Inevitably, he'd said.

"Don't be afraid," he went on. "We needn't spend a fortune on lawyers. I'll give you the best settlement I can afford,"

She turned around to confront him again. Having foreseen this day and braced herself for it, she was able to reply, "Enough to put me on my feet. No more. I won't parasitize you...and her."

It hurt unexpectedly much to see his astonishment. "By God, you do have guts."

"I've needed them. You don't believe that, but it's true."

"To fight yourself. Why? I've pleaded with you, never mind expense, see a psychiatrist. Get rid of those demons, whatever they are." He paused. "Or -- okay, we're not Catholic, but at last I wondered, I'm still wondering, maybe an exorcist --"

"No!" she cried, less at him than at the horror.

Getting rid -- if it could be done at all -- of the final, unbearable guilt.

He slumped where he stood. "Well, we've been over this ground and over it, haven't we?" he said dully. "Too late now in any case. But I'll always wish you the best."

A civilized lie, she thought. Not that you'll wish me the worst. You'll simply be too free and happy to care one way or another. "The same to you," she said.

"Too bad things didn't work out. But --" He straightened. "Well, they didn't. We can stay friends, can't we? How about a drink? Or we could go out to dinner. Or whatever."

She shook her head. "No, thanks. You go, Roy. Please. Till tomorrow. I'd rather be alone overnight."

"You sure?" She nodded. After a few further, embarrassed exchanges, he left. She knew where he was bound. No matter.

The westering sun began to soften a ridge on the horizon with purple and shadows.

It was a comfort, the comfort that is in surrender, when Jenny asked, Will we go home now? Yes, Jenny had listened, a little bewildered and scared but with unshaken faith in her.

No, she answered. Don't you remember? Mother's not there anymore.

I know. Where is she?

Poor tormented Mother. Did Jenny understand at all about death?

Resting, she answered. You and I aren't ready to. Not yet. Let's find someplace else.

Kamakura

Traffic went thick on the narrow street, cars, trucks, motorcycles crowding left-sidedly along, noise she didn't notice at the temple. Though lessening, the wind that searched through her thin coat kept the air fresh. On this gray day in November she might be the single foreigner in the Hase district. Certainly she saw none but Japanese. Most of them walked briskly but without hustle. They didn't look alien. Their clothes were Western style, except for one lady unself-consciously in a kimono. An occasional jacket or sweatshirt on a youngster flaunted some overseas name or slogan, generally American; mature men were often in business suits. Few were small -- well-nourished, the past couple of generations had grown to European-like sizes -- nor were their faces actually unfamiliar. By any standard, a number of the men were handsome, a remarkably high percentage of the women beautiful.

Emptiness asked: What can I find here? Gorgeous sights, interesting places, glimpses of customs and rituals, but for me, are they anything more than museum

pieces? This is a high-tech, cutting-edge, world-power country. I might have done better on a Southwestern Indian reservation. No, there they'd have nothing whatever they could share with outsiders; everything goes by kinship. Here I can at least get around as easily and safely as I could in France or Holland. Relax. Forget any pilgrimage nonsense. Be just a tourist. I'm no more an outsider than I have always been everywhere.

Still, the snatches of conversation she overheard were incomprehensible, the signs unreadable. The walk was supposed to take about ten minutes. The guidebook contained a sketchy map. But when a longer time than that had passed, she realized she'd missed a turn. She stopped, unreasonably dismayed. How helpless you felt when you had become illiterate.

She looked around and around. Could she manage to retrace her steps? Then it might not be worthwhile starting over. Already the day was noticeably darkening.

"Excuse, please." A middle-aged woman had halted, to address her in English with a friendly smile. "You need assistance?"

"I've lost my way. If you could tell me how to get to --"

She hesitated, aware she'd mangle the pronunciation. "Hase-dera?"

"Come." The woman took her elbow. "I show you."

"No, thank you very much -- ah -- arigato. I don't want to trouble you."

"No trouble. You come, please." The woman led her off.

"Really -- I mean -- weren't you headed the other way?"

"No trouble. You come from United States?"

"Yes. Near San Francisco." Her last port of call.

"Ah, Carifornia, yes? You enjoy your visit?"

The American nodded wordlessly. The Japanese accent was hard for her to follow. She'd encountered several individuals with perfect English; they got plenty of chances to practice. This lady had to make an effort, besides going in a direction that wasn't hers.

It was a short while, though, till she pointed up a lane.



"Straight there. Watch out for cars. They come stow, but you go stand on side, okay?"

"Thank you -- arigato, arigato --" She recalled that the proper expression involved another word or two, but couldn't bring them to mind. She bowed awkwardly. Her guide smiled again, wished her a pleasant evening, and disappeared into the crowd.

She stood for a minute harking back to earlier incidents after her arrival. You expected politeness from bellhops and waiters and such, and received it with never a hint of surliness. However, this wasn't the first time a stranger had freely come to her aid. She thought the Japanese must be not only the most courteous but the most considerate people on Earth. She almost wished she had been born as one of them. Born -- No. No, no, no.

She snapped a cold breath. She had indeed come a long way from her beginnings. Why couldn't she leave them behind?

North field

Spring in Minnesota was a flirt, bright and thawing, bleak and wet, then at last all-yielding. Leaves glowed newly green, blossoms sprang forth overnight. The arboretum became an enchanted forest. It was the pride of the college, forty acres of trees and shrubs, where footpaths wound and a brook lazed glittery under a wooden bridge. Fragrances and early birdsong filled the breeze. And she walked here with Tim. Tim!

The world had wobbled yesterday when he suggested it as school was closing for the weekend. They'd passed through the same grades since she and Mother moved to this town, but hardly ever spoken, and he wasn't just lately turned sixteen, half a year older than her, he was Tim, big, outgoing, popular, active in the science club and the band, a basketball whiz and surely great on the dance floor with any girl lucky enough to be his partner. For a couple of sick heartbeats she'd thought it must be some cruel joke. But no, he'd joined her offside where nobody else could hear, and his smile was almost shy. She didn't sleep much Friday night.

That made no difference. She had never been as alive as she was today. If I cut myself somehow, she thought once, wildly, I bet the blood would sparkle.

Underneath: Please don't let anything spoil this. Oh, please.

They hadn't found a lot to say, though. He'd gotten out a few words about having lunch later on, like at Ingrid's Sandwich Shop, and she'd stammered that her mother expected her home then and been terrified that she'd have to admit it was because she hadn't dared say anything about her date, but he made it good right away by answering, "Too bad. Some other time soon, I hope? And we could sit together in lunch hour at school if you want."

She, with him, who always sat by herself.

Otherwise they strolled under the leaves. He didn't take her hand, but once in a while his brushed hers and a tingling shot through her.

The path bent toward the stream. Near the bridge was a bench. "Care to sit down?" he asked.

They did, side by side, beneath the sky and the sun. The water clucked and murmured where it flowed around the piers.

"How nice," she managed after a while. "Extra nice right now."

He turned his head to look at her. She half looked at him. "You ought to know. You come here a lot, don't you?"

He's noticed? "Yes. It's, it's peaceful."

"Quiet. Like you."

She sat mute.

"You're so quiet," he said. "So alone. Why?"

"N-nobody asks me...to do anything."

"Don't blame them. You kind of scare them, you know? You often seem like your mind's off in another dimension or something, or else you've got your nose buried in a book."

Was that an attack? She stiffened. "I like books."

Books don't call me idle, careless, worthless. They don't tell me, "Jenny would never have done that." They don't cry for help.

He sensed the change in her. "Hey, wait." The words stumbled over each other. "I

didn't mean any harm. Honest. I like you. You've got brains."

The fear melted out of her. She felt the heat in her cheeks. "Thank you," she whispered, staring down at the damp earth.

He regained his usual self-assurance. "It's just there's more in life," he said earnestly. "Fun, games -- Not that I'm a lightweight. I have my ambitions."

Safe ground. Maybe. She found she could turn her eyes back toward his. "What do you want to do?"

"I think I'll go into electronics. Research and development. That's the future."

"Unless it's biology. Or psychology. They're doing big things in genetics and brain chemistry."

"You read science magazines too? Yeah, you're no airhead." He leaned closer. "I'd like to know you better. What's your dream?"

Confusion overwhelmed her. "To be happy, I guess."

My daydream. When I can dream it. At night -- No, don't think about what happens some nights. Not now. Hang onto this sunlight, Tim here beside me, yonder cherry blossoms.

"You aren't?" he wondered.

"I'm all right," she insisted.

"You don't need to be lonesome." Amazed, she saw him blush too. "You --you're real pretty."

His arm went around her shoulder, ever so gently. His lips drew near hers. I'm in love, she knew amidst the uproar, in love, in love,

You're leaving me! Jenny screamed. Don't leave me alone! It's dark here!

Her throat gave back the cry. She wrenched free, leaped up, and ran. Through the sobs she heard Tim call out, but he didn't come after her.

Kamakura

Small open-fronted shops flanked this lane, most of them offering tourist wares,

better stuff than their American counterparts. A few homes stood in fenced gardens. The buildings were old, attractive, exotic in ways she could not clearly identify. As her guide had warned, pedestrians yielded when a vehicle nosed through.

I won't have time for much, she realized. The view over the city. The Kannon Hall and its huge image. It wouldn't be right if I didn't pay my respects to the Goddess of Mercy. Not that I believe she can grant me any. But somehow, in some unreasoned way, it's something I can do for Jenny.

Or because of Jenny? I don't know. How long has it been since I last asked myself such a question? I don't even know what I came searching for, besides a few bright memories to take back with me. But why has Jenny been silent this whole while?

Never mind. Never.

I can come back tomorrow for the other sanctuaries and the garden. The book says they're exquisite. That'd mean changing my itinerary, but who's with me to care?

Only -- then I'd have to pass twice, to and fro, by the shrine for the children. How would that be for you, Jenny?

She tensed herself against an answer. There was none.

Abruptly, impulsively, she turned into one of the shops and bought a few incense sticks and a book of matches. She could have fragrance in her hotel room tonight, and afterward at home, wherever that would next be.

Not pausing at the lower complex, she kept on till she saw the staircase rise long and steep. Below it she stopped, unsure whether she really should continue.

Yes. Every time she made herself do what a normal human being would, she gained more control. If Kamakura had nothing else to give her, it offered this slight strengthening. She began to climb. The effort made her feel, for a foolish moment, as if she were climbing out of her past.

Minneapolis

How softly the snow fell. You couldn't see across the street through that tumbling white stillness. She wished she were out in it, the air on her cheeks like a cool kiss, the flakes on her tongue tasting of sky. Mother kept the house awful hot in winter.

But she'd tried to pick Gumball up for a hug, and the kitten was beside the lamp and she'd knocked the lamp over. Its glass globe lay in shiny pieces across the rug.

Mother loomed above, as tall as the ceiling. She kept her voice cold. That meant she was angry. "You're a bad girl. Bad, do you hear?"

"I'm sorry."

"'Sorry' isn't enough. You must be careful."

She hung her head. The tears began. She tried to sniffle them away.

"Don't blubber at me," Mother said. "You're four years old. High time you learned proper behavior."

She knuckled her eyes and sort of stopped crying.

"Go to your room," Mother said. "Stay there till dinner time."

"Yes." It came out like a puppy barking.

"Show more respect, young lady."

She bit her lip. "Yes, Mother."

"Go and think about Jenny. She would have been a good child." When no reply came: "Wouldn't she?"

Real quick: "Yes, Mother."

The woman bent down and spoke more softly. "I'm not being mean to you. I'm trying to make you as good as Jenny." She sighed. "And I have to do it all by myself, now that your father has left us. I love you. I want you to love me too, love me as much as both of you together should have done. That way you'll make up for crowding Jenny out of the world. Do you see?"

She nodded and nodded and nodded.

Mother straightened. "I know you didn't do it on purpose," she said in the flat way she'd said this often before. "It hurt you too. Your sister would have been your friend, your playmate. You would have grown up sharing everything, in a

loving home. Instead, you've never known her. But you can think about her. I do. That's why I gave her a name, so we will never forget her."

It was not my fault! She mustn't say that. She remembered too well what came of it when she did. But words escaped: "I won't. I know her. You never did."

Mother went pale and tight around the mouth. "That's enough. I've told you again and again not to act crazy. Don't say mean things, either." She pointed. "Go."

The corridor was high and hollow. Feet sounded loud on bare boards. This was a big house. Mother kept telling how she had wanted a big family. Now Mother wondered if they could afford to stay anywhere in the city.

The door clicked shut on the room. It was very quiet too. The light through the window and the snow fell shadowy-gray. The pictures on the walls, mostly of cute animals, seemed to lose their colors. But they had never been changed and she hardly saw them any longer. She had her toys, a large rubber ball, a tea set, crayons, paper, scissors, paste. She had her books. A teddy bear and a doll sat on top of the dresser. Between them lay a rattle. Mother had told her she must always keep it there, because it would have been Jenny's.

She sat down in her chair, looked out at the snow, and said into the quietness: "We're alone now,"

The sad little voice grew hopeful. Will you play with me?

Sure I will, she answered.

Who else was there?

Kamakura

No, of course you couldn't leave your past behind you. It was yourself.

As she climbed, her view became wide. Trees in their fall colors spread a tapestry across the hillside, subdued by the gathering dimness. The eastern sky arched slaty, the western dull silver. Lights were beginning to shine along the streets below. Southward glimmered Sagami Bay.

She reached a turn of the ascent and found the images. They were meant to welcome, but they brought her to a halt as if they barred the way. For a moment her heart stopped.

Rank upon rank, rank above rank, hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds, they lined this part of the stair, which otherwise turned upward to the left, and surrounded a landing. They were alike, doll-sized figures of a robed man, unpainted, earth hue. That made the articles of clothing on a number of them, mainly red caps or bibs, doubly vivid, even at this hour. Jizo, a bodhisatva, one of those who have attained Enlightenment but deferred entering Buddhahood that they might help lead others toward salvation -- Jizo, patron of travelers and the savior of children.

This was the place she had meant to pass by, and suddenly could not.

The landing was a small strip of ground that led off to a small and simple shrine. Here the caps and bibs were closer together, and she noticed tiny offerings of food at the feet of several. Mothers came here, to bind on memorial cloths, lay down their sacrifices, light incense sticks. Mothers of babies who had been aborted, naturally or deliberately, or were stillborn.

Stillborn like my twin. Though that was a strange case, an entangling umbilicus, a thing that could not have happened at all if we had not been two.

She felt with a faint astonishment that the thought did not hurt as it always had before. Her heart beat evenly and gently.

What stung her eyes was a nearby image wearing a cap with Mickey Mouse's face on it and a bib on which was printed I LOVE MY DADDY. She might have given that, if she had known her father. But this must be from a Japanese family. Did they have living children who liked American cartoons?

A sense of abiding strength touched her. The outside influence showed merely that here was faith held by real people in a real world.

How right that Kannon watches over this ground, she thought. I should go on and see the Merciful One before it's too late.

She couldn't.

Why not?

Jenny, do you want something? Tell me. Come to me.

There was no answer.

Mother would never let go of you. She would never let you rest. But she's gone.

Why haven't you departed too? Why can't you?

An impulse rose and rose in her, like a tide. She glanced back and forth, upward and downward. Nobody else was in sight. Nobody would take offense if a foreign unbeliever made a clumsy gesture.

A gesture, no more. But she'd had the courage to come this far. It would be wrong to deny Jenny a token, which was also a sign to herself -a declaration not of bitterness, in spite of everything, but of love.

Was that the blind wish that had driven her? Then where had it come from?

Let her carry it through and be done.

She stepped off onto the landing and passed between the little statues. At the shrine she paused, uncertain. What to do? She bowed deeply, as best she was able. Jizo, Kannon, and Amida must know she meant reverence.

Fumbling in her purse, she got a coin -- it felt like a hundred yen piece, which wasn't much but had flowers on it -- and tossed it into an offering box. The wind had died down, and the disc landed with a sound that almost pealed. Reaching in again, she took an incense stick and the matches. She struck fire and set it in a bowl of sand where others had burned out. She breathed the sweet smoke.

For you, Jenny.

Once more she bowed.

It was as if she heard a faraway chorus of children's voices. But the one that spoke to her was a woman's, calm and joyful.

Thank you, thank you, my sister.

Jenny, is that you?

Yes. At last at peace.

In unsurprised acceptance, she thought that Jenny hadn't foreseen either. How could a small child? But Jenny had come to know with a wordless wisdom that lies beyond life, that here was release.

Good-bye, my dearest. Peace be with you too, forever.



She stood alone, altogether alone, yet open to all that was. Never before now had she been happy.

I have not reached heaven, she knew. I have simply found -- or been granted -- enough Enlightenment that I can go home and share in the living world.

What is Enlightenment but Understanding?

It was not only Jenny who clung to me. I would not let go. Here I have freed myself from myself.

She went on upward, to Hase Kannon, to give her own thanks.