

RATTLESNAKE
FIRE

A MEMOIR
OF EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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RATTLESNAKE FIRE

Jean Ann Eisenhower

ParadigmSalon Publishing

Certain names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of some people in this story.

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Jean Eisenhower
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Jean Eisenhower
ParadigmSalon Publishing
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TO MY CHILDREN,
who give me courage and joy

AND TO ROBERT,
for his support

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I am grateful to you all.

Foreword

We live in turbulent times. International mega-corporations and militaristic nation states battle for control of dwindling planetary energy and material resources. Rampant over-exploitation and population pressures have brought numerous ecosystems to the verge of collapse and driven thousands of plant and animal species to extinction. The foundational elemental homeostasis of the biosphere is being severely disrupted, threatening planet-wide catastrophe and the survival of civilization as we have known it. Within the multiple layers of American society, and under the radar of mainstream media, there are shifting secret alliances among and between covert governmental, corporate, military and criminal gangs with partially overlapping conspiracies and agendas – but all concerned with enhancing the wealth and power of their particular “special interest” groups.

It is significant that Jean Eisenhower’s journey through the murky, paranormal shadowlands begins when she, the idealistic young

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former minister's wife, is working as a media activist for a radical environmental group advocating for sustainable forestry, a group which is being violently attacked and simultaneously framed by rogue law enforcement entities allied with timber industry interests. She finds herself under surveillance and subject to weird and terrifying altered states with obvious hostile intent, that challenge her idealism, her worldview, her religious convictions and ultimately her sanity.

In her ten-year odyssey through the psychic undergrounds she encounters experiential evidence of the secret government mind-control experiments known as PSY-OPS and MK-ULTRA, even while trying to come to terms with memory flashbacks to childhood sexual abuse. Dissociated states seem to be both the effects of abuse, a way of coping with them and something deliberately induced – but for what purpose and by whom? Jean Eisenhower brings the fierce intelligence of a spiritual warrior to her quest, as she seeks to sort out what is her own personal traumatic story of growing up in a disturbed family system, and what has deeper connections to covert military and alien abduction operations. She seeks help from psychotherapy, hypnotherapy, shamanic journeywork, Holotropic Breathwork, and also finds experiences of expanded consciousness, ecstatic vision and spiritual healing in her desert retreat home. Her shamanic experiences of connecting with the spirits of trees and of animals that manifest both physically and psychically provide

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her with solace and healing knowledge. She learns methods to access intuitive insight and understanding.

Although initially her instinctual cautious skepticism led her to refrain from reading “spiritual” literature, so as not to bias the interpretation of her anomalous experiences, an important turning point occurred when she recognized that her past experience and knowledge would inevitably shape her understanding of any new experience. Conscious skepticism informed by and combined with the knowledge gathered by other researchers allows one to carefully sift through alternative interpretations of new and unusual experiences. Then one can separate the phenomenology (what is experienced) from the interpretation (what is conceptualized). Holding the latter in the manner of a hypothesis, rather than belief, is the true scientific attitude and mitigates tendencies toward paranoia and delusion.

Jean Eisenhower’s reading of the works of Stan Grof and others on non-ordinary states and spiritual emergencies, of John Mack and others on alien abduction experiences, as well as the literature on multiple personality and dissociative disorders and the literature on covert government mind-control experiments helped her make sense of some of her more bizarre and terrifying experiences, and mobilize spiritual resources within herself to deal with them. Perhaps the most helpful and comforting event for someone going through a hellish experience of isolation insanity, is to recognize, in the words of another, that this experience is known, someone else has had it and lived to tell the story. I

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believe Jean's story can provide such help for others who may be going through similarly disruptive experiences, and for that I honor her courage in writing it.

These are truly “the times that try men’s souls,” when the horrors of war and pervasive violence, of environmental and social destruction and decay, afflict our senses, our rationality, and our belief systems. But beyond the crumbling edifice of the modern worldview and its associated domination and exploitation politics, lie possibilities of expanded cosmic consciousness and a renewal of ancient ways of living in harmony with nature and our fellow humans. This book points us to these encouraging possibilities.

Ralph Metzner, Ph.D.
Psychologist and Professor Emeritus,
California Institute of Integral Studies
Author of *Green Psychology*.

Foreword

PREFACE

In 1994, I'd just undergone the most difficult year of my life, and was looking for comfort when I moved, for the first time in my life, from the city to the country.

On the day I arrived, a fire was raging on Rattlesnake Ridge, at the top of the watershed above my home on the western *bajada* of the Chiricahua Mountains of Southeastern Arizona.

The Rattlesnake Fire induced a sense of foreboding – but not of anything I wanted to flee. I'd embarked on a journey I knew I was destined to take.

I left after a year, then after intermittent visiting returned in 2000 for a semi-hermitage of nearly seven years. Memories wicked as rattlesnakes, experiences devastating to my soul as wildfire, were also transformative. For all of it, I am grateful.

“Extra-dimensional,” as I use the term, refers to the conjunction with non-physical or other dimensional realms of our world, including:
~ those understood by many as the “spiritual realms,” inhabited by God, angels, demons, ghosts, etc.,
~ those realms understood by ancient cultures and people of New Age persuasion, inhabited by animal spirit helpers, divas, faeries, elementals, archetypal beings, and others,

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~ the realms from which beings called “aliens” and “ETs” visit our physical realm in craft called UFOs, and
~ possibly the realms of our own government’s “black budget” operators, who some say are more technologically advanced than they let most of us know.

Survival, for any living being, requires that its perceptions of its environment be clear. In every culture until the present few hundred years, especially in highly “educated” cultures scorning “superstition,” humans have always been aware of and conversant with other realms. I believe we, in the “First World,” need to regain some formerly inherent perceptions and wisdom that we’ve been trained not to acknowledge.

Some welcome and some fear a Brave New World. Whether we become micro-chipped wage-slaves of an industrial plantation or creative spirits of the “heavens,” I believe, is up to us. But we can only make that choice in wisdom if we see clearly what our situation is.

I offer my story as one more perspective on our “First World” culture’s situation and potential for transformation.

JEAN EISENHOWER

DECEMBER 2007

*Even those whose lives had appeared
to be ticking imperturbably under their
smiling clock faces were often trying,
like me, to evolve another rhythm with
more creative pauses in it, more adjustment
to their individual needs and new and more
alive relationships to themselves as well
as others.*

-- Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Part One: Opening to Other Dimensions

*Rather than being the center of the Universe,
as our ancestors believed,
we are the black sheep
of the interplanetary community.*
-- Paul Hellyer,
former Canadian Minister of National Defense

Chapter One: BLACK BUDGET “PSY OPS?”

Oakland, California, May 2002. I slept on a futon on the floor beside a baby grand piano, in the living room of a couple I didn’t completely trust. Trust was a difficult thing in those years, and still is to some degree.

I’d been asked to do media work for a historic federal trial. The FBI and Oakland Police, after twelve years of legal ploys to keep it out of the courts, were finally being tried on charges related to, but not including, the car-bomb assassination attempt on the life of an environmental activist colleague of mine.

One night, during the first week of the trial, having just fallen asleep, I woke and lifted myself off the futon in confusion - my entire body seemed encased in a cocoon of vibration. I imagined a government van with electronic equipment across the street, aiming a powerful beam of some sort toward me.

This idea did not come to me out of the blue. Years earlier, I’d read in the daily paper, and laughed along with everyone else, that Evan Mecham, then governor of Arizona, had accused the FBI of using a

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beam “to mess with my mind.”

I’d seen the movies, along with the rest in our culture, of government-employed electronics geeks in vans keeping surveillance. I’d read about higher-tech dirty tricks, I’d had my home bugged for holding Earth First! potluck meetings open to the public, and I’d experienced this non-violent activist colleague subject to an assassination attempt by someone the FBI refused, in twelve years, to investigate. For a moment I was terrified.

Then, I relaxed with the idea that this was not strange, but familiar, and even comforting. *Oh, this...* I said to myself, in happy anticipation, and lay back down to slip into oblivion.

On awakening the next morning, I wondered why I’d thought it familiar or comforting, and concluded, with no small amount of dread, it was probably government *psy ops*. “Psychological operations” was a major part of COINTELPRO, code for Counter Intelligence Operations, an FBI project, begun in the 1910s to crush the early labor movement with spies, lies, disruption, disinformation and even contract murders. It had been called to the attention of Congress in the 1970s and, for being contrary to our public right to protest, was supposed to have been shut down, but most historians of activism believe it was only moved to the underground. Psychological games, most activists felt, continued to play a role in driving away supporters, and I assumed I’d been a target of some new high-tech wizardry.

Years later, I’d wonder if it was something else entirely, but then, I simply knew I was engaged in a dangerous event in American political history.

In 1986, when I first got involved with Earth First!, the radical environmental activist organization (“disorganization” we preferred to call ourselves), I was aware that illegal property destruction, commonly done to protect ancient forests after all legal avenues had been exhausted, had likely piqued the interest of the FBI and would make us a target for infiltration.

I’d never done anything illegal in my life, other than drive too fast,

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so I did occasionally wonder why I'd gotten involved. I'd been a Southern Baptist minister's wife for a year, something I'd keep secret from most of this crowd for at least a decade, and normally shaved my legs, unlike most of the women, and never helped plan or do anything illegal – at least for the first few years. But I loved the ballsy-ness of the group, the sense of humor, the enthusiasm for song and dance and street theater, and the righteous anger sublimated to a noble cause. Eventually, I'd come to realize that sublimation of rage was a catharsis for me as well, though my rage was hidden deep within my subconscious when I first came on the scene.

After hanging with EF!ers for a couple years, providing organizing and media skills, I finally engaged in two illegal activities. One was a spur-of-the-moment act of civil disobedience - I locked my neck to the front axle of a road grader, delaying construction on a sacred mountain for a day - and the other I actually contemplated a little longer (maybe five minutes) before I put a bumper sticker - the easy-to-remove plastic kind - where it didn't belong – on a glossy painted surface (so it would be especially easy to remove) on the inside of a bathroom stall – and about had a heart attack. No, my destiny was not to do much more than write media releases and organize.

But I drank up the intellectual stimulation of hanging out with forest philosophers, academics, authors, angry anarchists, singer/songwriters and performers of every sort – from outrageous to spiritually sublime. At my first Round River Rendezvous, I sat with Dolores LaChapelle, author of *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, Rapture of the Deep*, and Bill Devall, author of *Deep Ecology*, and watched Jeri McAndrews dance and punk rocker Jonathan Richmond sing, all high in the mountains of Idaho. I'd never in my life been around so many successful people who also seemed so happy and in touch with their emotions, and able to express them. *I need this*, I thought.

Besides, my husband and I had just driven two-thousand miles to get there. So, when we heard people speaking fearfully of FBI infiltrators, we were concerned, but didn't leave. Mostly I feared they'd think *I* was one – the woman whose leg hair was just a stubble.

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Even though this crowd of about three-hundred was camped at ten-thousand-foot elevation, some men had hiked back out and in again with a generator, television and VCR (the only time I know that such a thing was done), so everyone could watch the national news EF! had made that year.

On that cold July night, we stood huddled in the meadow, incongruously around a television with the generator chugging, while others bitched about the noise and consumer gadgets offending their sense of the wild (rightly), and watched news clips for about an hour. As a media relations professional, I was impressed that this rowdy disorganization had commanded the attention of the major national media – which, I’m sure, also helped the FBI decide they had to do something about it.

The two clips I recall included one about the burning of a helicopter used for clear-cut logging on steep slopes – an environmental nightmare that causes mudslides and the death of creeks and streams and all the fish and wildlife that depend on them. It was a little disorienting to stand amongst the type of people who would cheer about a felony that made the news, but also impressive to witness the passion and audacity someone had had, to take action to stop something that was clearly worse: After all, what’s more valuable, an ecosystem or a helicopter?

Obviously, I’d never be able to do anything like that, but I knew I could write the media release for someone, explaining why it had been done. They were like the American colonists, I thought, who’d dumped England’s tea into Boston Harbor. Now applauded by historians, it was a similar sort of civil disobedience, the destruction of something small to protect something invaluable – *after all legal channels had first been exhausted*. I’d be sure to always include this Earth First! ethic.

The other clip was of Dave Foreman, a cheerful, avuncular man with a drawl, who’d been a preacher’s son! He and his wife Nancy lived in Tucson, not far from us, we were soon to learn. On the video, we saw him in his tweed jacket and trimmed beard - “dapper” someone in the circle called him, eliciting hoots and laughter - being interviewed by Jane Pauley on “Good Morning America.” I’d go home and tell my children

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these were people their children would read about in history books, who changed the world for the good.

Back in Tucson, we became regulars at the journal mailing parties, and soon would host the biweekly potluck meetings at our home. We understood this meant we'd probably host infiltrators, but we wouldn't fear, at first, as we knew we weren't doing anything illegal.

For me, Earth First! was about writing media releases, creating post cards for hundreds of people to send to Congress, holding protests, singing outrageous songs, performing skits on the sidewalk, and some went so far as to disrupt Forest Service offices, sometimes chaining activists to railings. At the age of thirty-four, after a decade of motherhood duties and nine-to-five professional work, this was fun.

In 1989, less than three years later, our idyllic activist community was rocked by the arrest of Dave, Peg Millet and three others (not Earth First!ers), who soon were all facing prison. Dave had been framed on the flimsiest of charges, having been hundreds of miles away from the FBI-planned event, and the federal wiretap proving he hadn't an inkling of what the FBI infiltrator had schemed. After a year and a half of intense preparation and the free services of a world famous attorney, Jerry Spence (who defended Imelda Marcos), Dave barely eluded prison.

Many activists pitched in to do jail and lawsuit support work, but I never felt able. The arrests and our realization that two of the infiltrators who'd sought to put our friends in prison had both been in our home and pretended to be our friends was too much of a shock – though I'd thought I was aware of the reality. I quit my activist responsibilities for most of a year.

Within the year, I became re-inspired by a California Earth First! activist, Judi Bari, who was doing PR like I'd never done PR. The high point of her work, or that which attracted my attention, was her plan for Redwood Summer, a nationwide action modeled on Mississippi Summer, which had catalyzed the Civil Rights movement by bringing people from around the world to see and experience the racism of the South.

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Judi was planning to bring people from around the world to see the giant Redwood forest being cut down. She was brilliant, and I wanted to watch her, study her thought processes, learn from her, and one day become as powerful an activist as she was.

Acknowledging that I was burned out and still had two teenagers at home (though Judi had a four- and nine-year old, and she kept going), I decided to continue giving myself a break, but to keep an eye on her work, and in a few years, when my kids were on their own, I'd reenter activism with renewed enthusiasm and vision. I repeated to myself: Neither Judi nor I do anything illegal; we only educate, so no one can ever frame us. Somehow I ignored the fact that that's all Dave had done too, and he'd been busted. What would happen to Judi, though, was far, far worse.

At that very time, the FBI was holding "bomb school" in Judi's county, teaching local law enforcement how to investigate a bomb scene. Two of their three example vehicles, which were bombed, were Subaru station wagons – exactly what Judi drove.

Just before the first Redwood Summer gathering began, on May 24, 1990, a pipe bomb exploded beneath Judi's car seat and should have killed her, except the cap blew off, sending most of the force out sideways, ballooning out the steel of the driver's door. She was gruesomely wounded, her pelvis shattered in uncountable pieces, her body impaled on a seat spring from beneath her.

The FBI immediately took over the case. Judi's lawyers said they were on the scene so fast it was as if they'd been standing around a corner with their fingers in their ears. While agents arrested Judi, unconscious in intensive care, other agents removed her driver's side door, to send to Washington DC "for evidence." Then they told the media that Judi and her fellow activist, Darryl Cherney, also injured, though less seriously, in the car when the bomb exploded, were their main suspects. The evidence would make this impossible to believe, especially in a court of law.

In the "court" of the media, though, with the evidence

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conveniently removed, the lie served its purpose. Judi and Darryl were characterized as “mad bombers” in headlines across the nation. And a citizen referendum she’d been helping with – to make California’s timber industry sustainable, which polls showed would likely win – was now associated with violence. So, after years of statewide grassroots political effort, involving scores of groups and organizations promoting sustainable economies and sustainable ecology throughout the timber region, it barely lost.

The timber companies, which had been logging seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day under stadium lights, to liquidate as much of their assets as possible, in the event the referendum would win, continued taking down the old growth Redwoods, while activists sat in trees and filed lawsuits that would never be heard. The national media, at least outside California, refused to tell the political story and covered the activists’ heroic actions as “color pieces,” media lingo for something interesting, maybe funny, but essentially insignificant.

The people planning Redwood Summer now had to split their time between the national campaign with thousands arriving from around the country, Judi and Darryl’s legal support, and Judi’s and her children’s care. Obviously, the bomber dealt a blow to forest protection, besides nearly murdering two brilliant activists.

It took years, but Judi was eventually able, with her wheelchair and walker, to go back on stage and play her fiddle with Darryl, a powerfully talented singer-songwriter. Judi defined the word *indomitable*, but she lived in pain the rest of her life, until she died in 1997 of breast cancer.

I was not as strong as Judi and could not shake my depression. It was as if a psychic bomb had exploded in my mind. Within a couple years, I folded my business and looked for a job.

A couple years after that, in 1994, when other family stressors compounded my depression, I divorced my husband, left my children (barely old enough to be on their own), and moved to the country. With credit cards and a total limit of twenty-thousand dollars, I built a 600-

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square foot straw bale home with a fireplace, passive solar design, and steel roof to harvest drinking water. I wanted to live rent- and utility-free and go into the city only occasionally for groceries.

Twelve years after the bombing, the trial was finally scheduled to be heard. I'd spent four of the past years in hermitage, when Darryl called to ask me to help with media work. I came out of seclusion, thinking it well past time to confront my fears.

After the first vibration experience in the living room, I wondered how to tell Darryl about my possible *psy ops* event. Every morning on the way to court, he talked non-stop, usually assigning me a dozen tasks he needed me to take care of that day. I didn't want to give him one more thing to worry about, but I thought maybe he'd experienced the same while sleeping upstairs.

I worried about the family who gave Darryl and me spare rooms, serving us gourmet vegetarian meals every evening – always with too much wine and too many provocative questions that kept Darryl up too late, talking when he really needed to sleep.

The vibration experience was repeated a second time, again when I had just begun to sleep, but this time I found myself in another realm, fleeing from pursuers like nothing I'd ever experienced in any dream or shamanic journey.

I'd had quite a few anomalous or spiritual experiences while living in the country without clocks or calendars, spending every sunset sitting and staring at the colorful sky. After a year of wondering, *what in the world could explain these strange events*, a girlfriend, who was experiencing similar things, suggested “we're having shamanic initiations.”

My first reaction was rejection – *Not me! – I wasn't the type*. I wasn't comfortable with those woo-woo people with spirals in their eyes, and certainly didn't want to consider myself like them.

On the other hand, I'd had to let go of my prejudices when I'd had an amazing healing a few years back, after hugging a tree, *which had*

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suggested I do that. And then, when my son had gotten cancer and seemed ready and determined to die, I'd seriously prayed and he'd suddenly recovered. And when I was going down the tubes in a nervous breakdown that year, the Tarot cards I'd bought for some reason had shown an incredible series of serendipities. Still.... Anyone can read Tarot cards and pray. What was this about *shamanism*?

All that crossed my mind in no more than one second of adamant refusal, then I softened and realized everything made sense through that lens – though, whatever that lens was, I wasn't quite sure. I'd have to read about it. Suddenly, all those anomalies, bugging me all year, felt part of a calling. I embraced it and found myself moved to do the things called “shamanic practice.”

I began to see our world was not a universe, but a multiverse, peopled by spirits, all of them teachers. Over the years, I flashed on seeming past lives, or other people's lives, received signs prior to two friends' deaths, and experienced the surprise spirit visits of people who lived on my land in ancient times. I talked to animals, made friends with them, talked with animal spirits frequently, and somehow felt I was moving toward an understanding of this multi-dimensional world.

One day, within a couple weeks prior to Darryl's call (the first we'd had in nine years), Judi, in spirit, had suddenly come to me (“crashed into me” was how it felt – Judi was a powerful woman) and given me a couple of messages. I never told Darryl this – it seemed too big and private a thing to share if the time wasn't right, and a right time never did present itself – but it was part of the reason I believed I was supposed to go to Oakland and help.

These vibration events, when I reflected on them afterward, were nothing like my shamanic experiences, but the chase sequence in the second one was similar, and comforted me because I could shape-shift confidently and become anything I needed. My pursuers, though, could also shape-shift and come after me with equal ease. From realm to realm I fled, and they pursued. I amazed myself with all my changes, and my calm confidence, even leaping on top of the flames my pursuers sent to

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engulf me. Finally, beginning to worry it would never end, I said, *Enough!* and found myself awake in bed.

Maybe both were dreams, I told myself, brought on by the stress of watching our government agents lie daily about an assassination attempt, and my writing it up and sending it out around the world, with my name on top. But I didn't think so. I'd had plenty of experiences bridging the worlds of what we call reality and what shamanic practitioners call the other realms. This was no imagination or dream. It was clear to me that I'd slipped, or been dragged, into another realm and had no memory for most of the experience.

Activists poured into San Francisco for the trial. The legendary attorney Tony Serra, on whom the Hollywood movie *True Believer* was based, came on board the legal team the last week and guaranteed that some media, who might otherwise have tried to ignore the trial, would have to be there. Julia Butterfly spoke at one of the many rallies, as did Starhawk, Wavy Gravy, and Utah Phillips. Bonnie Raitt's agent called to discuss a fundraiser to support our cause. And other Hollywood stars were anonymous funders.

But the trial remained a place where darkness tried to stay in hiding. The FBI agents and Oakland Police were caught in scores of inconsistencies between their testimony and their previous depositions, or other people's testimony or depositions, or the physical evidence, or just plain common sense.

The most striking was their contention that the bomb was "obviously" placed in the car by Judi because it was "on the back seat;" but the back seat, brought into the courtroom, and the back door (described in court by the emergency medical technician, who said he opened it easily to attend to Judi) were in virtually unspoiled condition, whereas the hole was blown *beneath* her seat, indicating a bomb was *not* "logically" put there by her. And of course, her driver's door was now shaped like a balloon.

Another contention of the federal government, to justify their investigative focus solely on the activists and over a hundred-thirty of

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their friends and family members, was that Judi “had to have known” the bomb was on the back seat, because she had supposedly laid her guitar case on top of it, which they explained had caused the case to be damaged “beyond recognition.” However, government photographs show the guitar case on the sidewalk, quite recognizable.

The trial lasted six weeks, from early May through mid-June, during which time I either sat in court, taking notes, or worked with two other media volunteers in the office, writing releases and trying to speak by phone with reporters around the nation. Every journalist outside of California refused to pick up the phone after our first calls. Or maybe their phones never rang – we wondered if the FBI could misdirect our phone calls, or if the reporters, some who’d already covered FBI misdeeds, were afraid.

Spiritually-minded activists brought us gifts of protection, like rosemary, Earth goddess statuettes and other emblems, which we kept on our desks, or hung around our necks or on our walls. Occasionally, they’d lead rituals or prayers for protection.

Two weeks into the trial, I moved to a different house, and twice when I woke there, I couldn’t remember who I was (not where, but *who* I was) – and most strangely, I had no fear. I felt confident that my identity would return shortly. It was as if my infinite Self, all-knowing, unable to fear, had just returned and was simply waiting for my personality to come back before her peaceful understanding was withdrawn.

I stared at the room around me and into the hallway through the half-open door, content to be in a body for which I had no memory. Studying the unfamiliar door frames and wall paint, I slowly recalled the personality of the man who owned the house, followed by a remembrance of his profession, then his appearance, and the way we joked together, then my reason for being there – the trial! – and finally: *me*. I had no understanding of what would have caused that strange event, but also had no time to wonder about it.

It happened a second time at that house, then that was the end of anomalous experiences during the trial. Or at least those I remember.

RattleSnake Fire

Despite our stresses and the media black-out, everyone performed brilliantly, and the FBI and Oakland Police were found guilty on most charges, and paid a historic judgment to Judi's children and Darryl: \$4.4 million.

Home in the desert again, alone, my days were drenched with paranoia that grew overwhelming before it would subside – but it wasn't just the FBI that worried me.

Then, almost two years later, I would again experience vibrations drawing me – willingly – into oblivion.

We human beings consider ourselves to be made up of “solid matter.” Actually, the physical body is the end product, so to speak, of the subtle information fields, which mold our physical body as well as all physical matter.

-- **Itzhak Bentov**, author, **Stalking the Wild Pendulum**

Chapter Two:

VIBRATIONS RETURN

March, 2004. Less than two years after the Judi Bari trial, while my boyfriend, Asante, worked late one night, I decided to sleep in the bedroom we'd created in the greenhouse/bathhouse. Loud metallic rattling roused me and, in my first struggle toward wakefulness, I thought a washing machine was out of balance with a heavy load – then I woke fully and remembered where I was and that I didn't have a washing machine, or even electricity in that building.

A metal bed frame stored under my bed was clanking on the cement floor, and the whole bed and I were vibrating too. (Arizona hasn't had an earthquake in over one-hundred years, and no one ever mentioned any tremblers.) No sooner had my brain registered the shock of this, than a different recognition dawned: *Oh, this.* And then these words: *It doesn't make any sense, therefore there's no need to think about it. Might as well go to sleep.* And I did. Later I'd wonder if it had been a command, but I then took it as my idea. Curling my arms comfortably around my pillow, anticipating something familiar and good, I lay my head down and slipped away.

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The next morning, I wondered if it was a repeat of the vibrations at the FBI trial. There, too, they had felt familiar. *But why would it be the FBI now?* I wasn't doing any more environmental work, and I'd never been as successful as others anyway.

Asante had moved in with me less than a year earlier and was very familiar with the FBI, having been a radical activist since he was a teen. We discussed this over breakfast, coming to no conclusion.

Rising from the table, I walked to one of my bookcases and, without any conscious intent, pulled Whitley Strieber's *Communion* off the shelf. I'd read it a couple years previously, telling myself I only wanted to see what the rest of our culture had found so intriguing in this #1 *New York Times* Best-Seller. I'd found the book credible, and was happy it had "nothing to do with me." My life had enough weirdness in it.

Though I had other work to do, I took the book and sat on the couch intending to spend "just a little time" reviewing it, for no particular (conscious) reason, other than to take my mind off things.

Within a few pages, Strieber described sensing himself *vibrating* before the "visitors" abducted him. I sank back in the sofa with my mouth open, then with a quavering voice I told Asante that I might have just experienced ... (I paused, too embarrassed to say the words) what people call ... (another pause – I hated this – *Go ahead, just say it* – I prodded myself, and inside I withered with humiliation) "*an alien abduction!*" spitting out the words. I wasn't sure I'd rather it be feds. At least their harassment wasn't something that would make all my friends think I was wacky.

For months, I continued to have similar experiences (told to nobody but Asante), a few each week, many beginning shortly after I drifted off, and others happening in the middle of the night.*

One of those earliest events, on March 19, 2004, I went to bed

* Since 3 – 4 a.m. is a common time reported for abductions, it would be nice if I had noted the exact times. But I was living with few electrical gadgets then, and my only clock didn't have a lighted face. For years, I went all day without ever attending to the time, so I never cared to know the time at night.

Vibrations Return

earlier than Asante again and, after I'd arranged my pillow and was just beginning to relax on my back, I was shocked alert by a laser-like light that seemed to hit me between my eyebrows – so bright, I saw it through my closed eyelids.

Wanting an assuring explanation, I scrambled for one, and thought, *Lightning?* But I'd sensed being hit directly between the eyebrows, and memory had it coming at a precise angle, not through the sliding glass door, where I might convince myself it had been lightning, but through the eave and wall above and to the left of the door. My memory was also clear that it had been circular, about a pencil's width, with a precise, not fuzzy, perimeter. Like a laser.

Suddenly I realized I was immobilized, which filled me with utter terror. I tried to pray for protection, but my speech center, including the part of my brain that creates *silent* speech, was mostly incapacitated. I was able to drag the name *Jeeeeeee-----zzzzzuzh* through my brain, but my mind seemed frozen and unable to remember the name of any other helping spirit I had, which added to my fear. I could accept my body immobilized – but my mind?! That provoked a terror unimagined until that night.

Then, I saw on my right, reflecting in a picture glass the window on my left, a tall being *gliding* southward, just a few feet from the house. After struggling for a few moments with deep-soul fear over my inability to even silently pray, I mentally “tossed” my need for protection, like a basketball, to spirit helpers I imagined gathered nearby overhead. Then I fell unconscious.

The next day, Asante and I recalled that the night had been pitch black when I'd entered the bathhouse. It was a first quarter moon, which wouldn't rise until near midnight, and the sky had been overcast, so there weren't even stars for the palest light. There shouldn't have been light to see anything reflected in the glass. Years later, I'd read that observations of ETs are often attended by inexplicable light, presumably from their craft.

I'd once ended a friendship with a man the first time he said the word “alien” and clarified, “Yes, as in aliens and UFOs.” I believed this

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was all a possibility – and quite likely true – but I adamantly did not want to be friends with people who talked about those things. And now I certainly didn't want those things in my life. I'd come to the country for peace, to read, write, and contemplate life.

Since they were showing themselves to be part of my life, I should have been willing to contemplate them, but I wasn't willing – probably because the subject is so ruthlessly ridiculed.

Today, I suspect I've left this realm frequently over the course of most of my life. Sometimes it has felt like a vibration, other times I'd slip into a vortex or sense myself turning to “mist” and materializing again. But as I was taught by my culture, I'd forget it – mostly.

Occasionally I reasoned that, if aliens are visiting the Earth, they need to pick *someone* for whatever they're doing, but I couldn't figure out *why me?* It made sense that their goals would include letting the populace know they are here. But if that is the case, *Why didn't they choose someone who had more credibility?* It was true I'd been a reporter and even won a couple awards, which might add to my credibility, and I had been respected in various business circles that didn't know about my activist leanings, but that was all years ago. I thought I'd blown my credibility when I'd aligned with Earth First! So, it seems they'd made a mistake in choosing me.

Later, I would learn there appears to be connections between “alien” contact, environmental awareness, psychic phenomena and, much to my dismay, government intelligence agencies.

*We're in a constant state of communion with Spirit,
whether we know it or not. --*

Unknown

Part Two: Exploring in Innocence

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Bernardo [Peixoto, Brazilian shaman employed by the Smithsonian Institution] ***bad the sense of ‘millions of molecules being disintegrated in myself’.***
– John Mack, *Passport to the Cosmos*

Chapter Three: BORN ON THE 7TH OF JULY

It wasn't difficult for me to become a hermit, as my childhood contained a lot of solitude. I felt closer to my dog and cats than anyone else in my world, and knew the weeping willow tree in our backyard objected vehemently when her branches were used for switches. I often dreamed that I could fly.

Occasionally, in pre-school, I used vocabulary that no one else understood. Somehow a college student heard about this, prompting her to follow me around for a day, to write up a paper.



At bedtime, I sometimes saw spirals in another dimension, and was happy to see them, then I'd slip in and disappear. Or, head on pillow, I would sense myself flashing, as large as the universe and tiny as an atom, in rapid pulses that came on me unbidden, but were always welcomed with joy and relief that I could go somewhere else.

In John Mack's *Passport to the Cosmos*, he tells the story of Sequoia

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Trueblood, a Native American who often experienced people from other realms, and told of once seeing “a kind of vortex of swirling lights ‘like a rainbow,’ into which he was sucked.” My spirals seem like something similar, so it’s clear to me that my moving between the realms began in childhood, as perhaps they do for all of us, until we learn to shut it down.

My mother expressed concern to her friends and my pediatrician that I had an “imaginary friend” I called Cathy. She looked like a very pretty, even angelic child my size and age, and once materialized in front of my parents, which alarmed me until she gestured (or told me telepathically?) that my parents couldn’t see her. Then we had a private *tête a tête*. Like all children, I learned not to tell others about these things, and eventually forgot it all for decades.

Many of my childhood memories are of being alone. I learned to crotchet before I entered kindergarten, and made the most elaborate doilies I could find in the pattern books. In third grade, I read classic novels hundreds of pages long.

We’d lived for most of my young life in Merced, California. The summer before fourth grade, we moved to Paradise Valley, Arizona, hometown of Dan Quayle, who went to our public school for a few weeks while awaiting entry to a private school.

In fifth grade, I read the palms of my classmates, always “by the book” – except once when I accidentally went into a trance, vaguely aware of saying things that came from somewhere other than my books. When I regained my normal state, a half-circle of girls stood around me with looks of astonishment. I vowed to myself to never “do that” again.

Good grades were normal, as were art awards, and sewing, beading, crocheting, leather tooling, and copper enamel projects.

I was strangely turned off by television. I watched it with the family on weeknights, as that was our main family time together. I never watched it on weekends or after school though, and frequently told my younger siblings they shouldn’t watch it either – it was “bad for them.”

By the time I entered high school, my parents decided I should sew my entire wardrobe, and so I did. My mom and I would visit Sacs Fifth Avenue, then buy fabric and patterns to combine or adjust, and

Born on the 7th of July

we'd recreate our favorites. Other moms couldn't believe my tailoring skills, and in the Fine Arts Department my senior year, I was voted "Best Dressed Girl."

Using a book, I learned to hypnotize myself to relax or sleep, by focusing on spirals I envisioned in space. I also began to interpret my dreams.

When our varsity choir went on tour, my hotel roommate gave a back massage to a boy who lay on our floor, and she suggested I give a massage to another boy who'd arrived. Accepting the pressure toward this teenage intimacy, I began, having no idea what to do, but figuring I'd imitate my friend. To my surprise, my hands seemed to read some energy and followed it across and around the boy's back muscles. Repeatedly, I was forced to let go of what I *thought* I'd do next, as the energy moved my hands.

I never asked anyone, but always wanted to know: *How many others experience this sort of thing?*

Today, I believe there are a lot of people like myself, and I wonder if everyone has more "anomalous" experiences than we remember, but because we're taught to ignore them, our natural ability to relate to the other realms slowly fades, and we forget what we knew as children.

RATTLE SNAKE FIRE

The Darkness has a hunger that's insatiable
The Lightness has a call that's hard to hear --
Indigo Girls

Chapter Four: MINISTER'S WIFE

In college I was astounded to learn that Jesus, icon of mainstream America, had spoken against doctrinarism, materialism, sexism, racism, and had thrown over the money changers' tables. Even though the words embarrassed me, I "gave my heart" to him – in secret. I didn't like to make a scene.

Then I dropped out of college, and hitchhiked across the country with the first man I found who thought it was a good idea. I felt I had to "get away."

When our money was gone, in Bradenton, Florida, I took a job at McDonalds, and he went to work at the Tropicana juice factory. Terrifically depressed, at home alone one day with no one but the roaches and TV for company, I knelt before a chair and prayed for direction, promising God that whatever He said, whether I liked it or not, I would do it, if only I had direction. I'd only expected a vague notion, but to my great surprise, an oval light appeared in the room, and I heard a voice say *That's it* – and I understood that "it," my promise to follow Guidance, was key.

Having seen very few independent women in my life, I didn't know how to follow anyone but a man, and would find God hard to hear. Afraid to be alone, I married the boy-man, with whom I was living

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and traveling, and we eventually moved to Phoenix, Arizona.

The night before my son's birth, I felt his spirit come into me, a beautiful light exploding with gentle sparks of fine gold. My mother was visiting and, when I told her, she insisted we go to the hospital. We did and, even though I told the doctors the feeling was wonderful, they sent me home with antacid.

The birth was nearly a death for both of us, thanks to the doctor who induced my labor.

On a trip to Ohio, when Michael was six months old and sitting on my lap, my husband drove very slowly in an icy blizzard with two lanes of traffic crawling and stopping. Once, after sitting in another vehicle's exhaust, I asked him, next time, to stop farther back. Irritated at being told how to drive, he stopped fifty yards back, and smirked. We were both astounded when, seconds later, an out-of-control truck used that space to pull in front of us and exit the highway, where otherwise there'd have been a massive death scene.

My husband announced one day that he felt called to the ministry. First shocked, I was later embarrassed to find myself in the role of a minister's wife.

While playing my role on Sundays, during the week I suffered from nightmares of forgetting my baby in bizarre places and other events more upsetting. When Mormon missionaries came to the door, I decided to invite them in to converse, and soon had nightmares about them.

Within the year, I was able to quit playing "minister's wife," as my husband felt called to seminary, in Louisville, Kentucky.

There, my husband found *us* a job as house parents at a children's home. While he spent long days at school, I stayed home with our two children, one- and two-years old, and six to eight teenage girls with a variety of emotional issues.

Minister's Wife

One afternoon, working with the girls in the kitchen, I suddenly felt called to find Michael, and walked immediately to a chair in an unused room of the 4,000 square foot house, and found him choking on a marble. Without thinking, I swung my arm gently and connected with the center of his back. A marble popped out, and he looked up, unconcerned, so I figured he'd just begun to choke and hadn't had time to become afraid.

In Louisville, we discovered a "radical Christian" Church (a common term in the seventies), where the congregation welcomed gays and lesbians, and recycled, ate healthy food, and marched for peace. Friendships had been rare for me, as I'd allowed myself to become isolated in the housewife role, so these relationships were wonderful and important. At a Halloween party, a man asked me to paint a tree on his forehead, and I did, adding the roots beneath the tree, so it formed a beautiful circular design – and I felt part of something absolutely sacred.

"We" should never have been given that houseparent job, which turned into *my* job – six days a week, twenty-four hours a day, with two children of my own to care for. Within three months, I was a nervous wreck. After two girls climbed out a window one night during a snow storm, intending to run away, I began having nightmares and woke up one night dry-retching. Thankfully, the girls had been brought back by the police, very cold, but safe. I understood their frustrations and desire to be "away," maybe get married and thereby become free of the system. They needed more than the system or I could give them.

As soon as my husband finished his first year, he quit seminary, blaming me for lack of support. Interested in "intentional community," we followed some other Christian friends to the Catholic ecumenical community called New Jerusalem, in Saint Bernard's Parish in Cincinnati, Ohio. There I started a Third World craft market at Christmastime and a year-round children's clothing exchange open to the neighboring, more economically-oppressed Parish.

I discovered a community of peace activists, with whom I once leafleted outside Senator Neil Armstrong's office. A man, looking very much like the Monopoly banker, refused my leaflet and asked me with a

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sneer, “Don’t you have anything better to do?”

At first I was shocked, but after pondering his response to my anti-nuclear material, I decided I understood: he believed the television – it wasn’t his fault. And with that was born a vision: One day, if I were lucky, I’d work to put a different sort of programming on TV.

A local peace group invited me to help organize a five-state peace conference. I worked enthusiastically, and the keynote speaker, Sidney Lens, said it was “the best organized conference” he’d ever been to. Thrilled at the peace-dove pin I was given when it was over, I thought it a wonderful possibility that I might make activism my career.

Eventually we moved back to Arizona, and my husband found a church he liked, though I absolutely did not. The people refused to discuss things like nuclear power, ethical investments, or Jesus’ teachings on materialism, racism or sexism. I attempted to converse on these subjects occasionally, politely, of course, but was told that everyone thought I was making trouble. Unfortunately, these were my only acquaintances when I decided I needed to divorce my husband.

When he told everyone that the divorce was my idea, the entire church quit speaking to me, though of course, I’d also quit attending. Soon he told me (truthfully or not, I don’t know) that a number of people were willing to testify in court that he was the better parent, *and* he said that the most dominant member of the church – who happened to be my doctor – would testify that I was schizophrenic!

Again, maybe the doctor didn’t say that. I’d never been diagnosed with anything worse than depression. My husband’s mother, on the other hand, had been hospitalized at least twice, he’d told me, for some indeterminate mental illness. I’d later learn that this is called “projection,” to accuse another of what you fear in yourself.

But I was alone, young, had been emotionally abused for nearly a decade, and had no experience in standing up for myself. I chose not to defend my sanity in court, worrying that those church members might actually intend to lie about me. And their testimony might be believed and recorded in legal judgments. I might have gone to my family for financial help, but they thought I should stay married. As my father put

Minister's Wife

it, “You make your bed, you lie in it.”

My husband had promised to return joint custody to me after I'd gotten a college degree and could support myself. So I bent to the manipulations, and gave him full custody of our children. I would seethe at Christians for decades after that, and wrote off God and Jesus for a long while too.

After six months without my kids, I woke up as if from a stupor – caused by depression and a decade of wifely submission? – and realized the enormity of what I'd done. I talked to a dozen lawyers and learned the hard truth about suing across state lines for custodial rights if you aren't the one in “possession.” I could have followed them, but my ex threatened to flee the country with our children if I tried to live anywhere near him.

I moved to Tucson, and missed two precious years of my babies' young childhood, and they missed me, as my husband left them with whatever woman was willing to care for them while he went to school, and at least one who only did because *someone* had to – she called me and told me.

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*We are stardust
We are golden...
And we've got to get ourselves
back to the garden --*
Joni Mitchell

Chapter Five: ROCK 'N' ROLLIN' REPORTER

To shake off my overwhelming sadness, I danced four nights a week. Disclaiming I was “*not* a groupie,” I cherished my friendships with the members of *Los Lasers* and their fans, and eventually produced an award-winning rock video for them.

I dressed like what my parents would have called “a tart,” but in my mind I was helping all women of our culture reclaim the right to dress *comfortably*. Only years later would I begin to understand I was probably also reclaiming my sexuality, very naïvely. I don’t like admitting how I acted back then, but this was the reality for many who knew me at the time.

Even though I didn’t own a TV, I worked toward a Bachelor of Arts in Radio and Television. I reasoned that these were the most powerful forces framing our culture, and I wanted to play a role in changing what was broadcast over the nation’s airwaves. I was a dedicated student, twice given scholarships, once when I didn’t even ask.

One afternoon, riding home on the city bus from the restaurant where I waited tables on the lunch shift, I saw a woman dressed in a cheap brown skirt and pale blue blouse, both clean and pressed, but

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unattractive and uncomfortable-looking, with thin hair brushing the tops of her shoulders. She looked so sad it broke my heart, and I ached to do something simple – even just smile – to encourage her, if she would meet my eye.

Then suddenly I felt the reality of the millions of people in the world with sad stories. It wasn't just me. Out the bus window, I saw rows upon rows of rooftops of middle class homes and thought of the families inside them, fighting, accusing, or lonely, mothers seeing no way out, children alone and frightened.

The world seemed so filled with sorrow, I felt a kinship with it all.

And a mission. The simple act of being nice to another person was profound, and something I could do at any time, even then, rather than focus on my own sad life. I looked behind me and saw a few Mexican women who, I surmised, might have just cleaned some rich people's homes, judging by the route we were on, their clothes, and their tired and bored faces. The men had on uniforms with names on patches over their pockets. Only one woman met my gaze and returned a questioning smile.

My stop was coming up and I really wanted to meet the gaze of the woman in the pale blue blouse. As I moved to the front, I tried to meet her eyes, but she stared out the window instead.

An image came to mind of little boats in the dark, on a choppy, cold ocean, and the words "We're all in this together" came to mind.

I wanted desperately to convey to others in this dark lifeboat that I was dedicated to helping us all. I wanted to make a difference, not just in their situations, but in their hearts. I wanted to make them feel peaceful, if only for a moment, and for them to know there was still love and gentleness in this world. But I didn't want to embarrass us all. A time would come, I felt.

I stepped off the bus onto the hard-packed dirt between the street and sidewalk. My sense of mission was filling me up, and I lifted my arms in exultation, inhaling deeply as if the air were pure and I were standing by the ocean. As the bus rumbled away and I began my walk home, I noticed an energy buzzing all around my body, that moved with

Rock 'n' Rollin' Reporter

me, that hovered around my arms no matter how I moved them, that moved with my legs as I walked. It was my *aura!*

I'd never sensed it before, and I loved it. I felt more alive than I'd ever felt, and I stepped brightly, almost laughing with my love for all the world.

At my apartment, I fell on my bed, waved my arms above me and experimented with how my aura felt as I moved. It stayed with me, buzzing, delighting, making me feel I could do anything, and life was a fantastic adventure.

The next day at school, I found it hard to concentrate, but that seemed unimportant. The second day, concentration was still difficult, and I was a little bit concerned, but still very happy. On day three, I didn't see how I could wait tables, attend class and do homework in my ecstatic state, so I told my aura it was really wonderful to experience, but I needed it to go away now, so I could function in the world. It disappeared in a couple seconds, and I was back to normal, disappointed.

My last semester of school, I interned in a commercial television station, the public television station and National Public Radio affiliate where I won a first place award from United Press International (UPI) - Arizona-Utah region, for a radio feature. I also won another award for a radio feature series on education. (I include these awards and recognitions for context, for when my story becomes quite strange and maybe unbelievable for some people.)

While my ex was in school in California, he left the kids with various mother figures. Toward the end of my next-to-the-last semester, their caretaker, with whom my ex was also sharing a house, called to tell me the children were being neglected while in *her* care – what an admission! - because she didn't want the job, but my husband wouldn't look for anyone else. Then she scolded me for abandoning my kids. In shock, I told her my version of the story.

Angry to have been lied to, she suggested I prepare to receive the children, and gave me a particular date when she'd throw him out, when she knew he'd be too occupied by final exams to have many choices.

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Hopefully, he'd call to ask me to take them.

It worked perfectly and, two years after I'd lost them, I received them back and was able to care for them full-time for the next twelve months, while establishing myself professionally. This was enough to satisfy the court that my petition for full custody was worthy, and I was soon launched, happily, into the role of single working mother, *with custody*.

When I graduated, I gave up my dream to be a radical reporter and instead took a job in public relations, for the nine-to-five schedule it offered – best for a working mom. I accepted a position at the largest PR firm in the state.

*Your theory is crazy,
but it's not crazy enough to be true.*
Niels Bohr, physicist

Chapter Six: BREAKING THROUGH

1988. At age 36, having sex with my second husband, I spontaneously slipped wholly into another age, and experienced myself as a child. I relived – and remembered – the sensation of being myself at a barely verbal age – lying naked on a bed, approached for some horrible purpose. All the room was clear to me, including the wallpaper, texture of the bedspread, late afternoon light coming in around the window shade, except the space was empty where a person stood beside the bed looking at me. Whatever was coming, I was dreadfully familiar with it.

Swirls of nausea flowed through my legs and torso, urging me to move, but I lay still, having already learned there was nothing to stop what was coming. So I did what I “always did”: I focused on the wallpaper: *The paper is gray-green. The roses are pink. Each one is framed by eight wavy lines, two to a side. The white paint is thick in some places, thin in others, so the gray-green shows through – and I wonder if the workers got in trouble for that.*

Soon I wasn't in my body. I reflected on my invention. My description of the wallpaper and these words were probably simpler, but these best convey my sense of pride: *I invented this, and no adult told me how to do it. They probably don't even know how to do it. I figured it out by myself. I'm good.*

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When I went on a bit longer about how good I was, it almost made me remember what it was I was avoiding, which caused a moment's panic.

I stabilized myself by returning to the wallpaper recitation and making a new rule: to never diverge from my routine.

Then I was back with my husband in bed, hands on his biceps, in shock.

Immediately, I knew this was the sort of thing that made some people think they'd been sexually abused as children, but I didn't want to jump to that conclusion. It was a sickening thought, and women who suggested such a thing were called hysterical, "jumping on the bandwagon of the current diagnostic fad" – or so it was reported by one of the newspapers I'd read recently.

The next morning, I pondered the possibilities:

One, this could be what it seems to be.

Two, it could be a mental delusion.

Three, since our beings supposedly have components in spiritual realms we don't often see (though I didn't subscribe personally to such a belief at the time, I included this for the purpose of generating theories), maybe my spirit had accidentally collided with someone else's, and for that moment I experienced their life in vivid detail.

Four, maybe it was possible for someone to shoot a beam of energy into my head with a powerful amount of information created to make me perceive in full detail this thing I mistook for an experience. Evan Mecham had recently been laughed at for asserting such a thing, but maybe it was true.

Since then I've considered other theories, but these were all I could come up with at the time. And every one of these was something to resist for one reason or another, the third the least so. Even it, though, meant that we couldn't always trust what we thought was our own experience. And if we couldn't trust what we saw, heard, and touched, what in our perceptions was dependable? The doubt pulled the rug out from under everything I thought I knew and made me wonder at the meaning of existence, if we couldn't trust our perceptions.

Breaking Through

My fourth theory, of an electronic beam, was intriguing but frightening: *Who would do that to me? And Why?*

The previous year, I'd spearheaded a campaign to stop a high-rise project in my neighborhood, which cost the developer over a million dollars. The day he visited me and sat on my porch to ask what it was I wanted and I refused to accept any pay-off, he'd looked at me with a hateful stare that made me feel he might have connections to have one of my children murdered. Now I wondered if, instead, he'd put me on a list for psychic retribution. *Something* had to explain how this bizarre perception could feel so real.

Could I have actually been sexually abused, not known it, and acted normal all my life?

On the other hand, I didn't really think of myself as normal, I usually admitted I was slightly neurotic, and didn't like what our culture called normalcy anyway. Too many people were mesmerized by television, and thought that fine. I considered myself smart enough to keep my mind free of such idiocy, and act normal when it was needed.

Taking stock, I acknowledged I didn't have many friends, and was terrifically dependent on my husband. And I screamed at the drop of a hat. My kids would come into the kitchen while I was working, and I'd scream. Loud. All the time. They'd say, "Mom, you knew we were in the house..." and I'd say, "I know – I'm sorry," then answer their homework question or whatever, ignoring the terrible pain in my joints from the adrenalin rush that would make my arms hard to move for ten seconds or longer. Maybe my neuroses had some real foundation – something I'd never considered.

To think this through carefully would require professional help, I decided, and I had neither time nor money for that. Besides, if I thought about the memory too much, I might contort it, and that would destroy "evidence," if that's what it was.

I made a pact with myself to not think about it at all, but to keep it pristine for later investigation. I put the memory in an imaginary box – an old-fashioned, striped hatbox came to mind – put on the lid, set it on the top shelf of an imaginary closet and shut the door.

RATTLE SNAKE FIRE

Curiously, years later I would come across this exact technique, as an established method to help people manage psychological trauma. I'd never, to my knowledge, been taught it, but later I'd wonder if I might have been coached in the skill when I was a child, and hatboxes were not uncommon.

1992. Four years later, standing before the stove and reaching up to get a sauce pan, another spontaneous flashback announced itself with a cadence of something that seemed to have been repeating in my mind for awhile. I thought about it and decided it had been drumming just below the threshold of my consciousness *for the last three days*. It felt like “a word on the tip of my tongue” – tantalizing, but out of reach.

Standing with the pan in my hand in front of the stove, I felt it was from a time when we lived in “the pink house,” from when I was four until almost eight. Ticked that I was on the verge of remembering something long forgotten from childhood, I also realized it would probably only come when I quit focusing on it. So I started toward the sink, to fill the pan with water.

Then this reality shifted and my kitchen floor dissolved into the choppy surface of a dark green ocean, with huge bubbles the size of playground kick balls rising rapidly from the depths, reflecting yellow light, wobbling rapidly up through the layers of cold.

Strangely, I felt no sense of amazement that my kitchen floor had disappeared. Unperturbed, I stood, waiting to hear the words I knew were in those bubbles.

Then I wondered, *How deep were those words, to have been rising for three days?*

In a second, the bubbles broke on the surface, and I heard the words I'd been waiting for: *You've got to stop that soon – She's getting old enough to remember.*

Today I'm not sure if the voice sounded like my mother's, or if my rational mind simply grasped for meaning - *Who could have said that, but someone who was around me often? Like a parent.*

Lungs suddenly paralyzed by shock, I drew in thin wisps of air,

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curled involuntarily into a stoop, and shuffled to the kitchen sink, barely able to lift my feet. I leaned my lower ribcage against the ledge, hoping to relax so my chest could expand and I could breathe again. My fingers barely gripped the saucepan, as it hung weakly from my wrist – my arm too weak to set it down and my mind unwilling to bear the noise should it drop. In a few minutes, I'd regained my breath, but was left with the question of what had happened.

When my husband got home from work, I was afraid to tell him, but did. He said not a word, but looked at me as if to say, *I never want to bear anything like this again.* So I put this event “up on the shelf” with the other, for later.

In my business networking group was a hypnotherapist, with whom I scheduled a session to explore my problem of trying to live up to my parents' expectations. It never occurred to me to explore the words in the bubbles.

To both our surprise, I flew spontaneously into space, enjoying the stars, thrilled to be “away.”

She urged me to return, reminding me of my commitment to end my session on time in respect for her other clients. I returned, but didn't want to.

Finishing our session, she led me through “rewriting my programming” to free myself of compulsions to fulfill parental expectations instead of my own desires. As the programming was being rewritten, I felt gold energy working its way through my system, changing out lifeless connections for connections of the highest quality.

My slumped form slowly filled with energy, rising in my chair until I was sitting as tall as I'd ever been in my life, and my aura stood out a full foot or more about me, golden. I felt ecstatic.

*We all know more than we allow ourselves
to know because of a certain cowardice in the face
of the inexpressible, and fear of accepting its
effect on us as guide to the nature of reality.*

-- Laurens van der Post

Chapter Seven: TREE-HUGGER

Tree-hugger. The term drifted into my mind as I walked on a trail up Humbug Mountain on the Oregon Coast, surrounded by 600-year old Douglas Fir trees, each one easily four-feet across, with vines creeping tangled around the bases of their trunks with dolphin-size roots plunging into the earthen sea.

It was sometime in the late eighties, and my husband and I were bicycling down the Washington, Oregon and northern California coasts after attending the annual Round River Rendezvous of Earth First! I'd overheard a couple young men, one in dread-locks, another with short hair and a workman's cap, ribbing each other with this term they'd obviously been called and taken to heart. Tree-hugger.

I wondered: *Did anyone ever really hug a tree for some purpose?* There were people in this movement, a minority for certain, who acted – what I thought then – strangely. Some conducted “medicine circles” and sang New Agey songs. They were a definite minority, strange and not embarrassed to be so. I'd dropped in on one of those events when invited, but snuck away shortly after it began. Still I didn't want to brush them off, when my aversion might only be my past bad experience with

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religion, and maybe they had something real. I could use spiritual guidance, if there was such a thing.

I imagined the leader of one medicine circle, Peg Millet, hugging a little, white-barked birch tree, and found the picture ludicrous. *Nah*, I thought, concluding my contemplation on that subject.

Why don't you try it? I heard, and staggered as my feet momentarily froze while my body continued forward. The voice had come from the trees, and didn't have a quality I could remember – it hadn't been audible – but was clearly there, *in English*, no less.

I'd been trying for the past year to articulate an intelligent explanation for what other people called Spirit. I'd determined, after leaving the Christian Church in my twenties, that I didn't want to arrive at any conclusion by intellect or reason, so I'd enforced a ban on spiritual reading and tried always to avoid using any jargon I'd heard, in favor of the words that felt most true to me. I was in my mid-thirties then, and had been open for years to the idea that, if Spirit existed, it would make itself known to me. Otherwise, no argument or reading could convince me.

Nothing had convinced me, yet. Everything others got shivery about, or intuitions for, or seeming answers to prayer, I assumed were simple coincidences, or perceptions of subtle energy from atoms and light, nothing unusual, only natural. If anything was special, I thought, we were – we probably had more subtle perceptions than were currently recognized.

This reasonable conclusion did not, however, inspire me to develop my subtle perceptions. I rationalized my stubbornness: I didn't want to risk contaminating my quasi-scientific inquiry by getting my imagination involved. If Spirit was going to speak to me, It was going to have to come to me. I wasn't going to it.

The anomalous experiences I'd had, I ignored, and continued to call myself an atheist, or at least an agnostic. Either one, to my mind, showed intelligent self-respect.

I walked on, ignoring “what could not be,” eyes on the trail, the trees earning no more attention than what I gave from the corners of my

Tree-Hugger

vision. I didn't believe in things like this. I'd joined American Atheists, just for the card to prove I was a rational empiricist, not someone with spirals in her eyes.

Then I sensed the trees' disappointment and felt that I'd been rude! And my heart sank with this idea: *A rational empiricist had to consider the evidence, even if she doesn't like the apparent corollaries or conclusion.* To wit: I had to hug a tree. For years I'd said I'd consider the evidence if Spirit ever talked to me. But I didn't want to test something like this. *What if my new husband, ahead on the trail came back down and caught me? Or a family from the campground below?* I'd be mortified.

Those concerns probably covered a greater threat I wouldn't allow into my consciousness: that a new perception of such magnitude might rock my world, might not be fun or exciting, might be disorienting, even scary.

I stopped and turned toward the forest, scanning the trees with my eyes. *Nothing seemed unusual. No faces in the bark. The world still seemed perfectly normal.* I would do it, or berate myself ever after for not having the guts to test out a theory. I'd never be able to feel honest again calling myself an atheist.

Sending up a quick prayer for privacy, I forced myself to approach a tree, but after walking fifteen feet off the trail, I soon discovered the roots were all so large and ascending at such a steep angle to high places on the trunk, it would be impossible to stand against any trunk. *I was saved!*

Just like Abraham with Isaac, I thought (years of Bible study still evoked their lessons): The sacrifice didn't actually have to be made, so long as I was willing. Having learned my lesson, not to be so sure of myself and reality, I could now get back on my way.

Turning to go, directly in front of me was a tree I'd just passed, with a root that made a right angle from the trunk, at a perfectly comfortable stair-step height. *Had this tree shape-shifted?* (Tony Hillerman novels were my only education on this concept known to Native Americans and others with shamanic knowledge.) *I was off the trail, amongst shape-shifting trees...* but somehow without fear.

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Re-resigning myself to the task, I stepped on the trunk and wondered how long would constitute a worthy test. Checking myself, that I still felt in possession of my normal rational faculties, I realized: *Even if I think I hear something, it won't prove anything. I might only go the rest of my life wondering whether I'd imagined it.*

But I'd do the test. Since I was there. Wrapping my arms around the tree, I leaned in my chest while my fingertips searched out crevices into which they might dip, to help pull me close.

As soon as I'd gotten comfortable and let go a breath to relax, I was immediately stunned by a beautiful cascade of light that fell through the crown of my head and washed all agitation from my body – agitation I'd not known I'd had. It was as if I'd had a radio tuned to static inside my body my entire life – and the radio had just been turned blessedly off.

I looked around, then up through the branches to the sky, then close at the bark. Everything was still normal.

I never felt so good – literally, ever. The writer in me tried to find words...*clear, light, pure, crystalline...*but it all felt totally inadequate.

Stepping off the tree trunk backward, two steps without taking my eyes from the tree, I raised my hands in a classic prayer pose and slowly nodded my silent thanks.

I wondered if I might become like some of those women with pinwheels in their eyes, and felt a sudden surge of sympathy and companionship with them and their visions.

But even companions like those I would not seek out to talk with about these things. I knew too little, I thought, and wouldn't want to burden anyone else with all the questions I'd likely want answered. It would be better to find my own answers and then have something significant to offer.

This may have been just my cover for the fact that I still wasn't very good at friendship. In any case, I'd watch the scene from my own little world, until I had something to say. It seemed an unpredictable cosmos I was in the process of discovering, and I didn't want to speak too soon before I got the full perspective.

[When intelligent alien life is found, the Church] would be obliged to address the question of whether extraterrestrials might be brought within the fold and baptized. -- Jesuit Father George Coyne, Vatican Observatory director, --*National Catholic Reporter*, January 22, 1993

Chapter Eight: ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST

As a free-lance media consultant, a great deal of my business time was devoted to helping Tucson Earth First! protect a mountain in southern Arizona from an astrophysical development.

Mount Graham was called “an evolutionary museum as important as the Galapagos Islands ” by an international association of evolutionary biologists. It evolved in isolation from other mountain ranges for over 11,000 years – since the Pleistocene – with seven biological zones rising from desert floor to forest top, equivalent to a walk from Mexico to Canada within a few miles, with fourteen perennial streams around the peak, at least a dozen new species discovered in a short, two-week study, plus uncommonly dense populations of mountain lion and black bear.

Mount Graham is also sacred to the San Carlos Apaches, and used to be part of their reservation until the US government reclaimed it, promising the tribe they could always use it. The telescope project, though, threatened those rights.

The law makes it easier to defend an ecosystem by focusing on a single plant or animal determined to be “indicators” for ecosystem

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health. The indicator of this ecosystem was the Mount Graham red squirrel. The local and national media constantly ignored the ecosystem science and derided the squirrel as a “rodent” holding up scientific progress.

Having years of successful PR experience behind me, I took on the challenge of enlightening the media to the science and politics they were missing. After years of being ignored, and hearing stories leaked from inside the newsrooms of pressure to tell the story a certain way, I finally accepted that our media isn’t really “free.”

The University of Arizona, the Vatican, the Smithsonian Institution, Italy’s Arcetri Institute and Germany’s Max Planck Institute and other American universities intended to construct fourteen telescopes, parking lots, dorms and other buildings, despite the forest’s humidity, which made for “bad seeing.”

Earth Firsters and other environmentalists around the world brainstormed everything from media work, public education, street theater and lawsuits to stop this project.

Once a small group, unbeknownst to most of us, dressed as waiters, and put beautifully designed papers with Smithsonian logo on every plate at an environmental law conference luncheon, hosted by the Smithsonian. The paper explained the travesty they were involved in, and the keynote speaker, when questioned, was speechless. Within weeks the Smithsonian pulled out, though years later it would rejoin the project.

Most of my business colleagues did not know I worked with Earth First!, and I was invited to Leadership Tucson, to speak at a Leadership Seminar for college students, to sit on numerous boards in the community, and was hired by mainstream organizations like the United Way. But my environmental work took up most of my time for a few years, put a toll on family finances, and on my marriage. I wondered whether to continue the work or pass it on to someone else.

One weekend, my husband and I camped on the mountain with friends, and I decided to ask Spirit – if Spirit was willing to talk to me – for a message that would help me know.

Environmental Activist

A novice birdwatcher, I separated from the others and walked slowly and softly off the trail, with binoculars and bird book handy. Suddenly, a bird flitted to a branch about seven feet high and seven feet away from me and, instead of startling and flying away when it saw me, it began to sing. Assuming it must not have noticed me yet, even at that close range, I stood very still, excited, and repeated its characteristics to myself, so when it did notice me and leave, I'd have it memorized and could look it up in my book to make an identification.

Satisfied I'd soon have a new "ID," I was flustered when a second bird arrived, different from the first, landed on a branch of a different tree to the right of the first, also about seven feet high, seven feet away from me, where it perched facing me, singing. Thinking this was strange, two near-sighted birds arriving at the same time, both singing as I'd never witnessed birds do at such close proximity, I wasn't sure if it was spectacular good luck or bad: I didn't think I could remember two different birds' characteristics – shapes, size, colors, wing bands, bill types, etc. I told myself to just enjoy the experience – but I wanted the IDs!

Then a third different bird arrived, same orientation, on another tree a little to the right of the second. My mental struggle changed then, as I realized this was definitely not normal forest bird behavior, and if it wasn't normal, then what was it? Perhaps a thought of Saint Francis crossed my mind, because I urged myself to forget memorizing, relax, and just enjoy it.

My mind relaxed, then struggled, relaxed, then struggled, as a fourth bird, fifth bird, sixth bird, and seventh bird arrived, forming a circle, all facing me, all singing. Each new arrival pushed my frame of reality out a little more, and a little more....

When the seventh bird arrived, reality had been distorted, it seemed, beyond all that had ever anchored my life, and I suddenly felt I might levitate up through this circle of trees – which terrified me.

With effort, I lifted my boots and walked from the circle, enraptured, casting a silent and panicky *Thank you!* behind me, relieved that the experience, though beautiful, was over.

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A few minutes later, still off trail and wondering where my husband and friends might be, I came across a deer and her very young fawn, only fifteen feet away, directly before me. The mother was intent on licking the fawn's anus when I saw them, and I stopped in my tracks, embarrassment in tension with fascination.

Years later, a friend would explain that mothers of many species do this to stimulate the intestines to work. The mystery of why I was allowed to be so close and the mother and fawn didn't bolt away I would theorize about later when I began to heal from my childhood sexual abuse.

The mother looked steadily at me, then continued with her ministrations for such a long time – possibly ten minutes – that I actually considered walking away.

As soon as I thought it, though, she stared at me again, rose very slowly (intentionally, it seemed, to make me stay longer still), nuzzled the baby, and the two of them ambled away with the slowest steps I could imagine, looking back to make repeated eye contact.

My anomalous experiences I kept mostly to myself (the deer experience *totally*, for obvious reasons), feeling they were either too bizarre to be believed, or if they might be thought wonderful, could potentially be considered spiritual bragging. And since I'd thought it wise to read nothing of spiritual literature for the past decade, I had no one else's experiences to compare mine to, to learn from, or with which to try to make sense of these things.

One day, lying with girlfriends by a mountain pool, I noticed a hawk overhead, flying back and forth near the sun in a manner familiar to me. As had happened before, the hawk soon flew precisely between me and the sun, throwing its shadow across me. That accomplished, it immediately flew away. It was a game they played sometimes, I'd always assumed.

When I mentioned this game to the other women, though, I was surprised to learn that none of them had ever had it happen to them. I thought: *One more thing to keep quiet about.*

*[T]he sine qua non of any consciousness
whatsoever is the 'psychic image.'
Every psychic process is an image and an 'imagining,'
otherwise no consciousness could exist. -- Carl Jung*

Chapter Nine: HOLOTROPIC VISIONS

One evening when my children, fourteen and thirteen, were each spending the night with friends, I attended a workshop on “Holotropic Breathwork.” A form of intense, deep breathing, the practice was developed to bring people into altered states of consciousness without the use of psychotropic substances. After LSD had been outlawed, Stanislav Grof and others with the Esalen Institute had decided to explore the many techniques used around the world for altering consciousness, and had developed this system.

A dozen of us gathered in the home of a woman who'd been specially certified in this work, and paired up with partners who'd sit with us – and we'd sit with them the next week.

As the heavy drumming music began, we visioners lay on our blankets, eyes closed, breathing as deeply and rapidly as we could. Within minutes I experienced something called *tetany*, a side effect of hyperventilation, not uncommon, but also not experienced by any other participant those two weeks. My fingers became painfully rigid, pointed in a tight cluster I could not separate, even when I tried to wedge one hand's fingers between the others. Counselor to “breathe through it,” I

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was relieved when the condition subsided.

Soon I drifted into a visionary state, where spirits of Mount Graham wailed and doors passed in the sky overhead. Eventually, I saw myself exclaim to my grown son, “We healed our birth! We healed our birth!” I was ecstatic. When the session was over and we all shared our visions, I wasn’t sure what mine had meant.

The next morning, I received a phone call from my son’s best friend, from a local hospital. The boys had been walking down the road when my son had said, “My brain doesn’t feel right,” too strange a statement for the other boys to respond to. Soon he fell to the ground and went into convulsions.

When I arrived, I found him moaning grotesquely, eyes rolled up in his head, his body arched and rolling from shoulder to shoulder, from heel to heel on a cold steel table, the only thing keeping him there being straps they’d tied around his wrists and ankles. When I tried to touch his face, he recoiled as if I’d raked steel wool across raw skin.

Then I noticed his hands, fingers in rigid clusters like sticks.

“He has tetany,” I said quietly, chilled by our identical condition twelve hours apart.

The doctor answered, “Yes. Are you a nurse?”

Within an hour, at a loss for a diagnosis, the hospital sent him to the University Medical Center at the University of Arizona, which has a pediatric Intensive Care Unit. This team was equally baffled and dosed him with enough Valium to quiet him down to a state that a young resident M.D. described as “an induced coma one notch above the level of a rock.”

When I saw the electrodes on his chest, I recalled his birth again and the coma he’d been in the first thirty minutes of his life and the vision I’d had the night before of “healing his birth.”

That evening, he was wired with a dense halo of electrodes attached to his scalp and tested for brain function.

“Slowing of the frontal lobe,” I was told, “the part of the brain that determines personality and decision-making.”

I went to bed alone in an empty hospital room, praying intensely

Holotropic Visions

- not to any God, but to *him* - to fight whatever it was that had him trapped in this deep dark hole.

A few hours later, a nurse called. "He's waking up. You might want to be here."

Skidding down the dim, after-midnight hall in my stocking feet, I found him sitting up, confused, whimpering to see his hand bandaged, immobilized on a board for the IV. He gestured as if his hand were the site of the trauma, too horrible a thing to put into words. I couldn't help but laugh, at which he fell back on the bed in shut-eyed distress.

By nine the next morning, he was fully himself, marveling: "I was in a coma!? Wow."

Two weeks later, I saw him dance with joy, the first I'd witnessed since he was three. Just a little jig in the dining room, it was enough for me to believe his birth, or something, had somehow been healed.

I began to admit there was something that might be called *Spirit*, that I could actually relate to, but I knew it would be nothing like what I'd been taught. It was not "supernatural," but *natural*.

I told a few friends, "Spirit is not special, something judgmental and outside us – it just *is*. It's everything. It's the way that everything works. It hums. Spirit is what makes us exist. It's the vibration. That's all it is."

And to myself, I added: *I'm not into religion again. This is just another way to look at what we know through science.* I knew spirit and religion were different things, but some part of me needed to continue checking and affirming that I wasn't going astray.

Constantly, I checked myself to make sure I knew where new ideas came from - *Did they come from my own experience? Or had I first read something or heard the thing from others?* To minimize this latter possibility, I continued my ban on reading any spiritual material.

"Reading someone else's concepts," I explained to a few friends, "frames your expectations. And our expectations can frame our perceptions, then define our experiences, and thereby contort and limit our understanding of them. I don't want to read anything about anyone

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else's experience or theories of the cosmos, because I might then misinterpret my own experiences, even ever so slightly. And I might be misled to undertake the rest of my life in a misguided or limited manner. And in any case, it seems a terrible waste not to experience one's own life through one's own fresh senses." I had lived most of my adult life without a television for the same reason.

I glossed over the obvious fact that one's perception of life can never be totally free of social context. The Heisenberg principle applies to all of life, I would eventually realize, and that truth doesn't necessarily negatively affect our ability to judge our perceptions – sometimes it has benefits. For instance, hearing someone else's story might have saved me from certain mistakes along the way.

To me, at that time, it seemed the risks of error were less significant than the value of seeing the world through my own eyes.

I did indeed suffer for my determination to judge my own perceptions with no one else's help. And I also experienced an awesome, unlimited view of the multiverse, as I opened myself to more fully see Spirit.

*Wonders happen if we can succeed
in passing through the harshest danger;
but only in a bright and purely granted
achievement can we realize the wonder.*

-- Rainer Maria Rilke

Chapter Ten: BREAKDOWN

April 1993. My son was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease, cancer of the lymph system, and I decided to divorce my second husband. I also chose to move, and my health insurance company indicated it was sliding into bankruptcy - all in one week.

When my daughter told me that I was selfish to make them move, I suddenly felt as though I'd lost everything in my world: my marriage, my security, my home and neighbors, the illusion that my children would live, and my confidence that they'd always love me.

I went to a therapist to recount my woes and seek help making some basic decisions. Barely through the doorway, I blurted out the mantra I'd been repeating for days, of all the things I'd lost, and was dumbfounded to hear myself add to the list words that had never crossed my conscious mind: "and I think I was sexually abused as a child."

I think "It blew my mind" is a fair description of the reaction those words had on me, emerging from my mouth without intention. It was so inconceivable that words could exit my mouth that I'd never consciously thought – at least for more than a fleeting moment, years earlier – that reality seemed totally suspended. I turned my head

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sideways to see whether these mischievous words with lives of their own might also be spelling themselves out there in the space before my eyes. They weren't.

Quickly, I told the shrink that was not the reason I'd come, and I didn't want to spend any time, or money, on it. He, wisely, told me that sometimes our subconscious knows better than our conscious mind, and encouraged me to consider what I'd said. And so, my over-full emotional plate had heaped on top of it this most disgusting mystery: *Had I been sexually abused as a child and been amnesiac for it all of my life?* Later, I'd learn this is quite common, with the late-thirties a typical age for regaining one's memories.

In a couple of weeks, I was notified I'd won a literary award. At the ceremony, a judge encouraged me, if I wanted to pursue a Masters degree, to apply at the University of Arizona, where he'd assure me entry.

At first I thought, *That's the last thing I need.* But later, when I found myself unable to work, waking from unconsciousness multiple times a day, every day, head on desk, staring at the wall of my office sideways, wondering when I'd laid my head down, I realized I needed to quit, but didn't know what I could do to bring in income.

I decided to enroll in school, partly because I wanted more writing instruction, but also for the income of student loans. Then I realized, with only a twinge of guilt, "writing could double as therapy!" I didn't realize, though, that my mental state would not improve, but deteriorate. I wouldn't be the person they'd invited into the program. The consequences, socially, would be painful. Other options, like welfare, disability or other social service programs, never occurred to me.

In the summer before school, one afternoon, I decided to test the theory that you could "ask inside" and speak to your "inner children." The phrase made me wince with embarrassment, but for some reason I thought I'd try it.

Sitting on my bed, journaling, I set my book aside, and asked, as if there really might be someone inside, "If there's a little girl in there and

B r e a k d o w n

she wants to say something, I'm listening." I thought I'd hear something, or have an idea I might later chalk up to my imagination.

With a powerful quake, I *felt* myself a baby on my back, my crotch exposed to fresh air. The experience of being a baby is a powerful thing to re-experience after decades of removal from the body into the mind: Understanding is not words or ideas, but pure body experience. Nothing existed but my skin and viscera, spirits hovering about, temperature, noise.

My legs are spread and something is moving inside me. I jerk. Things feel different. Then different sorts of pain! First pokes inside, that my adult self interprets as a needle. I am mostly a baby, but some part of my adult self is also there, very little, maybe five percent.

Then it feels like something cutting – little snips. I jerk with the sharpness of the pain. Then something is pulling at my tissues, and I leave my body and float above, looking down on the room where I see my mother. She has slid down the wall behind her, holding her hand over her mouth, stretched wide in a silent scream. Her eyes look wild and bulge out in horror.

Then I'm back sitting on my bed, forty-one years old, my hand on my heart, my body in spasms of pain and disgust, coughing and bobbing, making noises between a groan and a whimper.

Panicked, I wonder, *What can I do? I need help....* I remember things I've heard about needing to nurture my inner child. I pat myself on my chest and shoulders, stroking my arms and whimpering, "It's okay, it's okay, it's okay," over and over. I'm shuddering, reeling....

Then, I hear a child being beaten in a nearby apartment, a child, whose only sounds are light whimpers, as if they've been trained not to yell, and the *Huh!* sudden exhalation of being hit. The light, breathy sounds from the child can't be avoided, and I fear they can't be silent enough. I want to call the police, but I don't want to talk to policemen just now. Still, I can't let the little child go ignored. That's just what our world doesn't need: more people not doing anything.

I call the police. Twenty minutes later, they've checked all around, knocked on doors, and no one has heard what I heard.

RATTLE SNAKE FIRE

Did I really hear it? It seemed absolutely real.

Over the next few years, I'd ponder the flashback to babyhood, and know that I've never felt that what was done to me was directed by my mother. It seemed she was there, going along with something, when the activity suddenly changed from what she'd expected, but she couldn't do anything to stop it. I didn't feel my father was there. It felt like a group of strangers that my mother had trusted.

Fourteen years later, I'd wonder if the sound of the beating was an invention of my subconscious to get me out of my own experience. It had that effect, which I certainly needed. It also might have been a real event – a memory perhaps, or a connection to another person's life that I somehow opened to on another realm – again, which served to ground me by compelling me to take some useful action.

I entered what some have called “a spiritual crisis,” but I called simply a “nervous breakdown,” because the phrase felt so perfectly apt. At times it seemed aspects of my nervous system – patterns of simple behavior, like making eye contact while speaking – were breaking down.

Very few of the people I conversed with during this time were friends. My ex forbade me to enter my old home to attend the potluck meetings, and there was no other home large enough and central enough for our group – though I never asked them to move. After all, I knew I hadn't the energy for activism; I only wanted the social interaction, and couldn't ask them to make such a change for that poor reason. Besides, I was so tired every day, I might not want to attend when it came down to it.

So I lost my social sphere. Schoolmates were all I had in the way of acquaintances, and they had little tolerance for an older woman in a nervous breakdown.

It was distressing to find myself listening to someone, wondering what I was supposed to do with my eyes, whether I had looked at them too long and maybe it was time to look away – *But for how many seconds? What was normal?* Then I'd recognize the other person's nervousness,

Breakdown

obviously wondering why I stared at them and looked away with timing that was all wrong. Then of course, I'd lose track of what they were saying, and couldn't respond appropriately. Over time I came to understand it was a necessary step to healing: Before we can accept new patterns, old ones must fall away. But the falling away of such basic skills was private, painful torture.

One day, struggling with the reality or non-reality of having been sexually abused as a child, I told my therapist that I would rather be insane than have to choose what I thought was real. I imagined living in a quiet, white-painted hospital room with a single bed, looking out on green trees and grass, being brought my meals, even if it meant being dismissed and scorned by my children and family. It seemed a satisfactory solution.

I sat on the therapist's couch, eyes closed almost to slits, my voice trailing off to a whisper, "I know that craziness is a choice, and it's what I want. I don't want to deal with this. I want to be crazy, where I don't have to decide anything."

"You're right that it's a choice," he assured me. "But, no, you don't want to go that way."

"I know," I whispered. Breaking my lovely reverie, I opened my eyes and spoke in a whine, almost breaking into sobs, "But it's *so hard*."

The pain lessened as I recognized it was a matter of choosing between an *idea in my head* or the *knowing in my body*. The idea was that I'd had a normal, happy childhood, and my body's knowing was that I hadn't. *Bodies couldn't lie. Words might, but bodies could not.*

Since then, I've realized that even our bodies can be made to lie, with torture, but this was the state of my thinking at the time.

Every day, all day, I cried. If not overtly and consciously, then secretly and unconsciously, face placid or blank while my tears drained down inside my nose, making it run all day, every day. Handkerchiefs made my nose raw. "Snuffling" swelled my sinuses until snuffling was useless. At home it was easy to scoop out tears in the front of my nose,

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just before they dripped, with a long thumbnail and wipe them on something, or when that became tedious, slurp them off. They were only tears, after all.

At school, I vacillated between the constant pain of the handkerchief and humiliation of surreptitious scooping and slurping. Eventually I couldn't care what anyone thought. It was clear most everyone already thought I was a mess. I might as well do what was easy. I occasionally slurped when I thought no one would notice, and even slurped sometimes when they might, and I just didn't care.

Thirteen years past prayer and trusting in God as I'd known "Him," I began to use Tarot cards. While I'd half-cynically expected occasional messages that might or might not be simple coincidence and my subconscious interpretation, I was stunned repeatedly to find five emblems to be my near-constant companions.

Of 78 cards in the deck, at least two of these five were always in spreads I did for myself: The High Priestess (in *The Mythic Tarot* deck, Persephone, who was raped as a child and dragged into Hell); The Moon (meaning "waiting without knowing" – I was usually asking who did it); the Three of Swords ("blighted family inheritance"); The Tower ("shameful secrets revealed, often sexual"); and The Wounded Healer, who can heal others, but not him- or herself.

This synchronicity kept me using the cards, and I was soon familiar with the human archetypes recognized throughout history: *Sun, Moon, Empress, King, warrior, wounded healer...*

For the first time in years, I began to pray – for my son's recovery. Though the cure rate for Hodgkin's Disease is a somewhat encouraging seventy-five percent, his cancer had been discovered after it had migrated fairly extensively through his body. He refused to eat the cancer-fighting foods I prepared or any herbal supplements. He disappeared when it was time for chemotherapy appointments, so they were often delayed. He was mean to the neighbor's dog, and played chicken in front of trains when he was feeling well. And I thought he

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was sniffing glue. If anyone had to be in the lower twenty-five percent that didn't make it, it seemed my son was a likely candidate. I began to imagine answering the question "Do you have children?" with a calm "Yes" followed by various explanations about the son who had died.

After months of pleading with Michael and explaining the purposes of his herbs and chemo, I decided just to love him, and pray.

One day in January, 1994, I came home from school and found him sitting on a step by the fig tree, whispering to the dog he'd been mean to, appreciatively stroking the dog's bony head. At the next appointment, he was pronounced in remission, and has been healthy ever since.

We might have celebrated, but I never thought of it, still burdened with memories I couldn't make sense of. I still needed to heal myself.

Toward the end of the school year, climbing a staircase to my classroom, the building's walls began to tilt and the floor gently rocked. I clung to the handrail as I continued to climb, perceiving my world as a ship tossed at sea. The horizon rising and falling was a metaphor for the line between true and false. *What was truth? Was I abused and amnesic? Or was I crazy to think so?*

The horizon line continued to rock with invisible swells. *Apparently truth wasn't stable.* How could *that* idea help me?

At the third floor mezzanine, classmates turned to see who'd arrived, then turned back without acknowledging me.

While the floor beneath my feet continued to gently rock and swell, I put my focus on the nearest place to sit and walked steadily, step after step, toward it, intent to stay upright on my feet. I was never so relieved to have a place to sit as I was the moment my backside settled without event on the concrete bench.

About that time, one night, while lying down to read in bed, I suddenly rose up on my hands and knees and felt myself a she-wolf with fur on her chest, hair whorls around her nipples, with a flaming red,

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woman's vagina. She looked around the room, repressed a howl, and imagined the satisfaction of pulling down the bookcases and pictures and otherwise destroying the apartment.

While I'd had strange experiences before, I'd never felt another being a part of me, and certainly never an animal. Nevertheless, I dealt with her as if I knew something about shamanic craft, though it would be another six or seven years before I'd ever speak that word.

I told the Wolf *No* (regarding destroying the apartment), but negotiated: I knew she probably came to let me know I had rage that had to be dealt with. I promised I'd do what I could the very next day to release it. With that, she disappeared.

The next day, I contacted two mental hospitals to commit myself. When they heard I was only interested in a room to thrash and scream in, and wasn't interested in eight hours of group therapy every day, they both pronounced me "too sane" for admission.

Two weeks to go, I told myself, til school's out and I'll have all my days free to figure this out.

One of the last few days of school, I returned to my apartment, dropped my backpack, and suddenly saw myself from the interior. My form was like an old barn with dried planks letting sunlight into a mostly dark interior. In the broken strips of light I could see two long poles that seemed to be holding up the roof. *Not good*, I thought.

Then one of the poles dropped, and I acknowledged, *It's close*.

My falling apart was close. I was not afraid, except for the timing. I didn't want it to happen in front of other people, or interfere with school.

Someone in Earth First! had once drawn a humorous cartoon of an older woman in a straight skirt and sweater, with her hair in a bun, standing on top of a bulldozer, with a sledgehammer raised over her head, and the caption: "Destruction precedes creation." I'd always thought it funny, and now, even in my desperation, I smiled weakly when I thought of myself destroyed.

I desperately wanted a new self to emerge, and if I had to fall apart to get there, I *wanted* to have a breakdown. *Just not that week*

Each psychology is a confession, and the worth of a psychology for another person lies not in the places where he can identify with it because it satisfies his psychic needs, but where it provokes him to work out his own psychology in response.

-- James Hillman, psychologist, scholar, international lecturer

Chapter Eleven:

MULTIPLE PERSONALITY

The evening after the last class of the school year, I prepared the table beside my reading chair with water, tea, journal, and pens. Relishing the idea of the entire summer ahead to contemplate my life, with hopes of healing, I sat to read *The Holographic Universe* by Michael Talbot.

After a few pages, I came across a sentence that I couldn't get a hold of. Each time I'd finish the sentence, the meaning, the words, everything about it was simply gone, vanished. So, I'd read it again, and the same thing would happen. I shook my head, breathed deeply, and tried it again and again, with intense desire to focus, but each time found myself unable to consider a single word about what I'd just read. Something very strange, I knew, was happening. Finally I thought to read the words slowly *aloud*.

The paragraph made a tangential reference to Sybil, the famous "multiple personality," and in this sentence referred to her doctor who had once opined that people with Multiple Personality Disorder often look "significantly younger than their ages."

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Immediately I scolded myself, *No, do not go there!* Just because I'm often told I look a decade younger than I am... just because, at 42, I'd recently been carded where it wasn't necessary... just because I was often mistaken for my children's sister... all those things did not mean I should consider such an abhorrent diagnosis.

Then suddenly I realized: *It would explain a few things.*

Multiple scenes flashed through my mind of chronic forgetfulness. And I recalled the time in seventh grade when my best friend was furious at me because I didn't remember – she thought I refused to admit – something sexual she said I'd done in fifth grade. She'd screamed at me, "*You split personality!*"

That could be explained away, of course, but I remembered another, more profound event.

When Mike was six weeks old, I didn't want to return to church. But the ladies were calling and my husband insisted, so finally I gave in to the pressure. I didn't want to leave him in the nursery, but everyone insisted I must. So I did, and promptly forgot I had a baby.

After church, I watched other mothers with their children and babies and felt the same sort of "otherness" toward them I always had: I was a woman in the wife category, and they were wives who had gone a step further. We were different.

When another woman with her baby approached and asked me where my baby was, I looked at her incredulously.

Who was she confusing me with? And how, after we'd known each other for over a year, could she have mistaken me? I was embarrassed for her, and so I smiled to make her embarrassment easier when she'd soon realize her mistake.

She looked at me so unwaveringly that I began to wonder if I was the one confused, so I thought of her sentence again.

The only thing I could think of to substitute for the word "baby" was "pet project," but she wouldn't use slang like that, and I wasn't in charge of any project at church or anywhere. Completely perplexed, I wondered what I could say to help us both toward a resolution.

"Michael?" she asked, and I was even more confused.

Multiple Personality

She has a name for this baby she associates with me! And there's no one else at the church who has ever been confused with me. She seems so certain, she hasn't a doubt on her face, and even looks worried for me.

We stared into each other's eyes. Then something clicked.

Michael! I had a baby... and I left him in the nursery!

This last thought was one of horror. Years later I'd realize why I had to block out the memory of what I'd been forced to do: leave my baby with strangers in church. *Left him with strangers... in the nursery* – and with that, I panicked.

I raced up the center aisle of the sanctuary without looking back, slowing barely enough to take the corner, skidding through the foyer.

“We were wondering where you were,” said the nursery worker cheerfully. “Usually new mothers are the first ones back.” She moved my son from her shoulder to my waiting hands, and looked at me with gentle, but quizzical eyes.

Mumbling something, I took my son, and exited the room, embarrassed and angry that I'd been coerced into doing something so contrary to my heart that I'd had to forget it.

The interesting thing to me now is that my husband stood beside me, watching this entire exchange, and yet we never spoke a word about it – a perfect example of “group denial.”

Strange comfort it was to remember the amnesia, as it helped me access an important truth I needed to acknowledge.

But now I felt even more socially *anathema* than I'd been with the stigma of childhood sexual abuse. No one wants to hear about that, but “multiple personality” would probably be worse.

Immediately, though, I knew this was key to a new phase of my healing. I accepted my self-diagnosis with courage. *Whatever it took, I'd pull myself together.*

As soon as I'd accepted this, I felt a woman's form – seemingly from some other realm – slip over my body, as if to contain it. *The Integrating Woman* I named her immediately, knowing she'd come to help me integrate my parts. Years later, I'd learn this is often called the Inner

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Self Helper, or ISH.

Seconds later my body seemed to turn to mist, and hovered for a moment in the space above my chair where my physical body had been a moment before, then it reassembled itself perfectly into the third dimension again. I knew I looked the same, but inside I felt newly harmonious, like when the tree had turned off the static. Every strand of energy connecting every cell had been rearranged, so that inside me energy flowed beautifully instead of in the usual agitated patterns. I felt wonderful, grateful, willing to accept the worst diagnosis, if healing contained events like this.

I sat marveling at the surprises offered by our universe, when suddenly there was more.

A column of energy emerged from my chest, about seven inches in diameter and seven feet out before me, where it disappeared into what I knew was another realm.

Ecstatic at this evidence of my connection to the Infinite, I then felt a second column rise off the top of my head, same diameter, two feet tall. My ecstasy turned to giddiness then, and I wondered whether the top column was oriented to my body or to some upright axis, relative to earth. I tilted my head and played with the energy as it slid around on top of me – oriented, it seemed, to the Earth.

After about a minute, I felt so happy I again feared, for the second time in my life, that I might levitate. Unwilling to experience the total warping of my reality, I jumped out of my chair with a quick *Thank you!* to whatever God or spirits oversaw my healing and provided me such sensations of ecstasy, then found something to busy myself.

The next day, at the University Medical Library, I learned that Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) is considered very curable, is associated with high intelligence, and exists on a spectrum – so I could imagine that my case was mild, explaining my ability to function well enough in the world.

Additionally, I read that some people don't even try to integrate their parts as much as learn to work harmoniously with their differences.

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Suddenly, it didn't sound so bad.

Years later, when I'd study shamanic practice, I'd learn that many shamans also have experiences that shatter their minds, which they use then for powerful purpose.

My biggest immediate concern would be the stigma associated with MPD - which seemed so wrong. I knew I'd want to share my discovery with someone, but how could I, when their first reaction would probably be to blow it all out of proportion?

Almost every text I consulted said MPD (also called Dissociative Identity Disorder) is highly curable once diagnosed, and is a common result of childhood trauma – typically childhood sexual abuse.

Some researchers wrote that it's possible everyone has it to some degree. It can be so mild that a person can pass as normal most of their life, like me, or so severe as to make a person dysfunctional in our society, like the famed Sybil. And it can fluctuate through a person's lifetime, depending on their levels of stress and other coping skills.

I say "*other* coping skills," because MPD, according to the literature, is itself a coping skill. Faced with untenable trauma, a child can choose to split, so one personality remembers the truth of what happened, and another personality can smile and go along with the world's pretense of loving protection for children.

Alternatively, the child can decide their experiences of life do not need to make sense or be cohesive, and those people become schizophrenic.

So, developing MPD in an environment of trauma, and especially the lies that almost always go along with it, is a creative, functioning way to cope and remain "sane." One "alter" (alternate personality) knows the truth, while the other alter plays the appropriate social role, pretending along with everyone else that the world is the way we'd like it to be.

Each alter is sane in its own accepted environment. Unfortunately, the alter that knows the truth must remain underground, sometimes for decades, sometimes for life, because few people are willing to hear their truth. When or if she surfaces, she almost certainly has significant grieving and healing to do, and may want to commit suicide,

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especially if her family or community denies what she knows.

The alter that plays a happy role rarely has her sanity questioned, but her personality is based on pretense and denial, or we could say, the “reality” that society agrees on. She’s the least sane, as far as her experience goes, but ironically the most socially supported.

Once splitting is accomplished a single time, it often becomes a pattern for the child’s developing psyche, with more and more alters sprouting with each trauma, large or small.

Since I didn’t have typical events of “missing time,” with unexplained purchases appearing in my house or credit card receipts I’d apparently signed, or more than one incident of amnesia that I could recall (two, counting fifth grade), I decided I was on the mild end of the spectrum, and anticipated quick healing. I left the library with a spring in my step, encouraged and happy that I was embarked on a new healing era in my life.

Later, I’d recognize more subtle things indicated my multiplicity might be more developed than I’d realized. For instance, I’ve always been highly dependent on my calendar and notes to organize my life or remember what I did the day before.

I recalled one Monday when a friend asked what I’d done over the weekend, and I casually flipped my calendar page to remember it had been my son’s birthday and we’d had a houseful of rambunctious pre-teens. Without checking, my business personality Monday morning had no immediate recall of what my mother personality had done on Sunday.

Recognizing the separateness of the business and mother personalities, I wondered if it was significant how long it often took me to recognize people. I theorized that my alters were in fairly good communication with each other, so there was little true amnesia; but remembering someone I’d only met once or twice often took a few seconds longer than it seemed other people were used to.

Now I mused on those situations and imagined whichever alter was “out” having to check inside and ask, “Quick! Help! Who knows this person?” and then the appropriate alter either coming out to take

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over or providing a name and a glimpse of a scene.

I've often seen confused and hurt faces when I couldn't quickly remember someone's name or where we met, and wondered if this might contribute to my difficulty making friends. And maybe this was why I've always felt the need to smile at everyone, to head off the hurt feelings I might otherwise inadvertently cause.

I also remembered the time my mother's best friend mentioned the plays I'd directed with the younger children when our families went on camping trips together. I stared at her blankly, without a bit of understanding.

"Oh, come on!" she protested, and went on to "remind" me, describing the short version of *The Wizard of Oz* we'd supposedly done. Our families had camped together for over a decade, and I was always the oldest, not to be confused with any other child.

I still don't remember the plays I supposedly directed while we camped, though I don't doubt it, because I often directed variety shows with my siblings and neighborhood friends. She didn't live in our neighborhood though, and could only have referred to our camping times – for which I have no memory.

I withdrew even further from the few friends I had. I didn't know how to tell anyone what I was going through. One friend had become very angry at me for a single thoughtless thing I'd done. Another friend was sympathetic, in the manner of a researcher observing a tortured subject.

I thought I'd rather be alone, and so I accomplished that, except for a boyfriend I'd attracted in the middle of the year. I'd told him I was in no position to fall in love or make any commitment, and he had said he understood. But he was young and didn't know what he'd agreed to. He was generous, loving, funny, unafraid of grief and mental strangeness, adaptable, a writer, and an alcoholic. He helped me heal, and made me laugh – so hard that, for the first time in my life, I snorted! – almost every day, as he loved to make me laugh. I was grateful for his cheerfulness, but I hated his drinking. And he hated me when I finally ended our relationship. One more heartbreak.

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[M]ost clinicians in this field agree that this phenomenon [inner self helper] or alter-personality is part of the healing process in about 50-80% of people suffering from dissociative identity disorder (multiple personality disorder)... Its memory is much more extensive than the client's... [and it] functions as a counselor and guide in time of need.

-- James P. Gunn, PhD

Chapter Twelve: VISIONS OF SELF

For days, I experienced myself in new ways. One afternoon, happy after an erranding bike ride, I flopped onto my bed and was surprised to sense myself as three people fanned out like a small hand of cards.

Who are we? I wondered, as I understood that two of my parts were ready to “go.”

I didn't want them to leave until I understood who they were, how they'd come about, what parts they'd played in my life all these years, and what part or parts I'd be left with. I wanted to appreciate them. They were part of me, and I felt I'd be remiss to not acknowledge them before they were gone forever.

The answer was clear, firm and kind: It would be too difficult to understand right now. Each part was composed of memories, ideas, feelings, associations, and wrong assumptions, and it would boggle my mind to try to keep track of the parts as they developed throughout my life – if some spirit helper was willing to separate all the threads and lead

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me through it. None was willing.

Just let them go, I heard.

I wanted to understand – my rational mind would have liked it – but I accepted the instructions and said Okay. And added quickly, emotionally, as I released parts of myself to some unknown void: *Thank you, thank you! I know you came into being to help me survive, and it was probably hard, maybe even horrible. Thank you for being here and keeping me alive. I appreciate you, and hope to know and understand you one day.*

I felt a respectful, but wordless, acknowledgement. Then they folded like the hand of three cards I'd first seen, merging into my center, and I was one.

Amazed, I stood up to see how I might feel different. Standing still, to sense the subtleties, I realized I *felt* the same, but I *perceived* the world new. Slowly I walked toward the kitchen, and saw that everything seemed to have not only greater depth and dimension, but *life*. Even the old kitchen cabinets resonated – just as I'd theorized years ago – but suddenly I could see it. Everything was deeper, more colorful, and alive!

I loved the world!

And years later I'd often say, "Nervous breakdowns! I highly recommend them!"

One day, I decided to draw a picture of the parts of me I guessed were my alters. I didn't have a clear understanding of them - I've never announced to any therapist that I was Mary or Bob, for instance, like the famous Sybil or Eve had, but I thought it might help me understand myself better.

I drew my business woman self, my mother self, the Earth Firstler who once participated in a "tribal dance" without a blouse, my most depressed and suicidal self, and the wolf woman in the center, with columns of energy and a form made of mist – not sure whether these aspects of myself were actual alters or not, but it seemed a reasonable place to begin to try to understand.

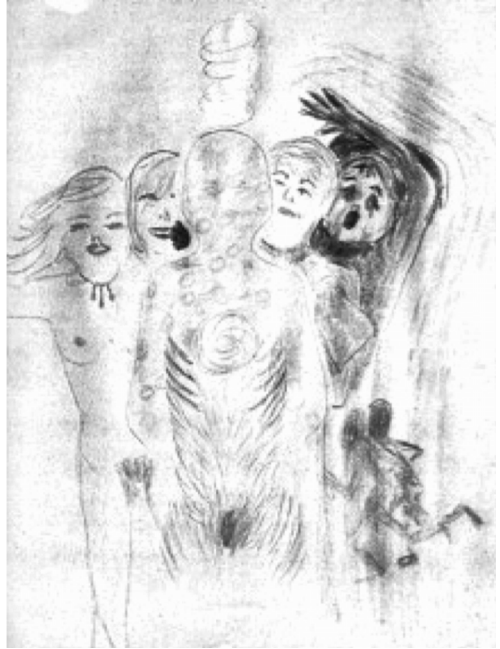
Paper on my lap, wondering if there was anything more to add, it occurred to me to "ask inside." As soon as I had – and I only expected a

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vague idea, if anything – I saw a dark forest and two children, one pure red and one pure blue, like child-versions of the blank international symbol for a person, run quickly from behind one tree to behind another. I saw them for only a moment, and they refused to come out of hiding when I asked them, *Who are you?*

I was fascinated, and confused. *Why were they pure red and pure blue? Why are they hiding? Why won't they respond, since I know now they exist?*

No answers came, so I added them to the picture. I didn't want to, because I was rather proud of this artwork, some of my first since high school, and these simple figures were out of style with the realism I'd worked to create. But I'd asked for something, and it had appeared. Visions were rare enough not to be dismissed, so I drew them in.



One morning, not long after, I woke with a start from a provocative dream. I'd been asked a question, opened my mouth, and found myself unable to speak. Then a waterfall burst from my chest, and I looked closely to see that tiny air bubbles in the water each had a number on them. Every bubble read "58."

I sat up and asked myself what 58 could mean. 1958 was obvious, but some rational aspect of me insisted I not jump to conclusions and demanded I think of all the meanings that might be associated with 58. Unfortunately, I could only think of a '58 Chevy, still referring to the year; and a '58 Chevy meant nothing to me.

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The controlling voice finally allowed me to consider this year, which I realized was when I would have turned six and have been in first grade. So I asked myself, *What happened when I was six?* Slowly, it dawned on me that I had no memories at all for that year. And it was strange, because I could remember scores of events in pre-school and kindergarten, and even one from fourteen months old, confirmed by my mother, but nothing from first grade, and then I was stunned to realize: or second grade.

I couldn't remember a single event in school, not my teachers from those years, not rooms, not friends, not anything. But pre-school, I didn't even try to count the memories: tomato juice, the slide, songs, naps, scoldings, the parking lot, the kids, too many to count. Same with kindergarten: coloring, cut and paste, numbers, street light lessons, stories, collages, standing in line, tooth fairy wands, accidentally sitting in rainwater, standing alone by the fence, my indignation when a teacher wouldn't protect a little boy everyone picked on and then called me a tattletale.

But first and second grade didn't exist – were void.

Weariness swept over me like a blessed ocean. Followed by a wave of titanic sadness, to which I yielded, wounded prey to predator. Life is sometimes not about creating what you want, but gracefully or not, flowing with what is.

I had a feeling what it was about, and I didn't want to feel it.

A few days later, I remembered being small, standing before a painting easel in the classroom, brush in hand, jars of paint untouched, yellow, red, green and black, wondering how in the world the other children could paint so enthusiastically. The teacher then instructed me to "*Paint,*" and I responded, "I don't know what to paint."

"Paint a tree," she commanded.

Obediently, I dipped my brush and painted a black-edged tree, bent half-way to the ground, with black wind and black leaves blowing by.

There, a tree, I said to myself.

Then another memory: The teacher was impressed and had me

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take my painting to the principal's office.

And another: at Open House, I was instructed to take my mother to the principal's to show her my painting on his wall. He praised me for it, took it down and rolled it up, and cheerfully presented it to me to take home. I was sad he didn't want to keep it.

I watched the linoleum floor of the hallway as my mother held my hand and we walked silently back to my classroom.

Other events would soon hint that more alternate parts of me may still exist, hidden inside, or somewhere.

One day in the shower, I found myself suddenly immersed in the deepest, most painful anguish – and feeling myself at sixteen, my breasts high and firm. My skin burned with fire, my mind roiled with sounds that weren't words, my stomach felt connected to a vortex of something sickening and unknown.

My body hunched forward, muscles tense as if I might vomit, but my mind knew it was not my stomach that needed to revolt, but my mind itself, so I tried to focus on the mystery: *Something... Something...*

My teen-age mind was blank with fire. My forty-two-year old mind was shocked. Again. She witnessed her teenage self, her astounding simplicity, like a young tree with smooth bark and few limbs.

So few ideas to make up one's being! Such naiveté! So much blankness and wonder – Ah, the wonder.... Wasn't it torture to wonder at that age?

There was so much to know in those teen years, that I knew then in my forties, that I *felt* ... and marveled at ... *how empty it was to not know* ... so much blankness ... quiet fear ... and no one to answer ... or encourage me.

I'd emulated others' false sophistication, looking the part of the beautiful young woman I was supposed to be, even while entirely bewildered.

Now horrified. I was a girl controlled by beauty, obsessed with looking good, her body a thing that made her shy.... and also... *this horror!*

Something beyond speaking, or even remembering – *something* to

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do with her body.

A white satin bodice with beads had been presented to her, was now held in her hands, to wear, on stage. Exquisite, soul-emptying pain.

What was *that*?!

I never saw a stage, only felt the horror, of waiting to go on... dreading it... alone.

My head arced back, lungs emptied, vision blank, skin burned from head to toes in a silent scream.

Scrambling, my adult mind tried to make sense – I'd once had a vague idea that I'd been put on stage for a sexual show – but I'd hoped it was a sick imagination. And there was the nightmare in my youngest childhood of a cartoon character sexually exposed on stage.

What would cause a child to dream that dream?

What was this?

Did it happen to me?

And continued into my *teens*?!

That would be a worse sort of amnesia that I did not want to claim.

But it felt like it.

My shaky hand turned off the shower, and I stepped out carefully, keeping away from the mirror. As soon as I realized what I was avoiding, my curiosity demanded, and I looked. I saw myself, a teen – then, seconds later, me, my age – then quickly a very tired older woman, all three with my face stretched in psychic pain. The sequence – only seconds long – propelled me out of there. I fell on my bed and sobbed myself to exhaustion.

*I never came upon any of my discoveries
through the process of rational thinking.*

-- Albert Einstein

Chapter Thirteen: HOPE IN HOME

Only weeks into my summer vacation, I felt inspired to move to the desert and build a small, self-sufficient home. I asked the kids if they would mind if I moved one-hundred miles away, with the understanding that I'd be back in town three days each week for school and to see them. They were each living in efficiency apartments next door and across from mine. It had probably been painful to watch me crash and burn the last year, so I imagined they were glad to be rid of me when they both said *Sure*. With this blessing, I began to plan.

In my divorce, I'd accepted twenty acres of land at the base of the Chiricahua Mountains, homeland of Cochise, with only one rooftop visible in any direction. For years I'd dreamed of a rural life, with no clocks or schedules but those demanded by sun, weather, animals and garden. I'd go there to heal. I'd give away all my electric appliances, except my computer and printer. I'd live in a home of mud and straw, the sun providing my heat, and my rooftop gathering water. The sun would also cook my food, and I'd live without paying monthly for anything but a phone.

I had no money saved, so I would use credit cards to build. Until Michael's cancer, I'd only had one card and never maintained a balance on it. After his diagnosis, with the health insurance company sliding into

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bankruptcy, I'd accepted all the offers of credit that came in the mail, and had been using them to pay the sixteen medical creditors who demanded monthly payments, while the insurance company decreased benefits, increased deductibles and co-pays, and raised the monthly premium.

As I quickly went tens of thousands of dollars in debt, money became unreal. I reasoned that paying interest on credit cards to build a house was no worse than paying rent. Both bought nothing but time. I called a friend to help me design my home.

With the help of friends and three paid carpenters, we built the basic structure in just six weeks. Over the years, I'd finish it myself and plaster the straw bale walls one wheelbarrow of mud at a time.

Preparing for the move that summer, I often sensed, in the middle of the day, the world as gloriously more than three-dimensional. Sometimes I felt myself bobbing between realities, like an electron in one orbital shell excited into the next, though not quite strongly enough to stay. My inner eyes would rise tantalizingly above the waters of this world, perceiving something I couldn't quite name, then I'd sink back down to our normal reality.

Sometimes, also in the daytime, I felt I'd slipped into the center of a wonderful vortex, life's energy moving me swiftly, easily toward some fantastic destination. I was frequently ecstatic, and took it as a sign I should build this house.

Once, when the vortex energy was strong, I considered something compelling: *I am meant to be a bridge. Many of us are meant to be bridges. There was this reality, which seems like the only one, but there are others, "spiritual" realms, in which we can also live consciously. The big challenge for this life is to learn how to move between the realms, consciously. Yes, that was it! Being a bridge between the realms was everything.*

I told this to a friend and added, "I really don't know exactly what I'm talking about, but I know it's the most important thing I must explore."

Hope in Home

No longer interested in activism, I told those friends almost the same. “I’ll be working on the invisible planes, though I’m not sure exactly what I’m talking about. I just know it’s what I need to do.”

While I was often inspired, other times I felt my life was the most tragic one on the planet. The things I experienced, the things I “remembered,” felt absolutely real, but were contrary to everything I’d ever believed about my life. And I couldn’t decide about it all.

After losing my family, my marriage, my children, my sense that they’d live and always love me, I was also losing the only worldview I’d ever known.

I was torn between two conflicting realities. One was pleasant, but blurry. The other was sharp, deep, resonant, and extremely painful.

I began to see my “old self” as one hologram of “knowing” in this body, though it might be multiple, and my new understanding as another hologram.

The old self, or selves, were nice, naïve, often obsequious, and seemed rarely able to relate to other people. Her feelings were so often hurt when others avoided her that she’d long ago accepted that she’d never have close friends, or very few. (And those few always happened spontaneously, with nothing to explain them at first, just a knowing. Later, one of those turned out to have exactly this sort of history.)

The new self saw the world more clearly, saw the energy of things, and felt other people’s “vibes.” She also got flashes of her own heart and intuition. This was exciting, and full of promise, but it came with a price – excruciating psychic pain of remembering. It was tempting to stay blurry.

One day, I came across a story about a tribe that had a process for creating shamans. They would remove one child to a cage out of sight from the tribe, but within hearing distance. They would feed the child, but would not speak to it or have any other interaction. After a few years, they would return the child to the tribe, the isolation having changed the child’s perceptions, from attunement to the group reality, to

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attention to the spirit realm.

The child would be their prophet or seer.

I didn't want to be a prophet or seer, but I took hope that sometimes torture can yield certain compensations. I prayed that I'd soon come to understand mine.

*To keep our faces toward change
and behave like free spirits
in the presence of fate
is strength undefeatable.*
-- Helen Keller

Chapter Fourteen: DEMON & LIONS & BEARS

Camping while marking my home's four corners, I lay down in my little pup tent one night and prayed naively, *Hey, Spirits ~ I'm here if you want to teach me anything.*

I'd forgotten what I'd read in Carlos Castaneda's books when I was a teenager, that there are frightening things in the spirit realms, and one should have caution when approaching. Without knowing it, I was embarking on exploration of new territory, and it wasn't just the desert of Cochise County.

Immediately, something evil was in the tent with me, a brilliant blue-white light, hissing like an acetylene torch.

Impulsively, I blurted out the epithet, *Jesus!* – not a prayer – and immediately, to my absolute amazement, I sensed His presence, surprisingly as familiar to me as myself.

I was not only grateful and astounded, but embarrassed and remorseful, as a memory returned of a cynical moment when I'd walked past a panhandler, who'd called after me "Jesus bless you," to which I'd responded snidely, "Yeah, sure!"

And now Jesus had responded to my call? My inadvertent call?

Without words, the question formed in my head, *You haven't forgotten me?* referring to the time I'd given Him my heart. I heard an

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almost humorous response, *No, I haven't forgotten you, and I never will.*

I was overwhelmed with gratitude, relief, and perplexity. My spiritual world of Tarot cards and unnamed spirits was suddenly expanded to include, to my chagrin, *Jesus.*

After I asked him please to protect me, my fear of the evil hissing demon was gone, and I slept peacefully through the night.

Perhaps because I didn't have enough spiritual good manners to even speak to Jesus the next day, I had another experience of fear to make me connect. Climbing into bed that night in my apartment, I was alarmed to see a large black cockroach run underneath my bed. Things had been going well lately, but I didn't think I could take it if a roach crawled on me in the night.

Thank God it hadn't hidden. Stooping low, I found it, seeming to be waiting for me. I shooed it from under the bed, and it ran promptly into the wide, door-less closet and up the wall about a foot and a half. Grateful for the easy access and good light, I picked up a shoe and, taking a careful stance, smacked it perfectly.

With satisfaction, I watched it fall – then *vanish* on the way down. Reality was getting *way* out of control.

Unbelieving, wanting only to experience what was normal, I pretended I hadn't seen that, and removed every shoe from the floor carefully, one at a time, investigating each, while keeping my vision wide enough to watch the floor and three walls all at once for the possible escapee, but I saw nothing.

Not only had I experienced an evil spirit in my tent the night before, but the previous week, I'd heard a story of a woman in a room on the fifth floor of a hospital suddenly covered with ants for which there was no trail. Today I think an obvious possibility is that it was a mean prank, but that evening I only remembered that they were considered, by the person who told me the story, *phantom* ants.

Phantom roaches could land me in the mental ward, I was sure.

But now I didn't want to go. I was moving to the country, where peace and quiet would help me get well. I had to survive this night with

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no cockroach excitement.

I sat on my bed, and imagined a sphere around me – a protection I'd recently read about in a *New Age Journal* that had come into my possession somehow. Feeling a little sheepish to make two requests in a row of my formerly-ignored spirit helper, I asked Jesus to banish all roaches from my sphere.

Then, not sure I felt comfortable about roaches allowed everywhere else in the apartment – I imagined the little roach-shaped demons swarming on the perimeter, threatening me – I decided to make my sphere grow to encompass the room, then thought *What the hell, let's do the entire apartment*. Finally confident of my protection, I slept soundly all that night.

To my surprise, I never saw another roach in the apartment for as long as I was there, about a month more, even though there'd always been scores of small ones in the kitchen and always two large ones in the shower.

I'd never thought Jesus should be called on for such mundane requests – or ones that would sound so utterly ludicrous. That He had responded, and performed the task beyond my expectations, amazed me.

But I still didn't get into a habit of talking with him. It reminded me too much of my bad experiences with religion.

Though I still didn't speak with him, I easily embraced Jesus as a spiritual being in touch with us humans on Earth. After all my years as a Bible student, I'd never understood his saving our souls through a tortured death. This doctrine had always interfered with my relationship.

I theorized our souls might be saved by our hearing and practicing his teachings and living a life of love. In that way could I justify the term *savior*, via his teachings.

As for the cross image, I theorized that this iconography was meant to instill fear in the minds of Jesus' followers – a reminder of what might be done to upstarts who throw over money-changers' tables.

While most Christian theology still doesn't resonate with me, I knew I was a follower of Jesus again, but in a very different way. I

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couldn't call myself a Christian.

I also wasn't sure that he was the only Spirit in the other realms on which I might call. I'd begun to feel close to Wolf, and had purchased a book with a deck of *Medicine Cards*, by Native American Jamie Sams, based on animal spirit totems. I hoped it was okay with Jesus that I still held this interest in communing with a variety of spirits. It seemed there were various types in the different etheric realms, and if we ever got lost out there in the multiverse, we would do well to have contacts with the full diversity. I didn't hear him object.

Over a decade later, I'd attend a shamanism conference and be amazed to learn that many practitioners also consider Jesus one of their major spirit helpers. Suddenly I wished I'd tried to talk with him more.

The day I arrived on my land to await deliveries of building materials, I was dismayed to see a fire raging on the mountain, on Rattlesnake Ridge, the high point of my watershed. The daytime sky was hazy and gray. At night, orange flames flashed on the high horizon, lighting up the clouds of smoke they created. Not a nice welcome.

Neighbors came to warn me that bears and mountain lions had been driven down by the fire and were prowling around people's homes. I shouldn't sleep outside, they said.

I had come to this land for healing and comfort, and now the fire seemed a worrisome omen. My apartment was emptied. The foundation was poured. Strawbales and trusses were on their way. I wouldn't turn back. But I certainly couldn't sleep in their rectangular, plasterboard rooms. I thanked them and declined.

The predators were on my mind when I emerged from my tent at night to relieve myself. And I couldn't take my mind off the story I'd published years earlier about being killed and eaten by a mountain lion, as an alternative to dying in a hospital or being kept alive by machinery.

*The house cat I'd tried as a child to cuddle, too aloof,
resisting, would be upon me now, with a vengeance. Soft fur and
warmth, its weight would surprise me. And its teeth would sink*

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with perfection, consummating our exchange.

...Before it broke my neck, perhaps a low sound would emerge from deep in the cat, to my ear, anticipating its satiation. Fur on my neck, like a lover, almost purring. Claws embracing. Its stomach and intestines, even then, churning chemicals to digest my flesh.

Its heart would beat strongly then, slow and healthy, patiently, after mine had ceased, as the owner licked its paws and cleaned its face. Then departed to nap, as we have for thousands of years.

Since I'd wanted to die so many times in this past year, I began to fear that the universe might now grant me my wish. One night before bed, I stood on the rain-filled foundation of my home beneath the stars and spontaneously enacted a ritual to profess my desire for life.

Arms lifted to Scorpio (only because it was central in the sky at that hour), I entreated the Spirits' understanding that I didn't want to die. Then I walked the first of many circles to be walked over the next twelve years, around the square floor of my home, and finished by splashing cold rainwater that had pooled there onto my back, my faint penance for wanting to quit life so many times.

In my tent each night, I did hope to hear a bear outside, to wake and peak out to see it, but never did. One morning, though, I rose to find a tuft of bear fur and long, wiry guard hairs snagged on the splintery edge of my picnic table bench. I saved it to tuck between two straw bales in the north wall of my home, emblems of bear energy, perfect for my quest, according to my animal divination book – *resting and hibernation, patiently awaiting intuition.*

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*You are
like a hurricane
There's calm
in your eyes....*
- Neil Young

Chapter Fifteen: RAVEN - RAVINE

In the weeks before I moved, while planning, I also became obsessed with changing my name. I didn't want my parents' name anymore. In *Earth First!* I'd known a number of people with names they'd invented: Sequoia, Lone Wolf Circles, Miss Anthropy, and others. And I'd once written a letter to the *Earth First! Journal* using the pen name Jean Ravine, and enjoyed it when friends sometimes called me that.

I considered it for a new name now, not certain I liked the rhyme for daily use, but unable to think of anything better. One day, feeling rushed by the approach of the new school year, I went to the courthouse and made it legal. Only afterward did I think to look up *ravine* in the dictionary. Horrified, I read that the word derived from the same root as *ravished* and *ravaged*, both words with sexual abuse connotations!

I'd known the meaning included dry ravines, but I'd also thought it referred equally to ravines where water ran, plants grew, animals found food and took refuge, places of life. But its main meaning seemed to be the opposite.

I wondered, *How could I have done this to myself?* Still, I clung to my personal image of *ravine* as something enchanting and mysterious.

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Because, exactly where water erodes or destroys the earth, it creates a depression where the next water flows and new life gathers. That was me. I'd been destroyed, but could sense the promise of something amazing beginning to stir.

Within days, I learned there was a French surname spelled *Ravine*, but pronounced *Raven*. My heart leapt with excitement, but immediately fell, as I felt it too pretentious a name for me. I'd stick with *Ravine*.

One afternoon, I walked the half-mile to the mailbox and returned with a letter that filled me with dread, a letter from my parents, most likely responding to the news of my name change. As I sat reading on the edge of a pallet of straw bales, only partially comforted by their narrow shade that August noon, I could hear my mother's language was hysterical.

It's a terrible name, a horrible name, a place of dryness and desolation! my mother wrote. She could never speak it, never write it. Then my heart was chilled by what followed: *Besides, she went on, a little girl was murdered in our city when your father and I were planning to have children, and her body was thrown into a ravine. It was in the paper every day: the little girl in the ravine.*

My mother's letter hung lightly in my hand, my stomach sick, my mind reeling. *How had the cosmos arranged this?* And: *My poor parents!* My mother had once told me about a friend of theirs who'd "accidentally" left their baby in a basin with hot water pouring in, which had scalded it to death. I'd always wondered about the reality of that. And their first baby, before me, had been born dead. And now this. Their minds had been tweaked with some pretty gruesome possibilities of what might happen to children. A little sexual abuse, I thought, compared to those, maybe seemed nothing.

But why had I chosen this name? What cosmic energies swirled through my life to create this web of synchronicities? I even wondered if I were the reincarnation of that little girl. Or maybe my mother invented that story, to make me hate my name. Years later, I'd travel to my birthplace and spend an entire day with librarian help, but never find any news accounts to confirm her story.

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A raven cawed, and I looked up to see it circling overhead. Spirit seemed to be letting me know...*something*.... But I wasn't sure what.

I loved the solitude, and timelessness, and it was exactly what I'd intended - healing. My house was small, less than six-hundred square feet, and I lived without clocks, music, or anything needing electricity but my computer, which I powered with a car battery, small inverter and half-size solar panel, to write my stories for class. I ate when hungry, slept when tired, woke whenever I did. And I spent every sunset on the porch, silent, watching, listening, feeling, loving the natural world.

My subconscious, I would discover, still contained a lot that remained hidden, to uncover and process. It would take its time, maybe gauging my inner strength. I would pray to release it, then cower in fear and denial when I felt it coming.

Once a week, I drove to the city for classes and to visit my children, usually staying with my old boyfriend, who suggested we could "still be friends," and three days later drove home again.

Traffic and too many people made me buzz with anxiety, and I pumped on the steering wheel, wailing *Hurricane* with Neil Young on the stereo, feeling my center *mostly* composed, while invisible gales swirled around me.

It was always a relief to go home. The tension of the city began to pour off as I passed the Triple T truck stop and cleared again as I exited the interstate into the amazing boulders of Texas Canyon, cougar habitat, a mystical windswept wonder.

For months I'd possessed a couple tabs of LSD a friend had given me, offered as a healing tool. It would be the first drug-induced psychotropic experience of my life, at age forty-two. One weekend I decided to use it. I'd used *cannabis* occasionally, off and on, always as a ritual for meditation, so I did the same with the LSD.

Before I tell this story, I'd like to make clear my feelings about plant medicine and other chemicals used to alter consciousness. I'm sure

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there are people whose bodies, lives and minds have been damaged by their careless use of substances, including the legal ones of alcohol, tobacco and sugar, or *any* use of some substances, like amphetamines. But I don't believe any careful studies have been done to separate the effects of traditional visionary plants from whatever psychological conditions pre-existed that drove them to abuse the potential medicine in the first place. It may very well have been that they were suffering psychologically from some trauma, and sought an altered state of consciousness to try to understand and heal, or maybe just numb out. Without wise guidance, as with anything, sometimes things go bad.

With help, human or spiritual, many people use the same substances and credit them with life-affirming advancements. Until these studies are done, we can't reasonably demonize potential medicines. Especially when doctor-prescribed pharmaceuticals are one of the highest causes of death and mental disability in the United States today.

My experience using plant pharmaceuticals, prepared by South American shamans according to thousand-year old traditions, and even street-available LSD is of perceiving new dimensions of our world, including my own interior world, from a perspective larger than our cultural programming generally allows – a fantastic gift.

One doesn't have to ponder long why this perspective might be culturally oppressed by legal opposition to the substances: Corporations make huge profits, not only by selling the legal drugs, but also by the loss of our population's perspective on life. If everyone continues to work, watch TV, buy, and not question, then certain people and institutions become very wealthy and powerful.

As Terence McKenna said, "We haven't demanded that the stories [TV shows, commercials, ads, movies] we tell ourselves about how the world works confirm our direct experience of how it works. The psychedelic substances, by focusing attention on the mind-body-brain interactions, are reframing these questions. And not a moment too soon, because the cybernetic and technical capabilities of this society demand that this all be looked at very clearly or we're just going to sail right off the moral edge of things and into the abyss."

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It is no wonder that those who control the populace don't often speak about human potential. Instead we have billboards that command us, as if we were incapable of critical thinking, to "Just vote." And a President who, after 9/11, told the citizenry to simply go shop. It's clear to me we're in dire need of some consciousness expansion.

Frequently, when I haven't used any consciousness-altering substance for months, and then I do, I experience a rush of understanding and perspective on situations and problems that had eluded me, and I say to myself, "You must not forget to do this every so often!"

Even Francis Crick credited LSD for his discovery of DNA, for which he was awarded a Nobel Prize.

This is not to say I endorse psychedelic use on a regular basis. I can go years between my use of "plant helpers." But when I do, I always feel more grounded, clear, directed, certain of reality – multi-dimensional reality – and more able to engage meaningfully in life.

While I have no doubt that some readers will use this admission to discredit the whole of my account, I trust that most readers will put it in perspective. For instance: Ours is the only culture in the world since the beginning of history that denies the sort of experiences I've had. Our government has a long, sordid history of lying to its citizens. For anyone to deny my story as unbelievable, they must also deny the accounts of millions of people all over the world, and then recognize they do so in favor of a narrow worldview, crafted and controlled by a powerful elite. If they choose that view, I can only pray for them.

I took the LSD and sat quietly, thinking and writing as the effects came on, praying that I'd be given a vision to help me understand what I'd been going through these past years. When I could no longer write, I lay down and watched as images flowed through my mind.

Toward the end of the journey, I saw a huge, orange spiraling "yarn" of lights, and felt that I was but one little fiber in the yarn of life, and my parents were two fibers that preceded me, and my children were fibers that carried on from me. All of us were inextricably linked, inheriting energies from what preceded, none of us solely responsible for

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all our pain or joy, but carrying on nonetheless with whatever was handed us. Whatever my parents had handed me, they'd been handed before them. Looked at through a tiny lens, seeing only a single life, it might be perceived as tragic; but the whole of the yarn, the beautiful swirl, the outcome, the slow resolution of wounds, and the wisdom that eventually emerged was truly wondrous.

I felt myself, wounds and all, part of a fantastic cosmic evolution, carrying my part, helping everything transform, forgiving, blessing, healing myself and helping my children grow stronger and wiser. I loved it all. We would all be okay. We might hurt in the moment, but all was ultimately more than okay – we were evolving, learning lessons of kindness and hard lessons of hurt, so that all of us one day would be wise. Years of sorrow evaporated from me, and I felt light, and relieved of my burdens, cared for by the Mystery. Tears streamed down my face, as the pain faded away, to be replaced by a fantastic sense of destiny, even glory. The road was hard, but ultimately, our growth was a beautiful result.

I opened my eyes and looked around, still feeling the effect of the LSD, marveling at how much information could be contained in a simple picture. I was grateful, grateful, grateful... and never would be so sad again, I knew.

Then suddenly something came over my head, and pain seared around my head and jaw. A helmet seemed to have been placed over my small child's head and a chin piece forcefully snapped closed, with something like a half a tennis ball embedded on the side, inside, pushing my jaw out of joint.

Rolling in blinding pain, I was a child, arms slapping around my head to find the latch to open it up. Copious amounts of saliva poured from my mouth, and swallowing wasn't possible because of my jaw. Fear that I could choke on my own saliva made me panic further.

Pain prompted movement – *any movement* - so I fell forward, planting my face in the bedspread, while my body heaved and jumped all around, and my arms flailed, still seeking the latch in unbelievable, blinding pain.

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Then suddenly it was gone. Gasping, still drooling, I sat up, wiped my face, gingerly touched my jaw, felt the tears and saliva on my face, my swollen eyes, sagging facial muscles gone numb, and was afraid to move anything for fear that the lock would return and I'd be thrown back into excruciating pain. I knew I'd rather die than endure it another second. And I wondered at the meaning of it, especially following my vision of transcendence.

It hadn't only been pain. *I'd felt a story behind it: of being a child, at the hands of operators who often did cold and heartless things to me.*

But why? I hadn't a clue. It was bizarre, and I wouldn't know what to think of it for years. It would eventually make sense.

One dark misty morning on the way to school, a mountain lion leapt across the highway in the furthest reach of my headlights - a graceful silhouette against an eerie headlighted desert scene, mystically beautiful. I looked for it as I sped past the place it had disappeared in the vegetation, saw nothing, and whispered *Thank you* in the rearview mirror as I traveled down the highway, keenly aware of my speed, an alien terror in the big cat's world.

This second year of school was easier and more satisfying in some ways, but not all. I assisted one professor with an undergraduate class and got glowing feedback from the students. In all my writing classes, however, my fellow students continued to treat me as if I were still a mess. I was smirked at, ignored, patronized by many of the students, occasionally sympathized with and befriended tentatively by only two women my age, who seemed to understand that sometimes things take us down.

One class I took outside the writing department, only because it suited my desire for a three-days-a-week schedule. It was senior-level philosophy. While I'd not had a single philosophy class beyond 101 twenty-five years earlier, I also had no bad reputation to work against. To my pleasure, I debated comfortably with the Philosophy seniors.

I wrote a paper comparing the writings of French Revolutionary

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philosopher Madame Germaine deStael, to those of Edward Abbey, the contemporary environmental revolutionary and inspiration for Earth First!, relating their theories to their social classes. It earned me an A.

At the end of the year, not knowing that Kant is considered one of the philosophers most difficult to articulate, I chose for my oral presentation to describe his accomplishment of separating rationalism from religion. I earned an A for the class and a glowing letter of recommendation to teaching from my professor.

It was wonderful to have some positive feedback, and I wondered how many people are denounced as crazy, only because everyone around them treats them like they are.

Battling nerves one day, I actually switched alters in class. I was critiquing someone's paper aloud when, mid-sentence, I suddenly felt another, more mature part of me "come in." She did not like what the speaking alter was saying, and suddenly a jagged line of light flashed before my eyes, and the distances in the room shifted around me as my proprioception adjusted.

Mid-sentence, I was suddenly, adeptly turning the sentence around, by first articulating a careful qualification to my previous words, then concluding with a viewpoint opposite to the one I'd begun.

Relieved to have stopped myself from saying something stupid, but also a little disconcerted to feel such a strange sequence come on me so quickly, so unexpectedly, and in public (I'd never felt a shift so clearly, even in private), I looked around the room to see if anyone else had noticed anything unusual.

I was sitting at one end of a long table. On both sides, every student looked down at papers, as if frozen, and no one looked up. At the opposite end was my nemesis, a young man who'd been educated in prep schools, who often laughed at me and controlled a small clique. He leaned on his forearms, excitedly staring, as if I'd just done a standing double back flip and landed neatly on my feet.

I wondered if this was an anomaly, or if there'd be more to come.

*You have one central lesson to learn –
to continuously drop all your rigid identities.
Personal history may be your greatest danger.*

-- Arnold Mindell, Jungian Analyst, author, *The Shaman's Body*

Chapter Sixteen: REALTOR OF THE YEAR

When I graduated, I wasn't sure how I'd make my living in the desert. So it was convenient when I fell in love and decided to move away.

John Lynn and I had had crushes on each other in high school, and re-met at our 25th reunion. After one visit to each other's home (his in Colorado



Spring), we decided our union was destiny. The cards and Runes confirmed it, as well as a fascinating dream.

Helping John look for a new home in which to spend the last few years of his life with his children part-time, I realized my passion for the concept of home as a spiritual and psychological as well as physical shelter. Ready for a new line of work, I decided I'd become a real estate agent and help others find their perfect psychic space.

I got my license and joined a large company, then immersed myself in work to repay my credit card debts for my home and Mike's

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medical bills. In three years, I was the top-selling agent in my office of forty, and was voted “Realtor of the Year” for “exemplifying professional and ethical standards.”

With my new income stream, I paid off much of my debt, and began to take time off for Rolwing (a type of body therapy) and quiet time. After each session, I took the rest of the day off, and spent the time quietly, resting and thinking and writing.

One day, writing a letter, I found myself using two words I never used – *meditate* and *portal* – and, what’s stranger: together in one sentence. I was writing a friend about my desire to hike in the Dragoon Mountains when I returned to Arizona.

Years before, I’d had a mystical experience there, in the Cochise Stronghold, when I’d come upon a bowl-shaped depression high in the range. Even though it was around sunset and I always helped set up camp, I felt there was something incredibly sacred there, and I could not leave. I had to sit and give the place my respect, and told my husband to go ahead without me.

I don’t know how long I sat there, but I do recall knowing it was unusual for me, and I could not do anything else but give in to the rapture. When my husband finally returned to insist I come to camp, it was dark.

Curious about my use of those two words in the same sentence, I decided to try to meditate on the place and, to my astonishment, immediately upon sitting up, closing my eyes, and taking a single deep breath, I saw the back of a woman and then slipped into her – a female member of Cochise’s tribe. I was pulled by what seemed like an energy cord attached to my heart, in through the back of her neck. The tug was so powerful, I think my head jerked back.

Inside her body, I instantly knew we had just learned our warriors had given up the fight against the dragoons, and our tribe would be removed from the land, put on trains and taken “away.”

I couldn’t fathom this. Life was connection to Mother Earth. (Even as an environmental activist, I’d never liked the term “Mother

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Earth,” found it squeamish to imagine saying the phrase, but here I felt it with deep emotion.) To be ripped from the Mother was unimaginable. I knew the places we gathered food in various seasons, where water was, and acorns were, and deer. The cycle of our treks on this land was life.

Imagining the train into which we’d be herded after all these years of fighting, I cried in terror, unable to fathom the future. Fallen on my hands and knees, on both the mountain and my bedspread, I sobbed without release until exhausted, ten or twenty minutes before the experience faded away.

Another time, while being Rolfed, I felt myself suddenly young, perhaps nine years old, seeing the world past long hair falling beside my face, feeling sad, and young – *Jean Ann* (my family calls me that still) – alone, staring, wondering about life, with nothing to hold onto, nothing to bring joy. It was strange to remember such a simple thing as sitting and feeling, rich, deep, and so familiar, yet never remembered until that moment when it emerged inside me complete.

Other times in Rolfig, I saw images flash by like pages flipped in a book, each page with a design from the fifties, squiggly lines from menu covers, borders from magazines.

Another time they were all cartoon and advertising faces, all with bright happy smiles, eyebrows raised high – and every page had a feeling with it, of me, wondering about the world.

Twice, at home after a session, as I lay on my back, my spirit left my body. I felt it shoot powerfully out the top of my head, then return after I don’t know how long.

Once, I heard a beautiful tinkling, like “celestial bells,” and looked out my window to see if the neighbor had strung up something under his eaves, though it seemed to be in my attic. There was nothing there, but I felt blessed by something strange.

I shared my experiences with my Rolfer. He encouraged me to enjoy each one, but not hold onto anything, as that could stop my further opening to Spirit. It sounded like what I feared too much reading could be: preconceptions that would limit further perception.

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When overcome with grief, as I often was, he told me to simply feel it, but he added, “Don’t feel sad about feeling sad. It’s enough, on its own.” Good advice that has served me well.

I began to long for my desert home’s solitude and quiet again. John and I, after three years of loving and mutual support, had discovered a huge area of incompatibility – my belief in Spirit, which he called my imagination. We were still friends, though, and he was sad to see me leave. But he helped me prepare my home for sale and also helped me move.

When my company heard I was leaving, the management offered me, out of 250 employees, the management of our “cornerstone office” of fifty-some agents, with a likely six-figure income. I was stunned. I appreciated their confidence in me, so important after being laughed at those two years in school.

But I declined, explaining, “I want to sit in my window seats and look out at the land.” After four and a half years away, I would return to face my solitude again.

*People from the stars are trying to give us knowledge,
but we are too stupid.*

-- Credo Mutwa, Zulu medicine man

Chapter Seventeen: STAR COMMUNION

November, 1999. The first thing I did, when I returned to Arizona, was join friends on a desert camping trip to the *Cabeza Prieta* desert on the Mexican border.

Talking one night with a new acquaintance, my old friend Leo Mellon kept interrupting me repeatedly, insisting I look through his binoculars at the Pleiades. Repeatedly, I declined, because I didn't want to feel forced to say "How pretty," when they were just another bunch of stars.

He wouldn't be dissuaded, so finally I put the glasses to my face and – determined to speak the truth, and if they were boring, say so – looked in the direction he indicated.

The Pleiades were so beautiful, my heart responded powerfully. Each star in the cluster was surrounded by a glow that seemed to butt up against the glow of the others, like gelatinous cells of light grown together, stars sparkling at their centers.

A moment later, they provoked a more powerful sensation, of *longing* – for *home!*

My heart ached, while my brain registered disbelief.

Then suddenly I felt myself looking out a back window of a vehicle moving away from this sight, wondering what it would feel like to

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be gone for a very long time.

Stupefied, I lowered the glasses and blurted out, “I think I’m from there!”

Then, realizing this was the sort of thing I’d have hated to hear anyone else say, I clapped my hand over my mouth, and listened to the silence until everyone returned to their conversations.

After that, I never mentioned the experience to anyone for years.

Over the next three years, Leo would become my best friend, teacher of the night sky, and partner, though he lived in the city and I only visited him for a few days every other week.

Leo was addicted to reading – anything – and was known for picking up magazines, quantities of them, out of dumpsters or anywhere. When I produced my first *Almanac/Datebook/Journal for Southern Arizona* (published in 2003 and 2004), I would include one of the quotes he tore from a drenched psychology textbook rescued from the gutter:

We are all insane.

There are occasional philosophers and psychologists who, on their gloomier days, would suggest that insanity is ontological. The psychologists might prefer to say it is endemic to the human species. In any case, they mean that insanity – “misreading reality” – is somehow built into the very structure of human experience. In most of us, these “misreading” patterns are relatively weak, but they are the same patterns of experience, which, during times of trouble, can be escalated into full-fledged psychoses.

Advocates of this point of view are saying that all of us are slightly insane all the time; and that we are all potentially more insane if tragic conditions should drive our present incipient states into full-scale conflict.

The age-old belief that those who are classified “insane” are somehow different from the rest of us is a myth that has had its day. “The insane,” as someone put it, “are just like the rest of us in every way – only more so.”

Star Communion

Leo and I often laughed over those words. And I always wondered: *What if the majority were misreading reality and imposing their beliefs on the minority?* Actually, I was certain that was true.

In April 2000, Leo told me about a coming spectacular sunset, when the new moon would be in line with four planets close by. That evening, I sat on my roof to watch the rare celestial event in the west.

The sight of the frail crescent and four star-like points in a line, in the sunset colors fading to blue-black, was beautiful. As I sat in reverie, a cluster of bats suddenly thrilled me by making swift circles before my face, then quickly departed. I anticipated reading the meaning of bats in Jamie Sams' animal divination book.

Returning my gaze to the moon and four brilliant planets in the deepening sky, my vision suddenly popped and the two-dimensional background of blues turned into three dimensions with various colors of light.

My heart leapt ecstatic, and I marveled at the planets' orbits nestled one within the other. My home was gone and I was in love with the universe, drinking it up.

Next thing I knew, I sat on the roof, facing north, staring at a pitch-black sky filled with stars, like pairs of eyes, with the moon and planets gone. Babbling gratitude, laughing that my words were so inadequate and unnecessary, I still tried to use them, needing badly to thank someone for something far beyond my attempts at speech.

Then a rhythmic hushing sound approached – *whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh* – and a large pale owl appeared, flying around a raised portion of my roof, and then around me. Not wanting to startle it by rustling my stiff coat, I sat perfectly still, only turning my head slightly to the side, and appealed silently for it to return.

The owl returned from the same side it had disappeared, this time with its mate, and together the two circled me in the opposite direction. Then they returned again, each circling in a direction opposite the other. Again and again they returned, as if inventing new variations and patterns with which to fly around me, even flying within a few feet over my head.

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I think they made twenty or more passes each.

As soon as I'd thought that, and wished I'd counted the passes they'd made so I could tell a truthful story without exaggerating – then regretted my mental activity and lack of “presence” – and tried to refocus myself, they were gone.

Back inside, I read that bats are signs of shamanic power, and owls represent astral travel.

So poorly did the experience fit into my existing worldview, that I could not allow myself to recall it completely. Only years later did I realize I have total amnesia for whatever happened between the moment I was enraptured during dusk and when I sat babbling under the brilliant starry night with the moon and planets gone.

*All this, the wilderness world recently rediscovered,
with heightened emotional sensitivity, is an experience
not too distant from that of Dante meeting Beatrice
at the end of the Purgatorio.*

-- **Thomas Berry**

Chapter Eighteen: GRATITUDE

I told a girlfriend about my experience with the owls on the roof, which she shared with a friend, and soon I was invited to attend my first shamanic gathering, where we used “plant medicine” to explore other realms of consciousness.

(Shamanic gatherings don’t always use medicine, but this one did. I’d only twice in my life used LSD and once used mushrooms, all since building my house. They seemed to play strong roles in my healing.)

Jurema is, considered the wife or sister plant of *Ayahuasca*, also called *yagé*, is a South American entheogen* reputed to offer healing wisdom.

After ingesting the medicine, I drifted “up the river of memory,” enchanted by beautiful, bejeweled snakes watching me from jungle plants also studded with jewels. Visions flowed by, of which I now remember only a few.

I was a butterfly, recently emerged from my cocoon, wings still

* Entheogen identifies plant medicines as tools for accessing the Divine.

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wet, too heavy to lift or open, sitting on my branch with others who could open theirs. I would have to be patient.

I was a woman, the center of a fire-lit ritual, honored with a colorful cloak laid over my shoulders.

Merlin slid into many scenes repeatedly, like a joker, floating pointed hat first into my vision, then silently retreating, only to return again and again, at least a dozen times during the session, sometimes sideways, sometimes up-side-down from above. It always made me smile, and wonder what he was doing.

And a word came to me, twenty times, I'd guess, an African-sounding name.

Afterward, when we sat quietly, sipping soup, I told the group the word I'd heard: *Yobimbe*. One person snickered.

"What is it?" I asked.

After a moment's silence, a different person called it a stimulant, provoking another humored reaction, and finally the admission it was also an aphrodisiac.

"I don't need an aphrodisiac – or a stimulant," I said, confused as to why I would have heard this name.

"Then," our leader suggested, "that's a meditation you'll need to do."

Within a few days, a girlfriend helped me out, by forwarding an answer she'd received from an herbalist friend: *Yobimbe* is a stimulant when ingested, and is bad for the heart. But smoked, it treats *angina* and heart palpitations – a problem I'd been having for years.

I then realized, in amazement, that a couple weeks before this gathering, I'd experienced a strange urge to smoke for the first and only time in my life – "not to get high, just to smoke!" I'd said with bewilderment to a couple friends. I detested tobacco, and had gone to town to purchase an herbal smoking mix, but I didn't like it. So I'd remained stumped about this inexplicable urge to smoke.

Now it made sense. It was preparing me to use this new medicine in the manner it would help me, not hurt me.

Gratitude

I discovered the correct dosage by trial and error, and soon my heart palpitations were a thing of the past. *Jurema* is indeed a healer.

A few months later, walking by my home near sunset, I heard a rustle in the air and looked up to see a raven flying almost directly over my head, then a few more and, as I gazed westward saw dozens, then adjusting my far vision, I was astonished to see, first, scores of ravens then, I estimated, as they flew over my head: two- to three-hundred!

They came from the west-northwest, and funneled together through an invisible, narrow passageway, every one following the first one's lead. The invisible channel for their passage seemed thirty feet up, about six feet wide, between my home and me. From there, they banked southward and disappeared eastward behind the line of oaks winding into the mountains.

Later Leo would find a book at the library, and I would read about ravens gathering in hundreds. Though uncommon, the book said, the phenomenon is verified, but ornithologists don't know what it means.

When I realized the last raven was passing through the gap, I watched it and was delighted to see it circle back not far from me in the west. Silently, I implored it to land and, pushing my shamanic initiate luck, suggested it land and walk over to talk with me; but it had another idea. It banked and crisscrossed a few times before the sun until its shadow swept across me, causing a blink in the low sun's brilliance. Then it flew south and disappeared with the rest behind the oaks.

It was glorious to be treated so generously by Spirit. But it also provoked a sense of responsibility to stay in touch. Some part of me, though, always seemed to want to pull away. And I suffered guilt for my lack of responsibility to the gift.

One morning, passing by a full-length mirror in my home, I saw for only a moment myself as a Native woman, dressed in leather shirt, leggings, and headband and, as I stopped to stare in surprise, heard the word – not *Apache*, as I might have expected – but *Cherokee*, then I saw

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my modern self in the mirror.

When I called a friend to tell her this, as I came to the end of the story, she said the word *Cherokee* before I could.

The second and next-to-last time I used *psilocybin* mushrooms, it had been with her, and I knew then why we've had such a deep friendship, though we might go for years without seeing each other. She smiled at me, her head suddenly wrapped in colorful scarves with bangles – a gypsy! Or Romany, to use the correct, less disparaging, term. We both believe we were friends in this other life, and maybe more.

One night, I spontaneously connected with a childhood in feudal Europe. I was four or five, and knew my chores on the farm. I gathered eggs and did other things that didn't require much strength, and whenever my errands took me toward the barn, I always carried two apples, one in each pocket, to hide in the wall, so that over time, I could build up a small store that wouldn't be taxed by the lord, and no one would ever spy an adult committing the crime.

In a flash, I knew that my hiding hadn't been careful enough, and my father had been taken away.

I used to call this a "past life," but it may only have been a connection to someone's, anyone's life in the past.

Twice I rescued lizards from my bathtub, and twice they didn't want off my hands when I tried to release them in the garden. So, I let them run up my arm and sit on my shoulder, then went about my work for almost an hour before finally putting them down. In my book, I read that lizards remind us to pay attention to our dreams, and so I tried.

A week or so later, coming in from the bathhouse, one of the lizards must have jumped on me from a doorway, because I later found it riding on my back. Again, I put him on my shoulder while I did my chores.

Once when Leo visited, he referred to my dresser with a variety of candles on it as my "altar." I was appalled and quickly explained that

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it was *not* an altar, but simply my collection of candles, and I hastily dispersed them around the room, along with the stones, pine cones and other pretty items I'd set there. Over the next few weeks, I'd move the candles to different places, depending on my needs, and somehow they'd congregate back to one place and look like an altar again. Each time I'd notice, I'd disperse them. I wasn't Catholic or Buddhist, I reasoned, so I didn't need an altar, and didn't want anyone to make the same mistake.

Then a book came into my life, titled *Altars*, which explained how they are simply visual representations of prayer – an idea which fascinated me and gave me peace about the idea of having one. And I began to create them for various needs.

My first altar was for my female friendships, which had always been very few. It came about when I began with two candles and realized, with some surprise, that they had both been given to me by women friends. I decided to search my home for any other representations of friendships with women, and discovered I had more than I realized. Women had honored me with gifts that I'd hardly recognized, while I'd held onto my identity as a person who had few friends. *Why?* I had a lovely stone, crystals, a scarf, two candles, a bracelet, books and more.

When the altar was complete, I sat before it for a surprising length of time, incredibly happy and hopeful, letting my prayers be wordless, embodied in the beautiful light glowing from the collection. Unlit, except occasionally, it stayed there for weeks, and every time I passed it, a wordless prayer arose, scores each day, filling me with sensations of tremendous blessing and hope for connection and change.

From that point on, I've always had an altar, a place where I can sit and realize blessings, pray for myself and others, and be wordless in the presence of the Mystery.

On early winter mornings, I'd often rise in the blackness to open the insulated blinds, then return to the warmth of my covers to watch the stars fade, the sky and clouds slowly turn to color, and – finally, happily – the Sun rise. I felt kinship with our forebears who, since time began,

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have also waited patiently, or desperately, for the sun in wintertime.

Those nights, I sat by my fireplace and felt such gratitude for the entity *Fire* – a helper who made us feel good, gave us light, kept us alive sometimes. *And it spoke and danced!* When I rose to refill my tea, I couldn't just walk away without acknowledging *Fire*. I leaned into it and whispered *Thank you!* every time, as if to a friend.

One day, I realized I'd used the words *grateful* and *gratitude* many, many times in the past few weeks. Every time someone asked me by email or phone how I was, I told them passionately about something I was grateful for.

My sense of gratitude became so strong, for two weeks there was nothing I wanted to do more than sit before my altar and pray for people who needed prayer and thank the Creator for all I had. Sometimes I walked the circle through the house. Sometimes I just sat silently, consumed in wordless prayer. For two weeks I prayed constantly, and felt ecstatic.

Then I emailed someone about the entire experience and returned to "normal."

*To everything there is a season,
a time for every purpose under the sun....*
-- Ecclesiastes

Chapter Nineteen: SNAKE CONSCIOUSNESS

After a year, I felt remorse for my habit of being “in my head” so often, remembering the past or imagining the future, even simple stories I might tell, and so I was rarely “in the now.” I prayed for something to help me learn to be more conscious of the present.

The next time I went to town and returned to the land, Leo came with me, and within minutes of our arrival, I discovered a rattlesnake near my front door. I marveled at the perfection of this teacher: I could not walk outside my door without watching and thinking, in the present, every step. I was delighted and grateful, and told the snake so.

The next day, I walked outside for sunset, and sat in my usual place on the futon couch. Leo, more cautious than I, looked under the couch before sitting down. He saw the rattler coiled exactly beneath me.

After a short disagreement over the danger or non-danger of this, he took up a watching post fifteen feet away, and I went immediately into meditation and felt an etheric snake form writhe up inside me.

Aware of the sexual connotation, I thought it was probably only incidental to a more important message, though she could certainly heal my sexual wounds too. Perhaps my snaky wound would be a part of my strength one day, as all wounds have potential.

Snake confirmed I understood her main purpose: that she came

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to teach me consciousness.

An aspect of me was a little giddy, realizing this was a shamanic first – a relationship with a spirit animal – and I felt the urge to hug someone in happiness. Actually, the snake came to mind, though I knew this was silly.

Sternly she warned (and I was embarrassed, since it was so obvious): *she was not a buggy teacher, and could be brutal if I continued in my careless ways.* When I apologized for my inappropriateness, she responded that apologies were a waste of time. Focus on the present. Always on the present. I said I would, and she disappeared.

A week or so later, walking with Leo back from the mailbox, I thought I heard a cicada. I'd never heard a cicada's *ch-ch-ch-ch* at the land, but I'd recently visited my Apache friend across the valley, who'd captured one in his hand. I turned toward the rattling sound, looking at the tops of the grasses, asking, "Cicada?"

Leo, who'd stopped ahead on the rocky road watching me, countered calmly, "Rattlesnake?"

My eyes dropped to the ground, and I saw it: a huge rattlesnake, head writhing high as if to strike, only a couple feet from me, moving his form backward into the grass, waving side-to-side in warning. I spun on my heel and strode away quickly, chastising myself for my failure of consciousness – again.

I tried to practice presence with wordlessness, since even silent storytelling is a tool for revisiting the past or projecting into the future and missing the moment. Daily, I tried to walk the mile to the mailbox and back – a 45-minute walk over a bumpy surface with lots to notice on the way – without thinking in words. My goal was to enjoy the walk, admire whatever beauty I saw, and just experience it, without telling imagined friends about it.

I knew that we – our minds, our brains – have been changed by the fact of language in our lives. Language is learned on a structure of culturally-defined concepts, through which we learn to perceive

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everything around us. I wondered, *If I could stop the mind chatter, might I begin to perceive the world differently, fresher, maybe truer? Whatever truth was....*

Again and again, I'd catch myself telling stories. But after a few days, I was better at the inner silence. I could go farther and farther down the road in my wordless state.

A year after the first plant medicine circle, I attended my second one on a Full Moon, and experienced a powerful sensation I couldn't explain, which happened while "coming down" from a medicine journey.

An exquisite expansion and contraction of different sets of muscles started in my torso, then tensed all my limbs along one side or another. Then led me to twist my arms and legs in every different position that might be thought of, including lying face up, limbs underneath me, my chest so high in the air I felt I could turn myself inside-out through my heart in a spasm of glory.

For perhaps twenty minutes, while everyone else lay silent and still, I quietly rolled and twisted my body in exhilarating contortions. I wondered if I were channeling some ancient yogic postures, but didn't care, just gave into the sensations with tremendous satisfaction.

When I came home from that gathering, I was surprised to see a picture I'd hung on the wall just before I'd left – a picture I'd saved for years and finally got around to framing that last day. "Night-Sea Spirit," by Durga T. Bernhard, depicted a woman with snakes for hair, arms, and legs, and with a vagina that split into multiple, writhing snake-shaped caverns inside her. I'd only remembered it as a picture of a woman *dancing*. It was a shock to realize I'd kept the magazine cover art for years, had copied and framed it and never noticed the more-than-obvious snake motif I'd happily hung on my wall.

Two weeks later, on the New Moon, I found myself giving into the "yogic contortions" again, and it finally occurred to me what I'd been doing: *I was moving like a snake!*

Throughout that evening, I'd feel the powerful urge, stop

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whatever I was doing and let Snake move through me. I'd read that shamans and shamanic practitioners express their totem's natures in song and dance, to more fully bond with them. But I'd never wanted to do that, as it seemed presumptuous to assume I might have a spirit helper willing to move through me, and I didn't want to be spiritually embarrassed by making a false assumption.

My lack of confidence, even in shamanic realms, was more profound than I could recognize. I would continue to require that my spirit helpers push me along.

One summer mid-morning, on the way to my mailbox, I came across a rattler lying sinuously in the dusty road. It seemed too late for him to be warming himself, so I concluded he was stretched there just for me. He remained still while I walked to a spot a couple feet directly in front of his head, squatted down, greeted him with a *namaste*, then told him he must be careful because my neighbor would love to run over him with his truck if he could. Returning from the mailbox, I was glad to find only his slither trail.

Two days later, heading to town, I found his body, limp in an end-of-writhing pile, crushed on a cluster of rocks in the road. I lifted him carefully and put him in the back of my truck.

After skinning him with the help of a girlfriend, Kay Sather, using an obsidian blade I'd made in a primitive skills class that year, I stretched his skin in the egg-shape of an *Ouraborus*, the ancient symbol of life everlasting, then sewed it on black cotton velour, added blue silk bat wings, embroidery, tiny gold glass beads, yucca pods topping the shield, and the snake's own vertebrae dangling – and realized I'd created something that might be called a “medicine shield.”

Creating “The Rattle-Dragon” was a new experience. I'd never thought of myself as an artist, and didn't know what I was doing when I began – which was probably perfect. I worked intuitively, never knowing from stage to stage what was coming next. And I was surprised and excited as each new phase led to the next.

Throughout the process, however, I was careless, and sometimes

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left the work outside while I went in for water or food, and often returned to find the wind had tossed the shield, breaking his head from his body, or some other accident.

Leo and I invited friends out to view the Leonid meteor shower in the rural area's dark night sky. Wanting the Rattle-Dragon out of the way, I hung it near my bed with a temporary attachment.

We stayed up most of the night, and went to bed at 5 a.m., so I'd have only two hours to sleep before the first friends would rise to leave. I've never done well with sleep deprivation, and lay down, anticipating those two hours would be painfully precious.

At exactly 6 a.m., the mid-point of those two hours, to the minute, the shield crashed to the ground near my head, waking me in fear.



Eventually, after showing the shield in two galleries, I realized I didn't have the right to display it. I disassembled it and buried the skin, head and bones, with apologies and promises to learn to be more careful. And conscious.

Months later, I realized another thing: When I had been skinning him with Kay, I came to something down his belly mid-line that seemed like a sticker or burr. I was in the middle of trying to remove it with my blade when she told me it was his penis. I thought she had to be mistaken, but she told me she'd studied snake anatomy once when she'd illustrated a children's book about a snake, and told me that that's exactly what their penises look like: stickers or burrs. Disturbed by the mystery of how that shape could function, I continued sawing and then unceremoniously deposited the thing on top of the guts to be thrown away.

In so many ways I'd dishonored this teacher, including sexually. What an irony, for someone who'd been sexually dishonored, and was attempting to increase her consciousness, couldn't leave a fire without

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acknowledging it, and respected symbols intensely. No wonder it had crashed by my head.

One afternoon, I came in from outside and, without any conscious intention, immediately turned to the bookcase and pulled out my Bible – an inexpensive, red, faux-leather edition, given me by my minister husband on our second anniversary, thirty years earlier. Having not opened it for over two decades, I turned it over in my hands like an artifact, then slowly opened it to read beside the fireplace.

Randomly turning pages, I found myself in a gospel story of two disciples helping Jesus get away from the crowds by rowing him across the lake.

Suddenly, I stood on the hillside overlooking the lake, beside a small tree, watching the three pull away from shore. I'd expected to be with Yeshua that evening, and now it was clear that I wouldn't. Disappointment clenched my heart.

Sitting on my sofa, I dropped my face in my hands and sobbed in grief – while another part of me witnessed, astonished.

This had to be a connection to what Carl Jung called our “collective unconscious,” because it seemed to much to have been one of the disciples who would have assumed such a close connection.

If powerful memories like this could be from the collective, then could it also be that my “memories” of abuse were also from the collective - *someone else's*? I liked that theory, but the remembrances had felt like *me* in this life, young, recognizable in my core, only long forgotten. The interpretation that they were *my* memories also explained a lot of other memories and experiences. And, accepting them seemed to have been intrinsic to my mental healing. As much as I'd have preferred to believe they weren't mine, I couldn't accept it. At least I knew I was open to considering all possibilities as they occurred to me.

In the spring, a friend visited and had a severe asthma attack. She asked me to drive her up the mountain, where the pollen would be less intense. As we drove, she wheezed desperately, and I was suddenly

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surprised to see her aura. It seemed to be absent at her arms, indicating, I intuited, a sense of powerlessness.

Later, I would find in a holistic healing book that asthma is indeed related to powerlessness, as is the symbology of having no arms.

Another night, meditating, I was suddenly struck with the conviction that a young friend of Leo's and mine needed three things: to have Leo look intently into his eyes, hold his hands firmly, and speak a particular phrase to him.

I immediately called Leo and learned that the man was there in an emotional state, and Leo had been at a loss to help. He accepted my instructions and later called back to say it seemed to be exactly what was needed, only he didn't want to hold the young man's hands.

A year earlier, in a Native arts shop owned by my Apache friend, I had bought a Tarahumara rattle, mostly to support his business. It had a bright sound I liked, but I had never wanted to use it. I didn't feel I had a right to use shamanic tools.

I would, though, buy a CD of shamanic drumming, to practice "journeying" in the Spirit realm, as taught by Michael Harner in his classic book, *The Way of the Shaman*, which I'd picked up in a used bookstore.

For a short while I had interesting and positive experiences using the CD and "core shamanism" ritual. Then trickster spirits began to plague me. When I called on my helping spirits, they'd arrive, as cartoons making stupid or leering faces, or they'd be crippled or dead, falling from the sky, and lots of them, to magnify my terror.

Unnerved as went on for weeks, I quit journeying for a year or so and imagined a trip to Mexico to find a shaman to teach me how to deal with such things, but didn't have money to travel.

Other shamanic-type events occurred spontaneously, without any ritual or expectation. One night, I felt inspired to create a new altar in the southeast corner of my home. Quickly, I gathered a candle, a few

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pictures, and a stack of books on which to balance the arrangement on top of the window seat pillows. Though simple, its beauty overwhelmed me, and I knelt before the altar and stared.

Suddenly, I was in a marble hallway near a doorway with very bright light shining out. I sensed I was given permission to step into the doorway and see Someone who emanated a great deal of light, but I was afraid.

Hastily, I stood and began to walk rapidly away from the altar, but caught myself in the middle of my second step and forced myself to stop and turn, but the vision was gone.

Then I knelt, open to whatever else might transpire, and heard the words, “Daughter of Isis.” This seemed too big a responsibility for me, and I sat perplexed. Besides, I wasn’t very familiar with Isis. *Where in the world did she fit in relation to Jesus? And where did they all fit in with Snake? And Owl or Wolf?* This was getting confusing.

Suddenly curious, I lifted the books I’d grabbed to support the candle, and pulled out the one on the bottom. It was a journal I’d hardly used, not liked, not paid any attention to, but Isis was on the cover.

Leo visited again, bringing with him a book on “star shamanism” from the public library. He found it mildly humorous, as it offered a meeting place for our swiftly diverging interests. He hadn’t read it, but thought I’d find it interesting.

After glancing through it quickly, I decided to meditate on the roof and talk to any star that seemed to call. Immediately, I noticed to the south a bright star in Scorpio, and stared for a moment, then was suddenly frightened. It was Antares, which I thought was nicknamed “the Demon Star” (but it’s not).

Spinning on my heel, I faced north and was relieved when I saw Polaris. Strangely soothed, even nourished, I stood still, arms hanging at my sides, palms forward, and stared for a long while, drinking up the calm.

Later, I read that Polaris is associated with Isis. And Isis is often depicted with a snake.

A political rival once said of my friend Barry Goldwater that he was “dragged kicking and screaming into the eighteenth century.” My Guides might say the same about my own resistance each time they have urged me to break new ground by writing about psychic concepts that seem to be ahead of their time.

-- Ruth Montgomery, syndicated Washington columnist on politics and world affairs.

Chapter Twenty: ALIEN IDEAS

One morning I woke up lazily, then sat up suddenly with an alarming thought. It was summer and the windows were all open to let the cool night breezes through. Outside, the area between my home and the oak trees, a hundred yards away, was mostly open desert grassland with small, sparse mesquite trees. I stared at my beloved view that had overnight become threatening, and was stunned with a new idea: *Alone here in the desert, a UFO could land, and beings could walk right up to my window and look in!*

But while I formed these words, I knew I was lying to myself. I didn't envision any being looking through the screen, but one *coming* through it.

Then I wondered with a shock, *Why did this idea come to me so powerfully right now? Did I have a dream?* Dreams have never resulted in sitting up with this sort of conviction. I got out of bed to shake off the idea and forget it.

One evening, a movie about crop circles was to be shown at the public library in Bisbee, sixty miles away. Since I could also buy organic

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groceries there and visit my past-life Romany friend, I decided to go.

The crop circle images were beautiful, and the scientific and mathematical analyses impressive. Afterward though, to my surprise, many in the audience hung around to talk about aliens and UFOs. The movie hadn't referred to these subjects, and I was mildly disoriented by the connection presumed by everyone else.

Driving home, suddenly, a blinding light was before me in the sky. I raised one hand and squinted my eyes, unwilling to pull over. Slowly negotiating the winding road through the foothills, hand protecting my narrowed eyes, I cursed the Border Patrol for its poorly trained helicopter pilots, so irresponsible as to blind drivers on the highway. They could cause a wreck, I would tell them the next day. Then I realized there was no helicopter sound.

When a UFO occurred to me, I chided myself: *The very first time you hear people talk about UFOs publicly is when you think you're having a UFO experience!* A sober part of me wondered if, by considering their existence even momentarily, I had somehow allowed them to contact me. A most disagreeable idea, I dismissed it immediately.

Next I theorized that the Border Patrol tower that lights up the desert had malfunctioned, and was aimed coincidentally in my direction. *That's it*, I decided. Still squinting, blocking the light with one hand and gripping the wheel with the other, I imagined my indignant call to the Border Patrol headquarters the next morning.

When I passed the light so it was finally behind me, I didn't continue driving, but pulled off the highway to look at it. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, so I drove home.

Years later, I realized the tower is not visible from that stretch of curvy road in the hills, where the light preceded me for at least a half-mile.

The next time I was in a used bookstore, I picked up Whitley Strieber's *Communion*, telling myself it was time I learned why the book was a #1 *New York Times* Bestseller. I finished it, certain it was true – and glad it had nothing to do with me.

Margaret Meade, asked if she "believes" in UFOs:

I think this is a silly question, born of confusion.

Belief has nothing to do with ... the kind of knowledge that is based on scientific inquiry. But this is just what we're doing when we ask whether people believe in UFOs, as if their existence were an article of faith.

Part Three: Working Through the Lessons

*We face a hostile ideology -- global in scope,
atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose,
and insidious in method.*

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower, from the
“Military-Industrial Complex” speech

Chapter Twenty-one: MIND CONTROL

June 2002. My first week home after the Judi Bari trial, alone, wondering if I ought to be a little jumpy about the FBI, a close friend wrote me an email with links to websites she thought explained some of our disturbing childhood memories. I looked at the sites, and began a deeper descent into darkness than I ever could have imagined.

In recent decades, I read, therapists across the nation had been compiling data on presumed “paranoid delusions” of their clients – gathered under scientific guidelines, to not muddy the data – that indicated they weren’t delusions at all, but memories of actual government “mind control” experiments done on children, beginning in the 1940s. There were a series of programs, contracted through the CIA from the 1940s until at least 1971, all well-documented by Senate testimony and Freedom of Information Act releases, even though most files, according to testimony by the 1971 CIA Director Stanislaw Turner, had been destroyed.

I remembered, just a few weeks earlier, at one of our publicity events in front of the courthouse, a woman had come to hand out black-

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and-white, quarter-sheet fliers announcing a presentation on exactly this subject. I'd read a phrase about CIA and mind control, and been extremely indignant that she'd crashed our event and was associating it with her flaky, paranoid subject matter. Now, I saw the subject wasn't flaky at all, but well documented. As for paranoid, well, most of us know the saying about that.

Historians acknowledge that the CIA brought Nazi scientists to the US after World War II under Operation Paperclip. One of their projects was developing a way to create amnesic pawns in service to the government as spies and assassins. They called them Manchurian Candidates, reflecting their assumption that the Chinese were embarked on this quest, which they wanted to achieve first, for national security.

While experiments on adults has been lightly reported and even made into a movie, the use of children as subjects seems to have been considered just a little too upsetting for public disclosure.

But scores of unrelated people, scattered across the nation, have described how they were tortured as children, usually at the age of six and seven, which caused them to become split personalities. The next phase was having their alters "programmed," using hypnosis, to carry out commands they would not remember.

At some point, either as a perk for the scientists, or because it caused especially powerful psychic splitting, sexual abuse also entered the picture.

According to the literature, the CIA had been networking, underground of course, for decades with other groups which provided them services such as cover, protection, collegial research exchange, and other benefits. It is assumed, and was somewhat documented, that they networked with elements within the Mafia, mainstream churches, Satanists, police, judges, lawyers, educators, psychologists and psychiatrists, the media, Congress, and others.

Torture included drugs, electroshock, dislocated joints, cold, isolation, and no-win psychological situations, in which children's responses resulted in other children being mistreated, or in some cases murdered in front of the others – all tortures that wouldn't leave physical

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traces, but which would cause them to “dissociate” or fracture their minds and be absolutely obedient.

Anyone would want to deny this, and I did too, but recalling my artwork of the red and the blue children helped overrule my denial. Some of the programs, the websites said, involved telling the child they “are red,” “are blue,” or “are green,” indicating their programming as sexual pawns, spies, or assassins.

For once I had something that wasn’t just a memory, but tangible evidence: *my art*. I felt fortunate to have dated the artwork, copied it, and given it years before to both a friend and a therapist, which would now serve as confirmation of my memory. I pulled the original out of the closet and stared at the little stick-figure red and blue children running to hide behind a tree. Sadness mingled with gratitude that the mystery was beginning to make sense.

Then I recalled the flashback of the jaw-displacing helmet I’d experienced and felt that little girl’s terror. No wonder I’d been the most obedient child I’d ever known in my life.

Over the next few days, other elements of my life began to fit the pattern. It was 1st and 2nd grade – ages 6 and 7 – for which I have almost total amnesia, and ages 6 and 7 are said to be the initial years of the mind control work. The sole memory of those two years, of painting the tree became sadly significant: shadowed by black, stormed by a raging wind, leaning drastically, black leaves flying.

While I have scores of clear memories from the years before, even as young as fourteen months, and the immediate years after, those two years are entirely blank, except for painting the tree. I cannot remember a single teacher, friend, classroom or other event.

It was overwhelming to consider that humans could do these things to other people, much less to little children. But I knew from history that things like this have always been done, and not just by serial murderers, but institutionally. The Inquisition, with its thumb screws, iron maiden, breast pullers and other torture implements - created terror all across Europe and the Middle East for centuries. Genocide of Native Americans and other peoples have always gone on around the globe.

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The nightmarish treatment of slaves. Removal of Native children from their parents into Indian Schools resulted in many of their ongoing rapes. The Tuskegee experiments left Black men untreated with syphilis, while doctors documented their torment. And the Holocaust.... I often said I don't believe the Apocalypse is coming. I think it might describe the last two-thousand years. In the context of our history, MKULTRA (code word for one mind control program) is not difficult to believe.

The men behind mind control are documented to have been Nazi scientists, brought over after World War II under Operation Paperclip. Congress was told the Nazis were needed to help us keep ahead of the Chinese, supposedly developing a brainwashed human who would obey orders, do anything, and not remember it, so couldn't be tortured to reveal national secrets. Black budget funding was provided to make headway on this project, and some of it was channeled into programs to develop a more promising adult by beginning their training when they were children. Over the years, I have purchased documentation, including the Senate testimony from 1971.

I now stared at an underbelly of our culture even darker than the FBI and what they did to Judi Bari. *These things were done.* I could feel it in my body. Alone in the desert, already unnerved by the trial, I wondered if they still were watching me, their subject.

I began to understand my lifetime of panic attacks over the mildest chill if I didn't have a sweater. I read about how children were subjected to extended cold – a torture that wouldn't leave a visible mark.

Sickened and frightened beyond belief, I thought, *Maybe the government doesn't really do things like this, but only torments people by aiming beams at them, making them believe these things are real memories, then we either write books about it or read them and sink in our personal swamps of invented horror.*

I remembered the time I was brought home, as a very young child, by four men with military haircuts; I'd sat in a silent rage in the back of a sedan with a two-tone aquamarine interior, with a man on either side of me, while I stared ahead at the space between the closely-shaved heads of the men in front, ignoring the men on either side who seemed to ignore me. I held on my lap a tin toy beagle with sad eyes, a

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crank on one side and music box inside, which played “How Much is That Doggie in the Window?” I didn’t know the words *betrayed* or *betrayal*, but I was so overwhelmed by the sensation I was hardly in my body.

It had been strange, when I’d brought up this memory to Mom and Dad hoping to glean information to help me determine that my abuse had come from someone outside the family. I’d asked my sister if she had any strange memories and, because she’d just watched a “20/20” television program on the “False Memory Syndrome,”* she assumed I had been misled by a therapist, and told our brother. He assumed I’d accused my parents and, without asking me, sought to comfort them. They were outraged and began calling me “deluded,” and continued this for years.

I hadn’t wanted to talk to them about this any more, but they had asked for a meeting when I lived in Colorado, and John convinced me it would be a good idea, possibly healing. When I wondered what in the world we could discuss that might go anywhere productive, I thought of this memory of the four men in the sedan, and imagined they might jump on the idea of it being someone else. Whether or not it was real, I hoped to restore peace in the family.

To my surprise, they denied they’d ever let anyone around me who would hurt me, and Mom said words again that I’d heard a few times in my life, that I “mix up dreams and imagination with memories.”

I recalled the first time I heard that phrase and how the hair rose on the back of my neck. Mom had said exactly those words, to me and no one else, a few times in exactly the same sing-song tones, as if she’d said them to herself a thousand times in a trance. I’d wondered what in the world she was hoping to hide when we’d been given such an idyllic childhood. I felt sorry for her, and worried she was beating herself up for something that was certainly nothing.

* Psychological and psychiatric associations do not recognize this as a syndrome. Documentation links the founders with pedophile organizations in Europe, and the “syndrome” is widely recognized as an attempt to discredit victims who’ve recovered their memories.

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They brought me back to the moment: “We would never let anyone hurt you,” they insisted indignantly, as if this scene of the four men had been a personal attack on them.

It had made no sense to me then, that they wouldn’t jump at the chance to blame someone else for my memories of abuse. But now it made sense, as I read how some parents enrolled their children in an experimental program with the government.

Had they been told that, besides helping their country, I’d be made well-disciplined, high-functioning and obedient? Did this explain why I was so obedient? And did my parents come to understand too late what was involved and didn’t want to admit they’d allowed it? And since my siblings don’t seem to have been subjects, is there something in this Network that carries on the “sacrifice of the first born?”

I remembered the time I mentioned to my parents that I was seeing a therapist, and my father had raised his voice so that I could not respond, pronouncing that “whatever is past is past, and there’s no sense digging it up!” and other such wisdom, after which he stormed out of the room, announcing with his eyes in dramatically angry slits, hissing, “*I’m – so – angry – I – could – spit.*” He’d done something similar when, in my twenties, I’d told him I’d gone to see a stage hypnotist.

If I’d been sexually abused, by anyone, even if by them – which I’ve never been sure of – I knew it would only be because of what had come before, as I’d seen in the LSD vision of the cosmic yarn. Whatever mess we’d all been born into, it seemed a tragedy, and required compassion, so we could all heal together. The tragedy ultimately, I believed, would yield wisdom. I didn’t want to fall prey to hate.

One day, something flashed in my mind, like a short clip from a black and white movie made in the 40s or 50s – so clear I could have counted the stripes on the little boy’s knit shirt, and can still see the texture of his crew cut blond hair and the panic so painful on his six-year old face. I feel dead and obedient. Mothers sit on chairs in a circle with spaces between them, and children stand obediently in the gaps, except for the boy leaning toward me, all watching a baby about to drown in a basin in the middle. Laughing, the mothers toss cupfuls of water toward

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it.

Had I seen this film as a child? Had I been there? Or was this another psy ops, something flashed into me?

I remembered a train trip I took with my mother to New Mexico as a child. It was the only time I remember ever traveling without the whole family. When I asked my mother about it once, she said something about going to visit an aunt, but I have no memory of that, and she responded while looking away, as if she didn't want to talk about it. My family wasn't the type to do that sort of thing, some members taking trips without the whole family, so it now seemed suspicious.

I also recalled the time I asked something innocent about my childhood, and my mother responded, *Why do you ask?*

I had no particular reason, so she didn't answer me. I learned long ago not to ask questions about my childhood.

I visited a hypnotherapist and asked to be regressed. Even though I'd read that the military was involved, I fully expected to re-experience a scene in a hospital. Instead I was in a large dark building, like a hangar, sitting on a chair too big for me, in front of a desk with a military man in khaki. Another man, pear-shaped, in uniform, approached the desk from behind me, then stood in front of me and to the side, glanced back, then said to the man at the desk, "A pretty one." I brought myself out of the trance, unwilling to proceed further.

The hangar seemed congruent with my lifetime nightmare of running across a field with airplanes in the distance, my knees buckling slowly as I tried to run in slow motion with someone in pursuit. It had terrified me regularly since I was quite young, then thankfully never returned after the day I told my therapist, "I think I was sexually molested as a child." Now I wondered if I had escaped once, when drugged, and had to be chased down.

This is one of the good parts of remembering: Nightmares go blessedly away. It makes me believe this whole scenario has not been beamed into me, but is actually really remembering. I wish I could conclude differently.

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I remembered more about the day I spent in jail in Durango, Colorado, for a demonstration in the Amoco parking lot. As an activist writer, I'd often tried to write about this event, though I never published it. The most significant element I never included, probably because it "didn't make sense," and I'd learned long ago to eliminate whatever doesn't advance the point.

After being arrested for standing too near some demonstrators, in mid-afternoon, I'd been separated from the other women and, after an hour or so in a cell with strangers, I was led down a hallway by a female guard with a long blond ponytail. When we turned a corner into a section of hall with no view from either end, two men in plainclothes came around a corner. I moved to the side of the hall, thinking to minimize the error someone had made by letting two men into this section of hallway with us. Next thing I knew, I was rising from the floor, enraged, hair in my face, swinging my arms, while the men grinned broadly, chuckling, and one stooped low to get near my face and take a picture.

Years later I realized I have no memory whether I was ever returned to the cell with the seven other women or whether I spent all those hours until midnight alone. They'd forced me to put on an orange jumpsuit, and I have no recollection of ever changing back to my own clothes.

Rising with arms swinging is commonly described of people who've been *tazered*. Tazers are fairly new law enforcement devices that send an electrical current into the victim, which causes them to drop to the ground, unconscious. Early users of the product found it entertaining to drop prisoners and watch them stagger up a minute later, disoriented, angry and swinging. Since tazers have inadvertently killed people when used indiscriminately, they're not allowed in some jurisdictions.

I remember staggering up that afternoon, but nothing more until I was awakened around midnight to be processed out. *What happened during all those hours in the jail? Why had it happened to me? And why had I forgotten it?*

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All these years, I thought they'd harassed me because I'd been giving my cellmates legal advice. Now, I've wondered if I might have been chosen because they had a different sort of file on me, one going back to childhood, one compiled by the CIA.

If I'd been one of their subjects in the 50s, and maybe 60s, I prayed I was one of their failures. But I wasn't sure.

There'd been a day during the Judi Bari trial, when I'd left a media conference, telling myself I didn't like the woman who'd taken over. I wandered around downtown, looking for a branch of my bank, not finding it, backtracking, looping around, self-conscious about what someone might think of me if I were being followed.

I imagined being followed by a fellow activist who might have thought my leaving the media conference suspicious. As I wandered, I told myself that, yes, walking loops downtown might look odd, but it was explainable: I was lost. Still, fantasies danced in my head that maybe I only *thought* I was lost, looking for my bank, but really I was being controlled, on a mission for the FBI. Of course, then I wondered what was up with *those* fantastical imaginations.

Remembering that afternoon, wandering, worrying like that, feeling like something was wrong that I couldn't explain, made me sick. I wasn't confident that my paranoia wasn't actually true. Now that I'd shifted my concern about the FBI to the CIA, I thought: *If I was still under their control, I would rather be dead.*

Almost daily I considered the implications of killing myself, removing myself as their pawn – but *Was I or wasn't I?* I wrote a letter, explaining all this to my friends, and gave them permission, gave them my blessing, asked them please to do this: *Kill me if you ever think it evident that I am acting "on orders" rather than from my activist heart.*

But I realized the letter could provide perfect cover for a spy in the movement to off me and make him- or herself a hero, so I destroyed it.

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*If you gaze long into an abyss,
the abyss will gaze back into you.*

-- Friedrich Nietzsche

Chapter Twenty-Two: RAMPANT PARANOIA

Why would parents give their children to a government torture program? I surmised they were told the program would create high-functioning, patriotic children.

My parents are hyper-patriotic. My father was in the Navy, which is supposedly a link in MKULTRA. And maybe our distant relationship to Dwight D. Eisenhower was some connection – he was my grandfather’s second cousin. He and Mamie often visited Paradise Valley, AZ, where we lived since I was nine, though we never visited with them. I have no idea.

Stewart Udall, then Secretary of the Interior, was our neighbor when I was eight, friendly enough to attend a Christmas party at our home once – another government connection. Most worrisome, the Secretary’s cousin, Addison Udall, was my pediatrician.

In Phoenix, at least one famous Mafia leader brought his pets to my father’s animal hospital. I read about the man’s arrest the summer I worked at my father’s front desk. When I asked, my mother answered casually, eyes averted, voice abnormally calm, that, Yes, it was the same family. Another connection to the Network.

Another connection could be our church. My mother is a “jack Mormon,” meaning not a member in good standing. The Mormons are

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the denomination most represented in the CIA and FBI. Jack Mormons' children, therefore, would be accessible, but less valued than the children of "good Mormons."

If Satanists had any connection, and the websites indicated they did, they would have enjoyed my birthday: 7-7-52 (three 7s). That day is the exact middle of Cancer, also known as Moon Child. I decided to look more closely at my astrological chart and realized I was born, not only on a Monday (literally Moon Day) that year, but a Full Moon. And my birth time, 4:25 a.m. was within eight minutes, less than 2/1000ths of a degree from perfection.

It was also the day Dwight Eisenhower was nominated to the Republican presidential ticket. Somewhere I read that Satanists are into this sort of coincidence.

With my head spinning, I remembered another string of coincidences. I'd been badgered into playing two roles as strippers in my short time in theatre. I'd never sought those roles, had only wanted to dance, but had been coerced into taking them.

One was a community theater production, in which every dancer was required to also audition for singing and acting roles. "Gypsy" is the story of Gypsy Rose Lee, the famous stripper, or actually about her mother, Rose, a failed vaudeville performer who made her living by putting her children onstage, eventually forcing Louise to strip, ruining their relationship while launching the unwanted career of Gypsy Rose Lee. I hated the role of Gypsy as much as Louise/Gypsy hated Rose. But we both did what we were told. Besides, friends thought I was crazy to want to evade the opportunity. I didn't practice my lines, dropped a few, and gave a rather wooden performance.

After I'd graduated high school, and was smoking cannabis, counting the days until I could leave home and bring my hippie consciousness out of the closet, I received a call from a representative of a sorority house – or "women's fraternity," as they ironically called themselves. This woman would not quit calling to insist I make a commitment to attend "Rush," where I'd learn about sorority life. She

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was the daughter of an acquaintance of my mother's, so I was constrained to not be rude.

After the third or fourth call in which I refused to promise anything, I was exasperated and told her I didn't think I was their type. When she asked me what *type* I thought they were, I was speechless for a moment, then, angry to be put on the spot, I decided to tell her the only word that came to my mind: "Plastic," I said. It was highly uncharacteristic of me to have been so rude, but I thought she deserved it for bugging me incessantly, and maybe it would make her quit calling. (Telling her directly never occurred to me.)

She returned heavy psychological artillery. "Plastic" was a common hippie denunciation in 1970, just as "not judging" hippies by their clothes was a fond demand, though ironic. She seemed aware of all this and quickly suggested I should not judge them until I actually knew them, which I could do by attending "Rush." Embarrassed to have been judged judgmental, I felt I needed to prove my willingness to check them out and not judge what I really didn't know. I agreed to attend Rush. *But just to see*, I told myself.

At the parties, I was dumbfounded to find myself the center of attention. I'd always been shy, on the edge of things, except in the Fine Arts Department, where we were proud to be called Fine Arts freaks. So being center of attention in a sorority house was hard to fathom. But it was the case.

Girls stood around me at every party, asking me questions I couldn't believe. I'd answer that yes, I'd been in theater, and instead of asking me if I ever had roles (even that was presumptive, since I might have been a painter or sound person), they asked if I'd ever played *lead roles*. When I admitted yes and answered their questions about which ones, groups would call out to their friends, "Hey, Sherry, I want you to meet Jean Ann – she played a couple of leads in community theater!" I was shocked they could be so brazen.

A long-time friend from grade school was going to the same university and wanted very much to join this specific sorority, and was baffled and hurt by my resistance. She suggested that maybe I just didn't

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know what it was like to have lots of friends and that's why I didn't trust it, that I didn't know what it was like to be really happy, and that's why it seemed plastic to me. Unable to explain myself, I decided to give it a try.

At the end of the year, it would all make sense, as we prepared for the next year's Rush. I learned there were girls whose accomplishments were memorized, to make sure that she felt special. My pledge mom told me that I'd been one – but not just recommended by an alumnus – I had been recommended by the state president!

I couldn't figure out how she knew me. My parents didn't travel in that sort of circle. I was dumbfounded. And insulted.

They'd pretended to be impressed by *me*, and to want to be “my sister,” but had not had a chance to know me. They'd manipulated me to please their superior.

After a month in the house, before I understood all this, a contingent came to ask me to enter a beauty pageant. I was appalled, and told them, “No.” But they came back to ask me again and again, pretending not to understand what was so bad about it. I told them *No* dozens of times, but they never quit asking, and I gave in. Then I learned they actually wanted me to enter *two* pageants. I went along.

I let my mother plan everything. She bought my dress, swimsuit, heels, luncheon outfit, and even my music and made arrangements for me to meet with my choreographer. I had no heart for it, but I went along.

For my music, my mother chose “Big Spender,” from *Sweet Charity*, a Broadway play about a prostitute. I went along with this totally inappropriate selection, because my mother insisted I had to begin practicing, I hadn't found anything else (I hadn't looked), and the music was played by the Percy Faith Strings – a light, *Muzac*-style recording. It *seemed* innocent. Besides, Shirley MacLaine had sung the song on television and stage, and she was America's sweetheart, it seemed.

When my choreographer gave me a move that seemed lewd, she and my mother both laughed, then they straightened their faces and insisted that was not why they were laughing, and the move was “fine.” It was subtle, but still I was humiliated. I didn't change my dance,

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though, afraid to imply that they would do something so cruel to me.

The move was not noticed in the first two pageants, and I was awarded First Runner-Up in each. Then one of the winners declined her crown, and I was sent to the statewide pageant. There, the judges' seating was directly beneath the apron of the stage where that move was performed, and this time it would not go unnoticed.

The day before, over my objections, my mother paid for a live band to replace the cassette recording of the Percy Faith Strings. With the *wa-wa* coronets and slide trombones, my music became a full-fledged stripper's song, and when I danced to the edge of the stage to perform the lewd move, I looked down to see the shocked face of one of the judges, jaw dropped, peering over her reading glasses up between my legs.

As soon as the spotlight turned off, I hurried to the dressing room, sick with humiliation and something worse I couldn't name, wondering what in the world had happened to me.

I finished the school year, dropping a couple courses, then "deactivated" from the house in the summer. The next fall, I dropped out of college, walked away from "my crown" and title, dropped my childhood name of "Jean Ann," and disappeared for months from my family and friends, hitchhiking across the United States, dressed as a boy.

The two stripper roles I'd been coerced to play, the flashback of the white beaded costume, and my amnesia were too much to take. *Had I been a naïve and sometimes amnesic pawn in some perverse game? Which included my choreographer? Which my mother would go along with? Which the sorority was part of? But was bigger than that – which extended to my earlier teen years? Maybe even to my childhood? Why had my mother and choreographer laughed, then denied it? And why had I ignored it and done what I was told, all those weeks of practicing the dance – knowing?* These questions swirled around me incessantly for hours, days, weeks and months.

The dots don't necessarily connect, I told myself. The pattern I thought I saw might only be paranoia, real mental illness. Maybe I have been mentally ill all my life, and I should consider that.

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But I had considered it, often enough, had even tried to commit myself, but everyone said I was sane. For a year I'd been seeing a therapist, who always told me I'd get through this, and nothing was wrong with me.

All my life, I'd been called a leader, intelligent, talented and creative. I scored in the top few percent of every national exam I ever took. I had only two amnesic events that I could recall. And amnesia wasn't necessarily crazy.

I might be multiple, I concluded, but I'm not nuts. The medical library made it clear that MPD was a disorder resulting from a choice to stay sane in the face of untenable trauma. I might have different personalities, but they were all sane ones, of a sort, it seemed. I had to remind myself of this.

Most important and strange, though, I was beginning to understand: the more I accepted these horrible realities, the more I felt healed and whole, and the clearer and more alive my perceptions of the world became. There must be something to that.

No matter that I felt clearer, I hated this conclusion, and constantly sought other explanations.

Here's one: *The feds are trying to make me crazy by beaming these images and feelings into me, to punish me for my activism, even though I think there are more creative media people in Earth First! than me. Or maybe that developer put out a contract on me, not to kill me, but drive me crazy.*

No, I finally concluded, all this speculating is not productive, and is actually more paranoia producing. There's no comfort in believing that others can implant perceptions in your brain. That sort of Brave New World is not a place I'd want to remain alive in. I had to accept my perceptions for what they seemed to be.

Daily, faced with this round of internal questioning, my weariness took over and I thought, *I cannot live.*

But I didn't want to hurt my kids. They were still young. And I needed to protect them. For the next decade, there would be a thousand or more times that I would despair that I couldn't commit suicide, because of them.

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Today, I'm very glad I have children, for many reasons, of course, but also because they kept me alive during those years. My torment didn't last, and I've come to see this "craziness" in a larger context.

Before reaching this comforting place though, the day came when I suddenly realized my grandmother, who in a few short years went from migrant farm worker, to widow with two young children, to successful restaurateur for the movers and shakers of Van Nuys, California, had owned beautiful lace and beaded silk dresses that my mother saved for me. One she allowed me to adapt for a costume. Another she gave to me many years later, though the fabric was rotting so badly it couldn't be lifted for the weight of the beads.

Then it dawned on me: *those were not the clothes of a migrant farm worker, not a frugal Mormon widow and single mother getting a business off the ground.* There was likely a connection between those beaded silks and her success. With a sick heaviness of heart, I wondered if there was a connection to me. And my mother, knowing it or not, had provided me a clue.

I remembered the time, at a family dinner, when my mother had told the story of the student who'd followed me around to write a paper about the strange words I incorporated in my speech when I was little. A few moments later, I asked a follow-up question, and she snapped her head up, then ducked it suspiciously and announced, "I never said you spoke strange words when you were a child!"

Is my mother a split personality too? Controlled by others? That would explain a few things. If this was a family legacy, I thought my children might be safer if I left this life, so they couldn't be held hostage to something demanded of me.

Again I seriously contemplated suicide, but first felt a need to leave a clear and believable story for my children to protect themselves.

I tried, but realized I couldn't write a story they'd believe.

I'd have to live. But, again, I didn't want to, and resented this life sentence.

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One day, I realized that, while I'd been initiated into the sorority, I had no memory of the ceremony – except for a one-second flash. I remembered waiting with my pledge sisters to enter the basement that morning. It was something we had looked forward to the entire year.

In shock, I pondered this fact – another event of amnesia....

I'd known that, by accepting initiation, I had agreed I'd never tell what I'd saw, and I intended to honor that. But strangely, I couldn't remember it. *Why was it blank? Had they enforced amnesia in all of us, in the event that we'd deactivate? Or was it just me?*

Then one scene came to me, as if I'd had my eyes closed and ears stopped, then opened them for only one second of the candlelit ceremony.

After the first few weeks of online research and email correspondence with the friend who turned me on to the MKULTRA documentation, I began to perceive evidence of someone entering my home, interfering with my mail and email, hacking my computer and tapping my phone.

Creeped out by all the stories of torture, amnesia, programming, lies and manipulations, I told Leo I felt like my life was *The Truman Show*, only directed by David Lynch at his most psychopathic perversity.

Many times I'd asked indignantly about Lynch's work, "Why do people have to make movies like that?!" Now I knew. Because the stuff is true, and people need to know. And those who know need others to know.

At sunset, on my porch, I often heard a high-pitched tone, and wondered if it was a tracking – or worse, programming – device. Occasionally friends would visit, and I'd ask them if they heard it. Sometimes it would happen six or more times in a half-hour, but they rarely said more than a vague *May-be*.

The tones were very clear to me, and nothing like ringing in the ears, which fades in and out. They were clear, with a steady, precise pitch

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and a definite start and stop. I'd step off the porch, look up at the sky, as they seemed to come from above, then duck fearfully under the eave again, as if I could get protection. The tones continued for as long as I lived at the house.

I began to feel paranoid of Leo. He'd come to Oakland for the last two weeks of the trial, so he knew how stressful that had been. And I'd shared with him everything I was going through, regarding my suspicions about the CIA and MKULTRA. I told him I feared my birthday made me a target of Satanists. He brushed it off. When I told him I didn't want to talk about certain subjects in the house, for fear of the house being bugged, he brought them up loudly, then laughed about it.

The next month, Leo brought a rented Mafia movie to my home for my birthday, even though I'd said many times that I'd seen enough Mafia movies to last me the rest of my life. Since moving to the country, my movie watching had fallen to almost none, so whenever I watched one, I intended for it to be something special. My daughter was also visiting, so I didn't want to make a scene in front of her, and sat down to watch it with them and try to enjoy it as art.

Within minutes I had a reaction like I've never had before or since in a movie. I left the house, then sat on the porch, crying and rocking back and forth – not because of a murder or torture scene, but a simple scene of a blustering man, seated, wearing a 1950s striped knit shirt. What had upset me was the man's feeble effort to act tough – he was an underling – which I could only guess had triggered some memory.

My Dark Night of the Soul was hitting its lowest point. I swung through cycles of grief, sickness, anger, vengeance, and paranoia.

Even when I was happy to remember parts of myself, the experience often recalled a description Judi had shared when I'd interviewed her over the phone once: After the bombing, every time one of her nerves re-grew to the point that it reconnected, at the moment of two cells linking, she relived a bit of the bombing when the nerves had

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been blown apart. So for months, she re-experienced the bombing, one nerve at a time. I felt like I was doing the same with my own trauma: Each part of me that returned, for a second, “fired” one part of a series of horror.

At my worst, I imagined committing suicide, violently, in my parents’ living room, spraying my blood all over their pale peach carpet.

Every day I felt watched. Every phone call, I imagined someone listening. Where before I’d feared harassment, now I was utterly terrified they’d return one day to torture me – use that jaw helmet or worse.

I read that the mind controllers have people, sometimes others who are mind controlled too, monitor their subjects and report back to them. I began to fear certain friends who I perceived as checking up on me and abruptly ended a few relationships.

My friend emailed with the name of a woman, Judith Moore, who’d written a book about her experiences and healing herself from programming. She lived in New Mexico, only a day’s drive away. I emailed her, hoping she’d help me get a grip on myself, or help me hide. Maybe there was an underground railroad for people like me. She wrote that she had no time for counseling, but for me to remember this: “There is nothing to fear.”

Damned if there’s not! I thought. *These people kill and torture!*

But I decided to try to believe it. All day, every day, I thought about what those words could mean. *Maybe there was a context I didn’t understand yet. Maybe the program is over. Maybe, like the old saying goes, the only thing to fear is fear....*

It was true that the more I focused on my fear, the greater it got. And while I was convinced I was watched, there seemed to be no actual threat. Maybe my fear was getting out of control. Maybe I could just stop it.

Slowly, slowly, I made the fear go away. Not all at once, and not without it creeping back now and then. But eventually, it became a thing of the past. And I began to see a bigger picture, slowly.

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My spiritual rituals remained inconsistent. One night, though, I knelt spontaneously before my altar, and shook my rattle. To my surprise, I felt something moving in my heart – like etheric sludge moving out of me into another realm, thick, heavy invisible stuff coming out of my heart, a tremendous relief.

I rattled until my arm was fatigued, and the stuff still seemed to be coming, as big in some other realm as boxcars, I thought. I switched arms and kept on until both arms were fatigued. Then I set down my rattle, and hummed and swayed while using my imagination to continue to pull more thick stuff from my heart, until I was so tired, I thought I would fall over. But my heart still felt full of crap. Then I climbed in bed with a prayer for protection and angels to continue the work, and I slept deeply.

Leo wouldn't take my fears seriously and thought I should just ignore it all, not seek to remember, and especially not believe the really scary stuff when it began to surface.

I constantly questioned my perceptions. I wondered whether reality was pliable and I might give this scary scenario extra power on some etheric plane by thinking about it so much. It seemed my destiny, though, to explore it, so I continued.

Leo couldn't support my exploration, and I couldn't survive the Dark without exploring it. I told him I needed a partner who could handle this stuff.

“Can we continue to be lovers until you find Mr. Right?” he asked, lightly joking.

I'd always loved his sense of humor. It made me relax to laugh. I knew that, despite everything, it would be difficult to lose him as a friend, even if he scared me at times. I hoped I was wrong about my paranoia.

“Sure,” I said, and we smiled at each other with eyes that knew we'd been through just too much together.

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*If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can
totally transform one million realities.*
-- Maya Angelou

Chapter Twenty-Three: SOUL RETRIEVAL

I returned to the idea that I might still be a multiple personality and have more work to do restoring lost “soul parts” or “inner children” who’d fled this earthly plane.

One day, I felt compelled to wrap a pair of stuffed animals – which I’d purchased impulsively a year earlier, not understanding why – in a shawl to carry against my chest throughout the day. So powerfully did this strengthen and calm me, that I carried the “babies” with me like that all day, every day, for weeks on end, and slept with them on my chest at night, apologizing profusely when, in sleep, they were tossed aside.

Suddenly one evening, I sensed a little girl in the air above my head, within arm’s length, and could *see* her there in another realm. This was not what I’d intended, but I knew I’d created the possibility anyway. In awe, I reached up my hand to reverently touch her leg, but she reacted by kicking her leg back and forth, as if she feared I’d try to pull her down, though I could also hear in her panicky whimpers that she was also hopeful, almost happy to be connecting.

I told her how happy I was that she was close, that I loved her,

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missed her, wanted to take care of her, but respected her caution and desire to choose the right time. She faded away.

A few evenings later, reading, I felt myself a child from long ago, absolutely *me*, suddenly in my almost fifty-year old body, looking at my hands, holding a book in my lap. *I loved my grandmother's hands...*

After a moment of marveling to feel this child in me, she said in her pure, childish voice, *This isn't so bad...* (referring to my older body). I thought... No... I *felt* her: simple... honest... and sweet.

Powerfully moved by her sweetness, innocence, and bravery, I experienced a flash of what we'd endured, that had caused her to leave, and kept her too afraid to return these past decades.

And now – to imagine her child courage, returning to a body she hadn't experienced growing old, and the strangeness of that. Her innocence was so beautiful my heart broke, and again my face dropped in my hands and I sobbed, happy and relieved for her return, but sad for all we'd endured and what we still might go through.

A couple years earlier, alone one late afternoon in my hermitage, I'd come in from wandering in the desert on the last high of psilocybin mushrooms. As soon as I entered the house, I immediately picked the Bible off the shelf, the second time that year, and read the complete story of Queen Esther, and was enraptured.

I wondered why it had never been made into a “major motion picture.” I felt inspired to do a one-woman stage play of Esther and take it around the country.

When I was a child, a librarian had laid a book in my hands. I remember clearly how she'd stooped down to look me in the face and tell me seriously that *I* should read it.

In my hands was a child's version of the story of Queen Esther, enslaved temporarily in a harem, but eventually made Queen, in position to save her people from annihilation. But the King could kill her for as little as asking to see him when he didn't ask to see her. I loved the book, unaware for years that it was a Bible story.

Esther was amazing. And we had things in common: We'd both

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been forced into harems, used for sex, could be murdered easily and were made wise in ways no one would willingly choose. Both of us had been made queens, though we'd never sought that. *What could I make of this?*

I found a shamanic practitioner to work with in Tucson, and asked her about MKULTRA and my concern that I might still have programming in me. She had never heard of such a thing, but conducted a few ceremonies over the course of three days. I didn't feel healed of the paranoia I'd gone to see her for, but felt supported and encouraged on my journey of self-discovery.

At the end of the three sessions, she gave me a beautiful pair of feathered Hawaiian rattles, constructed by a *kabuna*, which she said she'd always felt belonged to someone other than her. I should keep them if I thought they were for me or give them away, however I felt led. I've kept them, and recently traveled to Hawaii, and believe I will return.

Leo, as strong an anti-automobile activist as any, had convinced me to take the bus to the last of my sessions, so on my walk to the bus stop, I was able to spot a tiny, dead, desiccated baby rattlesnake by the side of the road, in nearly perfect condition, frozen writhing in the shape of a perfect heart. A single patch of its skin was gone about midway down its body, as if it had been hit by a stone, but otherwise it was in perfect condition. Its jaw was unhinged, wide open, surrounding its own body, as if it had been about to bite itself in agony when it expired.

Agony in the shape of a heart.... Fascinated, I picked it up gently and tried to carry it home. But my hands and arms were full, with my purse, bag of incidentals, bundle of rattles – each a foot long with foot-wide, flower-shaped, feather fronts – and I couldn't hold the snake carefully as I'd wished I could. I let the heart shape dangle lightly on one finger, but it cracked as I carried it. Eventually, I rearranged my bundles and carried brittle pieces of a dead baby rattlesnake back to Leo's.

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*I wouldn't try to publish a scientific paper
about these things, because I can't do any experiments.
...But I don't deny what happened.
It's what science calls anecdotal,
because it only happened in a way that you can't reproduce.
But it happened.*
-- Nobel Prize Laureate Kary Mullis

Chapter Twenty-Four: SHAMANIC VISIONS

For a year, with Leo's knowledge, I'd corresponded with a man I'd known of for seventeen years – an Earth First! activist and artist, Asante Riverwind. I'd been surprised he'd actually known of me, since I perceived him as a leader in the movement, and I was not. But we discovered we both lived isolated and rustic, both had star-watching roofs on our bathhouses, and both were shamanic practitioners of sorts. I soon learned he wasn't afraid of my story. He came to visit.

While Asante sat on a sofa across from Leo and I, suddenly the space around his head took on an extra dimension. I checked the rest of the room, and saw it was normal. Leo sat beside me, apparently seeing nothing unusual. But the space around Asante's head was deeper, as though I could see into a past life. We were in a stone castle, and he was telling a story, laughing lightly. Back in time, he'd just said, "And when you hear me say these words, you'll remember we have work to do together." Then he continued with this story he was telling in the present, merging with the past, laughing happily across the centuries.

I tested whether this phenomenon would go away if I looked around the room, but it didn't. For ten minutes, I checked myself,

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looked at Leo, glanced around the room, and tried to listen or act like I was, while the tunnel in time remained around Asante's head. Eventually I felt pretty sure he would be my new partner.

He was planning a short trip to the Seri coast in Mexico, hoping to kayak and enjoy days on the beach. I decided to join him. Before we left, I stood at my altar and prayed. To my surprise and delight, a cone of energy seemed to drop over me, vibrating, confirming – *something*. I wasn't sure what, but I was excited.

During our trip, we experienced a number of synchronicities. Every night, I found myself somehow aligned with Asante so that the Pleiades shined over his head. Sleeping on the sand, when we awoke hours later in the night, the same alignment occurred. And one morning, we woke just in time to see the two horns of an almost New Moon rising – two points of light lifting over the horizon, growing as the tips rose and widened horizontally, finally merging into a crescent. We were visited by a bobcat, which had heralded two other major transitions in my life, appearing once when I'd first moved into my hermitage, and again at the new home John and I moved into.

I considered all these omens positive, but in subsequent years acknowledged that trickster spirits can accomplish the same. On our way home, we agreed that he would set up his teepees on my land, but the house, so little, would remain my space.

Back home, we had a most amazing experience, though initially upsetting to me as I experienced a major rip in the fabric of my reality. We'd made love, during which time the candle had sputtered out, leaving us in total darkness. My home has insulated blinds, making the house so perfectly dark, that I have often hurt myself walking in it slowly without lights, assuming that after all these years I should know it well enough to feel my way. Finally I accepted the habit of walking with my hands low and out before me, to catch the edges of furniture as I shuffle slowly.

After the altered state of making love, neither of us noticed that we could *see*. We stared into each other's faces for a long time, as I pulled slowly away and climbed out of bed to pour drinking water for us. We flirted across the distance, and later I recalled looking down to see my

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slipper heels protruding from beneath my dresser. Then, we put on slippers and walked outside to pee under the stars.

When we re-entered the house, it was pitch black, and I did my usual hands-out-at-thigh-level routine, when it occurred to me that we'd walked out, *seeing*. As I asked, "How'd we get out of here?" my voice began to quake and I felt I could cry at my eerie intuition. Asante weakly suggested a light bulb had burned out while we were outside, but even as he said the words, we both knew the candle had gone out earlier, and we remembered staring at each other's face before we had moved and could have turned on a light. I screamed involuntarily and jumped onto the bed, pounding my thighs childishly, and continuing to cry in short, uncontrollable bursts. There was nothing frightening about it, except the evaporation of one's reality.

Eventually we accepted that somehow we'd seen without light – perhaps our "third eyes" had turned on in ecstasy.

Two friends of Asante's visited, and we took a trip to the ridge of the Chiricahua Mountains for the day. Hiking down, darkness fell sooner than we prepared for. Wondering what spirit help I might call on, I thought of Owl and began experimenting with arm movements until they were moving like wings.

As I did, I thought I could see the pathway as if lit. It had been what I'd had in the back of my mind, not fully conscious, but now that it had happened, I could hardly believe it.

I stopped flapping, and the trail was dark again. I flapped, and saw my way. Sure-footed, I ran down the trail, calling to the others behind me to try the same. They did, and followed at my swift pace. But no one would talk about it later.

Asante often appeared to my psychic sight as a fourteen-year old boy in Scotland with a red pageboy haircut. We'd be about to embrace, and suddenly we were young people meeting behind the trees beyond the meadows.

Another time I found myself between lives, but still hanging

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around the Earth plane. I'd died as a North American pioneer-era woman of European heritage, and my young daughter had been stolen from my Native husband by my parents, who didn't want our daughter raised by a "savage." When he came for our daughter, they tied him to a wagon and dragged him to his death, while I hovered above, crying in the afterlife for my beloved and my daughter who would suffer all her life from this.

Once, reading something that referred to "loved like a father," I set my book down, feeling sad. I always knew this was supposed to mean something special, but couldn't relate to it. My father was a good provider, but I never felt comfortable with him.

As I was about to tell myself what I often do – that in another life, I'll experience that – suddenly I was a young female Native American college student, with shoulder-length hair, entering a typical American home of the 1960s or 70s. My father, a tall, broad-shouldered Native man, stood up from the sofa where he'd been watching television (ironic for me, who disclaims television every chance I get) and came to hug me, his love for me so powerful that I broke down, in this life, weeping again, in sadness and joy for the beautiful sensation, both at once.

Afterward I wondered about this woman who lived concurrently with me – it obviously wasn't a *past* life, though it felt exactly like those I'd called "past." Maybe, I surmised again, none of them are past lives, but just *other* lives into which we can tap, as described by Carl Jung in his theory of the collective unconscious.

Another day, walking from the kitchen area toward the sofa, I glanced out the picture window toward the oak trees and felt an old Native woman inside, her heart bursting with love for the sight of those trees. And I knew my land had once been summer camp for grinding acorns and celebrating the harvest.

One evening, while my daughter visited, we sat on the front porch watching a beautiful, stormy sunset sky, gray-black and blood red, smeared with flecks of gold. Suddenly, two brilliant gold "eyes" opened up near the horizon in the northwest, and as we marveled at the sight,

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they closed, and immediately another pair opened up ten degrees higher in the sky. After we'd all exclaimed at the strangeness of that, a cluster of bats swirled wildly before my face, much as they had on the roof years earlier, just before I'd experienced ecstasy over the three-dimensional sky.

"Something is happening," I said. My daughter stood up, citing the darkness and cold. As we moved toward the front door, another break happened in the clouds before us to the south, this one even stranger than the two pairs of eyes: A squiggly rip appeared, displaying exactly – and no more than – the constellation Scorpio.

"It has to do with a shaman," I said, not sure why I felt compelled to state it aloud or why I should be so sure, "and it stings." I had no idea what my vague prediction might mean.

The next day, we learned that a lovely young woman we all knew had died in a car crash in the northwest the day before. At the young age of 16, she'd traveled to Mexico and studied with a shaman and a midwife. Many had thought her destined to be, or already, a shaman herself. I told her mother I was certain she'd gone ahead to help midwife us all through the coming transformations.

Another evening, Asante and I returned home late from some event, and an owl flew out from under the eaves exactly at the front door of my home. Following behind, I discovered at the door, beneath my feet, the remains of a cactus wren's nest and many feathers.

The owl, often associated with death, had just done the death deed, right at our front door, right when we arrived. I said aloud, *I wonder who's going to die?*

Inside, I went straight to the Tarot deck, and turned over one card. *Death*. Quietly, I sought inside any premonition that it was one of us or our families, and didn't feel it was.

The next morning, a phone call told us a beloved friend had fallen out of a tree from one-hundred feet up, while picking pine cones for the Forest Service.

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Why these messages had come to me, I didn't know, as I certainly was far from the closest friend to either of these people. I speculated that I was one of the only people, though, who spent so much time sitting quietly in nature each day, who might see and recognize the signs. Even so, I didn't do very well at following through.

Asante gave me a teepee, which I set up in the oaks and used as an outside bedroom. Four times in four days, I had amazing experiences of timing at my teepee.

Once, I arrived just in time to find a circle of at least a hundred very tiny spiders – each smaller than a pinhead – just hatched, crawling away from their invisible nest, presumably in my bedspread, as that is where they were spreading as I walked in with flashlight in hand. Thirty seconds later, moving so quickly, their number would have thinned out across the spread and it's likely I'd have never seen them. A few seconds sooner, their cluster would have been too small to notice against the design of flowers and smoke-colored leaves, and I'd have immediately flipped open the bed and climbed in.

Considering spiders to be teachers, I don't normally kill them, but I also claim the right to certain space. I apologized for playing Kali, and rubbed them into oblivion.

Two nights later, I arrived in time to find another circle, of exactly the same size, dispersing at the same swift speed, apologized again, and rubbed them out. Later I wondered if I had been given a second chance to do a better thing than kill them, and I'd failed a lesson twice.

Between the spider nights, I found my flashlight dead as I reached the shadows of the oaks at the dry creek bed, then heard an invisible animal before me, grunting *woof* in the darkness. Another animal moved to my side, and I guessed they were both *javelinas*, or *peccaries*, pig-like desert creatures. I said *woof* back, in a friendly way, and got another *woof* in response.

When the animal to the side bounded off, I vaguely noticed that

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it made no clatter of hooves on the dry creek stones, so I should have reevaluated my assessment that these were javelina. Eventually the animal ahead of me moved almost silently away, and I followed it, in the direction of my teepee.

The next morning, when I told Asante, he looked stunned as he informed me that *woof* is the vocalization of the black bear, and the second, quiet, smaller animal was probably a cub – a typically dangerous situation, for which I had sensed no danger, but only grudging acceptance of our co-habitation on the creek.

The fourth night, approaching my teepee, I heard a noise like I'd never heard before and felt powerfully the fear of the Unknown. My mind whirred at hyper-speed, trying to gather any bit of information that would explain what was happening. In seconds, I experienced an amplification of confusion, as my mind took in strange sounds that were approaching, but had no meaning.

Beyond the shadow of the tree where I stood in darkness, deer stirred in the moonlight, rising from their beds in the shadow of a juniper and circling as though they were alarmed as well. The strange noise continued, and eventually I recognized a male voice.

Close, and coming nearer.

My confusion turned quickly to real fear, as I realized a man was leading a group of people toward me.

I ducked and hastened the last thirty feet toward the teepee, my heart pounding wildly, and I crouched by my door, wondering whether to slip in or around or race away.

In only moments, people were walking by in a line, close to each other, voices droning, clothes rustling, a line of zombies – that's how they felt and it chilled me further – ghosts passing by me in the moonlight. Murmuring Spanish, shuffling feet, crunching leaves, rustling plastic garbage bags, their steady noise rose, as they walked only fifteen feet away, then faded in the darkness.

“Illegal aliens,” migrants, very nice people, suffering, whom we'd feed the next day.

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One afternoon another perfect timing event took place, with the composting toilet, which we'd just moved to a new site on the patio and hadn't yet built a room around, nor erected the vent stack.

I walked past just in time to see the first few bees leave a swarm hanging nearby, and enter the incomplete vent hole in my toilet. I'd been meaning to finish the vent stack and not leave it open, for exactly this sort of reason, and now I agonized that I'd been lazy and created an opportunity for a terrible problem. Recently "killer bees" had actually killed a neighbor, a woman about my age, when she'd moved a sofa in her storage room and accidentally disturbed a hive.

Quickly, I opened the toilet lid, ran inside the screen porch where I shut the door to be safe from angry bees, turned on the faucet and aimed the hose through the screen, straight into the toilet. The few bees exited the vent, and soon the entire swarm flew away.

I finished the vent stack project that day, aware that if I'd walked by a few seconds earlier, the bees wouldn't have been there, and a half-minute later, it might have been too late.

My sister wrote the family that she'd been diagnosed by two different doctors with one of the worst forms of brain cancer. My father's email followed with a dreadful prognosis.

I was well aware of shamanic healing and believed in it, but was afraid to try it myself, for fear it wouldn't work for me, that I wasn't ready, and ironically, that I'd lose my faith.

Guiltily, I said vague prayers, justifying for myself that I hadn't been called to be a healer, and it might be blasphemy to act like it.

One night, before going to bed, however, I found myself standing before my altar, shaking my rattle with unquestioning conviction. Confidently I called on three power animals: Raven to carry healing to my sister, Lizard to enter her dreamtime, and Snake to perform the healing transformation. At the end, I shook my rattle for emphasis, knew it was done, and sat on the edge of my bed in silent wonderment.

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Three days later, the family got emails that a third doctor had pronounced she had no tumor. Perhaps it was just a coincidence.

March 2, 2004, I walked out to enjoy a perfect spring morning, when a jet flew low over my home, heading east. Above me a fat plume of white descended as the plane veered northeast, and I noticed five other jets in that direction flying parallel, with trails of white behind them, also heading east. The plane that had been overhead straightened its course to become parallel with the others. Looking west, I could see it had flown out of formation to fly over my home.

Asante and I had been handing out newspapers the previous couple weeks, in which he'd written an article about "chemtrails." They're different from contrails, left behind planes for the past few years all over the world, persisting like skywriting and apparently affecting the weather. In his article, he'd summarized various theories, research, and anecdotes – a common one being that people get sick after being under a chemtrail "dump."



At the same time I discovered the chemtrail overhead, Asante discovered two strange dogs in his art studio teepee. The dogs, upon his

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arrival, broke through the sun-weakened, south-side canvas and ripped it bottom to top. Returning to tell me the bad news, six ravens had flown over his head, cawing portentously.

Intending to tell me about the two dogs, ripped teepee and six ravens, he was dumbfounded to see the six planes and chemtrail dump over the house, descending like a long row of inverted mushroom clouds. Such was his shock that I had to insist repeatedly for him to get his camera to document the situation. Finally, he broke from his stupor and took excellent photographs. We documented the line of small mushroom clouds blooming underneath the trail over our heads.

Asante faced a quandary: to fix the teepee under a chemtrail dump, or leave his art studio vulnerable, with a storm predicted for the next day.

“I’ve been under chemtrail dumps before,” he finally said, “and never got sick.” He worked outside all day, while I worked in.

The next day, Asante had a sore throat, and felt weak and feverish.

Day three, he slept a lot and coughed.

Day four, Asante was mostly unconscious, waking about once an hour, and I would respond with water and herbal teas. He coughed up blood, and his urine, passed into bottles, was red-orange with blood and had white globules settling in the bottom. Through a 10x lens, I could see clusters of tiny white balls aligned, it seemed, along tiny needles.

(I’ve saved the sample all these years, but never found anyone I trusted to test it. Saving it would be useless, of course, if his illness was bacteria-caused, but not necessarily if it was caused by chemicals.)

That evening, he was extremely hot, though strangely not his head. He woke about once an hour to whimper and would usually use a single word to indicate a need. I began to get a strong premonition he might die, and knew he never wanted to go to a hospital, for the same reasons I don’t ever want to – fear that the medical industry, which has always participated with the government in experiments like MKULTRA, still likely has people messing with activists. Nevertheless, since death felt imminent, I asked him the next time he became conscious whether

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he'd want me to take him to a hospital if things "looked bad."

No! he whispered vehemently.

I asked him if he wanted his – I meant to say *Eagle*, but accidentally said – *Owl* feather.

Startled with fear, he said, "*Eagle!*"

And I got it for him.

"*Do something,*" he then whispered.

An herbalist was sending a powerful detox herb through the mails. I'd been giving him other herbs, and praying.

Now I got out my *Herbal Tarot* and asked the cards if there was another herb that I might give him.

I drew one card, and turned over an herb I didn't have, but which depicted the personage of *Death*.

Praying fervently, I asked what else to do, and turned over another card with an herb I didn't have, but depicting the *High Priestess*.

It seemed obvious the cards were telling me to act like a healer or face Asante's death, but I didn't want to go through the motions of a healer.

I'd never "done" healing work, except alone and without forethought; I'd only found myself unintentionally a channel, and didn't know what to do. Before, feelings had just come over me, often when I was thinking of something else.

Now, I was thinking about Asante, and his need; and the idea of standing on my feet, walking to get my rattle, and shaking it around him seemed like an appalling pretense, which I resisted.

But Asante had asked me to do something, and the cards seemed to be encouraging me, so I rose to my feet, empty of ideas, picked up my rattle from the altar, and began to walk a circle around the one-room house.

The fireplace and two sofas, one with Asante on it, were in the center of the home, facing the southern windows in a V, with the fireplace between them. Asante lay in the westernmost one, his feet toward the fire.

On the west wall was the bed. On the north wall was the kitchen.

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On the east wall was the dining area. The entire south wall was windows and window seats. I could walk a circle through the house around the fireplace and sofas, passing through all the areas in twenty-two steps.

After three or four times around the house – through the bedroom area, the kitchen, then dining area, sitting area – shaking my rattle in rhythm, I stood beside Asante and shook my rattle over him.

To my amazement, I could feel a heaviness in the space over his body, though it seemed to be breaking up and lifting away.

Recalling stories of shamans *casting away* bad energy, I swept my rattle through the air toward the front door, intending just that.

Asante relaxed.

I rattled and cast the bad energy away until my right arm was weak, then shifted to my left hand.

Eventually I sat and prayed, but got up about every hour to return to the work whenever Asante cried out.

In the morning, he was clearly recovering, and was back to normal within the week. I became mildly ill, which lasted about a month.

Another neighbor had been painfully ill the same week, passing blood and mucous after eating a salad from her garden.

Sometimes our most useful spiritual learning and growth comes at the hands of rough teachers who have little respect for our conceits, psychological defenses, or established points of view.... One might even go further and argue that genuine spiritual growth is inevitably disturbing, as the boundaries of consciousness are breached and we are opened to new domains of existence.

-- John E. Mack, *Abduction*

Chapter Twenty-Five: ALIEN AMNESIA

Shortly after Asante was well, I began to have the first of what I came to think of as my “alien abductions.” Since Whitley Strieber concluded that his experiences, though frightening, led to a degree of spiritual wisdom, I tried not to be afraid and followed his lead by asking each night that I be allowed to be conscious. Months would go by, with a couple events each week, but I’d remember nothing after the swirling vibration.

For three nights in a row, March 9th through 11th, I dreamt I was told that the answer to a question would be found in three *mandalas* I was shown.

On March 12, I experienced the laser light to my forehead, and began to worry that this experience wasn’t all for the good and I shouldn’t have trusted Strieber’s judgement. The next night I read a couple library books that depicted, not only evil intent, but apparently government employees involved in some abductions.

Just what I don’t need to read, I said. But I did, to assure myself I wasn’t skipping needed information. Disinformation, I thought it might

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be.

On March 14, I dreamt I was called to a big stone castle, approached the heavy wooden door and knocked three times, then repeated that three times. When the door opened, I entered a theater-type space, and a huge spirit animal leapt toward me and, thrillingly, disappeared into me.

A few days later, skimming a book by Strieber, I found a reference to three sets of three knocks heralding the arrival of “the visitors.” I’d loved the sense of my spirit animal, but I wasn’t sure about this connection to aliens.

We were sitting quietly one evening by the fireplace, when we both heard a very clear tone, which surprised us because we had very few electronic items in the house. I’d given away nearly everything electrical when I’d first moved to the country. I had no smoke detectors. I still had my computer and printer, and had retrieved my VCR from my son a few years ago and my stereo from my daughter, but they didn’t beep. Asante had never owned things that beeped. The computer and printer were off.

We never could explain it. The house was tiny. It seemed the feds were in there with us.

A few times a week, I’d pick up the phone and no one would be there. Familiar with MKULTRA programming lore, I worried that someone was on the other end, and I was being subliminally programmed. Whenever Asante was there, I’d have him pick up the phone first.

Coming home from a trip to the Bisbee Farmers’ Market, we entered the house and watched Asante’s wolf-dog sniff with great interest – deep, fast, hearty snuffs – around my desk, something she’d never done before, even mildly, or ever would do again.

Turning on my computer, I discovered the power strip had been left on, something I was careful not to do, as I had a very modest solar

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panel system and did not waste electricity. We'd also begun turning off the whole-house inverter outside, which we then discovered was also on.

Soon I found the cursor speed on my computer had been accelerated to the maximum. And finally I found that my modem didn't work because it had been reset to "networking," something I'd never do. It might have been done to upload information, though.

It was distressing to be so obviously watched by the government, and I wondered at the coincidence of feds re-entering our lives the same time the alien abductions began.

One day, out of the blue, I flashed to myself as a child, blank, with a sense of white light and shock, told something short and simple to my face by someone who brought their face close to mine, then a circle of people backed away – many in white – and one with electrical prongs approached. A memory of electroshock?

A few days later, I wrote in my journal about some "switching" I'd experienced while talking with Asante:

...I remember doing abrupt switches and not knowing what we'd just been talking about. The residue of emotions from a conversation I couldn't remember was strong, which made me curious what it was. I told Asante about my switching and asked him what we'd been talking about, since I assumed he'd appreciate my having continuity in our conversations.

These are the times I'm most surprised about my splittenedness, really surprised, and wonder who those alters are.

Or maybe they're not alters coming and going, leaving me confused, but just short-term memory loss or amnesia. Alzheimer's? Or the feds experimenting, not triggering alters, but simply making me forget for short periods of time?

...So, what do I do?

One night I wondered if it was Asante triggering me, and I began a period of worrying that I was sleeping with the enemy.

Evenings, something unusual began to happen. I would experience something like a cat's back-arching stretch – that came on me,

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as unbidden, compelling and satisfying as a yawn, but different. The muscles in my back would tense up, or I'd feel as though I had tensed them, and I'd roll forward, my back hunched, and stretch my arms, legs, feet and hands, then let the tension slowly subside, then sigh and feel wonderfully renewed. If I was walking, the sensation would come over me so powerfully that I would have to stop to go through my contortion. Then sometimes, to express my exhilaration, especially if Asante was watching, I'd strike a muscle man pose in the end, for fun, and smile to make it funny.

One evening, something very different happened. As soon as the routine was complete, I sensed a being had entered my body and was looking out my left eye. *Had he been trying to get in during all the past episodes, and had finally made it?* He spied my fireplace hearth of brick and stone beside me, seemed to know how much I loved it, and smirked. He didn't think it was so special.

Immediately, I lowered my head to say a prayer for protection. Asante asked me a question.

"Please, I need a moment of silence right now. It's really important," I said.

"You always need silence. What about our relationship?"

And so began an hour-long heated disagreement about my needs, his needs, our expectations, and how poorly our relationship was going. Repeatedly, I asked him if we could have this discussion in a little while, but to no avail. And all the while, I felt the being watching, taking it in through my left eye, and smirking.

I could feel the being's disapproval of my handling of this disagreement, and of my not standing up for my rights in general. It was fascinating to see someone else's viewpoint *of me* from inside my own body! My desire to pray for protection was somewhat tempered when I realized the lesson I was getting.

My argument with Asante was going in a circle. I recognized it and pointed it out, but that didn't stop it. When the circle began again, the being inside me wanted to laugh, but I repressed it and kept a straight face. I'd never laughed when a lover said something he thought serious.

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I wasn't rude. I couldn't do that. But I had to admit – I could feel it, along with the being – that this really was funny, even while Asante expressed so seriously his sense of being disrespected.

We all have our bad days, or nights, and blind spots amongst our strong points. Asante is a brilliant activist, artist and one who loves life. Throughout our relationship, he respected me, supported me, and encouraged me to expand beyond the cloistered hermit I was becoming, to become social again. He bought me paints and welcomed me to sell my artwork alongside his at fairs and in galleries. I am absolutely indebted to him for helping me regain my social and artist's confidence. But that night was something else. (And, who knows, but he might have been triggered too. In any case, it all served an excellent purpose.)

What was funny was that he didn't hear my sense of also being disrespected, and he didn't answer my questions, only posed his own, and so seriously.

The next time Asante pronounced his indignation, I did what I'd never done before and have never done since to anyone: I burst out laughing! And it felt so good.

I could feel the being inside say, "Isn't laughter *the perfect response?* This argument has been stupid, and it deserves to be laughed at. You don't respect yourself to respectfully answer stupid demands."

Asante stopped mid-sentence, eyes wide, breathing halted, wondering what in the world had changed. His lips twitched, as he wondered what word he should form next.

"Don't say anything, Asante."

He did, though, and we repeated parts of the last exchanges, including my laughter, in diminishing spirals until we finally set the cycle down for good.

"I told you I needed some quiet time. I needed to pray, Asante, really bad. I was afraid a being had entered me, and I was scared and I needed to know what to do about it."

"What did you do?"

"*Nothing!* That's the point. I've been arguing with *you* the whole time. The being's still here, inside me, and I still need to pray, to be sure

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I understand what's going on. May I please have some quiet time?"

"Oh, my Goddess! You've been possessed! That's why you laughed at me so wickedly! I knew you weren't yourself!"

"You're right it was the being laughing, Asante, but I think it was good. It stopped us from going in circles. Some of your demands really didn't deserve a response. And you weren't responding to my thoughts. I think it was good I short-circuited this all by laughing. I'm kinda grateful to the being, whoever he is. But right now, I'm going to sit down and ask my spirit helpers, to be sure."

I sat down, asked for protection from the spirit guides I knew, then addressed the one inside me.

"Who are you?"

"You need me," he said. I could feel he was masculine. And I recognized he hadn't answered my question. In all the shamanic literature I'd read, spirits were always supposed to answer the question you asked, but he hadn't. His statement was more interesting to me, though, right then.

"Why do I need you?"

"You're so naïve and easily swayed. I can help you recognize it." I appreciated that, but still was concerned that he hadn't told me who he was.

"I don't want to be possessed."

He was suddenly in front of me, squatting down, making himself small. "I won't possess you."

"How do I know?" I was thinking the favor he'd done might be a Trojan horse, a gift to make me let my guard down. And besides, he wasn't human looking. He looked like a reptile. But friendly. His energy was good-humored, practical, wise, like a friend. I had a distinctly good feeling about him. *But a reptile?* Weren't they a species of "bad alien?" Later, I'd read that reptile-types, and other species, have both friendly and unfriendly emissaries. At this point, I could only make a judgment based on my feelings, and he felt like a friend. Worldly wise, and wanting to help.

"Anytime you want me to leave, just ask. And I won't make you

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do anything. I'll only suggest, point things out, and you can take my advice or leave it."

"Seems fair enough. But how do I *know*?"

He said nothing.

I knew I had Jesus in my corner, and while I didn't ask Him right then, I knew I could and would. Wordlessly, I imagined Him watching and didn't sense any disapproval.

This was interesting, all these spirits of different sorts – our cosmos was like an ocean! With sharks and jellyfish and algae and sinking ships and us, wading in, hardly knowing what we're getting into.

"Okay," I said, "I really appreciate the help tonight. I know it'll help me for the rest of my life, to not be spun in argumentative circles. So, thanks. I maintain the right to ask you to leave, if I decide you've been deceitful in any way."

He nodded.

When I looked up, Asante was watching, waiting, worried. "What happened?" He asked.

I told him. He was not convinced my decision was a safe one. But over the years I've never experienced the reptile again, maybe because I never sought him out.

I think, in the deep recesses of my mind, I've taken the caution of the Disney movie *Fantasia* too far. On the surface a child's tale, *Fantasia* delivers an appropriate caution about the spirit world. Unlike Mickey, though, who played carelessly with the wizard's tools, I've always done the opposite, refusing to try, even tentatively, the tools I've *been given* and the relationships offered. To this day, I wonder why, and pray to move past my hyper-caution.

Though I never sensed the reptile again, I often experienced the hunched-back contractions, which I began to call "The Hulk routine," because that's what it felt like, just like I saw as a child watching TV, only minus the snarling and grimacing. Well, maybe a little grimace. But replace the extremes of that with exquisite physical sensations, like a gre-a-a-at stretch.

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One evening, I experienced the routine again, maybe for the twentieth time, and then sensed, for the second time only, another person – a woman, marvelously powerful, with a calm presence. As I tried to wrap my brain around the idea of her, I suddenly felt – and this sounds silly – that she was the spiritual reality behind *one of the women superheroes!*

It was then I remembered The Hulk was also a superhero, fighting for good. This was getting silly! I never read those comic books. Maybe when my kids were young, my son would ask me to read a few frames, and I'd agree they were “cool,” but I never was into the genre, *at all*. So this was not a matter of my imagination coming to life. I was totally surprised.

And dismayed, because this was not the sort of thing I would *ever* want to share with my few shamanic friends – not that shamanic stories are shared that freely. (These, in this book, are only a small selection I feel led to share.) People I knew occasionally made references to spirit helpers of the Native American type, like Wolf, Eagle and Bear. Or Isis, I was soon surprised to discover.

But here was this woman – *No*, I saw no costume, only felt her, powerful, calm, able to do things I could hardly imagine, like ... I wished I could come up with a different metaphor, but her abilities simply made me feel like she was the spiritual reality behind a fantasy character, sans tiara. I loved the sensation of her and waited for a message.

“You gotta buff up,” she said.

I looked at my thighs. *Yeah*, I agreed. I'd gotten fat. Too much ice cream, chips, and sitting, writing, sewing or working at the computer.

“Okay,” I said, committed to do exactly that. It would be a few years, after everything had changed, but I'd do it.

These experiences led me to speculate that much science fiction and even comic book stories are based on fact. Gene Roddenberry, creator of *Star Trek*, according to those close to him, had many encounters with “space beings.” And I suspect the writers of most “science fiction” have too, and the writers of comic books, who probably

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thought, *Why leave out the children? They need clues too.*

Another evening, sitting on the sofa next to the fire, reading beside Asante, suddenly a powerful sense of evil was floating in the air in front of me, inches away, like a bubble three feet in diameter.

I stopped and felt myself *sensing* in the spiritual realms, struggling to do what I'd never done – exert my own aura boundaries against something “in the ethers.” It had located me and now was moving toward me, entering my psychic space. A moment of panic caused me to silently shout, *NO!* And the thing was gone.

Is it that easy? I wondered. Just say No?

I told Asante, and it worried him. But I was glad to have had the practice.

A friend loaned us a video of internationally-renowned physicist (and also a shamanic practitioner), Elisabet Sahtouris, speaking at a conference on consciousness. She told the history of bacteria on this planet, millions of years of battling for resource domination, much like humans. When they'd overtaken the planet, destroyed the atmosphere, and it looked like it was the end, then, from a combination of their DNA, there sprang up a new form of life – green plants! The plants, of course, restored oxygen to the atmosphere and brought an era of harmony where there'd only been war for eons.

Elisabet concluded that we humans are on the verge of something similar – the emergence of a new human or being that will arise from us.

She also told about how caterpillars turn into butterflies. The first butterfly cells are killed by the caterpillar's antibody cells. But as butterfly cells come in greater numbers, eventually the caterpillar antibody cells are overwhelmed and give up, and the butterfly develops, “dining on caterpillar soup.” She says we are the butterfly cells emerging *en masse*, and the caterpillar, which has been attacking us, will soon nourish us.

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Something made me think of Queen Esther again and our entrapment in bastions of power that could murder us. She accomplished good. Could I?

I wondered if the drones working for the deep underground might also have been born into their particular lives to also help with transformation work! Unlike me, they sit in key positions to make change.

And perhaps my life intersecting with theirs has some purpose. If they're reading my mail and email and tapping my phone, perhaps I can inspire them to revolution, and evolution. So they can do their transformational work from within the Beast.

One spring night, when we'd begun sleeping in the teepee again, I was still praying to be conscious during my next extraterrestrial encounter, I woke to find myself rising through the canvas. Giddy with excitement, I sensed these aliens were more benevolent than those I'd experienced with the light beam, so I didn't mind that I was immobilized!

Having read about how some humans had hit, shot and otherwise injured them, I accepted their defensive protocol. The experience struck me as fantastic and humorous at the same time. I had been granted my wish of remaining conscious! I was grateful, hopeful, excited, and wanted to be a cooperative partner in whatever education or experience was about to transpire.

I wasn't able to look down, but felt myself to be traveling upward in a perfectly straight line. The pace was steady, and it felt as though I were on an invisible conveyor belt leading upward into the sky, or another realm. This continued long enough for me to fully experience my excitement, anticipation, and the humor of being unable to move.

Suddenly I changed directions, making an instant ninety-degree change to the left, while remaining upright. It felt as though I'd entered a portal from beneath, which redirected me swiftly out to my left, with no centrifugal force. My new path was perpendicular to my initial, upright path, but I can't say I was then moving *horizontally*, as I felt far beyond the horizon, or perhaps in another dimension.

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Then I hit a second portal or vortex, which spun me almost full circle, three-hundred degrees, left shoulder going back, right shoulder going forward, and was ejected again, this time right shoulder leading, on a line sixty degrees away from the initial track I'd been on.

I am about to come face-to-face with "the visitors!" I said to myself again, excitedly, vowing to not freak out, as some experiencers had described getting violent, which is the reason we are now immobilized.

My conscious experience ended, and I woke in the morning with a powerful sense that I'd met them, but that they'd had to make me amnesiac again. I never considered it was a dream.

Within a few weeks, I read another person's description of travel with aliens, which, to my absolute astonishment, also described a ninety-degree turn from a vertical ascent followed by a sixty-degree turn. I thought of writing down the reference, but instead only mentioned it to Asante. Because of the sense of still being monitored by someone in the government, I was on the edge of paranoia again and trying to stop writing everything down. Even though I figured the feds had other ways to learn what I was up to, I didn't want to make it too easy for them. Now, I regret not knowing the author.

For months, I continued to interpret my experiences according to Whitley Strieber's theory, that this was all intended for spiritual transformation, so we shouldn't be afraid. I would eventually return to this belief, but would go through another period of intense paranoia in the meantime.

I ran across a theory of evil aliens in a couple library books entitled, *Abductions: Stop Them Now!* and *Love Bites*, the latter which theorized that one particular alien game is to make people fall in love with impossible partners, causing anguish on both sides, which energetically feeds the evil beings. As both books seemed rather hysterical, I didn't take their theories to heart. Until later.

I'd been dealing with too much fear over the preceding year, and the last thing I wanted was more, especially from a more unfathomable

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realm than the underground government. So I held to the more positive theory, for a time.

Most other “experiencers,” I learned, had also had amnesia after slipping away in a vibration. And many, in hypnotic regression, recalled being told by the aliens that they needed to be amnesiac until the aliens decided the time was right for them to remember.

I desperately wanted to talk to experts and to be hypnotically regressed to break through my amnesia, but couldn’t afford to travel, much less pay for the services. So I wrote letters to Whitley Strieber and John Mack, the latter a Harvard professor and author of *Abduction* and *Passport to the Cosmos*, hoping one of them might find my story so compelling that they’d direct me somewhere that I could get pertinent information or maybe counseling.

While the title of Mack’s first book, *Abduction*, struck me initially as embarrassingly simplistic, the writing and conclusions were beautifully reasoned science. Mack, now deceased, began his work with “abductees” (a term he later eschewed) as a skeptic, but came to believe the phenomenon is key to our perceiving and understanding a scientific paradigm shift of the largest proportions. He even convened a conference at M.I.T. to discuss the nature of “encounters of the fourth kind” - human contact with aliens.

Mack wrote that many people were given messages regarding humanity’s ecological irresponsibility, which led them to take leading roles in environmental awareness and action, much like the work I’d done for years.

Most fascinating to me, he wrote that many abductees have memories of childhood sexual abuse, and he wrote about two theories that others had proposed about this coincidence. The first theory is that aliens are either somehow attracted to abused individuals for reasons of sympathy and a desire to help them heal, or that they were chosen because the trauma creates a psychological break with the cultural mindset, making them more psychic and aware of other realms and more able to consider ideas in conflict with cultural training. This felt true to

me.

The alternate theory posited that alien abduction is a “screen memory” for sexual abuse. He dismissed this as problematic:

“There is not a single abduction case in my experience or that of other investigators that has turned out to have masked a history of sexual abuse or any other traumatic cause. But the reverse has frequently occurred – that an abduction history has been revealed in cases investigated for sexual or other traumatic abuse.”

Suddenly, my life, with its apparently bizarre collection of unpleasanties, began to make a strange sort of sense, which others have recognized and written about. Even though this new scenario might seem just too much to the average outsider, I was relieved to feel potentially understood by at least one group of researchers and scientists – who even had impressive credentials!

Everything had always been open to new interpretation, according to my own rules for open-minded inquiry, and now I considered a new possibility: What was the probability that my sexual abuse “memories” might be a cover for alien abduction? This theory *might* ease the discomfort in my family – or it might be too strange – but I couldn’t accept it, at least not immediately, as there seemed to be too many church and government connections and hostile family reactions to chalk it all up to alien screen memories. So the first theory – one of its two parts – seemed to hold the most promise.

Both Mack and Strieber had written that experiencers, once they’d broken through the amnesic wall, often remembered being told they were given information that would help the human race, and that they’d gain consciousness of it all when the time was right.

With that I was comforted that the power of those who’d terrified me for the past year, literally, almost to death might be trumped by some other spiritual or multi-dimensional purpose. I felt, finally, that there might be a reason to live through this and I might have some sort of protection.

The more I read, the more began to make sense. Many experiencers, Mack wrote, when they begin to break through their

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amnesia, realize that earlier recollections of strange experiences with owls and deer were actually screen memories for encounters with aliens, their large eyes being the link between them.

I began to wonder if my alien experiences began years ago with the owls circling me on the roof followed by my ecstatic gratitude directed at the stars. Or maybe my experience in my apartment of “turning to mist” was actually an event of de-materializing and re-materializing. Or maybe it had begun earlier yet, with the strange encounter with the deer on Mount Graham, since many abductees tell of encounters involving embarrassing medical procedures. And maybe the birds in the circle, that had made me feel I’d levitate if I stayed, had actually heralded an ascent that I don’t remember. One day, I hoped to be hypnotized and learn the truth.

A few experiencers, I read, are not amnesic, so I continued to pray to be allowed to be conscious and remember what happened. But I continued to experience the vibrations and slipping away for weeks, never remembering anything more.

I wrote Mack a lengthy letter and mailed it to the Harvard Medical School, but it was returned. Eventually I’d write Strieber, and connect with him.

Some extraterrestrial “visitations” are actually psychological warfare operations conducted by military and intelligence agencies of decidedly human origin.

**-- Alfred Lambremont Webre, J.D., futurist,
Director, extraterrestrial communications
study project for the Jimmy Carter White House**

Chapter Twenty-Six: DEALING WITH THE DARK SIDE

In mid-April, 2004, the quality of my experiences changed abruptly for the worse. Two or three times, it seemed my visitors were either clumsy, careless or cruel, as I woke in the morning with multiple, random scratches all over my forearms, as if I'd been dragged through the thorny mesquite trees that dominated my land. If the aliens were smarter than us (some people insist that, while they might have more technology than we have and understand the realms, they are not essentially smarter), they certainly were not more coordinated on this plane.

At first I told myself I must have gotten the scratches myself while gathering wood and just not paid attention. In late April, though, when I woke with a three-quarter-inch thorn imbedded deeply and painfully in my thumb, I realized something different was definitely going on. Maybe Strieber's and Mack's theories that the visitors are all benign was not the whole story.

I'd never visited Strieber's website, so that evening, I decided to see what new insights along these lines he might have written about since writing *Communion* in 1989. To my dismay, his most recent journal entry, with a title referring to “the dark side,” described a series of reports of UFO sightings coinciding with mutilation murders. These, he wrote,

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were promptly investigated by the FBI, which shut out local law enforcement and the media.

I postulated: The feds could either be protecting us from frightening information, or protecting mutilation murderers – and, of course, my experiences in the Judi Bari trial led me to worry about the latter.

Later I'd wonder if the supposed events were a disinformation ploy that Strieber unknowingly participated in, to make the few people interested in this subject afraid of aliens, so they'd turn to the government for protection and "truth."

I went to bed that night and, in my prayers, instead of asking simply to be conscious, asked, *If this is of The Light and only feels scary because it's strange, I ask to be conscious. But if this is not of The Light, I ask to be protected and have it stop.*

To my great surprise, the events stopped immediately. I had to conclude, though it was upsetting, that at least some of the entities were not good ones, and I had been dreadfully naïve to have let it go on. Every night, I said the same prayer and my sleep returned to normal for the first time in months.

The afternoon of May 9, 2004, when Asante had left to run an errand, I felt strangely compelled to take a nap, an extremely rare thing for me, and I didn't think to pray as I lay down. Having fallen asleep on my stomach, face turned left, away from the doorway, I woke to the sound of someone's back scraping under the canvas arch of the teepee entrance. Though I thought it was Asante returning, I didn't turn my head to see him or acknowledge him in any way, telling myself that I'd wait until he climbed over and was before me. (Asante never scraped his back on the entrance, but I wasn't thinking logically.) I was probably immobilized, but didn't recognize it yet.

Someone put a heavy knee on the bed on my right, and I expected Asante's hands or other knee to drop down on my left. Instead I felt a force hold me down and realized then that I was immobilized. A terrifying image and idea came to mind then, something I'd never wanted

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to consider: a large Reptilian being.

I'd heard of Reptilians, and considered them part of the unbelievable disinformation discrediting this subject. Later, I'd read that some people believe that the weirdest stuff is created by the black budget boys specifically to discredit this whole field. If that could be true, and if that's what happened to me that day, then they have the capability to make you believe their illusions are real, as it felt absolutely so to me, nothing like a dream.

Since then, I've seen photos of the statuettes of Reptilian beings discovered in archeological digs and now displayed in museums around the world. They're often dressed as kings or rulers.

To believe a real live Reptilian has held you immobilized in your bed is a terrifying experience. Not only was I being held down immobilized, but I felt something held against the back of my head that seemed like a single claw. I "screamed bloody murder" silently (I seemed to have the ability to move my facial muscles), and was satisfied that the being could see my profile and know of my vehement objection. Then I went unconscious.

When Asante returned and found me in the teepee, I woke up groggy and told him what I'd experienced. He was concerned that the intruder was human, a government agent.

I would have loved to believe it was all a bad dream, but the quality was far too real, and too many unbelievable things had happened by then for me to keep my sense of reality in line with my culture's.

About this time, I suddenly experienced weird pain during sexual intercourse. Investigating in the shower, I discovered something that felt like a flexible plastic cord, perhaps three inches long, imbedded horizontally inside the tissues in front of my vagina, two or three inches up inside, so I could reach it easily with my finger.

*Were the aliens or government interfering with our sexual relationship?
Why?*

Seeking other possibilities, I considered that maybe there was a strange cancer that formed hardened tendrils. I asked a friend who was a

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nurse, but she had no knowledge of anything like it. A day later, it mysteriously and completely disappeared overnight, and I wondered if someone had decided to remove it while I was asleep, after listening in on my phone call.

May 12, I woke with peaceful feelings and a memory of something familiar, interesting, and very positive that I couldn't recall. I wrote in my journal:

I am firm in my belief that the entities are of different types, with different motives. Some seem to manipulate for their unknown purposes, some seem to come to guide us for our good.

These experiences have similarities with what I've read and experienced of shamanism – they challenge us to expand our consciousness and develop discernment and warrior skills on other realms – which, interestingly, our culture mostly denies exist.

We can act like victims with no power, and indeed paralysis could convince us this is true, or we can persevere to learn to do the “impossible,” like mystics and shamans have always done.

Skills to develop might begin with prayers for protection, or prayers for understanding and wisdom.

But prayer is a mystery to me. I've struggled with it all my life, partly, I believe, because I was sexually abused in church, so that prayer is wedded to powerlessness. Somehow, we must move past whatever personal blocks are in our way – for some, heightened rationalism, cutting off the intuition; for others, terror connections and powerlessness, like mine.

...Sometimes spirit helps seem to allow us to fall into danger – like parents who allow their children to explore the world. There are many things to learn and power to be gained from the danger with which we dance.

...Many of us seem to be going where before only shamans went. I believe the call is for us to enter this Mystery, expand our consciousness, and meet the challenge of our evolution.

...The government may very well be involved in some experiences, though I don't understand the connection at all. Mind control experiments have a lot in common with alien “abductions”:

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- 1) *Both seem to begin in childhood.*
- 2) *Both seem to have intentions of creating “improved” humans.*
- 3) *Subjects are immobilized, with drugs or restraints, and taken against their will.*
- 4) *Both try to forbid memory, and amnesia results.*
- 5) *The point is said to be “learning.”*
- 6) *They were both begun, it seems, in the 40s.*
- 7) *They both involve memories that are or seem like torture.*
- 8) *There is often one person or entity who presents as the protector/friend/teacher.*

...I believe there's a correlation between child sexual abuse and a talent for perceiving alternate realities. After I'd quit wanting to commit suicide over the memories, I realized that maybe they'd inadvertently (I assume it wasn't their intention) given me a powerful psychic gift. -- This disgusted me to write it at first, as it might be misconstrued as a defense for horrendous acts.

However, as I muse on the nature of good and evil and our species' need to evolve beyond our species-centricity, I sometimes wonder if what seems like horror may not be compared to the pain and fear of childhood inoculations or childbirth.

And then I'm again in a quandary over my growing comfort with the extreme abuse that happened to me, and I worry about the philosophical implications of renouncing the good-evil duality. It seems a short step to vindicating pedophilia, even Satanic torture, or it could be misunderstood in that way.

But I know I would be only a shadow of myself – I'd seen only shadows of what I see today – if I only had memories of growing up in a typical “happy American family.” So, having survived my childhood and my suicidal eras, I am exceedingly grateful for having lived exactly my life. Because I can see.

So, with this perspective, I consider the spirits sending me to this situation on Earth, and wonder if something like this [what I've long called torture] might be necessary to help us escape the cultural programming – so even Satanists are playing their “perfect” roles in prodding us toward our

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destinies, toward our essential evolution. Ugh.

I don't like this conclusion.

But it may be just as true as the simple fact that children have to fall down and hurt themselves to learn to pick up their feet, to not touch the flame, to watch out for snakes, and stay out of the road.

... Even as this premise may contain grains of truth, so might the opposite: the imposers of cruelty may be doing their thing with a single intention to oppress and enslave us...to create a slave race of cattle-like humans. And this sort of theory only weakens our collective resolve to free ourselves.

Or could both be true? So, this gauntlet of life we run might be like a thresher [Hmmm - Jesus used a threshing analogy!], separating wheat from chaff...? So we're being separated by these trials, some to fear, oppression and slavery, and others to expansion, enlightenment and "graduation" to other realms?

I wonder. I wonder.

In November 2004, I attended a women's spirituality gathering a few hours' drive from home. On the highway, I stopped for gas, then re-entered the interstate for the last hour's drive toward home. Suddenly my headlights were fading fast, and I had to pull into the emergency lane.

Resting my forearms on the nearly level steering column of my 1971 Volkswagen van, I considered my options and decided the obvious thing was to walk back to the gas station and call Asante. If he couldn't fix the van on the spot, we'd sleep in the camper and deal with it in the morning.

I thought of what I needed for the short walk back to the gas station: I'd change into my walking shoes, then grab my purse and maybe the umbrella. But I sat there. I wondered why I wasn't turning in my seat to reach for my walking shoes.

Oh, well, maybe there's a better solution, and I'll think of it if I sit here a while, I thought. No better solution came to mind, so I intended to turn, reach for my shoes and purse and get out of the van.

But I just sat there. *Come on. Let's go,* I urged myself.

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No.... There's probably something better that will come up.... It seemed about a half-hour that I sat at the steering wheel, talking to myself occasionally, sitting silent for long periods, recognizing fully that this was *...weird, just sitting here....* but I could not will myself to get up and go.

Finally, it occurred to me to turn on the engine, put the van in reverse, and either coast or drive backward down the emergency lane and save myself perhaps a half-mile of walking.

I turned over the engine and was surprised to see the lights worked. Assuming the battery had recharged a bit while I sat there and the lights would soon go out again, I sat and waited, but they didn't. Concerned that they might short out again sometime before I got home, I decided to test my luck, checked the traffic, got up as much speed as one can in a Volkswagen going uphill, and entered the highway.

An hour later I was home, surprised to find Asante preparing to come search for me. Too distracted to ask him why, I told him about my half-hour delay.

The next morning, I woke from a dream, of pulling a tiny chip of something from my nose. We'd heard of people with implants, often called chips, inserted in various places, the nose not uncommon, and I wondered if the dream was a message. It seemed an unwelcome escalation of my abduction mystery.

After I'd shared the dream, we began to make love, but an incredible pain in my vagina made it impossible. Alarmed and curious, we each tried with fingers to locate the point of pain inside me, but were mystified that we couldn't.

Over time, I came to understand it as functioning like a small "hog ring" tightened around a bunch of tissue - only buried inside, so I can't see it or feel it with my finger, but it hurts significantly when my insides are stretched. That morning, it hurt unbelievably.

Later that morning, I was trying to understand why I felt so tired, and began to calculate out loud how much sleep we'd probably gotten. I began with my assumption that I'd arrived home about 8:45, when Asante exclaimed that it had been well after 10, which was why he'd been getting ready to go find me. I'd apparently experienced an hour and a

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half of “missing time.”

Later in the afternoon I blew a large clot of blood from my nose, nothing I’ve ever done before or since, but common to people with abduction experiences, assumed to be connected to nasal implants.

Again I wondered if the aliens or feds wanted to interfere with Asante’s and my relationship. Other aspects were already problematic, and we talked about separating frequently.

My “hog ring” pain would continue to make intercourse impossible for weeks, though it would decrease slowly over the years, but has never gone away as of this writing.

My van’s headlights and steering column never presented another problem.

Two and a half years later, I asked a friend, a retired doctor, to look inside me to see if she could see an implant site and, to my great satisfaction, she described a short straight incision beneath my urethra. Since she knew what I was looking for, and had accepted the plausibility of all this, I couldn’t understand why she seemed upset.

When I called her later, I was mystified how she could be so vague about what she’d seen.

Six months after that, I fell in love with a man whose heritage includes Native American, so that my experiences with star beings and with government misdeeds are not so unfathomable as they are to others. Many tribes have histories which include contact with the star nations, though they tend not to share this readily with the doubting dominant culture. Since he’s a photographer, I asked if he’d take a photo of my insides, and he agreed.

I gathered lamps and flashlights, and used a clear plastic speculum, inserting it sideways (unlike doctors’ standard technique, so they would never have seen this). I’d expected to see the horizontal puncture that I’d told the woman doctor about, but there was more – probably what upset her. Beneath the small, neat incision (at the arrow), where I assume a chip is implanted, it appears my “g-spot” was once sliced deeply from back to front and has healed with a 1/3-inch gap.

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I wondered if it was done when I was stopped on the highway, but if it had, touching would have been painful that morning, but it wasn't.

Then I wondered if it was done when I was a baby, in that flashback triggered when I asked inside if there was an inner child who needed to tell me something. *When I left my body and floated up above and looked down on my mother, in anguish....*

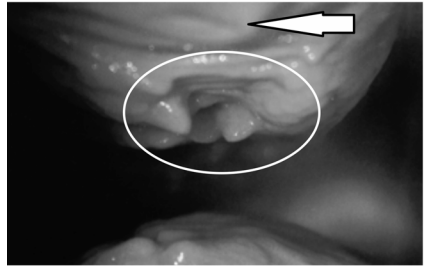
Personal sadness overwhelmed me, along with horror for all the little girls who've had this sort of thing done to them. This was balanced by a sense of *relief*, because now I had a second piece of hard evidence.

But the feelings took over. *Sad.... makes me feel.... like a faint shadow.... drifting.... away....*

I remembered a time during my first marriage, when my doctor (the same one who seemed to have helped my husband manipulate my children away from me) suggested an X-ray of my head to check on my pituitary gland. While I waited for the results, the technician came in, staring at me as if in amazement at something he couldn't speak of for professional reasons. He asked me a few questions, as if to create a reason to be there, while shifting excitedly from foot to foot, waiting for the doctor to return.

When the doctor did return, the technician's disappointment was visible when he was told to leave the room. The doctor told me there was nothing to worry about, but when I asked to see the X-ray, he declined. Now I wondered if there was a visible chip or something else inside my head, all those years ago.

When I read that Whitley Strieber had experienced government harassment prior to his alien experiences, I emailed him a letter with a twenty-page summary of my ET, spiritual and government experiences. He wrote back so quickly, within three minutes, that I wondered if the



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email didn't really come from him, but from a government agent who might have intercepted my letter and was now toying with me.

It's possible it really is Whitley, I told myself. So, determined to interpret further communications under both true and fraudulent scenarios, I answered the letter.

He said he'd get back with me soon, but he never did, and a year went by before I felt compelled to write him again. Again he responded enthusiastically, but this time also shared his sense that it was "weird" he'd forgotten about me when he'd been so interested. He implied that the government might have mind controlled him to forget. He wanted to interview me, and we set an appointment.

I knew he hosted a radio show, but he hadn't said explicitly that the interview was for his show. I was quite certain I wasn't ready to come out of the closet at that point, especially on national radio.

Still, I was keenly interested in learning what I could from him. I assumed he'd follow journalistic protocol and give me the rap on the use for his interview before we began taping, and then I'd tell him I was first interested in conversation only, but maybe later we could do an interview for broadcast.

Over the coming weeks, I experienced a mind-boggling series of miscommunications, all seemingly due to his and his wife's multiple email accounts, but possibly due to other reasons. Judging by his increasingly harried messages, it seemed he received none of my emails until the final day or two before our interview date. Repeatedly, he wrote with extremely brief instructions, requesting a response to confirm our interview and my phone number. I'd respond exactly as he requested, then receive back from him another message from a different email account, telling me he hadn't heard from me. Obviously, I wasn't able to clarify the purpose of our interview.

In one of the last messages, he told me that I would actually be interviewed twice, first by him, then by researcher/author Jim Marrs. Marrs would listen in on our first interview "like a fly on the wall," then afterward would begin his own interview, utilizing his more-extensive expertise on these subjects, including the connection between aliens and

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government mind control. I still hadn't been asked if I wanted to be on the radio, but I definitely wanted to talk to someone on these subjects.

On the day of the interview, Strieber called with terse instructions to "Hold on," that he'd be connecting us with Jim Marrs. Put on hold repeatedly between short commands to be patient and super-brief instructions on how we'd proceed, with no opportunity to respond, I was given my first opportunity to speak after Strieber announced the tape was rolling and he gave an intro for his radio show: "Hello, this is Whitley Strieber, and you're listening to Unknown Country...." I'd never given permission.

I was disappointed when Strieber launched into a long monologue, then suddenly asked me to tell a story I was not interested in telling, about his forgetting to call me, which surprised me so much, I just told the story as best I could without objection.

After over a year of wanting to talk to this man, who seemed to have some things in common with me, I felt horrible when it was over. The only question he asked me had been about the Reptilian in the teepee, and I hadn't wanted to talk about that. I knew it was the sort of thing a lot of late-night radio listeners would probably laugh about, especially since I'd been given no time to put it in context.

The interview with Jim Marrs was similar, with an extensive monologue followed by questions I wasn't prepared for. At one point, Marrs brought up Earth First! and asked if I knew that it was a CIA invention? When I said I'd never heard that and didn't believe it, he launched into a history of COINTELPRO. I was quite familiar with this "COunter INTELigence PROgram" used *against* Earth First! I was stunned that he thought Earth First! was a creation of government. Of course, a major component of the program is disinformation, so I assumed he'd believed some. *Or had I?* For a moment I tried to look backward through this looking glass.

Thankfully, I'd made my own recording and afterward listened to the tape to confirm my feelings that it was not what I wanted on the air. But there was something else on the tape I'd had a hard time believing when it happened. Between the two interviews, I'd taped Strieber

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laughing with Marrs, “We-e-ell, what do you think of that?!”

And Marrs responded, “I’d say she’s been, shall we say, treated to some of that... *psy ops!*” followed by both of them *laughing*.

During the rest of the break, Strieber had said not a word to me, and the sound of their laughter was chilling. Of course, I’d violated professional ethics by not telling them that I also had my interview equipment rolling, but they’d given me no opportunity. Perhaps I could use it somehow.

The next morning, as Asante and I discussed the problem, we realized we could listen to Strieber’s weekly radio show at noon, streaming on the Internet, which we’d never done before, and we were chilled to hear him tell the audience that he and a friend had long ago applied to the CIA together, and that his friend had accepted employment, but he hadn’t. After years of experience with feds pretending not to be feds, this didn’t convince *me*. Just the opposite.

I emailed him that I didn’t feel good about our interview. While I’ve never been one to attribute my less-than-desirable behavior to MPD alters, I wanted to make a powerful impact, in case our communications problems persisted and I only had one chance to get through to him. I wrote that I thought a “stupid alter” had been out that day (and perhaps one was – my tone of voice was embarrassingly credulous), and I didn’t think the interview should be aired. In the subject line I used the most provocative headline I could think of: “MK MPD Alter Out – No Show.”

Then I played my trump card: I told him that if he intended to air the tape as is, I would make the best of it for myself and plan two media events in which I would play my tape. I didn’t say explicitly that I’d play the section of him laughing with Marrs, but that was my intention, and I hoped he might suspect it.

Strieber wrote back and suggested “we both destroy our tapes.” I thanked him, copied my tapes, made transcripts, and stored them safely.

Today, I think it highly important to draw no conclusions, especially about others’ intentions. Strieber and Marrs probably had very good reason to laugh at my presentation.

One of the things that they're teaching us is that, Hey, you guys are pretty arrogant here, thinking you're in this universe, this Creation, all by yourself.

-- Sequoyah Trueblood, Native American Green Beret and Harvard professor

Chapter Twenty-Seven: UFOs WITH WITNESSES

One evening, during a storm, I turned a sofa toward the east, facing the Chiricahuas, so we could watch lightning. While Asante poured tea, I witnessed a star-like object spiral down into the foothills, only jaggedly, in a series of probably twenty short, extremely fast, straight lines. All twenty segments of the descent were likely completed in less than ten seconds.

I sat speechless, wanting to tell Asante what I'd seen, but was unable to think of a single first word. I sat there, stunned, working my jaw but unable to begin. I next saw a plume of misty light rise from very near where the star-like light had touched down. Since it was raining, it seemed possible that a bright light might have been shined up into the sky, reflecting off the millions of raindrops to produce an effect like a plume of light.

When Asante sat down beside me, I was still without a description, so I only said, "Watch," and pointed. I was grateful that he also saw the plume recreated four more times in the next few minutes.

Eventually I told him about the spiral descent he'd missed, and together we theorized that something had shined a light into the sky for some reason. We also wondered if there might be an underground base

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in the foothills, and a hatch had been opened, shining light into the rain-filled night.

I was not happy to find myself coming up with theories including things like underground bases. I'd hated everything I'd ever heard about them, and hoped those people who believed in them were crackpots or disinformation specialists making all this subject matter even less credible to the uninformed public. But, as I had in the beginning of my paranormal awareness, I didn't want to reject a theory just because it was unpleasant.

Both Asante and I had seen something unexplainable according to our current worldview, and to be responsible humans, we had to deal with this and not sweep it under any mental rugs.



stock photo of lenticular cloud

A few months later, on a Saturday morning, driving toward a shamanic gathering on the west side of the Cochise Stronghold in the Dragoon Mountains, we witnessed the formation of two lenticular, or saucer-shaped, clouds. While lenticular clouds often form naturally over mountains because of the moisture, we watched these form in the valley south of the range.

These were not small clouds. One was at least a mile, maybe miles across, and a half-mile high. And one had an amazing, perfectly straight “seam” around its perimeter. As we drove directly beneath it, we joked about it being a mother ship, only we weren't entirely joking.

When we arrived at the gathering, I was mysteriously unable to do anything but climb into the truck camper for a morning nap. When I awoke, I had a strange sensation that it hadn't been just a nap, though I had no specific reasons to explain my feelings.

When we began to hike, I discovered the place where years ago I'd recognized something mysterious in the Stronghold, which had prompted my letter a decade later containing the words *meditation* and

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portal, leading to my entering the body of the woman in Cochise's tribe, to cry with her. I'd been searching for the place for years, and it was profound to have finally found it.

Driving home from the Stronghold the last evening, we witnessed together, a bright, star-like object moving in a straight line, north to south, at a five- or ten-degree descent, in front of the Chiricahua Mountains, less than twenty miles away from us. It covered a distance of about ten miles in three seconds then blinked out.

One evening, Asante, two friends and I were outside when the two men saw a bright light angling toward the earth, they estimated less than ten miles away. Then it exploded in a brilliant orange and white flash, and a green luminous disk shot out at a steeper angle toward the ground. I'd just entered one of the teepees, so had missed this, and the other woman had been looking in the opposite direction.



Asante and I had read accounts of our government shooting down UFOs to back-engineer the technology. Pretending to joke, we wondered aloud whether we'd soon hear military equipment on the highway moving toward the crash.

I had recently come across, while freelancing for an environmental organization, an unusual land ownership involving the U.S. government, a mining corporation and the Roman Catholic Church in the foothills of a range to the north. A few days later, a couple of acquaintances of friends, whom we'd never met, visited and told us – out of the blue – their experiences suggesting an underground base in that range. Though I was suspicious of this timing, I took their bait, told them what I'd discovered and gave them a copy of the map I'd made.

We were still awake in bed the evening of the exploding disk, when we heard an unusual low-pitched sound of what seemed to be a very large vehicle moving slowly down the highway, southward, in the

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direction that the luminous disk had seemed to crash, and from the direction of the supposed underground base.

Quietly we considered running out the half-mile to the highway to see it, or even getting in the truck to follow it, but figured they would be watching to see if we did. People could be “disappeared” for such a thing, I feared. I was spooked by what I’d read of underground bases, so we stayed where we were, resigned that we were not investigators, and didn’t need to chase down every clue offered. A couple hours later, we woke to hear the vehicle rumbling north.

The next morning, I insisted Asante draw what he’d seen and date it.

A man new to our vegetarian dinner group felt, to me, like “a fed,” though later I’d amend that to “Man in Black.” I now acknowledge that there are levels of feds with more knowledge and connections than others. Not every fed is “a fed” the way I used to use the term.

He was handsome, in a “chiseled model” sort of way, but too strangely unemotional to be sexy. Asante thought I was being unnecessarily judgmental, which struck me as naïve. I told him it wasn’t a *judgment* at all, but a body feeling, a knowing. Like we teach children to trust themselves about adults who give them a “yucky” feeling. It takes no thought; it’s not a judgment. It’s a knowing.

Asante was running errands in town when this Man in Black attended a solar oven workshop I was giving at home. He stayed after everyone had left and then offered to try to fix my computer, which he’d heard was not functioning properly. He was the *last* person I’d have wanted to touch my computer. I never opened any email attachments he sent or clicked on any website links he offered, assuming they’d ruin my computer for good. So I imagined telling him politely, *No, thank you*, then going inside, leaving him staring in amazement.

Instead, I accepted his offer to help me fix my computer, and invited him inside. After he downloaded software I didn’t want, for which he didn’t ask my permission, he responded to my question *Why?* with some emotionless statement about me wanting it. I didn’t object,

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but just waited, thinking it might be the ruin of my computer.

Then he told me he wanted me to see an “important website” and typed into my browser the name of a site I’d never heard of. He said it contained political blogs, which I said emphatically I’d never read, and asked him to stop.

Instead, he turned and asked me a provocative question about activism, one that happened to be the subject of a story I loved to tell. In that moment, I knew that he knew that, and I knew my telling it would give the program a few minutes to download. I knew I was in a deadly situation for my computer, yet I obediently answered his question and told the story, thinking *Oh, well, at least I’ll know my paranoia is true*, while the computer sat untouched, open to that website.

When my story was over, he turned my computer off, gathered his things expeditiously and said he was happy to help me fix my problem.

Closing the door behind him, I snapped out of my acquiescence, and into shock and fear: *What had he done to make me obedient?! Does this mean there’s still programming in me!? And if so, what else might they make me do?* I was terrified.

The computer never worked again, and I was just days away from a deadline on a project I’d hoped would re-launch my career as a marketing consultant. I barely completed the project, using a borrowed computer and retrieving my project files from my client on disk, then taking them on disk to be printed, avoiding entirely the Internet. I didn’t know how else I’d make a living. Feeling trapped, I wanted to kill myself again.

Instead I went numb. Weeks later, I told this story to one of the Grandmothers in our dinner group, and cried telling her how much it scared me.

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Asante helped me laugh again, with a drawing he made, of me sitting at my desk, a large triangle visible through a cutaway in the wall, and an alien and Man in Black staring at each other in the living room behind me. Somehow, I found it funny.

Sitting beside my teepee under the oaks on a particularly lovely afternoon, a strong wind arose suddenly that disturbed me with its strange abruptness and absence of warning. I got up to go to the house, and was unnerved to realize I had to lean hard into the wind to stay on my feet.

Dust rose thick in the air as I struggled toward the house with my head down. Asante, also fooled by the preceding loveliness, staggered in a minute after me. I didn't notice the clock, but I guess the strange wind lasted approximately five minutes.

After it died down and the day returned to calm, a neighbor called to ask if we'd seen the strange thing in the



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foothills. We hadn't. She was not the sort of neighbor I'd ever shared any of this "crazy stuff" with, so I was dumbfounded when she described seeing something that seemed to hover there, "like a bi-plane... or maybe a corral." By the time she got out her binoculars, she told us, the dust had obscured it. Then when the dust died down, she said, it was gone.

She described a location not far from where Asante and I had seen the light plume.

When I suggested a UFO, with a hint of laughter in case she was hostile to the idea, I could hear she didn't find my suggestion either funny or helpful, but distracting and even upsetting.

As happens so often, I soon had the serendipity of coming across a reference to strange weather events sometimes rising abruptly to hide UFOs.

Perhaps a half-dozen times within a few months, I woke in the night, aware of strange activity in the house I believed I should check into, but was "too sleepy" to do anything about.

My mind argued that I should wake up and look around, but another part of me argued, *No... too tired... it's nothing.*

In the morning, I'd recall hearing the noises of people moving around inside my tiny home, and I'd tell myself I must not brush it off the next time, because it had happened more than once. And each time, I was more convinced it was not a dream, but real, and I'd been immobilized again.

I asked Asante, and he said he'd had similar feelings.

I decided to set up a voice-activated tape recorder before going to sleep at night, thinking I'd get proof that things were going on that I couldn't wake up for.

One evening, I made a test recording, listened to it, then set the machine to operate with noise activation, leaving my test recording still on the tape. In the morning, my test had been erased.

One night, just as Asante and I lay down to sleep, we heard a tremendous roar over the house and assumed it was Air Force jets. We

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chose to avoid the adrenaline rush of anger, because we'd gotten angry before and then were unable to sleep. Wanting to get up early the next day, we lay quietly, practicing calm, while the noise grew louder and louder until the windows shook. We felt that a fighter jet had skimmed the rooftop by inches. Since we'd felt harassed by the Air Force before, we assumed it was more of the same, and went to sleep, grumbling and weary.

The next night, we heard the same tremendous roar again. This time I jumped out of bed and ran outside. To my surprise, there was nothing low over the house at all, though the windows were shaking again.

High in the sky I saw three lights and wondered how those three planes so far away could accomplish the shaking of the house. Asante, seconds behind me, noticed the lights were not high-elevation planes as I'd thought, but a single thing, blocking out the stars inside the triangle.

Then I recognized it too: the huge triangle people had reported, only this one wasn't silent as everyone else has described it. Had someone wanted to capture our attention and had rattled our windows to bring us outside?

It was difficult to guess its height, but I felt it was at least a half-mile long, and Asante thought it was one mile. As we often did, we regretted that we had no other witnesses.

The next morning, though, I got a phone call from a close friend up the road, asking whether we'd seen the huge triangle in the sky.

Months later, sitting on the roof, I saw another apparent triangle to the south, near Douglas and the Mexican border, flying east to west, with a couple jets pacing it. A few seconds later, I noticed another pair of jets approach from the west and make a U-turn to pace it while the first two jets turned and traveled back east.

UFOs with Witnesses

Maybe the Star of Bethlehem

wasn't a star at all....

Neil Young

Chapter Twenty-Eight: HEART & HOME

Asante's and my relationship seemed to have completed its purpose and exhausted our patience with one another. We'd both done healing work on ourselves and for each other. We'd begun an environmental organization to protect the Dragoon Mountains from a mining operation. The organization would continue strong after we had left. But our differences had irritated or hurt the other, and we couldn't figure out ways to change them. On top of all this, I still couldn't have sex without pain, which also took a toll. We decided to bless each other and go our separate ways.

I decided to sell my home. I had no way to make a living out there, and my vehicle was too undependable for commuting to a job every day. Returning to society seemed attractive for the first time in years, since the country made me too easy a target for aliens or feds.

After Asante left, I slept on the roof one night, but before I fell asleep I saw a star-like light speed through the clouds over my head, lighting them up as it passed through, like *luminarias*, which gave me an easy sense of its height.

Immediately, I reviewed my perceptions and put numbers to it all: The light seemed to have become visible then disappeared within three to five seconds. It traveled a straight line, for which I estimated beginning and ending points corresponding to spots on the earth below.

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The next morning, I measured the distance between those points on a map and found it to be about ten miles.

Ten miles in five seconds (to choose the slowest possibility) equals 120 miles in a minute, or 7,200 miles per hour. Later, I'd read pilot reports with similar and much faster estimates.

Another night, driving home after visiting the neighbor who we'd joked had seen "the flying corral," I saw a brilliant light, perhaps the size of a baseball or basketball - difficult to judge for its brilliance - squiggling rapidly and chaotically through the air for about five seconds, about thirty feet off the ground, in front of and to the right of my truck, then suddenly disappear.

When a sale on my land and house fell through, I was almost penniless, and thirty-five miles from groceries.

I accepted an offer from a friend, Randy Redhawk, to live in his "guest house" travel trailer in the Cochise Stronghold, where he was caretaker for land bequeathed to the Chiricahua Apaches. I could travel with him to get groceries and make my money last.

It seemed a destined situation, since I'd felt connected to the tribe that used to live there. After a short stint in the trailer, I fell in love with Randy and moved in with him and his thirteen-year old daughter, Hope.

I would live with them for most of the year, in their 600-square foot octagonal, wooden yurt, beneath huge pink-orange granite boulders which tower over the house on the west. Sunrise is blocked by a ridge close on the east, but we could watch its morning light slowly *descending* the bright colored cliff on the west, finally illuminating the oak-cedar forest all around the home. I often call it "the most beautiful place on earth," and am grateful for the time I lived there.

The previous year, neighbors told me, a UFO had sailed through the canyon, lighting up trees and shining in some folks' windows. I never saw a UFO there, but did see planes releasing chemtrails over the canyon,

and occasionally black helicopters.

One midnight on a Full Moon, I woke and couldn't get back to sleep. I had one of the feelings that *something is going to happen*.

The home had a large four-foot diameter window in the center of the roof, and through this the Full Moon cast a circle of brilliant white light on the sofa in the center of the house. I sat inside the circle.

I never sleep upright, except rarely on planes or trains, and then only with serious discomfort, so I don't believe I sat there sleeping – especially since I could have laid down. Nevertheless, I suddenly “awoke” sitting upright still, and went outside to find the Full Moon setting over the mountain. It was four o'clock, and I have no idea what happened for the missing four hours, but I felt very happy.

On a trip to Tucson one day, a hawk swooped in front of the windshield of my van, then veered toward a field, dipping first over a disabled vehicle on the side of the road. The lovely hawk sighting seemed marred by juxtaposition with the disabled vehicle, but I still enjoyed it.

I knew hawks sometimes play the role of messengers, if one can read the signs, which I felt I could, so I wondered what message this one might herald. “Pay attention” came to mind, the obvious meaning for Hawk, so I looked around, but didn't see anything of particular interest. I figured I'd make the connection later.

Half an hour later, my van dramatically lost power and in only moments would not run at all. I'd needed to fill the oil but had forgotten. Engine destroyed, my van was another disabled vehicle on the side of the road.

The tow truck driver was Native American, the only one in the state, he told me. I shared with him the message I'd missed, and we had a good laugh, but inwardly I kicked myself for missing it. Now I had no vehicle at all.

I'd been feeling a call to go to Mexico for over a year, where I

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hoped to find a shaman to teach me what I needed to know to tie all this together and help me understand the other dimensions. But I still had no money, and rued the fact that I also didn't have enough faith to travel without much cash.

Suddenly, I got the urge to go, but not for the right reason. Just as I'd occasionally been paranoid that Leo or Asante was a fed, now I felt the same fear about Randy. So, I left Randy and Hope one day without warning or explanation.

The day before I planned to cross the border, I got a phone call notifying me that my former best male friend from high school Fine Arts had died, and a memorial service would be held in two days. Lots of my old friends from our theater days would be there. I was in San Diego, poised to cross the border, but nervous, feeling somehow certain that the window of opportunity regarding Mexico had closed and, if I had indeed been called there last year, it was no longer valid.

Instead of crossing into Mexico with a couple hundred dollars and wavering faith, I spent the last of my money on a plane ticket to see old friends in Paradise Valley, unsure what in the world I'd do next.

I was a nervous wreck, and couldn't relate to anyone. That night, after almost everyone had gone home, I was dancing to old rock and roll with the last two friends, when suddenly "the Hulk routine" came on. Never having experienced this in front of other people other than Asante and Randy, I attempted to repress it – I'd never tried before – and was extremely surprised and a little concerned to discover that I couldn't. So I incorporated it as best I could into my free-style dance, and felt my smile a grimace when I tried to respond to my friends' stares.

I assumed it was the woman who told me to buff up, but couldn't tell. I'd heard that the angels envy us our physicality, so it wasn't much of a leap to theorize a helping spirit might drop in just to enjoy a dance.

Other people, I've read since, assert that it's always dangerous to give disembodied spirits, regardless of who we think they are, access to our bodies. It's called *spiritual intrusion*, or in the worst of cases, *possession*. I agree that it's probably not a good idea in most cases, but sometimes, of course, I've felt that the energies were parts of me returning, so I can't

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subscribe wholeheartedly to this rule.

My body usually feels wonderful when I sense a spiritual energy coming through, as though it was enlarging the spaces between my cells and making room for the Super Woman to co-inhabit my body. Others might argue the good sensation could be a seduction, but I choose to read it as simple body wisdom, until further evidence. So far, the evidence seems to be that I'm becoming happier, clearer of vision, and more directed to do the various sorts of work that I feel I came here to do.

Randy had lived with a Diné medicine man for a year, so I once sought his opinion on this subject. He had nothing definitive to say, so I allowed myself to just experience it without judgment. A Buddhist sort of solution, it seemed to me.

With nowhere else to go, I returned to Randy's, and sold my vehicle for a little cash. He'd been hurt, but understood what I was going through and forgave me, and gave me a place to stay while I waited for my home to sell.

When it seemed a contract on my house would be closing in a month, I needed to move some final outdoor possessions from around the house. Working with a girlfriend over the course of two days, we came across three pairs of mating rattlesnakes. I felt gratitude for what I took as a sign of their farewell.

In the next month I began to experience my heart as "congested" - the best word I could find - and for a month I described the varying sensations as resembling a brick in my chest, or a half-brick, or a sliver of a brick, et cetera.

My Naturopath asked me about stress in my life, and I was not happy to hear myself begin to tell her about, not only the child abuse, but also MKULTRA. I wished I could leave it behind and not risk people thinking me strange.

I'd played with the theory, espoused by many in the New Age movement, that I could change the past by the way I talked about the

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present, and while it went against my rational grain, I was willing to try. But frequently I couldn't help myself, and would tell the story.

When I told my Naturopath, she was sympathetic to the child abuse, but unfamiliar with MKULTRA, which didn't surprise me. I knew fully well that I took a chance of being thought crazy or a conspiracy nut every time I told anyone about these issues in my life, so I tell very few. But I continued, as it felt important to educate this doctor.

After she asked questions and listened to my answers for about a half hour, she finally listened to my heart.

Registering disturbance on her face, she took off her stethoscope, listened in the room, opened the door, listened in the hallway, then in the room again, and finally asked if I heard music. When I said no, she listened to my heart for a second, then repeated some of the former behaviors with an increased look of distress.

"Maybe it's my implant, picking up a radio station," I offered, making light of what I thought a real possibility. If there was one put in my nose and another in my vagina, another one in my heart didn't seem much of a stretch.

She looked at me seriously, but made no comment. Not mentioning the music again, but seeming to listen in a distracting environment, she said she could hear a swishy valve, and referred me to a cardiologist.

I didn't feel like pressuring her, so never asked if the swishy sound was heard with music.

Over the next few days, I wondered if whoever, aliens or government, might have put an implant in me might have overheard our discussion and whether they would, or had already, made an electronic correction in their implant, so that a cardiologist would never hear any music. I'd never know, since the cardiologist was scheduled for many months out, and I'd soon effect my own cure.

The last day at my land, the day before the final contract was to close, my heart was so painful, I was unable to do even the lightest work without serious pain, so I hired Randy to pack up the last of my

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possessions. At one point, I picked up something to read aloud to him, a political piece which made me angry, and my jaw began to throb – a symptom my Naturopath had told me could indicate a heart attack.

I was dumbfounded. Sure, the day before, my heart had hurt so badly that I'd notarized a Power of Attorney "just in case," giving my daughter the right to decide everything in the event of my death. But it was just my practical and weary side acting. I really didn't think... or maybe I did.

I lay down, fascinated that I might actually die, as I'd wanted to so many times in the past decade, and now I could do it *consciously*.

My practical side was pleased: *It would be convenient*. My property was almost converted to cash, and my possessions were reduced, so the kids wouldn't have much to go through. I had no particular plans. And I'd taken care of the Power of Attorney. Perfect.

I'd had enough, I thought, was ready to go, and was curious about the experience of passing from this realm to the next. I was actually excited, wondering what it would be like - though my heart hurt, and I didn't like that.

The memory of Fred Sanford, of TV's Sanford and Sons, and his comic calling out to his deceased wife, Elizabeth, to meet him, I had to dismiss. Closing my eyes, I tried to envision my Helpers on the other side. Randy had come to sit beside me and placed his hand on my chest over my heart, and I assumed he was praying in some form or another.

As I tried to see with my spiritual eyes my Helpers, I was suddenly shocked to realize the only ones on the other side were mocking me, floating in something like a gondola, looking down and *laughing at me!*, saying, "Yeah, Jean... Come on!" My shock turned to indignation.

Okay! I thought, *I get it: it's not my time. But you don't have to laugh!*

What I'd thought was an appropriate acceptance of life's ending was suddenly a lesson that I could be frighteningly, spiritually vulnerable in a realm in which I still didn't know the rules. I had practically offered my soul into the hands of - *Whom?!*

Desperately, my mind raced and I realized: *I need to rally my energy*

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and heal my heart.

Ignoring Randy, I raised myself immediately from my bed, grabbed my rattle, and began a circle around the interior of my house for the final time, walking faster and faster until I almost jogged.

Suddenly, I stopped at the open front door, and was wracked with coughing and hacking, exhaling hugely, inadvertently throwing spittle – the energy inside me was intense – toward the western horizon. It continued for a couple of minutes.

Then it was over. Exhausted, I breathed deeply, straightened up my back, able to relax again after the strenuous effort, then looked around, a little embarrassed. Randy was still sitting there, where I'd passed him on my rounds through the house, though I'd never paid him any attention while the healing work moved through me.

He looked at me calmly, and I realized he'd probably seen stranger things, working with the medicine man.

My heart was much better, but not entirely, and I wondered what else I could do. It still felt impacted by a thin sliver of a brick.

An hour or so later, reviewing paperwork at my desk, I sat up straight, and Randy and I were both surprised at the sound of a tremendous cracking – three times fast – in my chest and sternum. At the same moment, I had a vision of light shining through the spaces between three vertebrae.

Breathing was a new sensation - easier, fuller, lighter. Something was free.

I signed a stack of papers the next day, and prepared to leave Cochise County.

Sometimes citizens are far ahead of their government, which sponsored that [ET] cover-up.

-- Ruth Montgomery, syndicated Washington columnist on politics and world affairs

Chapter Twenty-Nine: BACK IN THE WORLD

My only information on UFOs, ETs and extra-dimensional experience, aside from my own experience and a few friends with anecdotes, had come via library books, a few used books, and the Internet. Printed disinformation would be too easy to accomplish, I thought, so I decided to go to a UFO conference to meet some UFO experts face-to-face and “suss them out.”

With money from the sale of my home, I registered for the “Extraterrestrial Civilizations and World Peace” conference, the only conference that promised to address both the alien issue and spirituality, which I was delighted to find was scheduled in just one month – and in Hawaii.

Before I left, we held a celebration around Randy’s fire circle, and I shyly brought out, for the first time, the Hawaiian rattles given me by the shamanic practitioner I’d worked with. One of the Grandmothers, Allegra, blessed them for me in an impromptu ceremony, during which energy surged so powerfully through my body, shaking and quaking me, that some friends thought I was making a joke.

Later that evening, someone suggested – and I thought they were kidding – that I learn the Hula. Rather than laugh, I heard myself agree, and would soon learn something interesting about the practice. The tourist dance was derived from the traditional Hawaiian martial art and

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spiritual exercise, which is still practiced. I'd been yearning to take up a martial art, but hadn't been drawn to those that are more common.

At the conference, I met exceptionally credible people, and found myself, to my surprise, unafraid to engage in conversation with them. I'd lost my shyness. I met Pomaika'i Coulon, a shaman, who believes the Hawaiian gods are not unlike some of our extra-terrestrials. I met US ambassador John McDonald; citizen diplomat Dr. Michael Salla; and heard the former Canadian Minister of Defense, Paul Hellyer, speak. Most important to me then, I spoke with the Jimmy Carter White House appointee for developing a protocol for ET communications, attorney Alfred Webre. We talked about government harassment, and he encouraged me to get involved in the promotion of the international declaration to end the cover-up – which I did.

At a dolphin-swim seminar after the conference (dolphins are thought by many to be terrestrial “aliens”) hosted by Angelika Whitecliff, I met international journalist Paola Harris, who responded to something I'd said by asking if I was familiar with MKULTRA.

When I answered yes, she surprised me further by asking if I thought it possible I'd been mind-controlled.

Shocked and embarrassed, I told her I knew I *had* been, but hoped I'd healed myself. She said nothing more, and I was soon sickened with grief that I might not know the extent of my problems, and might never free myself. A year later, I was gratified to spend a few days with Paola at another conference; she apparently didn't think me a pariah.

That night, I opened a book I'd been given at the beginning of the conference and coincidentally found an essay on removing dark spiritual energies. That night and each night thereafter, I used a spiritual net to capture entities inside me, calling on a circle of protecting angels and a band of rescuing angels to take the entities away to transformation. It was not a simple exercise; sometimes the entities clung and I had to do serious spiritual battle to remove them. But I was able, and felt

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empowered again.

I have become convinced that fear is a magnet for dark energies and that my well-intended “education” of others (such as my Naturopath and even my attempts to write this book) could have the effect of reinforcing a link between “evil” and me. I was, however, beginning to reframe the entire subject of evil.

A magnetic connection could explain why intelligent and kind-hearted people sometimes simply refuse to listen to or acknowledge the dark side. I’d assumed they were in denial, and probably many are, but maybe the rest have simply learned that it’s best to do something different with this information than focus on it.

This reminded me too much of the statuette of three monkeys found in nearly every home in America in the 1950s, with the caption, *See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil*. I have in recent years played with the idea that that ubiquitous piece of cultural iconography was a mind control device to keep people silent about all the wrongs they might perceive about them. That summer in Hawaii, though, I began to consider that maybe it was decent, protective advice. But I worried: *How could we warn other people about the realities of the underground? Or was it up to each of us alone, and we can’t help others?*

I wrestled with the idea of balance, wanting to let go of my fear, but also not wanting to be in denial or fail to help others learn what could help and protect them. Eventually I came to believe that each attitude has its time and place, and each is correct at some point. For instance, in childhood, it would be blessed to live in denial of anything like torture. Later in life, it is probably important to know that it does exist, especially when it’s used to curtail freedoms on a global scale, such as was used in the Inquisition and even today, to keep the economic machinery running.

But *fear* of this reality does not serve us in the long run, and some people theorize there are spiritual entities which *feed* on fear energy! Whether this is true or not, I choose not to speculate. But I know we must discover, create within ourselves, an alternative to both denial and

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fear - a *Third Way*, the Buddhists call it. I believe the Third Way is an emotional response other than denial or fear – something we come to after exhausting ourselves in those and experiencing their pitfalls and ineffectiveness. I'd certainly explored it to the full.

This emotional response probably cannot be explained or taught; probably it can only be learned by direct experience of fear and its consequences, followed by the search within one's soul for an alternative. The search might include testing out anger and revenge and all those consequences too; and intermittent returns to denial. In the end, I believe the exhortation of the prophets to love and have hope is what's called the Third Way, which surmounts ignorance, denial, fear and all else.

As the months and years go by, I respond in new ways to it all. Sometimes I actually forget my fearful experiences for periods of time. Sometimes I remember them, even recall in my body the events of torture. Then I am thankful it's not my reality now, and accept it all, acknowledging the vision it's brought me. I pray for other victims. I also pray for the perpetrators.

Lately I've prayed for the supportive participants, the majority of whom I believe are involved only because they were sucked in somehow and are now afraid to buck the system they've seen from the inside. I believe they suffer as much as their victims, in fear that they could be next, as they could be. I pray they experience the Source's love, and believe that one day soon they will be key players in bringing down the Network, subverting the paradigm from within.

I talk to them sometimes on the spirit realm and tell them: *Because you are originally of the Light and because you are part of a majority who, if you recognize each other, you have the numbers and power to serve the Transformation by turning the underground network from within. In fact, you are the key players. And it's in your best interest to serve this purpose.*

One evening, at a second dolphin-swim seminar that summer with Joan Ocean, Elaine Thompson gave a presentation on the various types

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of aliens and what role each plays in the human experience. She showed slides of her paintings of the various races, based on descriptions of those who've interacted with them.

Enjoying her show, I decided I'd try my own hand at painting the reptile who'd entered me. A minute later, Elaine changed slides, and there he was, looking exactly, expression and all, as I remembered him.

Then, she distinguished Reptoids from Reptilians, explaining that Reptoids were "very loving" beings, and helpful to the humans who accept them, while the Reptilians have a different reputation.

Barbara Lamb, colleague of John Mack, gave each person at Joan Ocean's seminar a hypnotherapy session, but I had a hard time believing the things I experienced. It may not have been my time to remember. One day soon I'll listen to the tapes, and see if it's time.

Near the end of this second seminar, I bought a deck of *Archangel Oracle Cards*, by Doreen Virtue. Back at my hotel, exhausted by days of swimming and sun, I had no energy to read a word, but set them on the bedside table while I lay down to nap. Suddenly, a bright, happy, sparkly female was hovering all around me. Taking a cue from other's stories, I thought to ask her her name.

Ariel, she said, and I was immediately disappointed that her name was vaguely familiar. I worried that my rational mind might later convince me that my subconscious had invented the experience and slapped on a name that I'd heard of. It felt absolutely real, but I feared that with time I might begin to doubt, and the name might feel like something my subconscious could have stolen from another's story.

Hyper-cynicism having interrupted my experience, I dropped my attempt to communicate and was left with nothing but her name and the remembrance of how powerfully bright and sparkly she'd felt. Sorry for my struggle with disbelief, I thanked her and drifted off to sleep.

When I woke, I flipped open the book to read about Ariel:
She's very partial to the environmental area, and she works closely with the nature angels to heal and protect animals – particularly the

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birds, animals, and fish who live near and in the water. One way to work with Ariel is to participate in environmental work....

Of all the angels, it seemed she was exactly the one who might choose to make herself known to me, because of my environmental work and past days with the dolphins. Excited and honored, I wondered whether to tell anyone, or whether these are the sorts of things to keep private.

That evening, Joan asked me how my afternoon had been, and I realized we were standing away from the others. Taking our privacy as a sign that this experience was okay to share, I whispered that I'd sensed Ariel that afternoon.

To my profound surprise, Joan leaned forward smiling beautifully and whispered, "Isn't she bright and sparkly?"

After seven days swimming with dolphins in the open ocean reached by boat, I went with friends to Kealakekua Bay, where dolphins come every day to swim with people near the beach. We clambered over the rocks, put on our fins and masks, and negotiated the crashing waves. Shortly after, the dolphins greeted us.

They swam around us, swam beside us, demonstrated their games played with leaves floating in the water. For an hour and a half, various dolphins kept us constantly engaged.

One came within an arm's length of me from behind, startling me, then raced around and did it again. I swam after it making a silent "tone," which Elaine had encouraged us to use to communicate with them, and it seemed to work.

It was the only dolphin I tried it with, and the only dolphin to "speak" to me. It said, *Eek, eek, eek, eek.*

I repeated it, audibly: *Eek, eek, eek, eek.*

It slowed down so I could keep up with it and repeated its message.

I swam along behind it, answering.

We traveled this way in circles for what seemed like fifteen minutes. I became very tired and thought I'd have to drift behind, and

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he might leave me. But he slowed down. When I needed to go even slower, he took off, raced around in a circle, then returned to swim slowly with me some more. And all the while we exchanged our communication.

Days later, flying back to Tucson, I was nearly delirious with bliss, laughing at almost everything, telling too much of my story about the dolphins and ETs to a young scientist beside me who thought I was a little bit loopy.

On one leg of my flight, a woman beside me seemed to be in pain and admitted in conversation that she suffered from fibromyalgia. Though I've hated what I've long perceived as egoism in a type of person I've occasionally seen who dramatically (my judgement) puts their hands on another to heal them, I wrestled with the feeling that I should touch this woman's shoulder and ease her pain. Eventually I overcame my resistance and asked her if she would mind. At least I knew how to give a decent massage, so perhaps I'd just find a muscle that needed release. When she welcomed me, I laid my hand gently on her shoulder, not knowing what to expect.

I've read of people doing this work and sensing subtle energy moving through their hands. I felt too wounded, too irresponsible to be entrusted with such a gift and was even a little afraid that I wouldn't know what to do if my life changed like that. I released these thoughts and just asked Spirit to do whatever it would. Though I felt nothing in particular, her body relaxed visibly, and she turned to me with wide eyes and asked, "Are you a healer?"

I didn't know what to say, so I just said, "Maybe."

Having decided to reconnect with society again, I went searching for a small town somewhere in the Southwest, where I could afford a house in walking distance to an organic food co-op. In Silver City, New Mexico, I bought a fixer-upper to renovate for passive solar design. Most amazing to me, I maintained my happiness gained in Hawaii and quickly made more friends than I've ever had in my life, excepting

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perhaps in my high school years in theater.

I also connected with a few people I thought were trying to trigger me. At first it upset me, but then I accepted that this is the dance I'm dancing on the planet at this time. This is my work: to do *aikido* with these energies, take care of myself and strengthen myself in whatever way I can.

When those with strange vibes come around, each time I find a different solution. Since there's no one solution for all situations, I must stay in touch with Spirit, for guidance. Sometimes I fail, but that's life. That's the teacher.

"Off the path, then back on the path – that's 'The Path,'" I often say, paraphrasing Whitley Strieber in *The Path*. It's important to forgive ourselves.

I treated myself to a few more conferences, one on "indigenous ways of knowing," in Santa Fe, put on by SEED Graduate Institute. There, I learned that the physicist David Bohm, contemporary of Einstein, who carried on his work, discovered his notions of reality have powerful similarities with the Hopi worldview, so he spent the last years of his life in dialog with Native elders informing his scientific work.

One morning of the conference, I arrived late and stood in the back not too far from one of the Native presenters. He noticed my late arrival and came to whisper a story I'd missed, about Rabbit and Hawk. He had no way of knowing that the Rabbit and Hawk tale is one that has often worried me: Rabbit runs around saying, *Hawk! Hawk! Don't eat me!* and then, of course, is eaten because he draws attention to himself, attracting what he fears most. I've thought for years this was my situation with the feds, and I needed to quit focusing on this story (but obviously haven't). The Native man continued, "But the speaker didn't tell the rest of the story. It goes on: Hawk doesn't really eat Rabbit, because Hawk knows that Rabbit has a mission." I looked at him in astonishment, as he nodded and walked away.

At the end of the conference, a Medicine Woman came up to me, took my hands in both of hers, looked me deeply in the eyes and said,

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“You will see many things.”

Unused to being told grand things about my life, I smiled and wanted to humbly say nothing or deny it, but something prompted me to not play stupid, so I spoke what I believed, staring back intently into her intense eyes, and said, “I know.”

She nodded, smiling and shaking my hands for emphasis, and repeated her words, “You will see many things.”

Back at home one evening, kneeling before my altar, I sensed something enter my spinal cord and begin a delicious dance through my spine. I thought I recognized Snake.

Enjoying the sensation but remembering the warning, I decided I wanted to talk to it without it inside me, so said, in a manner that was quickly almost begging, *Sto--o--op*. A torrent of light-type energy poured into the top of my head, then a cloud of dark things seemed to fly out of me.

Had Snake been evicted or had it just overseen an eviction of others? Was it even Snake? Then, a cluster of lights arrived and entered me in place of the dark things, while I sat there open-mouthed in astonishment. Apparently we don't have to understand, necessarily, to be cared for.

I've thought and prayed about this incident for months, and decided I disagree with those who warn us against spiritual cohabitation - though I'm open to correction at any time. I've had so many lost soul parts return, and the arrival of the Integrating Woman was useful, so like what psychologists now recognize as an Inner Self Helper, an independent being who helps multiples heal, that I've become comfortable with the idea of my body as a site for various holograms of being.

The blob that came with a sense of evil I had no problem sending away. The reptile helped me and then never was evident again. The Snake, if it was Snake, either knew I was ambivalent and came in to do good work, or it was evicted because I'd said No. In any case, I can't point to any problem in my life that might be caused by entities. The biggest problems in my life seem to be fed-caused, and my failure to deal

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with them better seem unrelated to my spirit relationships – or because I forget those relationships.

I see myself as a multiple with pockets containing a number (how many? I don't know) of spiritual essences, most if not all of them me. Rather than feeling freakish, I feel powerful, like a team with many resources, skills, talents and abilities, all awaiting their time for expression.

I still take a little extra time sometimes remembering people. I assume that the alter who first met them isn't always the alter who's out when I meet them the second or third time, unfortunately. My alters aren't *that* separate or compartmentalized, so it only takes a few seconds longer than most people for everything to connect, but it's noticeable, and sometimes it seems I hurt people's feelings.

Now that I've come out with this book, I intend to tell folks, if they see confusion in my face, to just give me a clue. I can usually integrate the memory in a couple of seconds.

As part of my certification to be a Transpersonal Hypnotherapist™ (dealing with the spiritual as well as the emotional, psychological and behavioral aspects of a person), I skimmed again the Harvard Psychiatrist Dr. John Mack's book, *Abduction*. I loved his description of dropping his skepticism about alien contact:

I was dealing with a phenomenon that I felt could not be explained psychiatrically, yet was simply not possible within the framework of the Western scientific worldview. My choices then were either to stretch and twist psychology beyond reasonable limits, overlooking aspects of the phenomenon that could not be explained psychologically, such as the physical findings, the occurrence in small children and even infants, and the association with UFOs – i.e., to keep insisting upon a psychosocial explanation consistent with the prevailing Western scientific ideology. Or, I might open to the possibility that our consensus framework of reality is too limited and that a phenomenon such as this cannot be explained within its ontological parameters. In other words, a new scientific paradigm

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might be necessary in order to understand what was going on.

I was grateful for his placing this phenomenon in the scope of world history, which includes: ...*contact with a multitude of gods, spirits, angels, fairies, demons, ghouls, vampires and sea monsters. All have been said to instruct, direct, harass, or befriend humans with varying dispositions, motives, and purposes...* similar to what I'd written in my journal a few years back.

He cited cultures around the world with stories of such contact, including Ezekiel who ascended to the wheel in the sky, the Hopis who were taught by *Kachinas* who visited from other planets, Irish fairies who originated on other planets and travel the skies in cloudlike boats, the *Koryaks* of Siberia and *Bakairi* of Brazil, whose cosmology includes a heavenly dimension easily accessible to their shamans, etc.

Even the theories of alien reproduction to create a race of hybrids aren't new. For hundreds, if not thousands of years, there have been tales of incubae and succubae, spirits who immobilize humans at night and mate with them. And the Bible opens with the story of the gods who came down and mated with the daughters of men.

Jacques Vallee, perhaps the most comprehensive cross-cultural investigator of extra-dimensional subjects, documented hundreds of sightings of strange sky-born objects and their occupants across time, continents and societies, including the presence of disks in the symbology of various civilizations. For instance, both the Phoenicians and early Christians associated disks with communication between humans and god. Vallee wrote in 1988,

I believe that the UFO phenomenon represents evidence for other dimensions beyond spacetime; the UFOs may not come from ordinary space, but from a multiverse which is all around us, and of which we have stubbornly refused to consider the disturbing reality in spite of the evidence available to us for centuries.

I did not intend to begin practicing hypnotherapy immediately. I thought it would remain simply a field of interest, in which I would mostly work for my own healing and personal investigations, maybe one day using it to help others recall their extra-dimensional experiences.

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Shortly after I was certified, a friend asked me to work with her, followed by another friend, and another. When my first client came out of her trance, she exclaimed that it had been the most useful of all the therapy sessions she'd ever done in her life. I'd put her in touch with her inner Wise One. Since this hadn't been part of my training, I assume it was *my* inner Wise One who had the idea.

Since this subject of extra-dimensional beings has a long, global history and only a lying government denying it and lying mass media ridiculing it, it shouldn't be difficult to come "out of the closet" and offer hypnotherapy to those who want to remember their "ED" experiences. But it has been. Years ago, I realized I was tired of the activist role, always fighting uphill battles, and to offer this sort of hypnotherapy would only be one more Big Effort. Nevertheless, I designed my brochures, offering help for a variety of issues, began accepting clients, and returned to finishing this book I've been writing for the last thirteen years.

ETs are just one face of Spirit.
-- Sequoia Trueblood

Chapter Thirty: TRICKSTER TEACHERS

Continuing to use funds from the sale of my home and land, I treated myself to more conferences and traveling. After attending a conference on Sound Healing, I next planned a trip to sacred sites in Peru.

I accepted the offer of a couple who wanted to housesit and care for my cats while I was gone, despite my having bad feelings about them. Afterward, I remembered how the woman had talked at me for nearly three hours, and I feared, yet again, that I still had programming she'd triggered to induce my obedience to their request. Or did I just have a habit of saying yes to people who need help?

"Fortunately," a bad tooth flared up the night before my plane flight out of Tucson, forcing me in the early hours to cancel my trip, and have a root canal later that day. After emailing the house-sitter, I received a letter she'd sent me before she knew I was returning, enumerating a list of events that would have been extremely difficult to bear from Peru: my phone had quit working, she'd lost all the telephone numbers I'd given her, and my stove had been emitting fumes, toxic to her, which she'd had repaired, but now she was ill. Not only had she written a letter that would have been highly disturbing on my first day in Peru, but had presented a cover story for having at least two strangers, or groups of them, enter my home – disguised agents to tap my phone and bug the house? I didn't want to think it, but there it was.

When I wrote that I was returning, I knew she'd be upset because they were desperate for a place to stay. I didn't like being paranoid, and tried to tell myself that none of those dots *had* to connect. So I offered to stay with friends in Tucson for a few days, so they'd have time to find another

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situation. She returned a scathing letter, calling me paranoid, untrusting, judgmental, blaming, and more – thirteen items, a friend and I counted – some of which were true, of course, but none of which had been hinted at in my email. Just the opposite, I'd been too accommodating.

I called a girlfriend, a handiwoman, and asked her to drop by my house and see if the phone was really not working. At the door, she was told it had been repaired and was clearly not invited in. But when I called again, the phone still didn't work. A subsequent email exchange with my house sitter told me it had gone out "again" after my friend had left.

I changed my plans, returned home immediately, and was fortunate to have another friend drop by to witness the woman call me more names and accuse me of various defects in character.

When she finally agreed to leave, she took only one tiny bag from the guest bedroom, and not a thing more, not even toothbrushes, indicating that she and her husband had never actually moved in.

Within minutes, my friend received a call on her cell phone, which hung up before she could answer. When she hit redial, she reached a government office involved in "investigations." We assumed someone wanted at least to make me nervous.

I discovered things moved around in my bedroom - which they'd promised not to enter - and items also moved on my altar. Since my phone wasn't working, I called for a repairman, who said, after four hours of troubleshooting, his twenty-year record, he'd never found such an inexplicable outage, and he had to rewire part of the house.

The next week, another repairman arrived to "do follow up." He seemed disconcerted that I stayed nearby and watched what he was doing at every moment - almost. After he left, I realized I'd enjoyed watching him closely, protecting my home, then for no good reason, I'd walked away to give him a couple minutes without me watching at the end. *Why?*

Curiosity growing, I called the gas company, and learned that the woman had indeed called them, but the service report indicated there were no leaks that needed repair.

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I reflected on my past half-year: I'd made many friends, threw a couple of successful parties, renovated my home, wrote a new draft of my book, and gave workshops on solar ovens – everything looked normal enough, even successful.

And then the triggering. My lesson (always look for the lesson): I must always be on guard against liars. They can appear helpful, or they can appear needing my help. Either way, I have to listen to my heart and go by that. And, when in doubt, *don't*.

Before moving to Silver City, I'd told Source I intended to avoid another sexual relationship for at least a year, so that I could fully experience my own mind, my own intentions, my own spiritual work, with no other person pulling me one way or another. And I was fully enjoying that experience.

One day I wrote about this enjoyment in my journal, and within minutes turned over an Archangel card which promised to bring me “my Beloved.” This was followed by more cards, at my home and friends' homes, *everywhere* it seemed for weeks, promising that Love was on its way. I'd thought I didn't want it, but the promise disrupted my equanimity.

After two distressing errors, both prompted by unique paranormal events in conjunction with the men's overtures, I understood the lesson: that I needed to discern *tricksters* from real spirit helpers. Trickster spirits, I learned, can hijack even our own ritual tools, even Archangel cards, and create fascinating psychic experiences.

I would have thought I'd learned this lesson after those two mistakes, but I'd have to experience one more.

In April 2007, I attended another consciousness conference – or actually, *two*: One was on Shamanism, where I was gratified to speak with Hank Wesselman, author of three books on shamanism that have been important to me over the years. When I told him my name and commented that I've often wanted to change it, he stopped and abruptly peered hard into my eyes, pulling back his head as if to get better perspective. After awhile, he pronounced, No, I should not do that. It was a name I was born to, for a

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purpose.

The other conference, scheduled at the same time and location, was on Sacred Sexuality. All the workshops and presentations were open to registrants of either one. At the end of one of the sexuality presentations, I experienced a synchronicity so precise and welcome that I immediately interpreted it as a prediction for a future relationship

I'd known Native Americans talked about tricksters, and so did the Celts, but they'd never felt real to me. Later, I'd say, *Of course! If our physical world is a manifestation of spirit realms, then everything we have on this plane – goodness, murder, tricks and more – must first exist there.* But, it took me awhile to see the purpose of a trickster, especially one who'd interfere with people's "love."

Then I recalled Cupid: *a god who made people fall in love! Which also served "the gods" with entertainment!?* I was aghast. *Our emotions played with for the amusement of the gods?* Even though the idea of Cupid seemed silly at first, I had to acknowledge that our cultural forebears, the Greeks and the Romans, took Cupid and the other gods and goddesses very seriously. So have all the other cultures around the globe taken similar spirits very seriously, throughout all time. Except ours. *Could our modern sophistication be a cover for our denial? A debilitating affectation?*

Here's what happened: At the conference, after hearing a lecture on Sacred Sexuality, I had the most amazing sequence of events unfold, which seemed beyond mere coincidence, beyond my imagination; they seemed like Spirit giving me a Very Clear Message. But it was not.

After I got over my embarrassment, I wrote this poem:

*A Song of Synchronicities
Or
How the Tricksters Got Me*

*Watch out for those Trickster Spirits -
they can be the worst.
Like Cupid with bow and arrow,
bitting us where it hurts.*

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*I'm here to tell the story
of three synchronicities,
amazing events that swooped me to rapture
and brought me to my knees.*

*My mind was obsessed,
my body was too,
by these "spiritual" signs (I thought)
– Would you?*

*Sexuality was the workshop,
the sacred, healing kind.
I was inspired, and knew, for me,
a healing seminar was past time.*

*But, With whom? I wondered,
Whom? Whom? Whom?
A sea of heads parted,
and my heart went Boom: There he was.*

*Under guidance of Spirit (who else?),
I read the sign.
Wondering who my partner would be,
I was certain: He was mine.*

*A dream was formed –
Hawaii, high sex, hula, healing,
(and him – I kept this to myself)
Certain, my mind was reeling.*

*Omitting his name, I told it all to a friend,
who called out to the man of my fancy:
He should learn the Hula! -
Synchro-ni-ci-tous-ly!*

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*The third sign involved timing,
I prayed that we'd connect,
not get stuck in a crowd -
and our meeting was perfect!*

*I waited in the lobby,
sitting all alone,
quiet, staring, waiting, staring,
til suddenly I rose.*

*I walked to the ballroom
and stepped inside,
scanned the room.
He wasn't there.
I breathed a sigh.
It was okay.
I told myself I had no attachment,
accepted God's will.
Thought I shouldn't be so needy,
there will be someone else,
or maybe it's good
I be alone for a few more weeks,
or months, please God, not years.
Still, I had faith,
told myself I was fine.
Exhaled, and wondered, Where next?
My hotel, alone.
I turned, and there he was!*

*I asked him a question.
He took my hand,
and led me
to a quiet place to talk.*

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*So, what would you think?
Was this meant to be?
Or if it's not,
Who parted the sea (of heads)?*

*And who made our friend blurt out
that he should learn the hula?
Who moved us together
to the ballroom, huh?*

*Some would say it's angels,
my man is slow to understand.
But I gotta wonder if they're tricksters
havin' fun.*

*"Cupid is the one who's armed,"
I heard a wise man* say.
I think he's a wretch, for laughing at me,
I pray you stay out of his way.*

After all those years of reading signs, I experienced these synchronicities like a one-two-three punch of certain joy, but the man is not interested. He told me so clearly, very nicely. Now that time has passed, I can see we're totally incompatible. While I still admire him and am glad to count him a friend (he forgave me), I can only conclude now that there are spirits who trick us to teach us to be more discerning.

I find it interesting that some people draw comparisons between the "gods" and demons and extra-terrestrials – all reside in other dimensions, and sometimes they display motives we don't understand. Many ET's seem highly evolved, akin to angels even, while others seem demonic. Finally others seem a lot like us – they run the gamut: good, bad, ugly, tricksters,

* Native American activist and poet, John Trudell.

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and well-intentioned helpers that mess things up.

The apostle Paul (whose writings I have at times thought early disinformation) said something important: *Discern the spirits*. To do this, we must develop our spiritual practice and “learn the ropes” of the other realms. It’s a jungle out there. But, thank the gods, sometimes the lessons can be funny.

They might not feel that way at first. One evening I was overwhelmed with disgust and despair at how stupid I’d been to make overtures to that man, to the point that I actually felt I wanted to die – only for an hour or so before realizing how silly the matter really was.

Then I remembered a book I’d recently purchased, *Waking the Tiger, Healing Trauma*, which offered a way to unleash locked emotions, based on the behavior of animals in the wild. The authors wrote that wild animals, which regularly experience the trauma of watching others killed and ripped limb from limb, recover by literally shaking it off. I hadn’t read much of the book, but decided to try it.

Kneeling by my altar (despair makes it easy to kneel), I prayed and asked for help with my stupidity, or if I was being triggered by hypnotic suggestions or other programming, to help me become strong enough to resist them. Then I stood up and began to shake it off. Feelings emerged in my voice also, and I began to shake my hands, arms, feet, moan and make other grotesque sounds, until finally I was jumping up and down and laughing at myself – with real joy, that healing is possible, self-forgiveness is possible, and it’s really not all that difficult.

Laughter is incredibly important. Rob Brezsny, author of *Pronoia is the Antidote to Paranoia*, asserts, “Evil is boring. Cynicism is stupid. Despair is lazy.” And exhorts us toward “rowdy bliss.” I was intrigued that he also weighed in on split personalities and evil beings:

Are demons and devils real? In my view, it doesn't matter.... We are all plagued by split-off, unintegrated portions of our own and other

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people's psyches. They behave exactly as if they were diabolical entities

....

Then he quotes Paul Foster Case: "Laughter is prophylactic. It purifies subconsciousness and dissolves mental complexes."

I agree heartily. It does require a little effort to resist the fascination of fear, if you've been pulled toward that abyss, but once we free ourselves, we can lend our energies to create what we'd like the world to be. I know.

Despite my intentions, I have not yet used my hypnotherapy skills to explore my anomalous experiences. It might seem incongruous that I've left all this material unexplored when I've had the tools, but we all have a process that is personal, based on our strengths and abilities, and it probably shouldn't be pushed. Like birth, things have their time. I hope it comes soon, but I'll be patient.

I also believe it's important to hold lightly to our own conclusions. Be ready to amend them when further information presents. And be ready for the world to change. We may be absolutely right that something *was* a certain way, such as an evil cabal torturing little children, but that doesn't mean that that's the way it *is* now, and most certainly is not the way it will always be. Expect change. Be part of the change.

I also think it important to hate no one, even those caught in evil. We might fight and resist them, when that feels right. But I don't believe we should engage constantly with the "other side." It only forges connections which serve neither us nor the world.

I came across a reference to an early Jewish commentary on the Scriptures, called *The Abodazara*, in which Jesus was referred to as *ben Panther*. And I recalled he was also called "The *Lion* of Judah" in the Bible. *Lion? Panther?* I wondered: *Was his a shamanic lineage?*

With this, I understood that my old suspicion was almost certainly true, that Jesus – *Yeshua* – came to Earth to *teach* us, not to be killed. And what he said to the disciples, "You will do all these things and more," probably means we're meant to transcend this material realm and do what we

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think of as miracles.

The fact that we don't might be explained by something else he is reputed to have said: "Many are called, but few respond."

A Bible scholar tells me that the more common "few are chosen" is a bad translation. It's a matter of responding, he says, which too few of us do.

Our response, I've come to believe, is not about doctrine or other ideas in our minds (which Jesus warned the disciples against in his denunciation of the doctrinarism of the Pharisees), but about *resonance* with Spirit. It's a simple matter of heart. As he said, when the disciples argued over doctrine, "The Kingdom of God is *within*."

It's difficult, in today's world, dealing with rationality. For instance, despite my passion to experience the other realms with my body/spirit/being, I find it difficult to extricate myself from worldly concerns long enough to respond fully to what I believe is my calling: to listen and feel God/Spirit/Creator and resonate with that. But I persevere.

Though I've often felt exhausted, terrified or lost, I know that every challenge makes me wiser – eventually – and leads me through new doorways to a broader vision.

*When you see the Earth like this, and the cosmos like this,
and ten times more stars, ten times as bright because of no intervening atmosphere,
in the full 180-degree view, if you put your face to the windows,
it's magnificent, it's overwhelming....*

*It made me realize the answers to the ancient questions,
"Who are we? How did we get here? Where are we going?"
within science were certainly incomplete and perhaps flawed.*

This feeling of unity and connectedness was an ecstatic, blissful experience.

-- Astronaut Edgar Mitchell

Afterword:

MY CAMPFIRE

A few years back, I read about how one tribe supported its members who'd experienced traumatic events. The person traumatized would tell their story to the entire tribe one night around the campfire. Later they would tell it again, remembering more details, describing it as fully as they needed. Finally, they'd tell it a third and last time, making whatever conclusions had become apparent, and afterward they and no one else would ever speak of the trauma again. The person could leave it behind forever. They would take a new name, often indicating the strength of character they'd gained.

Since reading that, I've often reflected on how trauma is handled in our culture. We have too fluid a culture, no campfire, no way to share our stories. The result is that we can't let our stories go, and have to live through telling them again and again. Or if we quit telling them, then in a fluid society, we can never be known for the fullness of what we've experienced. And with storytelling lost, the generations lose powerful wisdom.

I yearn for a tribe to hear my story, then support me in *letting it go*. I hope, as I publish this for others to read, maybe I'll have found the best solution for our modern, tribe-less times.

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On one of the last days before printing this book, I picked up Carlos Castaneda's *The Art of Dreaming*, which I hadn't opened in seven years. In the early pages, I read what don Juan said about the old sorcerers and the new.

Sorcery, as he used the term, is not the evil that common Western culture says it is; it is seeing and working with the multi-dimensional world, the same as many of the prophets have tried to wake us up to see.

He said the old sorcerers invented the structures of working with other dimensions, but focused too much on technique and took advantage of their influence over others (which is why we consider sorcerers evil).

Castaneda wrote, "Modern sorcerers, by contrast, don Juan portrayed as men [and women] renowned for their sound minds and their capacity to *rectify the course of sorcery* if they deemed it necessary." [My italics] Don Juan went on to say, "I personally detest the darkness and morbidity of the mind."

As I've researched government mind control and related topics, I often come across theories that the underground, renegade Network, the cabal is not simply slipping over the edge of good judgment, politics gone too far, but has been aligned for eons with the dark side of spirit.

If the evil of the underground Network *is* sorcery of a sort – and I'll argue it is (the evil type our culture believes, only not ascribed to the correct people) – then our work at this time on this planet is to *rectify its course*.

Many religions tell of the cycle of evil having its time, which will end, and is predicted by many to be soon. And many spiritual traditions say it will require some effort from us. So it feels timely to hear this call now and to believe we *can* work miracles. We obviously need to end torture, wars, and thoughtless materialism stripping and poisoning the planet. We need to do nothing less than *rectify the course of sorcery*. To do this, I believe we must reclaim our vision and power as a species existing in multiple dimensions.

Many species on our planet have evolved and disappeared when they couldn't meet a challenge, and that's a real, and natural, possibility for us.

Each challenge of evolution requires a new response, usually attended by a refreshed worldview. We humans are facing such a challenge now, and we need to revisit our worldviews to see if they actually represent our reality, as Terrence KcKenna challenged. If our worldview doesn't match our

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reality, we must be prepared to change our worldviews, and see anew.

Opening our eyes to another world is difficult, I know because I stayed blind to parts of it, at least, for most of my life. Even after I thought I was aware, I continued to think it was a meaningless coincidence that I'd had ET contact and was also harassed by elements within the government, I thought, for being an environmental activist. It seemed unfortunate and embarrassing because both were ridiculed (contact called impossible and government harassment paranoid), so I kept both mostly to myself and was thereby effectively silenced.

It took me until the final day I was completing this book to realize consciously that, not only were political activists being monitored, but so were *contactees*, and both were subject to well-organized ridicule campaigns. While I knew contactees were ridiculed, I hadn't realized it was an organized campaign until I read Michael Salla's article on "Galactic COINTELPRO."

While I'd known contactees conveyed messages about our environmental situation and the dangers of nuclear war, both of which threaten our corporations and their minions in the government, I'd naively failed to draw a connection between that and the monitoring and harassment I'd experienced. Just as the decades of ET/UFO ridicule had made me believe the subject of contact was silly before it happened to me, after it happened to me I still thought it was too silly to interest the government – even though I knew the aliens' messages impinged on our government's ideas of national security, and even though I'd seen a similar pattern up close, in the lies told about Judi Bari. I didn't *want* to see the pattern again, just as I suspect most of my environmental activist colleagues won't want to hear about this. They won't want to degrade their noble causes with something so "ridiculous" as alien contact, just as I was offended when the MKULTRA activist brought her fliers to the Judi Bari rally at the courthouse. "Divide and conquer" remains a powerful strategy.

Even in the ET/UFO community, some UFO researchers refuse to consider the claims of contactees, not wanting to be aligned with what they fear will lose them credibility. But if UFO researchers understood fully that the media is thoroughly controlled by the underground cabal, they'd realize their research will never be accepted, no matter how narrowly present their

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cases, so their withdrawal from contactees only hurts those with messages that might actually contribute to their own understanding.

According to polls, a high percentage of American people know they are being told lies about this and other related subjects; they just don't understand *why*. With the *Why* unanswered, motivation to further understand dissolves, and people return to being entertained by their TVs and working to pay off their credit cards, as the underground cabal hopes they will. I believe we can compellingly answer *Why would the government lie about this?* with the messages offered by contactees.

The fact that the messages are mixed shouldn't deter, as we need to remember that the *message senders* are a mix – and that's an important reality of our world to understand. We live in a cosmic ocean, and the delight of dolphins doesn't negate the danger of sharks, and *visa versa*.

The messages we've received, particularly those encouraging us to be environmentally responsible and end the nuclear arms race, will not only help open people's eyes to a wider reality, but prompt actions of responsibility, none too soon. Only after that, can the implementation of clean "ET" technology possibly be utilized. Whereas UFO research, on its own, will not likely pave the way, regardless that it's considered an easier media sell. The contactee messages speak to the human heart, of human responsibility, and they answer the *Why*: Responsible citizenry and total corporate control over our culture are mutually exclusive, and the people from other dimensions have been trying to tell us this for thousands of years.

C.B. Scott Jones told the Hawaii conference, in so many words, that he, as a Christian, wouldn't be surprised if Jesus returned in a spacecraft. Many people laughed, and I understood their reaction. I'm not sure all extra-dimensional beings require them to enter this realm.

As I adjust my thinking about the prophets of all religions (though I'm most familiar with Jesus/*Yeshua*), their teachings have taken on new meaning. Today I suspect that what some people call *shamanic* are simply the activities of those conversant with a multi-dimensional world, like the miracles *Yeshua* said *wē'd* perform ("all these things and more").

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It's probably unfortunate that we in the "First World" use this word *shamanic*, as it implies these skills are exotic and rare, rather than our human destiny. On the other hand, he also said, "The first shall be last," and we're living in the First World. So it no longer surprises me that we're the last to know about extra-dimensional life.

Yeshua also said "heaven" was not assured by correct doctrine, but by having one's heart connect with Spirit. *How* we can connect with Spirit when our days are filled with false experiences provided by the media, I don't know. How we can survive as a species when we choose to perceive our own environment through the lens of corporate entertainment is a deeply profound question, of cosmic proportions, one that many contactees have tried to weigh in on. (John Mack's work has the most condensed and powerful accounts.)

Mack noted in *Passport to the Cosmos* that researchers Norman S. Don and Gilda Moura reported in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* that "when an abduction is being relived or remembered, a frontal-lobe hyperarousal pattern is found by electroencephalogram (EEG) similar to that seen only in advanced spiritual meditators." Obviously something unusual is going on, beyond anyone's imagination or fantasy, which warrants our respectful attention. Since contactees speak passionately of Spirit and responsibility, it behooves us not to dismiss them in favor of debunking and corporate hypnotism. (It encourages me that all the TVs of the world could be turned off tomorrow, ending this spiritual pollution without any infrastructure change or a single act of civil disobedience.)

As for the Network, even it has potential for transformation. Inside are people who've been trapped, the minions whose intention was never to be part of the darkness, who don't know how to free themselves. They are a majority (though they may not know it) and as such, they sit in key places to do good. They're already doing it, judging by the useful paperwork leaked out and other paperwork disappeared (according to activists I have known). They only need to act when it's their time. And they will, because it's in their best interest. If they don't, they know they'll be the next food; so they'll act.

Whatever our connection to the minions, though it might sometimes

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be painful, it's a wondrous dance. They make us see. We learn, and awaken. And we go on, finding strength wherever it lies for us.

Rob Brezsny writes,

This is a perfect moment...because you and I are waking up from our sleepwalking, thumb-sucking, dumb-clucking collusion with the masters of illusion and destruction. Thanks to them, from whom the painful blessings flow, we are waking up....

As heaven and earth come together, as the dreamtime and daytime merge, we register the shockingly exhilarating fact that we are in charge of creating a brand new world....

As we stand on this brink, as we dance on this verge, we can't let the ruling fools of the dying world sustain their curses. We have to rise up and fight their insane logic; defy, resist, and prevent their tragic magic; unleash our sacred rage and supercharge it....

In the new world we're gestating, we need to be suffused with lusty compassion and ecstatic duty, ingenious love and insurrectionary beauty.

So what will it be? The fearful paradigm of post-apocalyptic Hollywood? They're only caricatures of what we have already.

How about, instead, you chose your contribution to your community? Do you want to be a carpenter? A gardener? A baker? A tailor? An innkeeper? A sailor? A fisher? A butcher? A forager or herbalist? A home builder? Go to your heart, and choose. Then barter for everything you need, to create a local economy.

A little afraid? Turn up the dial on your intuition, and remember that the past does not determine the future. Give yourself permission to move away from those who make you nervous. Then move, blessing yourself and them. All the dance is purposeful.

Thank you for being part of my campfire. It heals me. And I pray it will help to heal others.

Ω

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Jean Ann Eisenhower has a B. A. in Media Arts – broadcast journalism, with a minor in religion and philosophy, and an M.F.A. in non-fiction Creative Writing, both from the University of Arizona, Tucson. Former associate editor of the international *Permaculture Drylands Journal*, award-winning broadcast producer and writer, author/designer and publisher of the 2003 and 2004 *Almanac/Datebook/Journal for Southern Arizona*, and freelance journalist, Eisenhower is a certified Transpersonal Hypnotherapist™, residing in Silver City, New Mexico. Further writing on these subjects can be found at www.RattleSnakeFire.net.

Ralph Metzner, Ph.D., has a B.A. in philosophy and psychology from Oxford and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Harvard. He has been involved in the study of transformations of consciousness ever since, as a graduate student, he worked with Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (now Ram Dass) on the Harvard Psilocybin Projects. Now Professor Emeritus at the California Institute of Integral Studies, he conducts workshops on consciousness transformation both nationally and internationally. His books include *Maps of Consciousness*, *The Unfolding Self*, *Green Psychology*, and two edited collections on the science and phenomenology of *Ayahuasca* and *Teonanácatl*. His work is described at www.GreenEarthFound.org.

Asante Riverwind, creator of various illustrations in this memoir, has his fine art available for viewing at www.AsanteRiverwindArts.com.

Robert Medina Cook photographed Jean for the back cover. His fine art photography can be viewed at www.RobertMedinaCook.com.

