

# *A Long Letter to a Friend*

*from one who left  
to one who remains  
in the convent*

*Sarada*

KARUNA BOOKS



SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

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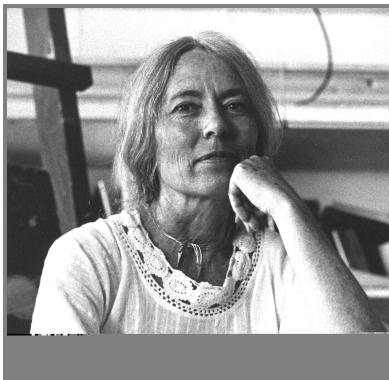
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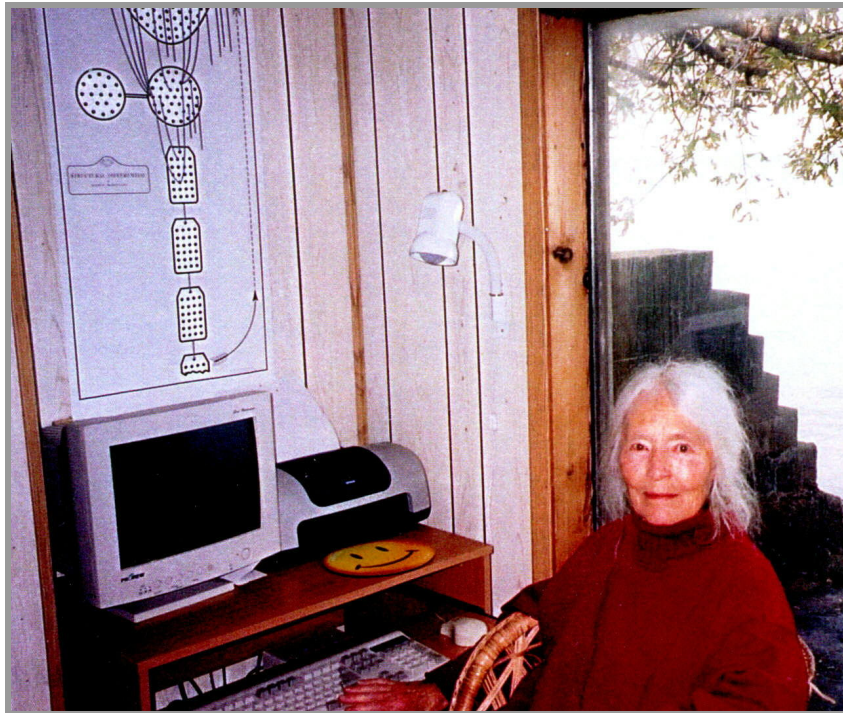
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Moments in my journey  
(photos put together by my friend, Dennis).



Me, today, with a picture of the Structural Differential (from General Semantics) to remind me not only that “the map is not the territory,” but also that the territory is always more interesting and life-giving than the map.

August, 2004

Dear Barada,

This is a belated thank you for your beautiful Christmas card of this past December, and it is also my *apologia*, my spiritual autobiography.

Your choice of cards is always lovely, but this one was special for me in that it included a gracious invitation to be a guest in the Bhavan the next time I should come out to California. It may appear that I plan such trips at intervals. However, my first visit to California, since my being here in Canada, was seven or eight years ago. I came at that time to see my friends and relatives, and all of you in the Vedanta Convent, after my “mysterious disappearance” of seven years. Since then I’ve traveled out West because of special circumstances. My sister Jody invited me to come to Hawaii for a reunion with my brother, after we had lived separate lives for many years. Two years later my brother died. Funds were provided to members of our family to be together in Hawaii for a memorial service.

At that time I had a small window of opportunity to visit with you. I had wished for a longer time to talk with you in depth, and to laugh about some of the “old times.” We’re both sorry that it didn’t work out. During those many years together at the Convent we shared the same routines, sat together in meditation, and took part in all the expected and unexpected events of our communal life. Now that we are hopefully wiser and more secure in our life choices, may we not share what were our inner lives, our breakthroughs or discouragement’s, if not face to face but at least in writing to one another? It was my inner struggles that culminated in my leaving the Convent after twenty-five years. It is possible, but I’m afraid unlikely, that if I had been open about them I would have stayed on. You were dismayed at my decision to leave and must have speculated why, but nobody asked me why. On the day I left there were muted, confused and pleading looks. I cried but the Connection had been broken. I had to leave or shrivel up inside.

Barada, now I want to tell you the story of how I was drawn to the philosophical and devotional aspects of Vedanta as a way of life; of how I strove

to deepen and clarify my “Connection”, and of my failures in this which led me to the breaking point. Your story may have some points of similarity, but you are still there! I ask that you hear me with compassion. First I’ll speak in some detail of my family life as a prelude.

From age fourteen I had been living alone with my father. My mother, after their divorce, moved out to the Valley with my one year old sister. My brother Bjarne, who was four years older than myself, had gone off to study to be a veterinarian. Up to that time we had all lived together in the same house, and with a *laissez faire* attitude towards each other. I never heard my parents really conversing, nor did I observe any hostility or affection expressed between them. In their relating to me I was never questioned as to where I went or what I did, or advised, rebuked, praised, guided or told what was wrong and what was right. None of us went to church. Strangely, when people spoke of God I felt embarrassed. My Catholic girl friend invited me to go with her to Mass. I remember a lot of standing and kneeling and hearing some mumbling up at the front. I didn’t go again. I went to Church once with my Protestant girl friend, and I have a vivid recall of the Minister in a deep voice and preacherly tone saying that, “Jesus was a Jew.” This was in the about ’32. Could he have been arguing against a growing anti-Semitism in his congregation? My piano teacher was a spinster and very sweet. One time she looked at me as though she was about to speak of my need for God or religion, but the expression on my face must have stopped her. I was probably about nine or ten years old, but I think my reading of her intent was correct. I’ll mention a memory not connected to my responses to church going. I was probably in the first grade. It seems strange that I should have had such a vivid memory of the boys running around during recess shouting, “The Japs are coming. The Japs are coming.” These same boys, as young men, would have been at draft age after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

I enjoyed my “free as a bird” life, and missed nothing in the lack of family intimacy. I was provided with everything I needed, and more, for the staging of my growing life, these things coming from the “wings” as it were. However, I also lived in a larger, stable social world of middle-class Beverly Hills. Despite what people might have considered a dysfunctional up-bringing, the parents

of my friends always felt reassured when their girls were with “responsible me”!

I went through high school when I was living alone with my father. It was during that period that I experienced my first emotional crisis. Following my habitual pattern of keeping my inner feelings private, it wouldn't have occurred to me to confide in my father about them. He also had his inner life, and perhaps because of his heritage as a taciturn Norwegian, he too did not speak of his inner thoughts. But he was a very caring father, and he wanted to know what was going on in my mind. In my desk drawer he found an affirmation type meditation. I had copied it out from a magazine that I had picked up at a lecture of Ernest Holmes on Religious Science. Discovering in me an interest in religion he revealed to me that he had been an initiated disciple of Swami for two years. And that he had been given the Hindu name of Vireswar. I learned later that he had been a spiritual seeker all his life! He was planning a trip to his place of birth in Norway. He suggested that while he was away I might enjoy going up to the Vedanta Temple to hear the Swami speak – and I did! I had just turned seventeen. As I took this life-changing step, I did not recall an experience that I had when I was twelve or thirteen years old. One rainy day, sitting at home alone and bored, I reached idly for a book on the table by my chair. Opening it at random I read, “Seek first the Kingdom of God.” I could describe what happened on reading this as an uprising fountain within, an epiphany of joy, a light, a light of knowing what it meant for me – that this was to be my life. Then a veil, just as suddenly, fell over this ecstatic knowing. I returned to my dimly lit life of daily doings and thoughts. To tell of what led me to be open to “religious” answers to my crisis will mean another installment in this my long letter to you

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One day as I was walking home from school, and as I was about to turn into my house, I noticed that the boy, who was tossing a football with a friend

in the middle of the street, stopped and looked at me. The expression on his face looked to me to be of surprise that I lived there. We got to know each other, and he began coming over in the evenings for me to help him with his homework. This was a ruse, of course, because he liked me, and I liked him more than I realized. We sat together on the “love seat” with our books on our laps. His knee rocked against my knee and it was pleasurable. We tussled over the radio dial—he to listen to Benny Goodman, and I to the classics. I felt little stabs of delight as our hands and fingers argued over the dial. The boy's name was Duke. His ambition was to be a musician and to play in a band. He told me that he had received a clarinet for Christmas and asked “Would you like to come over and see it?” He was inviting me to come deeper into his life. We started across the street when these “fellas” that my girl friend and I went out with drove up and hailed me to come with them – and I did! As the car caromed down La Peer Dr. I turned to look out the back window. Duke was walking back home. His body was slightly slumped and his head was cast down. In that instant I regretted my mindless impulse. I realized that I had brought pain to him, and I suffered for the first time in my life. Duke was too deeply hurt to come over and be with me again. In retrospect I ask myself, “How, How, was I so stupid as to have jumped into a car with guys that I cared nothing about?” Suddenly I had been jolted into the world of human relating with its pain and need for empathy and caring. I had not learned these relational skills, which would have enabled me to go to Duke and tell him how badly I felt about rejecting his offer. He was asking me not only to see his clarinet, but also to meet his family! If only I had been able to tell him that it was he whom I liked and wanted to be with. Most importantly, I wished I could have asked him to forgive me, but I suffered under the social onus that girls were not to take the initiative in boy-girl relationships. All I could think of doing was to maneuver situations in an attempt to show him how I felt about him. I had a counselor who decided our class placements. This was the time to arrange for my last semester classes before graduation. I kept after her as I was determined to get into music appreciation. I had ferreted out the information that Duke had signed up for that class. I got my wish. The class was to start in the Fall Semester. It was during the vacation period of that year 1939 that I first climbed the yellow brick steps leading to the

door of the Vedanta Temple. Amiya likened me to a high spirited pony that first time I came “prancing” in to listen to the Swami lecture. I can recall his words as he spoke of what we really wanted. He said, “Do we not want to have eternal life?” He went on to speak of Sat: as eternal existence, Chit: unbounded awareness, and Ananda: infinite bliss and love. He emphasized that this Reality was realizable here and now, and that that realization was the true fulfillment of our lives. I hardly understood in depth what I heard, but my intuitive response was, “It is so true!” I was contrasting these teachings with my resorting to “God Power” of Religious Science to “demonstrate winning Duke back.”

Amiya invited me in to dinner. She and the others had heard of me as Vireswar’s daughter, and had probably been on the lookout for me to come to the Temple. Amiya invited me to stay for dinner. After the lecture I went into the old green cottage. You and I have spent many days in that cottage during the years before we moved to the Convent in Santa Barbara. I sat alone in the living room as I waited to be asked into dinner. I felt a lingering upliftment from hearing about “what we really wanted” in a direct experience of a transcendent unitary consciousness. Glancing around the room my eyes were arrested by a painting. It was of a face in joyous transport. Gazing at it I felt myself to be the passive receiver of an over-whelming outpouring of love and warmth. I had the undeniable sense that this love flowed from that portrait. Right there and then I fell in love with whomever that portrait represented.

It was time to go into dinner. I met old Sister whom we can thank for giving to Swami the cottage, as it was her home, and she gave him as well the land that the Temple was built upon. I’d already taken in Amiya’s friendliness, her blond hair, her plumpness and her English accent. I soon gathered that she managed the household. She had prepared the first of my numberless meals of “dhal bhat” with curries of chicken, lamb and fish. I found Sudhira more casual, very friendly and more attractive. They were in their late thirties I guessed. They both hovered mother-like over me. This was obviously a “family” situation and not a monastic institution. At dinner I asked for a photographic copy of that painting that had so moved me. I never told anyone about my extraordinary experience. Everyone seemed strangely pleased with my request. I soon

learned that the painting was an idealistic rendering from a photograph of Ramakrishna. It was Amiya who told me that he was regarded as an Incarnation of God. I was delighted to be told that I had fallen in love with God, even though I had only a fuzzy idea of what the term God referred to and especially of how he could incarnate.

On hearing what Amiya said I felt justified in loving a face, a person, that I saw in a photograph, and whom I identified with that moment of loving enfolding. Concerning this I quote from Joseph Campbell, “Any beholding or contemplating holy beings will be a local ethnic idea historically conditioned, a metaphor, and to be recognized as transparent to transcendence. Remaining fixed to the name and form, whether with simple faith or saintly vision, is therefore to remain historically bound and attached to appearance.”

All of our Swamis came from India. Not only did they import the non-dual Vedanta, they also established shrines and rituals. Our Swami introduced pujas of Kali, Durga, Shiva as well as the chanting in Sanskrit of Ram Nam, our evening songs and so on. Our best-intentioned Swamis attempted to transplant in the Western world their “historically conditioned,” “local ethnic” practices of Hinduism. Being brought up and ingrained in these spiritual traditions they recognized as “transparent to transcendence” these gods and goddesses and divine incarnations including Jesus.

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I was, as I said, first drawn to the non-dual Vedanta, but having experienced being so mysteriously loved I became emotionally attached to the “name and form” of a man who had lived and died in India in the nineteenth century! Ramakrishna was not a figure I adored as “transparent to transcendence” but a “Someone” from whom I sought endlessly and futilely for a repetition of that joyful experience of being loved.

During that vacation period Swami gave me instructions in meditation. I waited in a pew for him

to call me into his study. Sitting there I enjoyed the quiet atmosphere, with the calming effect of the gray carpeting, and the dove gray pews. There were photographs of the luminaries of the Ramakrishna Order, of the Buddha and the Christ of the Turin Shroud on the off white walls. Up front I noticed heavy brocade curtains. I thought that behind them there must be a room. I ventured to climb the four steps to a landing. I parted the curtains, and as I stepped inside I didn't realize that I was entering a shrine room, where it was wrong to go in with my shoes on. I sat down cross-legged in this very small room breathing the heavy fragrance of gardenias. It seemed the walls were echoing a sound, neither human nor of a musical instrument.

Swami was ready to see me when I came out of the Shrine. His first instruction was for me to send thoughts of compassion to all corners of the earth before my meditations. Then he taught me to imagine my spirit rising to the crown of my head and to say, "I and my Father are one." The Swamis seem to assume that Westerners are grounded in Biblical knowledge of the sayings of Jesus. At home I soon gave up my attempting this incompatible meditation. The next time I came to Swami for instructions he instructed me in a meditation more to my liking. I was to visualize the form of Ramakrishna seated on "the lotus of my heart."

In my visualizing the figure of Ramakrishna I attempted to "touch" Him with my senses turned inwards. However I found it so much easier to gaze at his photo out side. In fact I began to imagine moving into the Temple that I might be close to Him who's Presence was supposedly invoked in the Shrine Room. I would have to wait a few months to graduate to be free to realize my wish.

On returning to school at the fall semester I experienced a conflict in what I wanted: to get Duke back or turn from him and the world to pursue a spiritual life. After a while my conflict was outwardly manifest in apathy toward my studies. This surprised and disturbed my teachers, as I had always been a diligent student. Coming home from school in the afternoon I was so worn out I'd lie on my bed, and physically felt each arm being tugged from opposite sides of the bed.

I had finagled my way into music appreciation. The classroom was like a small theater

with rows of seats. It wasn't long before Duke came over to sit next to me in what seemed like an act of friendly reconciliation. By then, perhaps from emotional exhaustion, I'd come to be a little above, or rather almost a witness to my conflicting desires. Just as well! One morning a new girl walked into our class. I can describe her as a living Barbie Doll, and I don't mean that to be a put down. Duke had met Gwen at the ice-skating rink, and they had been dating. Seeing her boyfriend sitting next to me she huffily sat several rows back of us. After a moment Duke got up to sit next to her. After another moment I got up to sit on the other side of her. Duke and Gwen apparently had horrendous spats. Duke came over to see me as his confidant. I witnessed one such fight and it turned me off. They eventually broke up. Duke reached out tentatively for me again, but the spell had been broken.

It was with undivided intent that I went up to the Temple to receive my "initiation." This is considered a formal commitment to one's spiritual path. We both remember this simple ceremony of offering a red flower to the photograph of Ramakrishna on the Altar, and then turning to Swami seated to our right, and offering him a white flower as a gift to the Guru. Swami then spoke our mantra to us and instructed us as to how to use our "malas" made of rudraksha seeds as a way to keep count of our "japam." It was that day that he gave me the name of Sarada. I'm called by that name by you and many others to this day.

Looking ahead to our life in the Temple Swami urged us to practice celibacy and to continuously repeat our mantra, as much as was possible for us, and that this would assure us of being on the Train that would take us to our destination. To others this might seem a very simplistic prescription that Swami gave us for our spiritual life, but he had great faith in the practice of japam and devotion, and perhaps less faith in our capacity to plumb the depths of non-dual Vedanta. Barada, I have to admit that the practice of japam was difficult for me from the beginning. My mental tongue got entangled with aspects of my mantra. The repetitions tended to become mechanical, and it was as though if I put enough repetitions into the Divine Machine enlightenment would pop out! I overheard older devotees speak of making twenty thousand repetitions a day. There seemed to be a spirit of competition as to who could reach the

highest number. One thousand times was my limit, which I hurried through as a mindless and boring exercise. I realize that my experience is the opposite of many devotees as the chanting of their mantra brings them a calm joy and deep concentration on their Ishtham [Divine incarnation chosen as a focus of devotion]. And there is the profound insight that sound vibration is the source of the manifestation of the universe. The supreme mantra, Om, being the Sound of Brahman and contains all sounds. Before each of our meals we chanted in chorus our Grace mantra. We repeated this mantra in Sanskrit but I'm sure we all knew the English translation. How many times before, during, or after eating did I contemplate that "Brahman is the food. Brahman is the eater. Brahman is the act of eating." Not once!

It was a few months after my initiation that I graduated from Beverly Hills High. This high school has become famous in the TV drama called 90210. I came each day by bus to Hollywood and Vine. It was a good climb up the hill to reach the Temple tucked away in the Hollywood hills. It was almost obscured in a residential area. I was given the pleasant task of picking flowers for the daily puja. Sudhira instructed me as to the number of flowers required, plus a few three pronged blades of grass. I learned how to make the fragrant sandalwood-paste by rubbing pieces of the wood on a pumice stone with a little water. After finishing our meal, served promptly at 1:15, my job was to wash the dishes. I remained for the evening Vespers, experiencing this as a lovely ceremony of the "waving of the lights", chanting and quiet meditation. One day and without a "by your leave" I didn't go home. No one was surprised, but rather they were pleased.

At that time joining a Hindu religious group, thought certainly to be a cult, was hardly the "in" thing to do, even though the Vedanta philosophy seriously interested a number of intellectuals including Aldous Huxley and others. At the time I hadn't even heard of them! My mother tore her hair at my move even though she had long ceased to be a part of my life. My father, who would miss my living at home, was as always my supportive friend. Despite any objections, or raised eyebrows, I was undeterred.

I bedded down in a corner of Amiya's room in the old green cottage. A small room next to the

kitchen became mine later on. From the beginning I was to take part in the house keeping chores. Taking my turn in the cooking of meals was daunting, as at home I had not been taught anything about how to cook or of cleaning a house. I soon learned to both cook and clean through the patient guidance of Amiya and Sudhira. One day I over heard Swami saying, "Sarada should be taught the rituals as a way of holding a young girl." At first it was a matter of memorizing procedures, but at the time I neither asked about, nor did Swami explain the meaning of these ancient Tantric rituals. It was only later that I dove into this treasure trove of symbols.

As I got into doing these rituals I began to see that the act of drawing a triangle and putting a flower on it was a help to look deeper and *see That* beneath appearances. A very powerful ritualistic meditation was "to imagine my spirit rising to the crown of my head – Swami's first instruction on meditation was a shortened version of it. As Swami described the Kundalini energy as rising upwards from chakra to chakra, to culminate its journey in the Lotus of a thousand petals, I vividly remember his saying to me at this point, "Here Sarada is no more." In the Primal Radiance of this chakra is visualized the forming of the Deity to be worshiped as well as the worshipers body. I find it such a beautiful idea that only the Spirit can worship the Spirit. And in a similar sense Jesus had said to the woman at the well in Samaria that, "There will come a time when you will worship in Spirit and in Truth." He taught Nicodemus that we must "die to the old self to be born again as a new creation."

Unlike my resistance to the practice of japam I took to the performing of the rituals. In time I became the official Pujarini of special Pujas, as you know. I loved performing the elaborate Kali Puja held at the Hollywood Temple every year. Even after we moved to the Santa Barbara Convent we came to Hollywood and I officiated as the Priestess – but with only an intuitive sense of what I was about. It has taken me years to come to an in depth understanding of the symbolism of these ritual acts. Swami, acting as the Tantra dharak, read out the Sanskrit mantras that I repeated with little comprehension. He seemed to hesitate in saying one mantra. Later he translated it for me. It was a description of Kali on top of her Husband Siva in an act of sexual intercourse. In Hindu Tantra the sexual act and the sexual organs in union – such as the Siva

Lingam and the Yoni – symbolize the union of Consciousness-Power. In the West, and despite the attempt to control and limit people’s acting out their sexuality because of “religious” constrictions, people still go on “making love” legally and illicitly as they are moved by their desire. The Hindu Tantra uses what comes so naturally – either in a literal way or symbolically – to raise ordinary consciousness to super-consciousness. Our Swamis had assimilated a lot of our Western prudishness about sex, and they emphasize that the actual sexual practices as a spiritual path are used by only a few sects of Hinduism.

When we were in India we watched the Hindu artisans mold the images of Durga out of clay, painting and decorating them to be put on an Altar. We were able to participate in Durga Puja, this most beloved festival of the Bengalis. We sat for hours on the marble floor of the worship hall, knee over knee, as there were so many worshippers. After the Priest in-breathed his Spirit from the image and the Puja was finished, I remember watching the devotees carry the image, with joyful shouting, to immerse it in the river to melt back into the elements. We had our artist devotee who molded the image of Kali. I as the Priestess in-breathed my Spirit and the image was taken to dissolve in the waters of the Pacific Ocean.

As for Swami’s idea of my learning the rituals “to hold a young girl” it worked successfully as it did involve my esthetic sense and my intellect. I began to grasp the fact that my drawing a Mandala, in the form of a triangle symbolized the Energy of Brahman, a non-verbal way of pointing to Reality. The mudras, or small hand gestures, including the elaborate interlacing of the fingers, was minimal dance to me. I had opted for modern dance over volleyball and such in school. An atmosphere combining the aesthetic and the sacred was created with flowers and incense, with candlelight and the occasional ringing of a bell. The Kundalini meditation was a training of my mind to recognize that the transcendent Reality had to be at least understood as a basis for devotional worship. Whatever non-dual insight that I had in performing this meditation, as I would leave the Shrine, disappointingly, I’d look back to admire how I had arranged the flowers on the altar. I would revert to my usual dualism of looking to the photograph of

Ramakrishna for his liberating Grace, imploring him to “do it for me.”

I’m reminded of one of the parables of Ramakrishna. The mongoose tries to settle into his tree borough, but he is pulled back down by the weight on its tail. I would like to muse a bit about the weight on “my tail; or rather the weight in my head of unexamined assumptions about my body, my thinking processes, which hold me down as I would try to fly up to the “spiritual realm.”

#### 4

From my latter day studies of “consciousness unfoldment”, I’ve come to reflect on how these stages of development correspond with the Kundalini visualization. The developmental stages are from sub-consciousness, to self-consciousness, to super-consciousness. (Ken Wilber) This corresponds to the Kundalini rising through the chakras. The Kundalini energy, that I like to refer to as Life’s Eros, is “coiled up” at the base of the spine and manifests at the sub-conscious level as feeding and fleeing, in tandem with the lizard brain. My cat has an added mammalian brain, with the capacity to discriminate about what is good to eat and from what to flee. My sexuality is awakened in my adolescence as the Energy rises to my second chakra. I don’t know if animals have chakras, but I suspect they might. My cat becomes sexually active at six months. With the added layer of the cerebral cortex I’m enabled to acquire language with its subject-object perceiving, which is both convenient and dangerous if it cuts my moorings with my direct sensing of an undivided and ever changing world.

Using a language can lock me in to third chakra self-consciousness. At this level an “I” wants *this* because it gives “me” pleasure and “I” don’t want *that* as it causes me pain. I like or love the “other” who validates my “I”! The capacity of caring for the other as I care for myself unfolds when the fourth chakra opens to the perception of our inter-relatedness. When the Kundalini rises to the chakra in the brain all sense of “I” and “other” is

dissolved in the Self. This is the unfoldment of super-consciousness.

In Tibetan Buddhism there is a graphic description of what I call being stuck in the third chakra, and for them as well it happens with the emergence of conceptualizing, naming etc. The experience is visualized as circling around and around in the “six realms.” This symbolic representation of our human experience can be interpreted in a re-incarnation sense as being born in one realm, to die and be reborn in a higher realm, or, bad news, in a lower realm. The purpose of Tibetan Buddhist practice is to get us off this “wheel of birth and death” whether interpreted as going through the realms psychologically from hour to hour, or an actual physical death and rebirth.

In my reading of the chapter on “the development of ego” in Trungpa Rimpoche’s “Cutting through Spiritual Materialism”, I learned that the stages of development are called skandhas, and that these seem roughly similar to the stages of cognitive development of Ken Wilber and others. It is tempting to equate the skandhas with the chakras of Hinduism, as both involve practices of transcending self-consciousness or the ego. Number-wise it is the fourth skandha in which we develop the capacity for language. This can be a covering veil of a conceptually separate “I.” Relating to separate “things and “others” in the numerous ways we do. It is when we learn to talk to others and to ourselves and our taking the “word for the thing” that we begin the endless revolving in the realms of ego-consciousness.

Some years ago I wrote a free-lance adaptation of our moving through these six realms. I was contemplating a portrait of Jesus Christ that I had painted. With oil paints and brushes I had portrayed what I admit was a beautiful face. From this contemplation of the beautiful I began my rendition of those “realms” as a part of a longer free-form poem.

We all are artists and paint upon the canvas of Reality  
the very world we live in and take as given.  
We start our painting from our birth  
with strokes of color without perspective.  
We can then be called Abstractionists.

As vague forms emerge important to our needs

we become Impressionists.

As we are taught to fix with outlines  
these forms in words we become realists..

The irony is now we live a fiction  
of ego’s playing roles with other egos..

We’ve cast ourselves in soap operas.

The Tibetan Buddhists call these the six realms

Struggling for money, things, and fame so  
prized of men

we are the “jealous gods”.

For but a moment we enjoy the “heaven”

Of our satisfied desires

But the death of a loved one

Or loss of money, things or status

Plunges us into the “hell” of despair and pain.

Groveling we emerge to pine for what we  
want

As “hungry ghosts”

Then settle in to grub

For the satisfaction of sex, a meal, or sleep

Just like an “animal”.

We circle round in these mental states

Till in the “human” realm we may awaken

With the coming of a Teacher to guide us to  
see the Real

Hidden by our unconscious art

But that should be the purpose of our  
conscious art!’

My portrait of Jesus Christ is not an icon to be  
worshipped

But a clear window to reveal the Light

To be loved as That transcending all our  
names and forms.

In my attempt to understand how and why my “living-room” experience had not been followed by a release from my cramped self, I argued this way. Could I have brought down my experience of being over-whelmed with that out-pouring of loving-warmth, which must have been an awakening of the fourth chakra, to a third chakra sense of “I”, with my sense of a separate self being validated by a

“Someone” out there? Was it because my ego was reaching for that “Someone”, or to my self created fantasy of that “Someone”, that I missed the spiritual point of seeing Him as transparent to a transcendent unity consciousness? I’m afraid so.

I launched my spiritual journey from a platform of being unaware of how I got myself out on the limb of ego. I was unaware of the great trunk of the tree of life out of which I grew. Was not my first necessity to climb down that tree to its living, roots in the Conscious Universe? I could call this a journey to the “mystic Body of Christ” which would be similar to rising through the chakras. Not to have examined my organic underpinnings I was to eventually squirm and wriggle in the bloodless confines of a plaster saint! An important aspect of what exacerbated my alienation from being part of nature was my internalizing what I might call the doctrine of “no sex if you want to realize God.” In a natural way I grew out of my crush on Duke and I had had no sexual awakening so called. I edited out in abstentia such bodily emotional feelings that might arise. And of course they did. I’ll go into that later. Barada, when you started to come around, your father and stepmother came to persuade you from your Vedanta involvement. In a gentle way your stepmother suggested that our bodies were made for sex and children. I had learned my catechism well as I reacted to her statement as to a hissing snake.

5

At the Temple on Sundays I listened with rapt attention as Swami expounded on the non-dual mystic philosophy of Vedanta, and that a transcendent non-duality was possible for us to experience. His talks reassured me intellectually and intuitively of the truth of these teachings. During the week in our small gatherings in our Convent living room, there was a sharp contrast to what Swami emphasized in his lectures. He spoke only of such things as devotion to the Lord. Alas, the term “Lord” was as vague in meaning to me as the term “God.” We grouped around Swami to listen, time

and again, to the same beautiful stories of his experiences with Maharaj, his Guru. He relived, in the telling, his vivid and joyful memories of thirty years before. On those occasions I hesitated to ask for clarification of the non-dual statements of “Atman is Brahman”, or “All is Brahman”, and their connection with my dualistic devotion. I needed help to heal the split in what I can describe as my epiphany of finding “Someone” to love and the Truth.

I’ve heard a lot about the highest human happiness being to love and be loved. Since a great deal of that experience is lived out in fantasy, it isn’t surprising that when couples come down to earth they begin to see aspects of their beloved to which they had “turned a blind eye.” The woman often says to her partner, “You aren’t the man I married!” And there is a break-up or divorce. I’ve told you how I “fell in love” with the picture of an unknown person and later was told that he was God. On this assurance, even though I had only “a fuzzy idea” of God, I began a spiritualized romantic fantasy of being loved and loving Ramakrishna. I needed to come down to the earth of the basic assumptions of my devotion – to see that it was really not much different from a human imagining. It was as though a different part of me was drawn to the Truth of non-dual Vedanta. As for following that path we heard stories of monks going off into the forest to live a life of extreme austerities and meditation for years and years before they had the experience of nirvikalpa samadhi. And could I actually want to lose my precious separate identity in some impersonal Reality? Intellectually and intuitively – yes. That was the final Truth. To this day, Barada, I hassle in my mind about how “the twain could meet” through my very human, dualistic and fantasy meditations. As you know I finally gave up the attempt!

It is an ancient tradition in Hinduism to look on your Guru as God. For most devotees Swami was indeed their Guru, to be looked up to, followed and obeyed. Chris was happy to “just sit like a dog at his feet.” I’m afraid that I often saw Swami respond to people and situations in all too human ways, and it turned me off. Swami Nikhilananda of the New York Vedanta Center came out to California to visit, and he gave each of us a first edition of his Gospel of Ramakrishna. I still have mine. Prabha invited the two Swamis and myself to

dinner. Swami Nikhilananda was tall, handsome, socially comfortable and out-going. After we had finished a delicious meal Swami Nikhilananda was ready to sit down for an evening of lively conversation. Our Swami rose from the table and indicated that we were to go. He shepherded us back to the Temple. It looked to me that Swami felt out-shone by his brother. I had observed that if someone got to Swami first with their story of complaint that he would react angrily about the person accused without inquiring about the facts of the other side. Chris saw such human foibles in Swami also, but they endeared the Swami to him!

Swami had exposed me to what I called the Truth. Along with my trying to assimilate these teachings at the lectures and classes, I probed into this End of the Vedas on my own initiative. I began to ponder the Brahma sutra: “Brahman alone is Real, the world transitory.” I discovered that a felt sense of the ever changing facts about my body and mind, and of things and other selves, eluded my grasp. I would say, “I know I’m going to die.” Don’t we all say that? But I couldn’t imagine that my youthful face, which I saw in the mirror, was going to become crone-like or finally a death’s head! I had yet to comprehend that I had created a fixed image of my *self* – that I was blocking out the facts of “impermanence and no-self” underpinning that false image. And at that time I had an uneasy feeling that I could not claim to be seeking the “Real” if my priorities didn’t match my claim. I took to contemplating the hibiscus bush that was growing at the side of the Temple. I would gaze at the abundant eruption of hibiscus flowers. I stood there for long periods of time. I observed the changing sense of touch and appearance of these living flora; the phases of their budding and unfolding into a moment of iridescent velvet beauty. Then to see them fade and turn brown; the withered petals to wrap around their stamens and to fall to earth. I contemplated that that was what was going to happen to me!

Now I want to tell you of the loneliest passion of my life! In 1942 I traveled to the Sandias in New Mexico to have a month long visit with Vireswar. As I remember this was before you began coming to the Temple. In his cabin and on a table lay a book sent to him by Hari-Mati. She later provided me with many relevant books including *Gestalt Therapy* by Fritz Perls. The book on the table was *Language Habits in Human Affairs* by Irving J. Lee. I began

to read his rather academically presented thesis. The reading was at first like moving boulders in my brain, or coming up against its hard wiring. Nevertheless I grasped intuitively that what was presented had a lot to do with my dilemma: “why can’t I experience the transitory nature of the world around me and of myself?” The answer: I’m identifying the level of words, concepts and names with the “silent level” of flowing sensory experience. Lee spoke of the practice of putting a finger over our mouth as a shushing of our thinking and conceptualizing, and with a finger of the other hand to point to the “silent level.” It is easier “to have and to hold” a named world of separate selves and things, but laziness contributed to my own suffering, frustrations and disappointments to thus identify “the unreal for the Real”.

I was not totally unprepared for this reading of Lee’s *Language Habits*, as I had been open from my acceptance of Vedanta, for any corroboration of its precepts. Serendipitously Evelyn Underhill’s *Mysticism* had come to hand a year or so before. It was my reading of her first chapter “The Point of Departure” that awakened my awareness of how much work of our senses and conceptualizing shapes our view of Reality. To quote from this chapter: “From sense messages the self constructs a sense world which is the real world, the solid world of normal men. As the impressions come in, or interpretations of original impressions which her nervous system supplies, she sorts, accepts, rejects, combines, and then triumphantly produces a “concept” which is, she says, the external world. She attributes her own sensations to the unknown universe. The stars are bright. The grass is green. It is apparent the sense world cannot be the external world but the self’s projected picture of it.” I am able to quote from memory to this day: “This world of “common sense” is a conceptual world. Within the mind it is built up, and there most of us are content “at ease to dwell like the soul in the Palace of Art.””

Much later I came to delight in Huxley’s reflections on the same subject. He writes: To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funneled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness, which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this planet. To formulate and express the contents of this

reduced awareness, man has invented and endlessly formulated those symbol-systems and implicit philosophies which we call languages. Every individual is at once the beneficiary and victim of the linguistic tradition into which he or she has been born – the beneficiary inasmuch as language gives access to the accumulated records of other people’s experience, and the victim in so far as it confirms him in the belief that reduced awareness is the only awareness and as it bedevils his sense of reality, so that he is all too apt to take his concepts for data, his words for actual things. That which, in the language of religion, is called “this world” is the universe of reduced awareness, expressed and, as it were, petrified by language.” I can imagine the response of a General Semanticist to what Huxley has written. He might say, Korzybski as a scientist, points to the fact that we abstract at different levels, and he warns us of identifying the levels with his famous “The word is not the thing.” In turn Huxley in his elegant prose speaks of “the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system” and “We are all too apt to take our concepts for data.” He also touches on ideas that Korzybski calls time-binding and non-allness etc.”

When I came back from the Sandias it was with evangelical zeal that I wanted to share my discovery. I had no converts. My fellow spiritual seekers rejected my enthusiasm as a straying from Vedanta. I could not even get a hearing about what was so helpful to me. I should have been able to point out how useful to a Vedantist it would be to become aware of our habitual language use, such as how we use the is of identity which equates “form” conjured up by our senses, and “name” which we lay over “form.” We say, as Underhill deplored, it is red. That is a brick. “It” or “That” is often used as pointers to the Brahman in non-dual Vedanta, and Vedanta speaks of our “naming and forming” as obscuring That.

I felt myself on solid ground in my passionate sense of the importance of this *tool* for a kind of spiritual digging. It is as though we humans are wandering around on a desert, symbolically speaking. We’re thirsty. We find a trickle of water that at first is sweet but then turns brackish, or we come upon a well that then goes dry. The water we seek is under our feet, and we need to dig to find “the water revealed to him that will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

A young artist devotee who sculpted in clay, kindly created a “Structural Differential” for me. She molded several different pieces that she glazed with differentiating colors. I connected the pieces with strings. I used this odd looking contraption to handle and see that “we abstract at different levels.” As an exercise to impress my mind at a deeper level, I’d point from one section to the next with: “The world of words is not the “measly trickle” of the sensory level. The level of direct touching and seeing is not the “Event” level, or Mind at Large, or, why not Brahman or Suchness?” It might seem blasphemous to some people for me to say this, but I see the Structural Differential as similar to Jacob’s dream of a ladder with steps going up and down between Heaven and earth. On an occasion old Mokshada, our dear householder devotee, came into my room. She looked at my structural differential and asked me, “Does this help you find God?” I said, “yes.” She was satisfied. Without a shared interest I retreated into the “closet” as to my serious interest in Korzybski’s ideas of General Semantics. I was also distracted for periods by the often exciting and dramatic events of our community.

## 6

During one of Swami’s classes that he held in the evening, someone in the back of the Temple asked Swami a question. To my ear there was an intelligent earnestness in a man’s voice. I turned around to see the questioner. I have a vivid memory image of looking into intently focused blue eyes set in a boyish face. I learned later that the man was Christopher Isherwood. Gerald Heard had brought him to hear the Swami. Chris soon came to see the Swami for meditation instructions. Chris became a “devotee” whereas Gerald and Aldous Huxley (who I never referred to or addressed as Aldous even as I grew to have a friendly relationship with him) were specifically interested in the non-dual Vedanta. Both of them contributed to Swami’s work. Gerald created excitement with his eloquent talks in the Temple. As Huxley remarked, “Gerald is a virtuoso of the tongue.”

One day as I was preparing for the daily puja I saw Huxley go into Swami's study with Swami. I assumed he was there for meditation instruction. I had no idea of the stature of our occasional guest at teas. It wasn't until I fell ill and had the time to read his books that I "discovered" him. Reading Huxley was for me a liberal education in the arts, in music, in literature, in history along with an acquisition of scientific knowledge and an appreciation of his profound grasp of psychology, philosophy and mysticism all woven into the narrative of his novels. Over a period of two decades we had the pleasure of his presence in our living rooms and at our dining tables both in Hollywood and in Santa Barbara. On one of the Huxley's visits to Santa Barbara I watched as he and his wife Maria walked around the garden. His tall figure would bend over his petite wife to catch her remarks, as she was very interested in horticulture. At dinner, as the subject came up, Huxley considered the contrast of a fixed and predictable "character" with the "individual" who was creative and often surprising in his approach to life. I'm afraid I haven't done justice to his comments, which he gave in humble clarity. I had the experience, as I served Huxley at the meal, of an atmosphere around him of a slightly intoxicating, very fine wine.

It was in the spring of '62 that Huxley spoke at the Temple in Santa Barbara, and he spent the weekend with us in the guestroom of the Convent. At our meals Prabha, our intrepid hostess, tried to engage him in conversation. Only after finishing his meal in silence did he lean back in his chair to amuse and enlighten us with tidbits of history such as: Richlieu died with horse manure in his mouth.

That weekend, as we all gathered in the living room, I expressed my intense interest in General Semantics to him. Like a couple of enthusiastic kids we talked about the subject as others looked on. In the 40's and fifties I would hear people quote glibly: "The word is not the thing." Huxley took that statement seriously. I mentioned to him that I had a home made Structural Differential. He asked me to go and get it. I did. Then he asked me to give an explanatory talk about what this strange looking instrument illustrated. I knew I had a captive audience so I didn't do very well. Barada, do you remember this occasion? This was Huxley's second to last visit with us before his death. Chris wrote a beautiful tribute to Huxley's last days before he died

"I came away with the picture of a great noble vessel sinking quietly into the deep; many of its delicate marvelous mechanisms in perfect order, all its lights still shining."

You were just coming around when Chris had moved in with us as a provisional "monk", and he remained for two years. I was delighted to read recently his *Diaries 1940-1960* and his *My Guru and his Disciple*. In these books he has preserved descriptions of each of us, and of the events he shared with us. He was writing his Diaries during his time with us as well as the years after he left the monastery. He called it as it was with: "Sarada was a born missionary." I did tend to imagine every new comer's interest in Vedanta as the possibility of their becoming a monk or nun. I think this was a clear sign of my seeking reassurance of my own commitment from others doing what I was doing! When you began coming around Chris described "my eyes circling around you like sharks." And for the monastic kill, I might add.

One of the exciting events we experienced was the day that Chris managed to have Greta Garbo come for lunch. I remember her wearing a blue dress that exactly matched her eyes. She acted a bit of the clown in contradiction to "I want to be alone." At one point during our lunch she turned to the Swami and said, "I love to look into the deep, dark pools of the eyes of the Hindus." Krishna let out a loud bark-like holler. We of course had learned to take this sort of thing in stride. Garbo looked around with innocents and said, "Was it something I said?" Chris wrote in his diary of July 28, '43 about Garbo's luncheon with us. He mentioned how she told Swami how dark and mysterious Indian eyes were. He went on to write that, "the girls were all a-flutter and Garbo didn't disappoint them outrageously sighing how wonderful it must be to be a nun, and implying that all her fame was dust and ashes in comparison." I don't remember her saying this and that surprises me. I can say that my recollections are amazingly in sync with Chris's quotes of what Swami said, of his descriptions of all of us and of the other Swamis. I often laugh with recognition and in total agreement with his account. Chris also wrote that, "Sarada, of course, is convinced that Garbo's soul is halfway saved already." Well – maybe. My first impression of Garbo, as I entered the dining room, was that she

looked me up and down like a man might do. Years later I heard the rumor that she was a lesbian.

I know I'm compressing the time Chris was with us. We've all enjoyed his translation with Swami of the Bhagavad Gita. I saw him as he did his writing while sitting on the sloping monastery lawn. As you must remember also he would read us his finished chapter and we were entranced.

Shortly after I had moved in I opened the front door to a man holding a pile of books. My hands were still wet from doing the dishes. He introduced himself as Somerset Maugham. I was just nineteen and I hadn't even heard of him. He wanted to buy the books for a project of researching for his novel *The Razor's Edge*. This novel was turned into a movie and Swami had been consulted about the authenticity of its depiction of the philosophy. His advice was not taken I gathered. To jump ahead a number of years later, the visit of Paul Tillich impressed me. He had come to meet Swami at our Convent in Santa Barbara. I remember feeling, as I walked down the path to the main house where we received guests, that I was going to meet a famous theologian, but I felt only a bland anticipation. I was unprepared for the outpouring of his caring energy as he graciously crossed the room to greet me.

7

I don't know about you, Barada, but during those early days I lost count of the number of young people who came to test the monastic waters and then left. A few stayed the course from those early days. Those who remained were you, Yogini and Usha, who became a Pravrajika called Ananda Prana, and John, who became a Swami and George whom Swami later named Krishna. I remember a day in late '41 that a Doctor friend of Swami brought George to see him. The Doctor went back to San Diego, but he left George in Swami's care. Our new member of the family was friendly and humorous and we liked him. Barada, it has taken me many years to learn that the affliction from which George suffered and without complaint is called Tourette's Syndrome. We were sitting in quiet

meditation in the Shrine room when we were first jolted by one of his involuntary outbursts of a sound that is hard to describe. And this became a repeated experience. Once or twice Swami would turn around and gently say, "George." What George accepted about himself, we accepted as well, even though we had no knowledge of his neurological illness. Krishna had many eccentricities, and one of them we put up with, but at the same time admired him for what was his steadfast practice of devotion. He always chanted Jaya Sri Ramakrishna as we did the dishes together. Krishna became loved and even considered a saint by everyone.

During my visit with you in '97 I found that only four of you remained from the time I left the Convent in October of '65. Prabha died suddenly of a heart attack four months after my visit. A Pravrajika has since left. Now there are only two of you with whom I can talk about the early days. As to the earlier "early days" before the others of you had joined up, I was the one to be surprised in August of '43 when a Mr. Kellogg gave Swami a house and property in Montecito on the hill sides of Santa Barbara. What an unexpected gift for all of us, since it later became our Sarada Math! I was interested to learn that Mr. Kellogg, our generous donor, was of linseed oil and not of cereals. Swami gave each of us living at the Hollywood Center the chance to visit our new property. My turn came. I was excited when the car turned off Ladera Lane and the tires crunched on the gravel entrance area. The first thing I saw was a low-lying building. It was a guesthouse I was told. It was with Swami and Krishna that I walked down a flagstone path to the Spanish style main house, passing on the left a very old grove of olive trees. We've experienced the hassle and the pleasure of that house being enlarged, remodeled and redecorated several times. The property was originally twelve acres. I was walking with Swami and Krishna when Krishna stopped for a moment and wrote out a check for seven thousand dollars. He gave it to Swami to purchase the triangle of seven acres that enlarged the property up to its tip that touched the point where Ladera Lane begins to wind around the Montecito hills to end up in the city.

I did some exploring on my own. I walked down a short path from the back of the main house to see what was called an artist's studio. Mr. Kellogg must have tried his hand at painting. That

studio was enlarged and divided into rooms and I was given a corner room. For eighteen years I enjoyed a view of the ocean from the front window and a respectable size mountain from a side window. But I return to the first day of my explorations. I wandered down a dirt path and was delighted to find the Spanish style Chapel. It was small but seemed grander as it was in the middle of a magnificent grove of eucalyptus trees. This Chapel was a ready-made place for our pujas and meditations! Everyone raved about the expansive view of the ocean, pleasantly relieved by a stretch of the Channel Islands twenty-five miles out.

We took it for granted that Krishna had the privilege of being Swamis chauffeur. He drove Swami back and forth from Hollywood and Santa Barbara “forever.” I’m sure you make use of his trailer that he had parked behind the garage. How Krishna hovered around Swami while jotting down his every word. We became accustomed to his unexpectedly snapping photos of all of us. There must be a huge archive of his photos somewhere! Swami showed great patience with his fanatical but loveable “Boswell”.

I vividly remember the day in ’48 when seven of us finally moved up to our new Convent. You had been with us for four years by then. In ’47 it was as though the place was abuzz with spiritual “vibes” as Swamis from all over the country came to assist in our first Brahmachari vows. At that time we didn’t appreciate how hard Swami had pressed the Order to include women both in India and the West. Up till then we had been loosely called “nuns.” Amiya and I became Brahmacharinis [similar to novice or postulant] on that revolutionary day. It was our given understanding that the vows of Brahmacharya could be set aside without condemnation, but there was a strong condemnation of abandoning the vows of a Pravrajika.

Amazingly it was not long after we moved to our new Convent home that Gerald gave over to the Vedanta Society 350 acres of land in Trabuco canyon. We had our chance to visit and be somewhat awed with the complex of buildings, the huge kitchen and refectory and the monkish bedrooms. I didn’t like Gerald’s conception of a place for meditation. It was a separate building that I entered with a little trepidation as it was dark without windows. In a dim light I saw descending

tiers for sitting around a sunken empty center. No pujas going on there! Gerald’s whole enterprise had been to create a College of spiritual intent. (This is my suppositional labeling of his dream.) A close disciple of Gerald’s was the mastermind of the building project. He also had great organizational skills along with having spiritual aspirations himself. (Prabha told us that she had met this young man a number of years before on an Atlantic crossing, and she said, “I danced with him.”). The story we heard was that he left to marry a woman who had come to be part of the College. In Gerald’s discouragement about his experiment in communal living he gave the whole place over to Swami on the condition that the Society would carry a six thousand-dollar debt!

Now there was a monastery for men. We women were offered our choice between Santa Barbara and Trabuco. The Montecito hills, that would be covered by fragrant Ceanothus blossoms every spring, and with sights of beauty in every direction, our place was unquestionably “feminine.” The wide-open spaces, sparse of trees and greenery, hotter and drier in the summer were decidedly macho! We were soon to be called “the birds of paradise”, and not without justification. Even our wealthy neighbors did not enjoy a grander view, or eat three tastier meals a day. We each had our own room and bath. Our daily chores were light, and only once a year the Siva Ratri demanded a small loss of sleep and fasting. Our daily routine pivoted around periods of meditation and work, and performing the daily puja and evening Vespers. To speak in modern terms our Vision Statement was to attain enlightenment for ourselves and for the good of the world. As it was we didn’t have a care in that world or presumably in the next.

It was in late ’46. I was arranging books in the vestibule of the Temple. The door of the Temple opened and a man walked in. I noticed what I thought was a look of desperation in his eyes as he gazed towards the Shrine. The Shrine curtains were then always pulled open. He asked about our books

on Vedanta. I was impressed with the refinement of his manners and speech. And of his tall, Gregory Peck type good looks. He hardly noticed me. His name was Henry, which I learned later along with other facts about this intriguing stranger and who was quickly became involved in our Temple life of lectures and meditations. I over-heard him trying to persuade Swami to let him move in as a trial "monk." He offered to pay \$250 dollars a month to help in his appeal. Apparently he had a lot of money as he told Swami that he had inherited a large Trust for his lifetime. I couldn't but think that despite his freedom to move about and have whatever he wanted that he was something of a tortured soul. He had, as he described, thrown himself into the Oxford movement. Publicly, and often, he made ardent displays of his faith in the salvation through Christ. He became disillusioned by not finding spiritual peace in his faith so, as he said, "I became a 'scientific materialist.'" He was married and had a child, still an infant. He had nearly finished building a home on the Rio Grand. Someone must have made a strong case for Vedanta because he left his wife, his child, and the house he had been working on for months to find his way – up the yellow brick steps leading to the door of the Vedanta Temple. Eventually Swami reluctantly granted Henry's wish to move in. He even became Swami's manservant. He plumped pillows magnificently. Swami confided to others that he was never comfortable in Henry's presence.

Henry began to turn his eyes towards me. I was, as Chris described, "very beautiful." (Ah now – anonymous in my grayness, no more to turn a head or desired after.) He saw in me an aura of spirituality. I did spend long hours in the Shrine, but not in mystic transport as he and others might have imagined, but rather I was struggling with the "weight on my tail." He began acting towards me as a devotee to a Goddess! I recognized his behavior as outlandish, but despite my better judgement of what I might be getting myself into, I was gradually seduced by the flattering attentions of this darkly handsome man. Even after we women moved to Santa Barbara there were numerous trips to Hollywood for Pujas and other events. Together with all the others, Henry and I would be sitting at the community table. Our eyes would meet. I enjoyed seeing his face flush with our glances. While clearing the table we had short visits in the

kitchen and I was sucked deeper into my folly. Though unexpressed in words and without overt actions on my part I led him on. Women can be wily in the man-woman game. On returning to Santa Barbara I would have romantic fantasies. These were more disturbing than pleasurable. I was playing with a darkening sexual attraction. It was a deep down sense, and not just the forbiddingness of it all, but something in the psyche of Henry himself that warned me about circling around this soul-threatening "black hole."

## 9

I wonder if this emotional turmoil triggered my thyroid to "blow"; that what was a newly awakened sexuality at odds with my spiritual aspirations and basic good sense, were a contributing cause. With this illness I rapidly lost weight, suffered constant anxiety and sleeplessness. The world around me seemed blanketed with a pall of darkness. Strangely, the times I encountered Henry again in Hollywood I felt some relief from my symptoms. Was this a glandular balancing for Nature's purpose of procreation?

I was put under the care of Swami's doctor whom Chris and Huxley also consulted. I can visualize now this Dr. Kolish, bull like, bursting on the scene just in time to decorate the interior of the Temple. I could wish he had come sooner to object to the architecture, which I describe as a poor man's Taj Mahal. I have to give the Doctor praise for his gift of interior decorating. But as a person I found him to be intimidating, of stocky build, bullet-bald head, and light blue eyes that pierced you from under shaggy eyebrows. I could imagine his stomping around and ordering others about with his heavy German accent.

He made it clear that he would prefer to have Swami cared for by a manservant, and have the women out. It took a long time for his patients to evaluate his practice as "quacky." He used the methods of forced sweats and leaches. He had a bizarre theory that a shot of mercury in the butt

would cure the cause of all man's ills: the original sin of syphilis.

He took me to his mountain home in Idylwild. The interior of his home was a far cry from a mountain cabin. In it he had created the same Temple-like décor. The property had a fence all around its extensive acreage. The front gate was double locked. I came to know that he kept a loaded gun in a closet, which I assumed was for rattlesnakes and not, as I learned, that it was for trespassers! I was given a small cabin some distance from the main house. As I was suffering from anxiety caused by my over-active thyroid, my being alone out there scared me to death. You were sent to keep me company for some part of that time. He took me for wild jeep rides around his property, hardly a calming treatment. For medication he gave me iodine drops and a drug that he discontinued as it raised my blood pressure dangerously. I experience the leach treatment. The leaches were put on the area above my ovaries. The creatures sucked my blood until they were bloated and then he fed them to the chickens! It's a wonder I survived his arcane methods let alone did not get any better. I have only a vague memory of how I was released from his dubious care. A devotee, with some knowledge of modern medicine, recommended a Dr. Smith. I had an operation that was totally successful. My thyroid functioned normally until it was discovered recently that it had dipped too low.

It took a year for me to recover from the trauma of my operation. One side effect of that experience was a pervasive apathy. Even the prospect of our up-coming pilgrimage to India did not stir me. You and I and others took off on our trip to India via Japan and Hong Kong in late October of '49. My first glimpse of India was out of the plane window as we flew low to land. I saw vast stretches of green and inundated countryside as the monsoon had just passed. Our twin engine plane was touching down at Dum Dum airport out from Calcutta, and my inner response was, "So what."

After we passed through customs we started by taxi for our destination, Belur Math the Main monastery of our Order. "What was happening?" I asked myself as I was beginning to awaken from my torpor just by watching a figure in a white sari walk across an expanse of green lawn. We continued our journey and as we crossed the Howrah Bridge my

eyes focused on the spires of the Dakshineswar Temple outlined against the setting sun. The lila of Ramakrishna had been played out there, but it wasn't from my pious reflections but rather some *magic* in the air or ground that was awakening me. As I walked down the marble floor of the Belur Temple a tingling began at the bottom of my feet rising up to my head. In those moments I felt instantly recharged with energy and enthusiasm.

Our group had arrived in time for the evening Arati. I heard the haunting sound of a conch being blown on the outside of the Temple announcing the beginning of the ceremony. Many monks were gathering before the large Shrine room creating an unbroken scene of shaven heads and guerua cloth. A monk-priest sat in meditation before the large marble image of Ramakrishna. Simultaneously as the monk-priest rose from his seat ringing a bell in his left hand, and holding a large conch shell in his right hand, the monks in rousing voice began the evening songs of praise. The celebrant-monk was slender and graceful in his movements. He circled the conch before the Image pouring water from it several times into a basin below. We knew that he was beginning the ceremonial returning of the elements to their Source. He waved a flower symbolizing the earth in the same beautiful circling motion. The pitch and pace of the singing accelerated as he lifted and arched a glorious tree of burning ghee lights as an offering back of the flaming element. The ceremony came to a climax of exuberance in his raising a great yakstail and flourishing it up with delicate twirls, and down then side by side in act of returning to the Lord the element of air. I was over-whelmed with the power and beauty of what I was witnessing – and suddenly it was over with a joyous "Jai Sri Guru Maharaj ki jai." In the silence the monks prostrated and left the Temple.

The cord of memory attached me to the last sight of Henry at the airport. I saw his longing look as we crossed the tarmac to begin our journey. This memory pulled on me throughout the flight. During my first night in the guesthouse I *heard* a door slam in my mind, as it were, on what I had left behind in Santa Barbara. For the next six months I often sang to myself, I'm in Heaven, I'm in Heaven." Those six months in India seemed to stretch into two years. I think this was because every moment was filled with a different sound, taste, smell and sight. Each

day was a new and exciting experience. India was indeed another planet to me.

I can still revive memories of my experiences in India to raise my consciousness, but back then when I returned to the Convent they were not enough to hold me above my infatuation for Henry. Up in Santa Barbara I still looked forward to our trips to Hollywood. Henry would receive my arrival with wide- open warmth, yet on the next visit he would slam the door on our encounter with an icy coldness. With these alternating receptions of fire and ice I began having strange symptoms of muscle tension in my eyes, or specifically those in my eyelids which prevented me from open-eyed looking.

The build up of my “Henry” conflict came to a climax. In '52 he raved his love for me and implored me to leave Vedanta with him. My response to Henry’s explosive suggestion was draconian. I somehow was able to reach within my body or brain and pull down the switch that controlled my sexual responses. I think that this was a self-preserving instinct to ward off any threat of sexual attraction to him that could influence my decision. I’d already done some work like this “in abstentia” some years before, having been indoctrinated, as it were, with “No sex if you want God.”

A darkening storm was gathering around me. Swami was wild with anger at Henry’s madness of wanting to leave Vedanta with the booty of his prized disciple. Good God, he had called me his “crown jewel”! You all were put on guard lest I should do something rash. I was caught in the sticky web of my own duplicity. If I had been able to convince all of you that I had no intention of leaving with Henry, and that to do so would be insane, one of you in your fury would have burned Henry at the stake with my words. I found myself in a Convent turned prison-hospital. Swami told others that he prayed through the night for his child who was “sick with lust.”

I was feeling a burden of responsibility about Henry’s feelings, that his Great Love etc. was being rejected. I wanted to soften his hurt by appearing to him to be torn in my decision, and this to preserve my “spiritual face” with him, even as I was horrified of the idea of leaving with him! I managed to get a letter out to him with a plan to meet and talk. In the

meantime you all told me that Henry was having an affair with Virginia. You probably thought I would be devastated by the gossip. I knew I was going to see him and that I would tell him about what I’d heard. My wiser self looked on, shaking her head, at the situation that I had allowed to develop; from Henry’s delusory and ardent displays of love for his Goddess, and my “feet of clay” stuck in second chakra titillation and third chakra vanity!

On the night of the planned tryst I climbed out of my bedroom window. I met Henry in his car out on the road. We drove to a motel. On the way I looked at his profile. It seemed frozen in demonic determination. I even exclaimed, “your face”! I had the strange experience of what seemed like a two-inch pane of glass between us preventing my being *touched* in any way. I confronted him with the gossip of his having an affair with Virginia. He became defiant. Now I was the “rejected” one. It was on this night that I finally felt a release from my murky years of emotional involvement with Henry – and in soap opera style! This whole business, from beginning to end, was hardly a shining period of integrity in my life. You might wonder about my sexual shutdown. The switch remained at “off.” Was this an on-going self-protection? In any case I’ve never had, with anyone, that experience which everybody makes such a fuss about either “for” or “against”.

## 10

The storm blew over. I had been shaken into the awareness of my vulnerability, and of how fragile my emotional connection was with my spiritual understandings. I had yet to *see* how my spiritual practices were not opening up into an anchoring Insight – and why. In telling you my story I am exploring with you that “why.” At the time you, my sisters, might have imagined that I was “licking my wounds.” It had appeared to you that I had actually been torn between commitment to my vows, or of going off to find happiness in human love – and then facing my lover’s betrayal. With this picture you could be benevolently sympathetic

and forgiving. In light-hearted teasing you would sing for me some of the relevant “love songs” of the day. The irony was that I never felt any “love” for Henry, but only that “murky attraction.” Gradually I was back into the rhythms of our Convent life of meditation, pujas, work, lectures and entertaining guests.

Speaking of guests, we were surprised to hear of the arrival of Lord Sandwich at the Hollywood Temple. When he was traveling in India years before he had been impressed with the Ramakrishna Order, and came to know and revere several of the direct Disciples. I assumed that he had been in Los Angeles for some reason and decided to pay a visit to the Vedanta Temple and a Swami of the Order. What followed, if it had not happened much earlier, would have eclipsed the scene of Henry erupting with notion of taking me with him as he left our scene. As it happened Lord Sandwich fell in love with Amiya! She, being English, acted as his hostess. Jaws dropped when he asked her to marry him. Even as Americans we could appreciate that according to the levels of English class structure, Amiya, being on the lower end of the middle class, that their alliance would be unthinkable. Henry hinted to Lord Sandwich that he would be getting a “lemon”, but as it is said, “Love is blind.” Their engagement with their photographs were in the papers, Lord Sandwich, 76, to be married to Amiya Corbin, 50, and a few other details. As Chris remarked, in my memory of what he said, the press swarms like flies to light on tasty news. The next day they swarm elsewhere.

Amiya’s leaving her Brahmachari vows, such as they made any difference in her life, was overshadowed by the prestige of her up-coming marriage to a Peer of the English Aristocracy. Lord Sandwich and Amiya were married. We gathered that the ladies of the Aristocracy were appalled. Each one of them had hoped to become the Countess of Sandwich. They never accepted Amiya socially, but she was thick skinned enough to enjoy hosting fêtes and having the Vicar for tea in her status, willy-nilly, of being the Countess of Sandwich.

## II

Barada, was it in ’53 that Mrs. Sheets began attending Swami’s living room classes? This gracious lady soon endeared us to her. I was amazed at what she told us of her life. She had been the head Buyer at Macys in New York. She retired and she and her husband went out West to venture in cattle ranching. She even helped in the round-ups. After her husband died she eventually met and married Mr. Sheets of Standard Oil. Mrs. Sheets, to whom Swami gave the name of Sita, was more interested in the teachings of Vedanta than Mr. Sheets. They gave her great comfort in her bout with cancer. However, Mr. Sheets was very friendly with us. I played card games with him and he always won!

We didn’t know if it was Swami’s speaking of his dream of having a Temple on the property, but we were excited and delighted that Mrs. Sheets gave Swami fifty-five thousand dollars for the project. Apparently it was a dream she shared with Swami. We soon got to know Lutah Maria Riggs whom she hired as the architect. Considering Lutah’s reputation as being a genius in creating the unique and beautiful in architecture she showed little interest in her own appearance. It was a welcome excitement for me to go up the hill everyday to watch the progress of the building. In ’55 as the Temple was completed, Architects came from all over the country to judge her work, and on their enthusiastic approval they made her a member of the American Institute of Architecture. It was for that reason, as well as for spiritual reasons, that people came to see the Temple. Swamis came for its dedication, and to invoke the Presence of Ramakrishna in this new place of worship. Now I had another focus for my devotion. In ’59 the Swamis came back to Santa Barbara to officiate in our final vows. Barada, how little we talked about this ceremonial step in our lives, or as I deplored, about any of our struggles. It was as though we lived more or less private lives in a community, or was it my difficulty in relating more closely?

Shortly after taking our vows we embarked on another pilgrimage to India. This time we were five women and Krishna, of course. We had sewn together Western style skirts and blouses but in the monastic guinea color. As we arrived in Calcutta we soon got to know our Indian sisters who had also been ordained. We both, in the East and in the West had established a whole new Order of nuns called Pravrajikas. You, Barada, are addressed as Pravrajika Baradaprana as I was addressed as Saradaprana. I call you simply Barada because of our long association.

How the monks shepherded us around. They drove us in jeeps over bumpy roads to the near by villages where Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother were born. We were in those places that our Indian hosts and we considered sacred. You, and I and the others were touched by the simple yet generous hospitality of the villagers. I especially remember how an older woman, dressed in the white sari of a widow invited us into her small hut. On a leaf she offered us a brown gooey substance that they called ghur. This was a gift of a very poor woman of a healthy totally unrefined form of sugar that would be highly valued in the West. In Ramakrishna's village a young man hung around me and seemed to be very friendly. But as he was a descendant of Ramakrishna, which I didn't know, he assumed that because of my devotion I would give him money. I had no money, of course, but the proper offerings were made to the Temple and to this young man.

The Swamis did the best they could with their assumption that Westerners would be uncomfortable without flush toilets and hot and cold running water. When we traveled to these and other villages the porters carried our "water closets" on their heads for all to see. The people must have been amused at the sight. We traveled a lot by train, and I loved it. Before we boarded we passed families camping out on the station platform. They slept there and ate their meals as they waited for a train! The trains stopped many times and whether it was during the night or day we could see and hear the lively sounds of many people milling around at the stations. Hawkers of tea went up and down the platform shouting "garom cha, garom cha." All we had to do was reach out the window for a cup of marvelous Indian tea.

Oh Barada, I wish I had kept a journal of the different times and places of our pilgrimages. We basically traveled to many of the same holy spots on both trips, and I question myself sometimes if what I was remembering was of the first or the second pilgrimage. We did go to Kankal to have a dip in the confluence of the three sacred rivers. I put my head under water for a minute to be amazed that the waters were solid with fish! In the evening I went alone to see the waving of Arati lights and to watch the devotees put hundreds of little baskets of flowers with a candle into the sacred flowing confluence. I was offered something in my hand, and I must have looked a little puzzled. A tall guinea clad sanyasin came out of the crowd and with the sign language of putting his cupped hand to his mouth he *said*, "Eat Pravrajika eat." We went to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, and I'm embarrassed to say that I was a little disappointed in it, and then we went on to Brindaban where Krishna danced with the Gopis. I didn't think it had the romantic spiritual atmosphere that I expected. On our way to the Udboden Office in the high mountains our chattering stopped at the awesome sight of the Himalayas as we rounded a curve in the road

It was on our second time in India that our destination was Rishikesh. The Swamis seemed pleased and a little amused as they accompanied us in following the monastic tradition of begging for alms. And I thought that it was with the pride of an age old Monastic Order that they gave us newly ordained nuns our directions in following an ancient ritual. We were to start to go into the forest for a life of austerities and meditation, but were to turn back after a few steps to be of service to humanity.

We traveled down to Benares and had the special privilege of sitting in the Temple of Vishwanath to watch the Priests at their puja [worship ritual]. The monks escorted us into this Temple of Siva. I was interested in seeing that the worship of the deity was performed in a sunken shrine. I felt pleasantly drowned in the sounds of the Priests chanting the mantras, and was caught up in the sights of waving lights of flaming camphor and ghee, which I saw through the thick smoke of incense. There were the offerings of flowers and garlands of flowers, the pouring of oblations over the Siva Lingam. None of this was strange or without meaning to you or to me as we had performed the same rituals many times. On a lighter

note we were all a little amused as we sat, dressed in our *gueruas* [saffron-colored clothing of Hindu monks and nuns], meditating on the bank of the Ganges as a boatload of tourists sailed slowly by. Such an incongruous sight must have puzzled them!

We continued our pilgrimage to the South of India. I was over-whelmed by the vastness of the ancient temples, and awe-struck by the sheer grandeur of their architecture. Apparently the Moslem invasion did not get this far South to destroy or mutilate the buildings or the statues. I particularly remember our stopover at the monastery in Madras. Everyone had spoken of the blissfully intoxicating atmosphere of the Madras Monastery Shrine room. The devotees were allowed the unusual privilege of meditating in the Shrine room. I too felt that upliftment of meditating in a space usually reserved for the officiating Priest alone. We continued our journey to the farthest tip of India, and just like Hindu pilgrims we traveled there to worship in the Temple of Kunya Kumari. Sitting in her Shrine I was riveted in watching the daily ritual of preparing this Virgin Bride. She was to make her way to the High Himalayas to be united to her Husband Siva. The symbolism seemed obvious to both of us from our ritualistic meditations. Kunya Kumari, symbolizing the Kundalini Power, ascended from her base in the spine of India to travel up the chakras or the Temples at Madhura, Benares and other holy places to Her union with Siva in the Himalayas. I can imagine that Hindu devotees on a sacred pilgrimage contemplate this outer symbol of our inner journey as they climb to Bhadri Narayan, the abode of Siva.

## 12

It was February in India and it was already growing oppressively hot. The time had come to return to our Convent. As I walked around my beloved Temple I was alarmed to see the encroachment of heavy brush pressing against its backside. There were many field mice nests. Their great mounds were woven together with intertwining vines, and the crisscrossing of fallen trees. Each of

these horrendous piles was a potential firebomb! I set about to clear out the nests and the dangerous under brush. One or two of my young Sisters joined me in my efforts. I felt that it was not a question of if there would be a fire but when there would be one! More and more I imagined that such a possible fiery destruction of the Temple would be a spiritual disaster for me. The focus of my devotional life had come to be centered on the Icon that it housed. Not surprisingly I went about my brush clearing with the strength of ten, so fanatical was my intent. This, of course, was an irrational obsession. In the name of spirituality I clung to my idolatrous fantasy with as much ego attachment as a worldly person clings to possessions or relationships. I *knew* better at a deeper perceptive level, but my emotional Need kept this level of *seeing* at bay.

I estimated that the second order of importance was to clear the brush a number of feet back from the perimeter of the Temple. I began to realize that a firebreak would be necessary to protect against the heavy brush above the partially cleared area. I was able to get to Swami's ear. He was persuaded by my arguments, and he gave his OK to make arrangements to hire a bulldozer. Old Lambert of Lambert bulldozers came to see me. He wanted to see what the job would entail. He found me out in the brush pulling and hacking away, and I was a bit dirty and sweaty. He seemed to be assessing the job and my earnest need to have it done. He said, "I'll send you my best man."

It was a morning of June '61. The day I had worked so hard for had arrived. Walking up the road with George Peters, the contractor of the Temple construction, I looked up and smiled at the silhouette of a man seated in a battered pickup truck. The moment he stepped out of his truck and strode towards me I looked into his compelling and intelligent eyes and felt a shock of, "What is this?" The man's name was Joe. I'd already planned to sit on the bulldozer and have my say in what was to be done. From my feeling of an immediate and riveting attraction to Joe, it was within an hour, if you can believe me, that all my loving energies turned direction from the Temple, from Ramakrishna, to Joe!

As a postscript to that day, I realized that I had stepped beyond my authority in Prabha's eyes. To her I was beginning to look like a loose canon. She

had looked askance at my brush clearing, and her position was that “The Lord will protect us from a fire.” I winced at her statement, and wince today at putting everything on the “Lord.” She was very much against the firebreak idea. She had thrown up obstacles against it, but Swami could hardly have reversed his permission to me for having a firebreak. Years before Swami had given Prabha the job as manager of our Convent, but we had not been told of her special status and this created some resistance in everyone. We all shared the house cleaning, and we took turns in the cooking on a rotating basis. Prabha told me, that aside from my job of performing the Special Pujas, my task was to teach any new comer the rituals of our daily worship. This was rarely required

I’m sure that Prabha came into this world a “preserver of the norms.” Having been born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, she had learned the Southern graces and social skills. I could not but respect her down to earth competence, but I rebelled at her reluctance to explore beyond the envelope of our lives and thought. Prabha was charismatic. She drew people into her sphere of influence – even Swami. I lived so much in my own spiritual cloud it was hard for her to get me down to the nitty-gritty of what was to be done and not to be done in practical matters. Through the years I’ve come to appreciate and use what I did learn from her. My maverick spirit had erupted to collide with hers, most specifically in my not being deterred in my brush clearing and firebreak projects. However, in a strange way we always recognized our complimentary natures, and had a real affection for one another. I can look back now and see myself as she sometimes saw me – as exasperating.

### 13

Barada, to give you a brief scenario of what was my “once in a lifetime” love. I hardly need to mention that I was a nun in the confines of a Convent. Joe was a humble working man, married with three children. He worked on a job with a schedule over which he had no control. It wasn’t

until nine months after our encounter that Joe had another job up the hill. In memory I had relived every moment of that June of ’61, with joy and a longing to see him again. When I walked outside in the morning I looked up and felt happy that we were under the same sky. Now I had the chance of seeing him for a few minutes every week, which turned out to be for the next three years, as he had other jobs up the hill. When I would hear his diesel truck coming up Ladera Lane I’d rush out to see him, unashamedly in love. I felt that it was as though the Angels arranged our meetings, their wings covering the eyes and ears of others. How romantic could I get? Barada, did any of you know or suspect what was happening? Joe and I never spoke of our feelings. We never touched. Although sometimes I felt his spirit reach out through his eyes and touch me as palpably as a caressing hand. Once this happened in another way. I was not looking at him. I felt his “touch” and turned around to see his face and form in a blaze of light. On several other occasions I saw him in a soft reddish golden glow.

At the end of that fateful bulldozing day we were covered from head to foot with black dust. I remember our parting handshake as a perfect fit and silky with that dust. Joe told me that someone else would be picking up the dozer in several days. On that day I was meditating in the small Shrine and I heard the dozer revving up. I left the Shrine, and as though I had wings flew up the hill to have a last look at the machine that had been transformed by my love into a chariot. As the dozer arched the hill I saw that it was Joe!

One thing I had noticed on that working day was that his eyes had no light in them, except the time I became a little bossy and saw in them what looked like burning embers turned up through ash. This morning though, as we sat a moment talking, he looked at me and a beam of light came from his eyes. He abruptly looked away. Nervously he took off his hat and ran his fingers through his light brown and curly hair. Joe was not handsome. He stood about 5 ft. 11 inches. He was very thin. His ears stood out from his head, but it was his eyes that would emit energy and light. That morning, a few moments after what seemed like a mystical experience, he had to begin loading his truck with the bulldozer. I went back to the Convent disconsolately. I thought I would never see Joe again. Happily I was wrong. I was standing in the

kitchen when I heard his truck going down the hill. Just at the point of his passing the Convent I felt his “touch” in my heart center! How to explain such an experience at this distance?

On one of those occasions of my running up the hill to see Joe, I found him parked and waiting to pick up a small bulldozer that was making its way to the road. I jumped up into the cabin of his truck. Joe was possibly more relaxed in this situation as he knew he was not taking time from his job. I was just sitting there looking straight ahead, and suddenly every tightened muscle of my body let go allowing me to melt into what felt like an ocean of bliss and love. Alan Watts writes of something similar to this kind of release from “the chronic muscle tension we usually call I.” The sense of “I” being the result of muscle tension could not therefore have had anything to do with this spontaneous release! To help me describe this unexpected experience of self loss, I quote Huxley: “My I or rather my blessed not-I was released for a moment from its throttling embrace.”

When the bulldozer arrived at the road I jumped out of the truck. Soon I was back into my ordinary experience of self and the world with the tensing of my muscles. What had happened in those few ecstatic moments in the cab of Joe’s truck? I agree that my chronic muscular tension that I call I was “unthrottled” by some “blessed not-I” that Huxley refers to. Could Joe have had a glimpse of what I was experiencing? Looking back, I like to speculate that Life itself, from the moment of my birth and his birth, and all of our births, seeks for that mysterious blissful self-loss that people speak of experiencing in sexual union. Not surprisingly sexual union is a symbol of a transcendent union. My momentary experience of self-loss was hardly that exalted, but I would certainly like to learn how to let go, at a much deeper level, of these “self-made” constraints.

I speak of my experiences with Joe as quasi-mystical because they were beyond the ordinary – including a genuine premonition. On an occasion I “knew” that I would see him if I went over to Summerland to the office of Lambert Bulldozers. It was just over the hill and I drove there in joyous anticipation of seeing Joe – not hoping to see him. Within a minute of my arrival Joe’s truck pulled up. He was in the office while I talked to Old Lambert

about business. Lambert was a wily old guy. He picked up on how I felt about Joe and he teased me about it.

However, I will attempt to describe the ordinary aspect of our relationship. The scenario of the movie *Brief Encounter* is analogous to our drama. Perhaps you saw the movie, but if you didn’t, it is about a businessman and a married woman who meet by happenstance in a train station. They became swept up in an attraction that they knew should not be consummated. Time and again, and for only a few brief moments before their respective trains separated them, they shared deep emotional but unarticulated feelings for one another. There was her final returning home to her husband. He had sensed something of what had happened, but he understood that it was over. They had a good marriage to which she had come back, perhaps resigned, but enriched by her “encounter”.

Joe and I shared an attraction that was not to be expressed in physical touch or words. We both recognized a line that could not be crossed. I could not even imagine that this *thing* with Joe could be transposed to an affair. After our brief moments together he returned to his home and I to the Convent, which did or had represented my spiritual aspirations. How to resolve my dilemma? I’m thinking of a parable of Ramakrishna. “If you have a thorn in your flesh take another thorn to dig it out and then throw both of them away.” Such a thing had already begun to happen. “Within an hour of my first meeting with Joe I felt the stream of my loving energies turn from the Temple, from Ramakrishna to Joe.” The “thorn” of my very palpable and joyous human experience of human love had removed the “thorn” of my idolatrous devotion that had been the vital connection to the Convent. My attraction to Joe was also misdirected and a “thorn” to “throw away”, but this took three years! The painful process of letting go of the second “thorn” was about to begin. Joe on one occasion showed the strain, perhaps of guilt in crossing the line in his imagining, as he was a married man. He became withdrawn and remote which stirred up my conflict. The muscles of my eyes began to tighten up.

It was happening again, or rather that I was doing it again. It has taken me a long time to recognize my responsibility for the tensing of my

muscles, and my eye muscles in particular; that I armor myself with a taut musculature against my own seeing as though seeing or looking was dangerous or wrong. I had been taught to close my eyes and go within to find what I really want in God. So – gradually my tensing became worse, to the point that I could hardly lift my looking above the ground, and that was just a peeking to see my way about. Years before I had read *Gestalt Therapy* by Fritz Perls, but with less than full comprehension. As I was experiencing this return of eye tension I re-read it with much blinking and effort. This time Fritz's insights were clear, but only became helpful when I worked with him much later. In the meantime the terrible tension in my eyes went on unabated. You must remember how ridiculous and weird I looked sitting at the dinner table, eyes closed, in front of dinner guests.

I needed help. You all thought that it made no sense that I could not open my eyes and look around. I guessed that Prabha suspected I was shaming. My friend Hari-Mati researched and found Jim Simkin, a chief “disciple” of Fritz, and that he practiced on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, my old stomping ground as I grew up. Shuddha argued with me, and almost pleading, “If you insist on going to see this psychologist what will the devotees think?” My desperate need prevailed. Prabha drove me down to see this Jim.

We settled ourselves in the reception room. Suddenly the door used by clients burst open. Prabha, with her normal reflexes, turned her head to see who had come in so abruptly. I sensed her movement, but I did not and could not turn my head in a response. It was Jim who had come in. I had called him from Santa Barbara to make an appointment and I explained to him some of my symptoms. His startling entrance, I presume, was a way of observing my reflexes. Whatever I may have said to him on the phone, if I did not turn my head in a reaction to a loud noise, he could better assess what he had to work with. Obviously I was interfering with my looking.

During my session with Jim I sat, eyes closed, talking to him from the other side of his desk. He had offered me, if I wished, to sit one to one in front of him. I would often interject a “you see?” as I was telling him about my eye tensing. “No”, he replied “I don't see.” If I laughed he asked me, “what's

funny?” At one point he suggested that I might not want to open my eyes and see that he was a handsome man. I didn't grasp then how close he was to the mark. The problem with my open-eyed looking came in the wake of my being attracted to Henry, “a darkly handsome man.” Unashamedly in love I had joyously “run up the hill” to see Joe, and then my problem recurred to the point of sitting in the office of a psychologist to get help. Jim continued to fish for clues that he could work with. I never even said anything about Henry and Joe! He asked me, “Who up there is calling the dogs on you?” I was puzzled by the question. He experimented with my hitting a pillow. I did it half-heartedly thinking it a pointless exercise. He asked about the woman who drove me down to see him. I said that she was my friend, as I have described my relationship to Prabha to you. At the sessions end my eyes popped open! I have no explanation for this. The next day all of us drove down to Hollywood for a special event. That day held a tremendous break-through for me. With the unblocking of my eye muscles I experienced a revolutionary sense that the natural flow of my energies was out, and I felt such an out-going affection for the devotees that it was like being swept away by a flood.

I had a few more sessions with Jim. On an occasion, as my time with him was completed, and after I had put my check on his desk, I put my hand on his which was placed palm down. I said with this gesture, “I love you.” He turned his palm up in receiving my expression of gratitude and smiled. The next day was inexplicably the most gloriously happy day of my life. Barada, do you remember us piling into the station wagon for a day's outing? We planned to have lunch at a very good restaurant, but it was out of the way. We had to drive through the back mountains to get there and we got turned around. I looked around delightedly as the whole world was blanketed with a new brightness. We stopped for a few moments at a camping spot. The rest of you wandered off into the woods. I went over to a huge old pine tree and threw my arms around it. Since then I can empathize with “tree hugging.” The distant mountains seemed close and full of that brightness. I sensed a kind of joyous communication with nature. And all this because I said, “I love you” in a genuine out-going of gratitude to my Jewish, atheist psychologist.

Once again Hari-Mati my very caring friend discovered that Fritz would be giving a workshop at Esalen up the coast from Santa Barbara. She gave me the gift of a month's stay there including two weeks of sessions with Fritz. Looking back, there must have been much hesitation on Swami's part to let me go but he did. Hari-Mati drove me up there. The only way to reach Esalen was on the serpentine Highway 1, that had been carved out of the cliffs rimming the ocean. Driving was much slower than on a straight road. On the several hours trip we passed, one after another, lovely coves, to gaze down upon their repetitive beauty almost to the point of tedium. The entrance to Esalen was on the Highway. I had to show a paper that I was a participant. We drove down a steep incline ending on a large plateau. I was assigned a cabin. There were a number of cabins for the people attending a workshop, and usually only one was held at a time for a period of a week or two. The main building had a large dining area that could also be used for workshops. There was a bar in the corner. A large door opened to a spacious deck. One could step down from the deck to where there was a pit for the evening fires. Almost every night the hippies would come down out of the hills to sing and play their instruments such as a washboard, the backside of a wash tub, recorders and such. These bearded longhaired young men had probably helped in the construction of what was a rustically beautiful building. Some hand crafters had supplied the interior with useful and decorative filigree iron works. Recorded classical music was played during our meals. At breakfast it was usually one of Bach's Brandenburg concertos.

Naturally I felt out of my element among these often brilliant and troubled people openly discussing their sex lives or their "peak experiences." There was a basic staff of young people. They confided in me their amusement at what was going on. One cynical young woman remarked that she felt that the participants were followers of their workshop "guru" to the point of following his lead off the cliff!

My sessions with Fritz were held in a huge old house down from the plateau in another open area. One morning before a session I was sitting where I could watch the giant waves crashing over the rocks. Michael Murphy, who had just recently instituted Esalen with his partner Dick Price, sat down a little behind me and spoke of his dreams of having the savants of our time gather there. That is exactly what happened with the coming of Maslow, Rogers, May, Fritz and others. Actually Fritz had just moved in as the presiding "shrink." Esalen was a new, innovating and exciting movement. Other such places for encounter groups began opening up later and everywhere.

There were only about twelve of us for Fritz's workshop. I listened raptly to him as I had listened to Swami lecture on the non-dual Vedanta. Fritz's teachings were, of course, more down to where we function in our daily lives. He would explain how we allow ourselves to be unnecessarily bound to a lot of "should do's" and "ought not do's." I learned even more from him in my casual associations with him at meals or else where. One evening we were standing at the bar and he asked me to name ten of my resentments. His idea was that when our resentments turn to gratitude we are cured. On another occasion he asked me if I cared for him. He remarked, "You care about your hair." I remained silent. If he had asked me, "Do you love me?" I probably would quickly have said "yes, I love you for how you are helping me." I've come to feel offish about using the term "love." I admit to using it trivially, sentimentally, and even hypocritically. I think I was sincere in saying to Jim "I love you." I spoke that way spontaneously in appreciation for his help, but Fritz had asked me if I cared about him, about his needs and wellbeing. Jim didn't need my caring as I suspect Fritz did. I'm thinking about a passage from the Upanishads relevant to "love." "The husband does not love the wife for the sake of the wife but for the sake of the Self in the wife. The wife does not love the husband for the sake of the husband but for the sake of the Self in the husband." I very much like Swamiji's remark that "It is not the arrangement of the molecules of the face that attracts us but the Self shining through."

One time Fritz observed that I was running to get some place. He remarked that man's proper pace is walking – very Buddhist. From some of his other statements I gathered that he had great appreciation

for the precepts of Buddhism. One morning as we were having breakfast together he said, "I'm going to give you a koan, but I doubt that you can give up your clinging to your fantasies of the past and the future." The koan that has taken me a lifetime to "get" was "All that exists is now."

I tagged after him so persistently that he called me a "sweet pest." He told me what he liked about me; that I knew what was happening, and that I could never be sucked into a Nazi conformity. He also said that my voice was sexually aggressive! I was at Esalen in its earliest days, and there weren't many people about. The next times I came to Esalen I found Fritz absorbed in playing chess with someone. He was obviously making himself unavailable to others. On those visits I was taking a workshop with Jim.

Curious strangers were not allowed to come down and look around. They would give all sorts of excuses; that they were good friends with so and so etc. What they wanted was to have access to the sulfur hot springs. I was finally coaxed down to the springs. In my Convent like modesty I quickly undressed and slipped into a huge tank with the others that thought nothing of being naked. Actually I found the springs to be very invigorating, and I got used to not having my clothes on.

In our group sessions Fritz worked with us on our dreaming; of how we project our creative scenarios upon the screen within our heads as we sleep. This is a process of recycling and rearranging the gestalts of people, events, and things of our waking hours. This is a step towards the difficult task of realizing that we largely project our wakeful scenarios on the screen of what is out there. As an exercise we are asked what we might make of what looks to be just a few random black patches on a white paper. Suddenly we see a dog. We had connected the patches to form a gestalt. Barada, have you ever looked at something in the corner of the room and can't rest till you figure out what that fuzzily undefined form is? When you can name it, the vague form is transformed into a recognizable object. I have done this a number of times.

A Gestalt Therapist tells us that we are doing this, or rather that our brain and nervous system are creating our perceptions this way all the time. To give an example, if we feel hungry the gestalt of food emerges brightly out of a diffuse background.

After we have eaten and are satisfied the gestalt of a tuna sandwich fades back in an amorphous background from which different needs evoke different gestalts. Watching my cat I can see how smoothly this process works for his survival, but he doesn't have our human problem of trying to freeze our gestalts by naming them, of filtering out the changes in a world we want be able to grasp and control. We attempt to eternalize, make gods if you will, of our gestalts of self and things. Our gods betray us. I've come up with my own mantra for dethroning my false gods, of seeing through my filtering out of the ever changing. The mantra is "I" now, "this" now, or simply now and now.

I feel a little like Siddhartha in Hess's novel. He learned wisdom from the river. I look out on the lake twenty feet from my window. If I were looking at a painting of the lake I would enjoy a captured moment of beauty. What I actually see are movements of dancing water that can not be captured. The lake becomes for me a symbol of the Buddhist precepts of "co-dependent arising, and impermanence, and no self".

## 15

One time I was in Fritz's cabin. He gave me a tab of Sandoz lysergic acid. I was a little apprehensive in taking this hallucinogenic. I kept up a non-stop chattering with him. Suddenly I shut up. I went over to an open window, and reaching out I picked a small flower. I spent the following eight hours glorying in what I was experiencing with that flower. Holding the tender stem between my fingers I felt the flower growing larger then smaller with its incoming breath and outgoing breath. As the flower breathed in, the petals expanded and it's lovely colors deepened. With its outgoing breathing the colors faded into a pastel beauty and all the time I watched the dance of the pistils and stamens. The seed heart opened more and then less. At one point I squeezed the stem a little to see if I could interfere with these living movements. Life's breathing went on as if I wasn't there!

I found that my LSD experience in Fritz's cabin, and at other times and in other places, to have been salutary. As an example: one time I was looking at a table whose surface would ordinarily appear perfectly smooth, but I observed the layer of varnish covered with interlacing cracks, and that the layer of varnish seemed about a half inch from the wood below with its many grains and cracks. It was as though my eyes held a powerful magnifying glass for having a closer look at what was there. A particular experience that moves me in memory to this day was of gazing at a sycamore tree. It became transformed into such heavenly beauty that I gasped. What was *out there* had not changed. Something in my brain had invoked a different view of:

“Earth's crammed with Heaven

Every common bush afire with God.

Only he who *sees* takes off his shoes.”

Another important aspect of my time at Esalen was taking part in an Art workshop. Fritz Fais, a friend of Fritz's was offering, in association with Fritz's workshop, an introduction to painting. Fritz strongly suggested that I sign up. I said to him, “but I've never had a paint brush in my hand.” He still pressed me to take part in the workshop. He said it would help in my problem with my looking. I was given a paintbrush with a bamboo handle. I think such a brush is used for Japanese calligraphy. Together with my implement for painting I was provided with poster paints. Fritz gave us a lecture on how to proceed. We were then left to our own creative devices. I tried to capture Joe's face, but I had difficulty in doing so. I went to Fritz and told him how much I wanted to get a face. He encouraged me by saying that if I had a drive to portray a face a technique would come. Uncharacteristically I had unquestioning faith in my teacher and a technique did come.

In that little class I discovered a talent for portraiture with my way *to do it*. I had no idea that this newfound ability would enable me to make my living in the future. My month's time at Esalen came to an end. It had been full of new experiences, insights, self-discoveries, and support from Fritz. However neither Fritz nor Jim advised me as to what my choice would be for the rest of my life.

I returned to the Convent. That first evening I sat with a few of you in the dining room. I think

Shakti's mother was there too. The light seemed cold. A few soft-spoken words were surrounded by what seemed a deadly silence. Barada, I don't remember if you were there. There was a palpable sense in the room that I had come to a threshold of decision in my life.

I had brought back with me my paintbrush and paints. A small shed at the side of the garage became my studio. I kept up my experimenting. What I produced was considered primitive, if not pitiful compared with Art, but I judged what I did against myself. From zero to one and a half was a big advance for me. All of you, to your gracious credit, were polite about your opinions.

Uprooting from my twenty-five years of Convent life, and my association with you and my other sisters, however lacking in personal closeness was very painful. The last time I walked out from our sleeping quarters I said a sad goodbye to the big old oak tree on the lawn. I left the Convent on a gray overcast day in late October of '65. Prabha drove me down to my mother's place in Encino.

16

The back of the station wagon was packed with my things. I don't remember driving away from the Convent with anything other than my clothes. It was mostly in sober silence that we drove down South. Prabha did make me an offer of providing me with money to live for a month or two, and if I decided to come back to the Convent in that period of time I would be welcomed back. The caveat was that if I took a job and made any money the door would be closed. I knew that I would never accept such an offer. This funding would have been from Prabha's own money. She had an inheritance from her father's death many years before. There was no question, I suppose, of her turning over her money to the Society. This was true of Krishna as well. He had Swamis permission to keep his considerable inheritance. You, Barada, had a small inheritance. I know you used it to have a hothouse built to grow orchids, these highly prized flowers to be used in the worship. Prabha bought Swami a

Cadillac for his trips from Hollywood to Santa Barbara and elsewhere, and always to be chauffeured by his faithful servant Krishna. I have a feeling that if my father had died while I was living in the Convent that I would not have been allowed to keep my inheritance.

We arrived in the Valley and it was still very hot. My mother was living in the pool house. We were to share a small space. I used a pull down sofa in the living room as my bed. My mother had a small room open to this area. In a corner was a table where we had our meals, and next to that was a small kitchen.

What we called the ranch had been originally bought for keeping a few horses. It was a two-and-a-half acre plot in the San Fernando Valley and just over the hill from Beverly Hills. At the far back of the property a couple of small houses were eventually built, which my mother later rented. Her place seemed larger because a wall of windows faced the swimming pool. Across from the pool was an area shaded by an aged wisteria vine that had woven its branches among the beams of the arbor. In summer clusters of purple wisteria blossoms hung down like little chandeliers over the picnic table. It was peasant to look at the sparkling waters of this pool, and even more pleasant to take a dip in them to cool off during the excessive heat. There were elegant tall trees everywhere. My love and need to be surrounded by the beauty of nature was partially satisfied, but I had been living in a far more beautiful environment. The least negative assessment my mother could make about my Convent life was that I had been in an elite finishing school for women. There was some truth in what she said.

My mother had no idea of what our "religion" was. She was a lapsed Mormon. She now listened to religious radio programs whose preachers speculated about what became of the ten tribes of Israel. I had not bonded with mother in my early years, and we were certainly on different pages now. She assumed that since I had wasted half my life that I would spend the rest of it raking leaves and such on her ranch.

I applied for a job of going door to door in trying to interest mothers in having their children tested for their musical aptitude. This was to be followed by a salesman coming to sign the kid up

for accordion lessons. Oh how I dreaded walking up to a front door and ringing the bell. I had continued working on my painting at my mothers. I still used my bamboo- handled brush and poster paints. At some point I switched to oil paint. I came up with an idea. It was that when a mother answered the door, not only would I present the musical testing proposition, but also offer to do a portrait of their child for five dollars. I had takers! They gave me a photograph from which to work. One mother was so delighted with my capturing the likeness of her child that she encouraged me to work hard on what she judged was my great potential.

I saved enough money to drive up to Esalen for a workshop with Jim. Hari-Mati had given me five hundred dollars to help me in my transition period. I gave this money to my mother, but she was resentful that I used my earnings for anything other than helping her with expenses. We did, however, have a congenial interest in painting. She could look at a picture of a vase holding hundreds of flowers, and just by eye she was able to reproduce them perfectly. We took an evening class in painting. I learned from the instructor that "everyone can paint, it is just fear that keeps us from attempting to do it."

## 17

I got in touch with Henry. We met. He, just in case I should imagine that we would take up from where we left off, told me about his relationship with a woman named "Rutchen." I made it clear that I only wanted some friends in the world. I eventually drove up to his house to meet Rutchen. It was the same house on Creston Dr. in the Hollywood hills that he had bought for us if I left the Convent. Henry had no doubt "gone on" about a very spiritual Sarada, and I'm sure he would do this to wit Rutchen. On meeting me she found no goddess, but a spiritually fragile women who was a bit lost just coming out from the safe but confining space of the Convent. She realized very soon that I had no *intentions* towards Henry. Rutchen and I became friends and I consider her one of the three best friends of my life through these many years.

A chance came for me to housesit for Henry and Rutchen as they traveled back east to take part in Tim Leary's communal experiment, LSD and all. The time had come for me to stop cowering out at my mother's place. Even though I had an uncertain future I told my mother that I was leaving the ranch. She remonstrated with me that I had no real way to make a living, which was true. I drove off in my "Bug", but I returned often to see her.

Henry had given permission to a Thad Ashby to lead an LSD workshop at the house during their absence. I, being a sort of caretaker, was welcome to take part in the day of "turning on." Thad was associated with Tim Leary, which gave him the authority to lead such a session. I don't know how the word got around about this occasion, but on the designated day about eight people arrived and were given, without much ado in terms of introductory remarks, a tab of the psychedelic. It was during the following hours that I happened to look out of the window and see that sycamore as though it was growing in the Garden of Eden

I observed how the others were responding to the hallucinogenic. Some of their behavior was bizarre. Thad disappeared into Henry and Rutchen's bedroom to enjoy his private trip. Sometime later they came out, and Thad asked me to observe his wife's skin around the chest area. What I saw was a fascinating interlacing of the patterns of tiny red capillaries that became visible as I watched, and then invisible again, appearing and disappearing probably connected to her in-breathing and out-breathing, like my breathing flower.

Thad stayed on at the house for a few days after the LSD session. He appeared to me to be addicted to feeling "high" even with cold pills. What he was doing, or what anyone of us does in our various ways, in trying to escape from our constricted worlds. But taking drugs is not the way.

Henry and Rutchen returned from their adventure with Leary, of sleeping on mattresses laid on the floor, and group sessions with LSD. Rutchen had surveyed the situation pragmatically and saw the need for cleaning up and providing regular meals. They were both happy to be back home. I was welcome to stay on awhile in the guest bedroom that Henry had added on to the back of the kitchen. It had a connecting bathroom. This arrangement was apart from Rutchen and Henry's living space.

Eventually I left the Hollywood hill house for an apartment of my own at the bottom of the hill.

To give an over-all picture of the richness of my experiences with Rutchen and Henry and their guests, I'll coalesce my time after their return and some of the other rimes I spent with them up on the hill. Tim Leary had gotten in trouble with the Law when it was discovered that he had a small amount of marijuana on his person. Rutchen put on a lavish defense fund dinner for him. A number of scientific researchers in the study of hallucinogenics were present on that occasion. Among these was Oscar Janiger, or Oz, a well-known psychiatrist. In a strange confluence of events I met up with Oz about thirteen years later on the island of Kauai. There is much that I can say of that incredible period, but of that later. Alan Watts was a houseguest. It was during the time that he was giving a series of talks in LA. I was welcome to attend his talks. He spoke of how we divide the world with our language into subject-object relationships. I was pleased to find a companion for my passion for this very subject! He gave, as an illustration of this process, of our saying, "The lightning flashed." It was as though a supposed subject, lightning, was doing the flashing when experientially there is only a flashing. I mentioned to Alan how much I appreciated his illustration. He, as I later learned, had remarked to Henry that, "She listened to what I said!" as though this was a rare thing. Alan was in my opinion an excellent teacher, and he took no position of being a guru. "I am only an entertainer", he would say. Once he spoke to me personally saying, "I've always related to women as either lovers or enemies, but in you I find a friend." I avidly read everything that Alan wrote. Here in Canada I ran across his Tao of Philosophy and I found it a treasure of insights.

Charlotte Selver and her husband Charles Brooks were also guests. She presented teachings of her life's work that she termed Sensory Awareness. Her classes were held in the living room. From her I learned the basics of being mindfully in touch with my sensory experience and bodily being. Rutchen profoundly assimilated Charlotte's teachings. She said that they had layed down a basis of her later studies of Vipassana Buddhism. She and Henry traveled to Burma to practice under Ubakin, a well-known teacher. Her progress was remarkable enough for him to lay the mantle of his authority on her to teach Vipassana. As many know she has

become a renowned teacher of this ancient Buddhist practice of Insight Meditation. Years later she created her own Center in Joshua Tree. The irony was that she had followed Henry to Burma because she didn't want to lose him! Henry came back from Burma empty after another failed foray into attaining enlightenment.

I would like to tell you of the times I spent with just the two of them. I observed how Henry would rebuke Rutchen for any departure from the ideal of detachment. He seemed to be playing "guru" by pulling the rug out from under her spontaneous pleasure in things. Henry could be, as Rutchen said, a wonderful loving husband to cuddle up with, and then there was his terrible icy coldness. I witnessed the oncoming of her psychotic episode. I was seeing before my eyes a playing out of my gut feeling of going insane if I were to have left with Henry. She related a hint of her experience by saying, "if I could only have just been able to sweep a floor!" A drug administered by psychiatrist and family friend Oz Janiger brought her out of this episode.

Rutchen had not come out of a Convent, but from war torn Germany. Compared to my vulnerable state during my embroilment with Henry Rutchen had a tank-like strength. She did rise like the Phoenix from the ashes, as they say, and with greater strength of spirit and loving-kindness. She also emerged from her experience with less physical strength and a greater sensitivity to disturbing influences around her. Henry appeared to me to have been sadistic. He drove at excessive speeds down the freeway even though she expressed her fright. He dragged her off to Africa to see the wild life in Africa, which she would have ordinarily enjoyed. She joked a little about a cheeta planted here and there to please the tourists. I'm convinced that her love was the salvation of our dear Henry. She persuaded him, in his physically and mentally deteriorating condition to come out to live under her care at Joshua Tree, where he remained until his death.

I could say it was my good luck that I met John Gibbon, but I don't believe in happenstance. He was one of Rutchen and Henry's guests at their festive occasions. John, in his attempt to make a living as a stockbroker played the part very well. He drove a leased Cadillac and wore business suits. He knew about investing but didn't find many investors. John came into the orbit of my life years later, and he had morphed into a radical hippie. He was unkempt, wore old clothes, and he obviously didn't bathe regularly. I had sensed this in other dedicated hippies. At that time we renewed what was a good friendship, and he even insisted on massaging my feet! His great interest had turned to making music with bells.

By the time I had moved down the hill from Henry and Rutchen's house, John offered me a job at a store he was opening. The store was on lower Sunset Blvd., an epicenter for the hippie culture, but John still wore his business suits. At that time he had a passion for sliced and polished petrified wood. These pieces were lovely. Each of them was a kind of Rorschach test, as one could imagine seeing beautiful landscapes and ocean scenes in the configuration of the polished wood-stones. His store, which he appropriately named Metamorphosis, was for displaying and hopefully selling these natural works of art along with geodes, crystal formations, and all kinds of small stones polished to a jewel like glow. He included some handcrafted items as well. The walk by traffic was sparse and made up of locals with hardly the \$150 that John was asking for the polished petrified wood. During the time I worked at John's store I sold a geode. It was to an elegant older man. He paid for it with a check endorsed by an employer, he said. The check bounced. John continued for a while to pour money into what was a doomed project. One morning, however, a Rolls Royce pulled up to the front door, and the "Queen" of the Rock world entered with a flourish. She bought up all of the handcrafted items. Her name was Pamela Morrison,

the girl friend of Jim Morrison. I'll touch on my meeting the rock star himself later.

I had found my apartment in the Goldwater Apartment complex on Gower Street at the bottom of the hill. These old buildings had been renovated from what had been a retreat for the devoted of the Blavatsky era. As the crow flies these apartments were only a couple of blocks from the Vedanta Temple. Surrounding an inner courtyard were small apartments for singles. I think that having a courtyard, with a fountain, induced a friendly atmosphere. When I moved in I felt welcomed as into a family. My kitchen had a window facing the courtyard. Double glass doors opened on to a pleasant residential area. I had an ample bathroom with a tub. The sitting room doubled for a bedroom. The rent was \$197, an unthinkable small amount today. The electric bill was \$1.75, and I could fill my Bug for \$2.50. I had enough money to pay these bills and for my food from my job at Metamorphosis, and the baby-sitting that my mother shared with me. I always had enough money in my purse for sherry and cigarettes. Alas, I smoked a lot.

I never actually got into bed at night. I just lay down with a cover over me. I was prepared for my new friends to show up at anytime. The young men were beginning to grow their hair and beards, and the girls to wear dresses of Indian tablecloths. There was the excitement of the Beatles arriving on the scene, and Woodstock. The Beatles made their famous pilgrimage to India to sit at the feet of the Maharishi. I would smile as I walked down a side street. Someone in an apartment was chanting Om.

I began to *listen* to the music of my young friends. As an old classicist this was a stretch, but I began to really enjoy the Doors and the Moody blues. I shared their first hearing of Dr. Peppers Lonely Hearts Band. John joined us occasionally, his voice reaching a high pitch when he would begin to rail against world governments spending money for arms that could feed and clothe and house the peoples of the world. We smoked a little pot together. Sweet, good-looking Johnny was one of our gatherings, and he was obsessed with chasing after every pretty girl he saw. He was the “turn-on master”, the one who rolled the joints. He had a sudden conversion to the Baha'i. He stopped chasing and “smoking” to stand up on the bus and witness for his new found religion. He knew I had

been a nun, and he said to me, “I wish I could come in here and find you telling your beads.”

## 19

In the Convent the “telling of my beads” had become a meaningless act to me, and I wasn't going to attempt to explain how that came to be. At the time that Johnny had made his plea I was in a spiritual limbo. What was amazing to me was that my twenty-five years in Vedanta, with its high philosophy and its traditional practices, had faded into irrelevance since my leaving what I might call “a little bit of India” in the foothills of Santa Barbara. During those years in the Convent my father moved to Santa Barbara to be near me. He would visit us at the Convent and was the elegant gentleman in his 1955 white Thunderbird. In later years, on leaving the Convent and my moving to Hollywood, I would drive up to Santa Barbara to visit him and clean his apartment at least once a month. One time, as I was driving back to Hollywood in my Bug, Joe's big truck and I pulled out onto the freeway simultaneously. We drove side by side for a moment. We raised our arms in a salutation to each other. He turned off to the left and I continued on my way. I feel that the raising of our arms was a final goodbye, and perhaps a mutual recognition of some extraordinary happening that we had shared. This was a perfect closure for me. My lessons learned – I moved on.

I have written very little of my father whom I called Vireswar, almost as though our relationship was exclusively in the context of Vedanta. For me that context meant detachment from human relationships. Didn't Jesus say, “He that loves his father and mother more than me is not worthy of me.” In my Vedantic renunciation of the world I thought I had found a “Someone” to love who was not of this world.

I had put my hand over the hand of Jim Simkin in an openhearted way of saying, “I love you.” This was an expression of gratitude for his help with my eye-tensing problem. I regret to say that I had a much greater problem in my ever

reaching out to touch my father's hand, what to speak of hugging him, or ever, ever saying, "I love you." I ask myself about who in my life was always there for me but he? He was always supportive, generous and self-sacrificing to a fault for me his daughter. When I was with him in his apartment in Santa Barbara I saw how frugally he lived. I knew he was drawing on decreasing dividends. He received a small amount of Social Security since it's first introduction just before he retired in 1935. Yet he paid for my two trips to India, my therapy with Jim, and he bought me my Bug. Fatherly caring flowed down from him to me without any demands for what should have been natural for me to give to him.

In remembering my father I am facing my buried regrets and shame that I failed him in ways it is more than difficult for me to forgive myself. At one moment in my youth I had a thought, which I let go of immediately, as though I had touched a very sore spot. My thought was that if I should lose my father it would be more than I could bear. From that moment could I have begun a process of insulating myself from the inevitable loss of my father? And could that insulating have spread into other cool, distant relationships under the cover of a spiritual justification?

I had entered my Vedanta life when I was eighteen. I left it at age forty-three going on nineteen. I had accumulated a top-heavy load of intellectualizing in my head. There were many lessons to learn in my life to make real the great insights of Vedanta and later of Buddhism etc. etc. I had learned pre-Vedanta that my actions had consequences from my "Duke" experience. In the Convent, with my traumatic "Henry" debacle I had turned off the switch to my sexuality and that for my soul's survival. Fritz speculated that I was emotionally and biologically very selective, and that the "right" man was needed to turn "it" or me back on. I wrote to you earlier about the fact that "not with anyone did I have the experience that everyone makes such a fuss about—for or against."

I experienced Vedanta as against sex. Out in the world they are all for it. You and others might have imagined from rumors that I had become very worldly. I did have boy friends, and I do mean boy, because they were all fifteen to twenty years younger than I was. There was Ken, aged twenty-

two who had been a participant in Thad's workshop. He said that he had fallen in love with me. I enjoyed many nice times with Ken before he moved on as I knew he would. On moving into the Goldwater apartments I met an attractive young man in the next apartment. He had ambitions to make it as a singer, Perry Como style. I would sit in a big comfortable chair and listen to his songs as he perched on a high, black stool. He moved out and Rich moved into his place. Rich loved to sit and talk with me and it was serious talk. He had examined the idea of a God and abandoned it. "Crazy Richard" as everyone referred to him affectionately, was an intelligent and humorous twenty-three year old whom I met at Metamorphosis. We took an LSD trip together. Whatever these "boy friends" felt or desired from me, I could only be there for them in enjoying their company. I did get a little attached to Rich, and for good reason. Rich put himself out for me on several occasions. I had been going from door to door in the Hollywood hills to see if I could get commissions for portraits. The idea occurred to me of going over to my old home grounds in Beverly Hills. On an outing there I was just coming back to the sidewalk after presenting my work of doing portraits. I saw two squad cars parked a short distance away. An officer beckoned me to come to where she stood. I told her what I was about, but she looked at me as though I had criminal intentions. I was driven to the police station. My Bug was impounded. After being finger-printed and having a mug shot I was led away to a cell. With the clanging of the cell door my heart sank. The cellblock was immaculate and I was the only one in it! I was allowed the usual one call. Two officers sat in the room with me as I called Rich. When he answered I said, "Rich, you won't believe this but I'm in jail!" And I laughed. He was over to Beverly Hills in as much of a flash as a bus would permit. When he arrived at the station he railed at the officers for jailing this innocent woman who only sought to make a living by painting children's portraits. The officers had found only a painted portrait of a photograph of a child in my purse. The officer in charge seemed a little apologetic to me. My bail of \$25 was returned, and a judge fined me \$10 for "Soliciting without a license." I retrieved my Bug and we drove back to Hollywood, I feeling grateful to my friend Rich.

Dennis was the bookkeeper for Metamorphosis. He came in sporadically and I don't remember seeing him. Arthur, a close friend of Dennis, also worked at the store. He was very talented in creating beautiful handcrafted jewelry, and he invited me over to his place one evening. He had in mind that Dennis and I should meet. As I entered the room Dennis looked at me with open-eyed interest. I soon gathered that he was held in some reverence, turned to as a source of inspiration in their spiritual community of Radha Soami Satsang. From that time we greeted one another at Metamorphosis. I came to appreciate his very bright intelligence. I could see in his clear cobalt blue eyes an innocent intent towards the world. Words like goodness come to mind about him, but above all he was a peacemaker and he remains one, even more so, today. Dennis also kept the books for Pamela Morrison's boutique, which was her way of spending Jim's money as a tax exemption, I suppose. I met Jim Morrison at his office next door to Pamela's trippy place. I was surprised at the blandness of his personality and appearance, as he gave the opposite impression on stage as a big rock star, from what I had heard.

Dennis began to visit me at my apartment often bringing a small gift. We talked about our former lives in a community. He had lived in an apartment building with several other Radha Soami's under an over-powering domination of the woman who managed the apartments. She claimed to be in mystical contact with Charan Singh, the Master, as he was called. Dennis left the building but remained committed to Radha Soami.

From his photos Charan Singh appeared to be an impressive personality. He lived in India. I'll try to give a short summary of the theology of Radha Soami. It could be described as an amalgamation of parts of Hinduism and Sikhism. They proposed that Kal, a dark force, which sounded like Satan to me, as in total control of the world. The spiritual purpose of Radha Soami was to help souls rise

through five transcendental planes, beginning at the forehead or Ajna chakra, to liberation from Kal. I went along with Dennis to the small Satsangs for his sake and not mine, but I probably just wanted to solidify my relationship with him.

Our spiritual views were unique to ourselves. We have continued a dialogue of sharing them to this day, and have grown and evolved in tandem, as it were, and sometimes reaching marvelous points of agreements. We both are mavericks, unable to fit into established modes of religious beliefs. Dennis, being a leader by nature, works on creating his own religion. I have found the teachings of Buddhism very compatible. I especially respond to Thich Nhat Hanh when he speaks of Emptiness as empty of concepts. I have been a Buddhist in that respect since I grasped the importance of not identifying the level of concepts with the level of direct experience from the insights of Korzybski's General Semantics, and the use of the Structural Differential.

I was able to see Charan Singh and evaluate my impressions of him when he came out to California on a visit. He gave a Satsang at an auditorium in Pasadena. A huge crowd of young Radha Soami's waited eagerly for the doors to open. With the opening of those doors the crowd stampeded into the auditorium to get as close to their beloved master as possible. Charan Singh spoke very rapidly and I thought quite mechanically in presenting the teachings. He made a bad boo-boo by quoting Jesus as saying, "It is not important what comes out of the mouth, but what comes into the mouth." He had turned a vital teaching of Jesus around to support the strict dietary demands on all Radha Soami's to be vegans. A very pale and thin young man was worried about eating cheese because rennet is used in it's making! I was amused to observe that the devotees scanning the labels on cans and packages of food to avoid eating a trace of egg. Charan Singh did not accept the fact that eggs bought in the market were not fertilized. Most amusing was that the devotees didn't pay much attention to the admonition of "no sex without marriage." Arthur, among others, had a live-in girl friend. One day she looked at me and in all innocent faith and said, "Charan Singh is God." I doubt if the Radha Soami's generally explore the underlying theology of their faith. I saw their focus to be entirely on the Master. His pictures were everywhere in their homes. I can share the fact that I

had that need for an “Icon”, my holy Someone. I gave up this focus after difficult years of struggle. Now I can understand the statement of a Buddhist teacher to his disciple. “If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him.”

It was three years after leaving the Convent that I met Dennis, and he proposed marriage shortly after that. Everything in me felt good in saying, “Yes.” Henry and Rutchen opened their home for our very 60’s wedding. Alan Watts led us through the Anglican ritual of Marriage vows. He had been an Anglican Priest. The ceremony was held on the patio that opened out from their spacious living room, which was filled with colorfully clad Radha Soami’s. Alan wore an Indian type shirt with a medallion around his neck. I had fashioned a poncho out of an old linen tablecloth that was in perfect condition, and it had a wide hand-made lace border. The groom was vested in a purple velvet jacket with a Nehru collar. In the background a musician played a sitar. A Zen monk sounded a gong. Henry was a bit grumpy on my wedding day. The next day we were getting ready to go to “church”, but I was much more interested in listening to the fabulous news of the astronauts reaching the moon!

After being married Dennis and I moved into an apartment in Westwood near UCLA. Dennis took the job of Vice President of Sat Purush, a store owned by a fellow Radha Soami devotee. Indian style clothing was made and sold in the store.

I haven’t mentioned that there was a rule against drinking alcohol in the Radha Soami path, so it was in deference to Dennis – no more sherry. Dennis had begged me to give up smoking for the sake of my health. I did cut down a few cigarettes a day but was soon back on my pack a day. One time Dennis came in from another room to where I was, and in a decisive tone said, “I insist that you stop smoking. You are the only person I’ve ever found that I could talk to about spiritual things, and I don’t want you to die.” From that moment I never smoked again or wanted to. He made his demand from his caring, and I am eternally grateful to him for doing so.

Now I had plenty of time to return enthusiastically to my painting. I finished about twenty studies of the human face and figure. With my improvised framing I had enough work for a

showing, but I had no place to show. An opportunity opened up to move back to Santa Barbara.

## 21

Beside my father, my friend of friends, I have three best friends in my life: Dennis, Vijali and Rutchen. It is a common agreement among religions that we need a community to support our spiritual aspirations. The Convent is such a group for you nuns in Vedanta. Christians gather in churches. Muslims bow down to Allah side by side with the other devout. Buddhists have their Sanghas. As Jesus said, “If two or three are gathered in my Name I will be there among them.” In this sense these friends are the nucleus of my support community. I have told you some of the story of my friendship with Rutchen. We still keep in touch by phone, and I have been to visit her, as well as having taken part in several of the retreats at her Dama Dena Center. Dennis lives in California, but he calls me every two weeks and we have lively and lengthy talks about how we are coming to view reality. And there is Vijali. She lives in a remote part of Utah when she is not traveling to other parts of the country and around the world. The times we do communicate it is as though we find we are in the same place, so to speak, however far apart geographically.

For me to speak of Vijali is to tell the story of her odyssey. I witnessed her life’s journey from her early years. She was thirteen or fourteen when she pressed her father and Swami Prabhavananda to allow her to join the Convent, having learned of Vedanta from her father and her own precocious reading. (Her father, Paul, became a Vedanta monk at the Trabuco monastery.) She was happy to be with us, and became devoted to Swami and a practicing devotee. She was very shy with even the closest of the householder members. Mr. Sheets, in his attempt to engage her in conversation did not even succeed in getting her to look at him what to speak of respond to him. I mention these aspects of her growing up because of the contrast with the articulate world traveler for causes of peace and

ecology that she became; of her being called to be the speaker at forums and in presentations of her art work that expresses her spiritual values. She has traveled around the world several times and formed groups with the local people to put on dramatic performances to illustrate our connection with the earth. Vijali met a Chumash Indian and was deeply impressed with the spirituality of the American Indians. He taught her some of their inner secrets and bestowed on her a sacred eagle feather, a symbol of her initiation I gather. It has been a broadening of my vision in trying to understand her in her inspiration. It was in connection to this Indian View that she “circled the earth” as a sacred mission. I admire her heroism in living alone in a cave in the Himalayas, cooking her own food, and leaving an extraordinarily beautiful painting of the Buddha on the cave wall. Fortunately she took a photo of it.

Vijali remained in the Convent until she was in her early twenties. Something within her pressed for greater space to grow and manifest her potential. She had developed her artistic talents in the Convent. With a firm intent and without great emotion she took a friendly leave of us. It pained Swami to lose this young person, and in innocent faith he said that he would pray that she not go. His prayers were not answered.

You already know the story of how she met a young man and fell in love with him. It’s fun to tick off the unfoldment and consequences of this romantic encounter; of her going off with him to Canada where she enrolled at McGill University in Montreal to continue her art studies. She and her boy friend broke up. Vijali came back to the States for a visit, and she met Dale on the Temple steps. Dale, being a well regarded artist, they immediately had something in common. In two weeks they were married! She moved into his handcrafted home on Hidden Valley Lane, which was of itself a work of art. Vijali’s ex-boy friend had been exposed to Vedanta through her. He also returned to the States. He got together with a new girl friend and they were married. However he decided to be a monk at Trabuco, and she became a nun in Santa Barbara! She is still there. Could anyone believe all this? And there was more. Vijali and Dale had created enough of their artwork to embark on a two year selling tour around the country. We were visiting with them and they told us of their plan. We asked

if we could rent their place while they were away, and they were happy for us to do so.

The year was 1970. You nuns had asked that I not remain in Santa Barbara after I left the Convent, but it had been five years, and I thought that enough time had passed that any furor over my leaving had surely died down by then. Evidently you nuns were not too pleased to have Dennis and I just short walk down the road from the Convent. I must tell you, Barada, that I had the experience called “shunning”, which is a term used by fundamentalist Christians to express their alienation of a member of the church who had left the fold. Devotees whom I had known for years would not acknowledge my presence as I stood behind them at the check-out counter, and a married couple who had been close friends quickly, and in great embarrassment, left my presence as we were in an enclosed space. I could mention a number of similar snubs. I keep wondering about the blurb about me in the back of Chris’s Diaries. It is the last sentence that bothers me particularly in that it was so wrong. The descriptive blurb said, “She left the Convent because of her sudden interest in men. Swami forbade anyone to ever mention her name in his presence.” Was I experiencing a trickle down effect from Swami’s admonition?

I soon became aware of the existence of the Santa Barbara Beach Art Show. After finishing my obligatory three months residence in Santa Barbara I applied for a license to show my work. I already had the paintings I needed, and I had the use of Dale’s art studio to create more. It was fun sitting on my warm grassy spot at the Art Show, which was part of the display area that stretched several blocks, the artists showing on one half and the hand-crafters on the other half. On Sundays thousands of visitors came to promenade along the sidewalk and would buy whatever appealed to them. Early Sunday mornings we hopeful sellers brought down our display arrangements and garden chairs to sit out an eight-hour day. Remarkably I began to make a living by selling my paintings. Dennis had been commuting to LA. He earned enough money from his various jobs for us to live on. Now he could stay in Santa Barbara permanently. He helped with the framing of my paintings as well as hauling the stuff down and back from the beach.

As I would sit on the beach for hours I enjoyed “people watching”, as well as listening to

young people tell me of their dreams. Dennis and I were both cast in listening roles with our young neighbors, Cassie and Harvey who lived at Stillfarm, a large estate up the hill from Dale's place. Cassie was a restless heiress of the Warner Bros. fortunes. She had a one-year-old daughter and she decided to end her marriage. She moved out of Stillfarm and Harvey stayed on.

Dennis invited a number of Radha Soami's to come up from Los Angeles for a social get-together. Arthur was among those who came for the day. The beauty of Santa Barbara captivated him. Dennis helped Arthur to get a job at Still Farm and a place to live over the garage. One hot afternoon Dennis and I walked up to Still Farm to enjoy with Arthur and his new girl friend a dip in the pool. Suddenly we were alerted by a loud WHOOSH, and all of us watched a wide line of fire sweeping down the side of the mountainside. I reacted to what I saw with particular horror as I remembered a similar fire sweeping down towards us while I was living at the Convent. At that time we evacuated. Returning the following morning we found that the fire had stopped dead, and in the middle of heavy brush around the perimeter of the Convent property. Apparently at dawn the winds had shifted, and the fire had turned back to land bare of fuel and so it died. It could have looked like a miraculous intervention even to the County Fire officials, but for me it was an added impetus to get rid of that heavy brush crowding close to the Temple and our living quarters. Now, ten years later there was that rush to gather a few things and evacuate. Coming back in the morning we were relieved that the fire had not touched Dale's property. The fire had crossed into Convent property at the tip of the top seven acres. As you remember Barada, those seven acres were burned to the ground. The merciless devastation consumed all the huge old oak trees, and it only stopped at the firebreak. Sparks must have flown further into the property but did not find enough food to satisfy its appetite. After that first fire a law had been passed that all under-brush must be kept 250 ft. around all buildings in the Santa Barbara foothills. I understand that Shakti is in charge of this project, and she had helped me in my earlier brush-clearing efforts. This time, like a frustrated, hungry and insatiable giant the fire jumped across Ladera Lane to move southeast and away from the road. It left some homes as smoldering ashes and badly

damaged others. The small wooden cabin at Vijali and Dale's where we had our meals and entertained our guests sat miraculously alone on a rock, unscathed. Arthur had not evacuated. He stayed to hose down the slate roof of Cassie's stone mansion. The mansion was not touched, but parts of the garden were scorched. After the fire came the flood. Heavy rains bloated the ravine beneath the cabin. Its waters thundered down the hill carrying huge boulders. Dennis and I huddled helplessly on our bed above a flooded bedroom floor. The perky cabin, threatened once again, survived.

Soon after the furor of fire and flood Dale and Vijali returned from a successful tour of art shows. Fortuitously, Cassie offered for us to move over to her place up the hill, a large sandstone mansion. We moved into what had been the cook's or servants' quarters, and tried to keep a low presence, as Harvey, it seemed, was a little annoyed at sharing his space with us. Harvey's story fascinates me. I met him again, with his wife Donna, years later on the island of Kauai. They had just then emerged from their lengthy involvement with Scientology. I was in the midst of my own entanglement with a control-mad leader. Coming back in time, Dennis and I were about to be on the move again.

## 22

Cassie had moved out of Still Farm. She had purchased one hundred acres of land with houses 2800 ft. up the mountain above Santa Barbara, and it was called Laurel Springs. Her plot of land, that had no springs, was off Camino Cielo, a "road in the heavens" rimming the Los Padres National Forest. On the property were a rambling main house, a smaller house next to it, and a shed off to the side. Further back and on the edge of the woods area were a good-sized house and a cabin next to it.

Cassie did not plan to live alone on her top of the world retreat. She began to implement her idea of an umbrella type arrangement under which she would invite artists and artisans to come and do their "thing." Dennis and I were invited to come under her gracious umbrella along with Arthur and his girl

friend. I had noticed before that Arthur was aggressive in creating his environment. He had decided, I imagine, that since he had helped out during the fire at Still Farm that he could claim maximum rights of occupancy in the large back house. He established his jewelry studio in the large living room. He moved with his girl friend into the spacious master bedroom. Dennis and I were left with the cabin, which had space for little more than a bed, and getting to the bathroom and kitchen in the main house was not convenient through the rain and the extreme cold of the high altitude. I had the use of a small room off the kitchen for my painting studio.

The “meek” did not inherit much of this bit of “earth.” Perhaps Dennis and I were both being non-confrontational. Dennis had negotiating skills, but he didn’t use them in this case. He says that he was grateful to Arthur for having given him a place to live at one time, and perhaps he thought that Arthur had “saved” Still Farm. In my lifetime, and particularly in my episode with Shon, I had learned to adapt to the circumstances that I had gotten myself into. I “made do” and found solutions to serve my real needs and so on. I guess I could be called a survivor. However, when a way opened out of the constraints of my misperceived answers to those yet unfulfilled longings, I stepped out into the unknown with surprising trust that there would be solid ground under my feet.

At Laurel Springs other couples began to gather. Several occupied rooms in the main house, and another couple had the use of the small house next to it. Cassie had a very large Master bedroom and bath for herself in the main house. Two of Cassie’s hippie friends from her past and whom had no money lived, I felt resentfully, in the shed. He, whom we called the “mountain man”, often came around. He lived a kind of hermit life in his cabin up the hill from Laurel Springs. When he finally shaved off his bushy beard and cut his thick straggly hair he was a good-looking guy. He seemed to me to be overly submissive to Cassie.

Cassie had a girl friend that she invited to stay at Laurel Springs. The girl friend had a boy friend, and she asked that he might be included. The boy friend, in turn, wanted to include his buddies with whom he worked in wood sculpting, and thus our community was formed. It wasn’t all work in the

arts and crafts. The guys would jump in and out of the pool on hot summer days that had become dark green with algae. The atmosphere generally was very “laid back.” Mary would do her yoga exercises on the lawn. We often shared potluck meals in the dining room of the main house.

Arthur did his “thing” as little as possible, as he enjoyed living a life of simple aesthetic pleasures between commissions to make wedding rings and expensive pieces of jewelry. Cassie asked only for a small token rent and probably over-looked any non-payments. Every evening Arthur and a few others would hasten to the edge of the mountain precipice to watch the sunset.

Early in the morning Cassie’s girl friend would play her records. The loud sound rudely broke the mountain silence and I complained about it. A young woman with her child stayed an unwelcome time with us as she assumed we were a commune in the sense that each of us, including dissenting me, was expected to baby sit her child. One evening we were having our joint meal when a couple came in. They must have been acquaintances of Cassie from another world. The woman o-o-d and ah-d over our fascinating life-style as she gushed over the charming pottery dishes out of which we were eating. This was my first experience of fleshing out the term “square” despite my experiences in the world. It was difficult for us to keep from laughing.

We had the excitement of having Mike Love of the Beach Boys spend a few days with us. Arthur had been fashioning jewelry for Mike from the Metamorphosis days. I remember a time when he was visiting Arthur with a few others. They had gathered in a another room to listen with fascination and horror as he told them the inside details of the Manson murders. He knew Manson through the music business I gathered. Dennis grumpily refused to join the group. I always found Dennis avoided being out-shone. I’m no astrology fan, but he is a Leo and enjoys the attention of being the leader. At Laurel Springs Mike regaled us with the stories of he and the Beatles sitting at the feet of the Maharishi in India. Mike was a disciple of the Maharishi and he was taught to practice what is now known around the world as Transcendental Meditation or TM. He was also a teacher of the method. I was tempted to

take instructions from him but didn't follow my impulse.

I must have looked like a workaholic to the others since I never took more than occasional dip in the pool, and then only after the green stuff had been cleaned out! I continued to show at the Beach Art show. It was quite a drive down the hill every Sunday, but I was obsessed with painting and selling. If Trungpa could have called me a "spiritual materialist" in the Convent, I was now just a plain materialist, hollow inside of spiritual ideals, or they were deeply buried.

It was during this phase of dryness and emptiness that my father, approaching his ninetieth year had to take a road test to maintain his license to drive. He was so anxious to keep his independence by driving his car that he fainted and was unable to take the test. I had to insist that he come with me up the mountain. He had once remarked that he would only leave his apartment "head first", but now there was little other choice than to come with me. I settled him into a small bedroom available next to Arthur's room. I made sure he had a space heater as he suffered from the cold. The room had a door to the outside. He became content to spend his days quietly reading and going out for a walk in good weather. I realize now that my father "hid his light under a bushel." I had apparently lost all of my spiritual aspirations and hid in my "work." I had nothing to draw on in myself to comfort or support him, and I was pitifully blind to what he could have given to me from his inner richness. I did my duty towards him by supplying his physical needs but with my usual paucity of daughterly affection. My agony of "if only's" is connected largely with this last year of his life. Dennis was very caring with him in his failing days. He would remove my father's dentures to clean them. It would never have occurred to me to do that. The night before he died a buried love moved me to sit on the floor by his bed and hold his hand, gently caressing it. For that moment I was his loving daughter. The next morning I came into his room to find him gone. The door had closed on the earthly life of an elegant, strong, selflessly caring father. My terrible numbness returned. We were to follow his hearse down the mountain the day after he died. We had been told to "get out. We're moving in." by the Scientologists who were Cassie's friends.

During my father's last month of life Cassie had found a new boy friend. He was from the city and made it clear to Cassie that he did not want to live up in the woods. Crucially he had just become a Scientologist. He interested Cassie to join his religion as the Scientologists claim it to be. Cassie in her attempt for us to see the value of her new view on improving our lives gave us a course in the steps to getting "Clear", and gratis. She gave over Laurel Springs to the Scientologists. Anyone who wanted to join them was welcome to stay on. Dennis and I made it clear that we were not interested in Scientology and we were told to leave. There was only one young man of our singular community who said he wanted to become a Scientologist. The living arrangements at Laurel Springs were more attractive to him than his proclaimed interest in Cassie's new religion. He had a chameleon type of personality and tried to change his colors to fit the new requirements. It didn't work for very long and he was told to go. We heard that the Scientologists rode around in property on horseback while toting guns. They had installed a large freezer in the basement for their steaks. They soon tired of the woodsman's life and went back to the city. Later Cassie sold Laurel Springs to Jane Fonda, who turned it into an exercise spa and a camp for under-privileged kids from big cities!

Dennis found a small house for us to rent. It was on Canon Perdido Street, a few blocks from downtown Santa Barbara. The house was set high off the street, and one of its most attractive features was a view of the mountains from the back window. These could be seen across a large garden area belonging to a house in the back, which was jointly owned by two young women. Dennis had the large front bedroom, and I had the room with the view plus a space to paint. There was a large kitchen opening out on a living room bright with the light of a Southern facing window, and an old fashioned bathroom with a tub held up by ornate feet about describes the main aspects of where we were to live for a couple of years.

Soon after our move to Santa Barbara my mother and sister came up from Los Angeles for a family memorial of him who had been a father and a husband. My father's body had been cremated. I asked Dale if he would sail us out a ways from the harbor that we might cast his ashes into the ocean. That day, which I wanted to be a sacred event turned very windy. Dennis and I and Vijali and Dale at the helm sailed out from the harbor. The winds grew fiercer, but Dale handled the sail with the expertise of many years of boating in Baha California and elsewhere. Vijali sat upright in the boat, a totally trusting wife. Dennis and I hugged the bottom of the boat in terror! When the boat was returned to the boatman he expressed surprise that we had made it back.

Dennis had been showing a growing restlessness while we were still at Laurel Springs. Our marriage had really been based on our shared spiritual aspirations though maintaining our individual approaches. Dennis is much younger than I and his romantic needs began to focus on younger women. I overheard his telephone conversation with an old friend of his whom I had met. He expressed to her his feeling of "being blown by a seventy mile an hour wind" in his desire to see her. It wasn't that I didn't feel some chagrin that he sought the company of this old girl friend, or of his intense attraction to a woman with the glamorous background of being in that famous Bus with Ken Kesey. She often came around to Laurel Springs, and I admit I didn't like her.

Dennis had made a trip to San Francisco while we were at Laurel Springs, right around the time of the Kohoutek comet. The comet did not make much of an appearance in the sky, but Dennis came back full of inspiration from the Bay Area spiritual scene, and brought a book for me. It was *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* by Trungpa Rimpoche. While we were still at Dale's I had heard of Trungpa as a charismatic teacher of Tibetan Buddhism. A woman had visited with us and told us of a talk she had heard Trungpa give, and her account did awaken my interest. But I experienced an explosion of renewed spiritual intent on reading the book.

I don't remember how it came about that a student of Trungpa, whom I didn't know, showed up at the beach one Sunday. We shared our enthusiasm for his teachings and made plans to go down to LA

together to hear his talk scheduled to be held at a City club. The Los Angeles Dharmadhatu had made the arrangements. Sitting in a hall that was filled to capacity, I anticipated my first sight and sound of Trungpa. He walked out on the stage with a limp and sat on a chair to speak. A glass of what I assumed was water was on a small table by his chair. Occasionally he took a sip from it. I couldn't tell you what he said that evening, but I had a taste of his cryptic style of presenting the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. I was impressed enough to fantasize a Center in Santa Barbara to which he might one day come and speak. This was a re-emergence of my sense of a self as a lamp looking for an electric outlet to plug in to, a Someone to give IT to me.

Before Trungpa came out to give his talk I noticed a heavy-set woman in a long loose dress bending over and chatting with some people in the front row. I guessed that she was the head of the Dharmadhatu. She was. I introduced myself and spoke of my inspiration from Trungpa's talk. I expressed my hope of having a place for practitioners to come to in Santa Barbara. In fact I offered my house for that purpose. She was encouraging and perhaps sent the word around.

There were, as it turned out, a few people in Santa Barbara who had been drawn to the teachings of Trungpa Rimpoche. Some had read *Cutting Through*, or *Born in Tibet*, and a few had spent time at one of the Dharmadhatus including the main Center in Boulder Colorado. I had read *Born in Tibet* after reading *Cutting Through*. I found the details of his life's story fascinating. After the Chinese invasion of '59 he undertook the perilous journey down from Tibet through the Himalayas as Chinese soldiers pursued him. The Dalai Lama and many monks of this ancient tradition of Tibetan Buddhism made this heroic escape. Trungpa reached asylum in India. He learned English and moved to England. He as a Buddhist monk became a controversial figure from this point. He married a woman of the Aristocracy. He managed to crash his sports car into a toy store window. Trungpa tells this story on himself. Unfortunately this accident left him with a partially paralyzed leg. He came to the United States and eventually settled in Boulder Colorado. He spoke of the high mountains as reminiscent of his homeland. It was in Boulder that he established his Main Center, the Vajradhatu. The work he started there is continuing and includes the

Naropa Institute. Dharmadhatus took root in Vermont, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles and other cities in the States and a few in Canada. Now there was to be a Center in Santa Barbara.

A few youngish people began to gather in my living room for weekly sittings. As our group became established and more participants joined us, we decided it was no longer appropriate to meet in my house. We found a room that was available in a building down town. The room was upstairs, and it was long and quite narrow. It had no windows. We made the best of what was available, as the asking rent was what we could afford. My dream of having a Center to which Trungpa would come was realized. He did come to Santa Barbara to give a talk, but he spoke at a public venue. I scrubbed and polished the Canon Perdido house for his short stay over in Santa Barbara. On this visit he performed the dedication ceremony of our Room. I had my one and only interview with Trungpa in the back garden. It followed a simple ritual. A student with amused pleasure called me out to sit before Trungpa. The student placed a pot of tea ceremoniously on a small table beside Trungpa. In clear memory I recall those few minutes with him. He was so solidly there and yet softly there. I noticed that his eyes were moist as he looked at me. It seemed he was seeing That in me that I wanted to *see* and yet elaborately avoided *seeing*. I regard Trungpa as a Bodhisattva in reverent respect of that time with him.

We heard that the Karmapa, the Head of Trungpa's Kagu Lineage was to be in San Francisco on his first visit to the States. In Tibet the Karmapa is honored in the same way as the Dalai Lama is honored. A few days before I planned to take off for S.F. I encountered a deliveryman who was taking something to the back house. We began to chat. I mentioned my up-coming trip to greet the Karmapa. Out of the blue he advised me to wear a long dress and to take a gift of not less than \$5 dollars. How was it that a stranger would deliver to me a message about Tibetan protocol? I purchased a small silver spoon and unpacked my Indian table cloth dress. A few days later properly attired and with my offering, I bowed to the Karmapa in San Francisco.

The Karmapa came to Santa Barbara to give us a talk in our rectangle box of a Center. I recall that he came up to us as part of his itinerary of a State visit to the Los Angeles Dharmadhatu.

However his visit to LA and his coming to Santa Barbara happened a year or more after Trungpa had dedicated our Center, but at this point in my story I want to tell you about this event.

There was a peculiarity about our Center. Downstairs a room was rented to the Primal Scream Therapy group. They used it at irregular times. As the Karmapa sat with us he made no sign of hearing from the floor below loud blasphemous shouts against someone's remembered mother, or a moaning and even screaming. It was like the medieval picture of a Heaven above and the souls in the world below being tormented by demons. I saw this situation in an ironically symbolic way. The Holy Leader of an ancient Lineage of Buddhist monks dedicated to showing mankind the way out of suffering was just upstairs!

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The owners of the Canon Perdido rental decided to divide the house into two apartments. My friend Vijali, having separated from Dale, moved to Los Angeles. She left a huge loft a short walk from the beach. I moved in. The loft had a small room in the back with a built-in bed and storage space underneath. There was another smaller room next to it and a room with a sink and a toilet; otherwise the rest was all open space. In a small niche off my studio was a strange homemade bathtub, but I needed a ladder to get into it. Dennis and I had parted as best friends. He found a room to rent, but he spent many hours with me in my studio. I worked from an easel that I bought from Dale. Dennis used a long counter where he could fit and hammer together box frames. I covered these box frames with artificial gold leafing. I had to varnish the leafing to protect it from darkening. The next step was to spread yellow ochre oil paint over the entire surface and sides of the boxes. I used the technique I had come up with in Esalen of rubout for high lights and then shading in darker earth colors. Over a period of about ten years I produced literally hundreds of "old fishermen with a pipe" and "old gentlemen with a glowing pate." I found that the

studies of old men and young women were most saleable. I did some strange studies of two heads sharing three eyes appearing as though there were the normal four eyes. One afternoon an attractive young man stopped at my display. He showed interest in my strange “three eyed paintings that looked four eyed.” He said he was the member of a band called “Pink Floyd.” I enjoyed my work, and I was good at portraiture. I have been told universally that the eyes of my portraits expressed aliveness.

Our small sangha continued our sittings in the town Center. You and others might have wondered what we were *thinking* as we sat for forty-five minute sessions. A representative of Trungpa had given us the preliminary meditation instructions, but Trungpa, in our times with him, passed on to us the practices handed down from the Buddha. This was the simple mindfulness of our breathing. He told us to emphasize our out-going breath, to go with it, and to identify with it as it flowed out and dissolved in the air around us. He said not to give much attention to the in-coming breath. Other Buddhist approaches to this practice give equal emphasis to both the out-breath and the in-breath. We were given to expect that thoughts and fantasies of all kinds would arise. These intrusions were to be witnessed but not dwelt upon with a returning to our breathing, our awareness to be likened to a sky where the clouds of sensations, emotions arise and pass. One of us would sit up front and sound a gong to signal the end of the sitting and to announce our standing for walking meditation. I remember Trungpa instructing us on being mindful of as many aspects of the physical process of walking as possible for us. How little conscious I was of my breathing or of feeling the lifting of my leg, or of pressing my foot to the floor. It is a way of getting out of my thinking head, and of literally “getting my feet on the ground” and being in touch with my life in the here and now. The sounding of the gong signaled the end of this twenty-minute practice.

Barada, I can imagine that you find these Buddhist meditations quite different from our meditations in Vedanta, but there is another Tibetan practice that I would like to share with you. One of Trungpa’s students came down from San Francisco to instruct us in this exercise. We were asked to kneel on the floor, preferably a hard floor, and to raise our arms straight out in front of us. This was an awkward position to begin with, but we were then

to imagine that every inch of our body was being pressed in upon while at the same time an inner force was pressing out against it with equal force. The instructor seemed almost sadistic in urging us to increase these antagonistic pressures to a painful extreme before we were told to “let go.” I more or less just did this exercise at the time, but later used it in my “war of the muscles” the “hot spot” being the antagonism of my eye muscles.

We were not told of what to expect from doing this exercise, or from the mindful following of our breath – what to speak of being given promises of enlightenment. It was almost a leap of faith to just do them and “see.” After all what we “see” is on a different level than thinking about what we might see.

Trungpa made it a rule that this counter-tension exercise be practiced in a group as it might trigger a paranoid reaction in a lone practitioner. I feel he had some cause for his concern. If such a practitioner was to take a perceived world as the world out there, that the “good” or the “bad” was pressing in on him or her, that would be paranoid, a sense of being the self-centered target of external forces. I’ve mentioned to you about my reading *Gestalt Therapy* by Fritz and others. During one of my conversations with Dennis he mentioned that he had the original copy that Hari-Mati gave me so many years ago. He mailed the book to me. In writing about the counter-tension exercise I kept having a vague memory of something relevant to what I’m writing now. I pulled out my *Gestalt Therapy*, and in a page to page “research” I found what I was looking for. And I quote: “Most modern people feel that they are being invaded by external stimuli – that what they see and hear is imposed on them willy-nilly from the outside – and they respond more or less according to the pattern of the “defense reflexes.” Such behavior is a symptom of paranoid projection.” And they go on to say, “what people in general are only dimly aware, if at all, is that they’re seeing and hearing is a reaching out to fulfill their needs.” I’ve under lined the reaching out! Apparently, we tend to block out how much we have turned our initiative the other way around! And to paraphrase what they wrote: having thrust the initiative on the powers that be, we expect those powers, such as the “government”, “society”, or “God,” “to supply me with what I need,” or “make me do what I ought to do.” This is beginning to

sound like the story of my life – particularly after I moved into the Temple. I began to depend on the Vedanta Society to provide my needs, and I looked to “God” or Ramakrishna to fulfill my spiritual aspirations. However after a year or two I was becoming aware of having a problem. I’ve described to you my enthusiasm in finding Korzybski’s General Semantics with the importance of being conscious of “abstracting at different levels” and what happens when I identify these levels. How can I, according to Evelyn Underhill, identify my sensations with the mysterious universe out there and not make a paranoid reversal? My eye tension was an expression of my turning my natural initiative the other way round. With help and reflection I gradually recognized that I was doing the reaching out, and that I was clamping down on it. I’m reminded of Reich’s “character armor” of tightened muscles to protect us from the invading world. When I was at Esalen I heard Fritz agree with Reich that we armor ourselves, but that we tighten our muscles against our own out-going. Fritz gave the example of driving a car – that it would be like pressing down on the gas with one foot and pressing down on the brake with the other foot. I think this is a great illustration of what I was doing. Normally when I get into a car I want to go somewhere. Occasionally I use the brake. Coming to traffic lights I stop on the red and move on with the green. These signals are a benevolent design for our safety. In a similar way I have a benevolent “red light” and “green light” design in my parasympathetic-sympathetic nervous system to ensure my survival. In my case I got stuck on the “red light”, and I experienced the “braking” of my eye muscles to such a degree that I was practically incapacitated. You witnessed this Barada. I came to use the counter-tension exercise to consciously take responsibility for clamping down on the free movements of my eye muscles. I did this exercise almost to the unbearable point before letting go. It worked in the sense of my getting back to “normal” functioning. I became freed-up to function with the good sense to “watch my step” or get under the shade of a tree to avoid the heat of the sun sort of thing. Most importantly I was free to reclaim my own natural “reaching out for the fulfillment of my needs.” My primary need being to reach deeper to touch the Real, that many call God.

In my creative period of '88 I wrote a lot of poetry. The one I would like to share with you about this journey I am describing is...

#### A Search for God.

The self bores holes through skull-bone  
to search you out  
sends filaments of nerve to every millimeter  
of skin to touch you  
Brain computes your mystery as color  
and solidity  
and gives voice to your call  
from the abyss of hidden being  
With centrifugal force brain’s sounds and sights  
are thrown out there  
to veil and reveal your Presence  
in a game of hide and seek.  
This creative out-put is your body  
to be savored sacramentally  
a would-be incarnated image to help me see  
your Spirit  
but a centripetal power makes self small  
and separate  
breaking branches from the vine  
in vain idolatry  
Still Love calls from the Sought and from me  
The hidden and the seeker would cry  
“ali, ali oxen free.”

To be free and sane is to go back to where we began. Let us first reclaim our inherent out-going initiative, and then give no ear to the chattering of words and thoughts that we may silently “savor the world sacramentally.” To quote from Wendell Berry, “To live we must daily break the bread and shed the blood of creation.” I hear Jesus saying, “This bread (creation) is my body. This wine is my blood (of creation). Take – eat and drink in a remembrance with me. A Buddhist statement would be that to live we need to breathe in and breathe out every moment. Mindfully following our breath remembers us with the whole breathing Universe into which we were born. We may have to play the game of “hide and seek”, but it is over when we realize that the seeker is and always was the Sought.

The discipline of our Sangha was of spending one eight-hour day in our meditation. This is called a nintun. One time I took off in my Bug for a ten-day retreat in a back woods Center, The Middle Way, north of San Francisco. Everyone brought their sleeping bags and camped out in tents. We gathered in the meditation hall to spend eight hours a day in these mindfulness practices. This ten-day period is called a dhatun. I was keeping at it. I made a trip to San Francisco to receive the Refuge Vows from Trungpa. While we were waiting for him to come out, his secretary said somewhat jokingly, “You may now enjoy your last ten minutes of being a theist.” Of course being a theist was never a clear identification for me. Let me get academic for a moment. Tibetan Buddhism combines Hinayana Buddhism, which is a seeking for enlightenment through mindfulness practices together with the Refuge Vows. In Mahayana Buddhism one takes the Bodhisattva Vow of refusing to enter Nirvana until every sentient being has gone in before you, which seems to amount to never entering Nirvana! The crowning Vajrayana of Tibetan Buddhism are its many practices, visualizations, and meditative rituals under the submission to a Vajra Master.

For me to qualify to enter the path of Vajrayana I had to take part in a three month Seminary Training, as Trungpa termed it. This Training was held every year at a hotel during the off season. The requirement for taking part in this Seminary Training was to complete a retreat of thirty days of spending eight to nine hours of sitting meditation each day. I was among one hundred or

more eager applicants gathered in the high mountains out from Boulder. I was assigned a small and private cabin. The conditions were kind of primitive with outhouses, and communal showers for the men and the women. Thank goodness there were three meals a day and a tea break. Trungpa gave us a talk at the end of a long and arduous day. I managed somehow to get through this demanding thirty-day period and was accepted to take part in the three-month Training at a hotel in Wisconsin lasting through the month of October to the end of December 1976. I was off to the Land of Lakes in northern Wisconsin.

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The hotel was very old, middling large, and set apart in a wooded area. A small town was in walking distance from the hotel. Many of the trees were holding on to their colorful foliage, the ground covered with the reds and oranges of their fallen leaves. The air became filled with their spicy scent as I crunched the leaves under my steps. Fall is my favorite season with its lovely change of light, the deeper blue of the sky and that *something* in the air. I walked around the grounds enjoying the woody atmosphere and other differences from my California experience.

I finally entered the hotel to begin orienting to our human environment that will protect us against the cold of a Wisconsin winter. Storm windows will be installed. The heat will be turned on to keep us cozy as a half a foot of ice builds up on the back sides of the hotel. I wandered into the spacious kitchen where three official cooks with their expertise will feed us three times a day. There was the occasional guest cook. Looking ahead I'll mention my opportunity to cook the main meal that was served at noon. I ordered everything I would need to prepare my most excellent lamb curry, if I do say so myself. The curry was to be served with rice covered with lentil sauce and cabbage curry. Does this sound familiar? Since you and I have cooked for 250 devotees attending special Pujas this was not a daunting task for me. I had help of course.

I received my reward when people sat down on their zafus with their plates of food to eat, and I heard loud um-um's of pleasure from many around me. All of us would take our turn in running the dirty dishes through the big hotel dishwasher and drier. I took a look at the large hall for our sittings and Trungpa's talks. This was an open area where there must have been over-stuffed chairs for summer tourists but was now bare of furniture.

I had been assigned a double occupancy room and was the first to go in and get settled down. I took the bed by the wall so that my unknown roommate would have the bed by the window. The only spatial difference was that she was a couple of yards closer to the bathroom. I meant this as a symbolic act of unselfishness, or I hoped it would be recognized as a friendly overture. From now on I'll refer to my roommate as she or her as I have forgotten her name. She came in. The moment she saw me she made it clear that she resented not being roomed with one of the elite of the Scene. She was one to express her feelings and thoughts oblivious of "How to make Friends and Influence People."

She happened to be the mother of one of Trungpa's valued students to whom he had given the position as one of his Ambassadors, as they were called. On the grounds of her family connection she insisted on being accepted for the Seminary Training. Trungpa strongly dissuaded her entrance, as he judged her not ready yet. But as she persisted in her demand the room-planners had to place her. Their excuse for putting her with me was that we were the same age. In my relating to the older women in charge of other Dharmadhatus I had been seen as making friendly relationships with them. I guessed they hoped the best for me. After three months of coping with this hostile woman David Rome, Trungpa's secretary remarked that I was "heroic" as he himself had contentious episodes with her throughout the Training period.

She spoke openly of being frustrated that her husband was no longer interested in having sex and that she was. There was the partially true reputation of these Seminary Training's, which was that one could be sure of getting laid. I suspect from what she told me this was a strong motivation to be there. However, I have to acknowledge that she was always prompt and present at the sittings, and

particularly the morning sessions, which were generally sparse of sitters.

She had a short cupie doll kind of body. I would guess that the possibility of her getting laid was nil. Aside from her carrying on about being horny she seemed obsessed with her bowel movements. One time she came in and boasted of just having had "twins".

Otherwise the many students I encountered were sharply intelligent. Some of them might have still been in their period of extreme skepticism. I remember listening to Trungpa's famous "no hope" talk. After he listed the things people put their hope in he would repeat, "no hope". He said Christianity, "no hope", Buddhism, "no hope." I wasn't surprising that students would scoff at newcomers expressing piety, faith in God or Krishna, which was common, or remarks such as, "Isn't it all so wonderful." During the Training one of the students, whom I got to know better and he me apparently, observed that I might still be vulnerable to be sucked in by a "hope." I denied the possibility, but he was proved to be right!

As we all got into our new adventure I noticed these young students had their established friendships. I, being older and not really knowing anyone, felt apart from the social aspect of our life together. It was like being in the middle of a centrifugal whirl.

We attended out daily classes on Buddhist psychology and with much emphasis on the skandas in ego-development. Students, who had definitely done their homework, and who had a lot to convey to us, led the classes. The classrooms, however, were so thick with cigarette smoke I could hardly see the instructor across the room.

Trungpa would give us a talk at the end of our day's sittings, classes and short work periods. One evening he made a powerful point by suddenly snapping shut his Japanese fan and saying, "You just missed it." It took me a lot of reflecting, and not just there at the Seminary, to dig out the meaning of what he did and said.

Years ago, when I must have been fifteen or sixteen, I got into my father's spiritual books. I decided that I wanted to try meditating. One evening I sat down in the big dining room chair. I didn't know what to do so I just sat there. The

fruitful part of my first “sitting” was that I became aware of the noisy traffic in my head, of my thoughts so jammed up together they were indistinguishable. Certainly then and now I still “miss” the gap between my thoughts. During his talk Trungpa suggested that we paste little red stickers around our home or apartment to remind ourselves that “We just missed it.” I’m thinking of an analogy such as of catching a glimpse of the screen between the fast moving frames of our projected homemade movie. Sat Chit Ananda can be revealed in the gap! Maybe I will paste some of those stickers around my place.

Trungpa occasionally provided us with an evening of entertainment, but that depended on what one thought of Japanese films. Trungpa enjoyed them. A large white sheet was tacked up on a wall as a projection screen. After the movie was over, and as the sheet was being taken down, a tack flew off somewhere onto that large area. My immediate concern was that someone might get hurt, as we walked around in our stocking-feet. I mentally called out, “Oh, St. Anthony, where is the tack?” Barada, you remember how we played this game in the Convent when we couldn’t find something. We didn’t believe in a literal St. Anthony who would go around finding things for us, although sometimes it seemed to happen that way. I want to describe to you a very strange experience. I felt that my head was being turned in a certain direction, and against my own resistance. Next, the muscles of my eyes, in a bunch, were pulled towards a point on the carpet, and the tack loomed up as large as a big mushroom! I grabbed it. Afterwards I was puzzled. I’d never heard of such a thing. Only recently I read in one of Depak Chopra’s books of soldiers in the First World War having the uncanny experience of the eyes of enemy soldiers seeming as large as saucers. I have speculated about my experience. Perhaps it was because my urgent call was altruistic, that it triggered into action an aspect of my self (that is in all of us) that sees and know more than we do consciously.

There were another sort of fun times at that Wisconsin hotel. The young people threw wild parties. Their music and dancing was much like that seen in the hugely popular movie “Saturday Night Fever.” There was a lot of drinking too. One of our ordinarily very serious meditation instructors got

drunk to the point that his wife, almost reverentially, took him off to bed.

And, of course, there was the controversial (to me) bedhopping. People found steady partners, and were attached to them for the duration. There were marriage break-ups and new formed alliances. I ducked out on three occasions with the slightest “come one.” How was I to sleep with someone I wasn’t passionate about, or actually, if I was! Trungpa once spoke of the energy of passion moving creation. I might take from this that to inhibit one’s passion might be tantamount to suppressing life itself. I gathered that Trungpa or Tibetan Buddhism channels this energy for spiritual enlightenment. This is true in Tantric Hinduism as well. Trungpa was patient with his students learning their “channeling.” He also emphasized the need for passion to be productive through marriage and children.

Beside the occasional parties that I enjoyed on the sidelines, I felt a slight annoyance, as during the night doors were being opened and shut, and there was a lot of laughing. I guessed people were playing games. The hotel had an indoor heated pool, which I never saw, but was told of the midnight frolicking. This could explain the sparseness of the morning sittings. A bright young man gave me another possible explanation. He said “that it wasn’t cool to stand out, to try to be, or to show oneself to be an Ideal practitioner.” I do remember Trungpa saying, “Seek your enlightenment, but don’t be too eager about it.”

I came to see a plan unfolding behind Trungpa’s seeming *laissez-faire* attitude. I had been present in the early days at Boulder. I observed the young participants, with their long hair, beards and clothes, which spoke to me of a rebellion against the Establishment. They lolled about in the meditation hall, chatting with their friends, as they waited an hour or two for Trungpa to come out and give a talk. A few years later, and after my Seminary experience, I witnessed the transformation of these young people. The men had become gentlemen wearing three piece suits, concerned about the style of their ties, and wearing wing-tipped shoes.

Trungpa had acquired a several storied building in the middle of Boulder. On the top floor he created a very traditional Tibetan Shrine room. The men, who had once lolled about, now sat up

right on their zafus. They sat, without moving, during the usual delay before Trungpa entered to give us a talk. The women too, now elegant in dress and demeanor awaited their Teacher. With The sound of the elevator door opening I turned my head to see Trungpa coming in with his limp that never seemed to concern him. I was among perhaps a hundred of Trungpa's students gathered at the Vajradhatu Center in Boulder. In my mind's eye I was seeing a picture of "before and after." More of the "after" was to follow in time. Trungpa's idea of a party was that it should be an elegant affair, quite the opposite of the "wild parties" at the Seminary. A few of us from our Dharmadhatu attended such a party. The men were to wear tuxedos, and the women were to come in long gowns. We all sat at tables and sipped champagne. We rose to waltz around the room, and gracefully we hoped. Trungpa's aristocratic English wife was seated on a podium. It was English protocol, I suppose, that each of us knelt before her. I remember my hurriedly blurting out something. From the look on her face she must have found it incomprehensible.

We were given our Boddhisattva Vows after two months of Seminary Training. Part of the ceremony was to place before our Teacher something to which we were attached. I hadn't planned on this happening. I only had a silverish bracelet with handcrafted decorations that Dale had given to me. I loved it. It was with a lingering regret that I parted with it.

The Boddhisattva vow of dedicating ourselves to the good of all is central to the Mahayana aspect of Tibetan Buddhism. The following of our breath, in coming to Insight, is the main emphasis of the Hinayana. In Mahayana practice the breath is used symbolically. We were instructed, that as we breathe in to visualize drawing in all the darkness and sufferings of the world, and then to breathe out our healing Light. These are beautiful ideals, and astoundingly so as they are combined with the vow to spend eternity thus breathing in and breathing out for the good of all sentient beings.

I had only a blurry idea of not causing harm to another, and of doing as much good as possible within my limitations. I stand in awe of a Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, and the list goes on. But when I come right down to it, the idea of drawing into myself all the sufferings of the world

is to confront my instinctive shrinking from pain. It would be like being repelled at the idea of eating rotten food. These instincts are more than I can bypass with holy intentions.

I wonder at the very possibility of anyone sucking out, as it were, what makes us miserable, our ignorance, illusions, and selfishness, and then to pour into us freedom and peace. I deeply question the central Dogma of Christian theology that Christ's suffering and death on the cross atoned for the darkness and sins of all mankind; that only believers who accept Christ as their Savior from Hell are promised the joy of Heaven, and that, after they die.

Dare I understand that the coming of a Christ or a Buddha, by their examples and Teachings, help us to awaken the capacity of clear seeing and compassion within ourselves? This surely would be for the good of Mankind and all sentient beings. The Mahayana aspect of our Seminary Training was a brief touch and go, and we were on to the Vajrayana.

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We Seminararians had come to the door to the Vajrayana. However, it was required that we express our desire to go through that door. No announcement was made of our need to make this request. The word of this obligation was to be passed from one who knew to one who did not know. My roommate knew. She did not tell me. A young woman who sat near me at our sittings suspected I did not know. She leaned over and whispered to me what I was to do.

What we were taught was not to be revealed to others. Just as the mantra given to me by Swami was my secret, and the mantras passed to Radha Soami's were never to be revealed. In all my years with Dennis, even after he had long-since left Radha Soami, he had not told me his mantras.

Trungpa described to us in vivid detail our new visualization meditation. In time we were instructed in the four essential practices to be

completed before becoming a Vajrayanist. The practice commonly known in Tibetan Buddhism is the ritual of making 100 thousand prostrations. One can watch a Tibetan monk, who from a standing position, slips down into a full-length prostration, and at the same time he repeats, “I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.” As he prostrates he visualizes the Lineage of Teachers back to the Buddha. Eric, whom I knew rather well, as he had come to our Dharmadhatu to instruct us, remarked to me, “I keep seeing Jesus among the Lineage.” As he said this he looked at me quizzically as to how I would react to what he said. He drew a blank. His remark seemed strange to me as he was Jewish and I wasn’t a Christian.

For Thich Nhat Hanh, of the Vipassana Buddhist tradition, the practice of prostrating is somewhat different. He asks us to remember that not only do we carry in our genes a physical heritage from the beginning of time up to our blood relatives, but the whole lineage of our spiritual Teachers, and those who have inspired us. On our individual journey’s we may have Teachers of several paths. I can list a few of my own. Prostrating for Thich Nhat Hanh is not a flat out prostration, but a bowing very low, touching as much our body as possible to the ground. This is an act of surrendering our whole being, physical mental and spiritual to the Earth. At the same time we take refuge in our Buddha Consciousness, our living Dharma practices, and our supportive Sangha. We can bow in this way once or twice or as many times a day and for the rest of our lives if we wish.

After a practitioner has finished the 100 thousand prostrations, a secret mantra is given to repeat a 100 thousand times. There are two more practices involving 100 thousand repetitions. I’ve forgotten what they are.

In Tibet it is customary for a young monk, or anyone who chooses, to go off on a three -year retreat. In that time he will attempt to complete the demanding preliminaries for submission to a Vajra Master.

Here in Canada I recently passed through the city of Halifax. I came to visit the second main Center of Trungpa’s continuing work. It is called the Center for International Tibetan Buddhism. The leadership of the Center is under one of Trungpa’s sons! He became a Rimpoche under the training of

the Rimpoche’s of Trungpa’s Kagyu Lineage. The Center is in a large old house on a main street, and easily recognized by the bright orange door and window casings that contrast with the whiteness of the building. The interior has Trungpa’s penchant for elegance of design. I was greeted warmly by a student acting as the receptionist. As for the time it took her to finish her prostrations she smiled and said, “they were interrupted by three pregnancies!” She phoned one of my fellows Seminarians to tell her of my visit. She came over right away and we reminisced about our Seminary experiences. I have the photo of our 1976 group that she retrieved for me from the archives.

We went down stairs and I spoke to another “76 Seminarian. He was the student who came down from San Francisco to teach us what I call the counter-tension exercise. I reminded him of this, but he seemed to have forgotten about it. As I had suspected this practice was not popular and is probably no longer part of the Sangha discipline. I was glad to have had a chance to thank him for how this practice had helped me.

Some years ago, and here in Canada, I watched a TV documentary of Trungpa’s work in Halifax. The production was excellent and fair-minded. The presenter did not eliminate the controversial aspects of Trungpa’s reputation, such as his womanizing, but he gave a balanced view of the impact of his teachings and work. The documentary included a clip of fully ordained Western Vajrayanists. They were seated, still young enough to sit cross-legged, on both sides of a long table. They looked just like I remember seeing the Tibetan monks at their rituals. These disciples were performing the same rituals, the ringing of bells, chanting of mantras, and the graceful movements of the hand holding a small, elaborately decorated object called a Vajra. Years before I had had a thought, which was that I had spent twenty-five years ringing bells in Hindu Shrines, and I didn’t want to work up to twenty-five years of ringing bells in Tibetan Shrines. I did kind of mean it.

Jody came to visit me in ’94. We flew to Halifax and with a rented car drove to Parsboro. I wanted to revisit the “scene of the crime.” I had called the Church and asked if they could suggest a bed and breakfast in the town. I remembered the woman that I talked to, but she was at first confused

as to who I was. When she made the connection she said that the house where I had lived had been turned into one! I made reservations for us. We arrived in the evening and our young owner-hostess showed us around a beautifully renovated house. The room where I had stayed was too small for a guest occupant and was used for storage. The dreary little room where I had painted was now a modern bathroom with a sunken Jacuzzi. The next day we went to Church. We sat behind a young girl and up front I spotted Dave and Janette whom I knew well. After the service they all immediately recognized me. I was surprised because Shon always had me wear a red beret to cover every hair on my head, as well as having me put on fake glasses. It was as though I was the one that everyone was looking for! They said I looked years younger. I told them the story of what had been the real situation. Shon, whom they knew as Peter Morris, had accepted to be the godfather of one of their children etc., and they had wondered about our sudden disappearance. The Father, who served the Church when we were there, had been transferred elsewhere. He had sought out the company of this intriguing young man. They began anticipating telling him that I, alias Jane Morris, presumably the mother of Peter Morris was the painter and letter writer, and that a con artist had scammed them all. I smile to think of this little parochial town. The local newspaper reports little more than who came from another town to have tea with whomever. Now they had a strange drama to talk about, wonder about, and share stories about. And many of the town's people have one of my paintings. If I ever wanted to have a retrospective of my portraiture and copies of the Old Masters I would come to Parsboro!

Jody and I drove out to Brookville and I was actually excited in showing her the house of many miserable experiences. But these had been assimilated to the point that I was happy to see it again. The new owners weren't there at the time. Jody took a picture of the shed where I suffered both from being locked-up and where I enjoyed my hours of painting. She remarked on how eager and energetic I was in our walk to get to the beach. I wanted very much to revisit that monumental rock. We were caught in a heavy down pour, and even though we were soaking wet, on the way back to the house in town we stopped at the library. I was pleased to see that my painting of two ducks was

still hanging there. We had already seen my copy of Leonardo's Last Supper hanging in the Churches recreation room. Jody shopped for gifts to take back for her grandchildren. She found little T-shirts with dinosaurs printed on them. Since I had been to Parsboro the street lights had neon tube dinosaurs. The town had become famous for the discovery of dinosaur bones – and during the time that we were there! We said our good byes and drove back to Halifax. It was at this point that I visited the International Center for Buddhism, with the flashbacks to '76 Seminary Training

And now to return to the time that we all pitched in during the last several days of our Seminary Training to clean the hotel to a “spit and polish” surpassing how we found it. I was in the car ready to go. A student ran out to give me my purse and woolen poncho that I left in the hotel. What kind of daze was I in to forget these things? Christmas was in a few days. Wisconsin was in deep winter as we drove carefully through snowy, icy streets. I sat next to a student from San Francisco on the flight back. Taking a connecting flight I touched down in Santa Barbara to find it hot! A friend met me at the airport. I was on my way “home” to my loft.

Arriving I walked into a large and virtually empty space of what was the front half of a thousand square foot area. Our Sangha had yet to move in and transform this bleakness into a colorful Tibetan Shrine room. It was shortly after I returned that I heard that the Karmapa was to arrive within a few days for a State visit to the Los Angeles Dharmadhatu. If you remember I referred to this visit earlier. I drove down to Los Angeles to participate in receiving him. However I had come down with a cold, and it was a bad one. I had to walk a short distance to the Dharmadhatu from where I was staying, but I had to drag myself to get there. I was too fatigued to help in the preparations for his arrival. I sat and watched as Trungpa ran his students ragged as they hung yards of red satin over

entire walls, and using a steamer to remove any creases from the material. He meticulously directed them in accomplishing other aspects of Tibetan decor suitable for the head of the Kagu Lineage. When the Karmapa arrived he didn't seem too impressed with the effect everyone had missed sleep to create. All care was taken to provide his holiness his Tibetan diet, but he would request pizza, and unexpectedly asked to visit Disney Land. I returned to Santa Barbara after a memorable encounter with a Personage of very natural and spontaneous ways, and, importantly, with the memory of the power of his Presence.

My cold had gotten worse. I finally went to a Women's clinic. The Doctor dismissed my complaints as being a little hypochondriac about a bad cold. A couple of days later I became feverish. I called the Doctor and she told me to get to the hospital. I felt too wobbly to drive, and I asked one of the Sangha to drive me there. A culture was taken and the hospital called to tell me that I had viral pneumonia, and that there wasn't anything they could do about it. I had been walking around with this condition for weeks. I trace my illness back to those smoke filled rooms at the Seminary. At the time I had experienced unusual sensations in my lungs. It has since become common knowledge of the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. I went to bed and coughed-up and coughed-up the stuff in my lungs. The one who had driven me to the hospital did not inquire about how I was. I was hardly able to get out of bed what to speak of going out to get food. Dennis was off on one of what he calls, his "fleeing trips to find greener pastures." I had rented the front half of the loft to a Yoga teacher and her students. The leader heard me coughing and came back to see how I was. She brought me food and whatever else I needed – Bhodhisattva like!

This illness took about six weeks for me to recover enough to begin my Prostrations, and to return to my normal life. By this time Trungpa was sending his Ambassadors to the Dharmadhatu. We, in Santa Barbara, went down to meet what was a young, attractive and intelligent representative for the Los Angeles Dharmadhatu and our Dharmadhatu as well. He was always dressed in a three piece suit. He wore wing-tipped shoes, and he gave special attention to the tie. He walked with dignity to the speaker's platform, and he did an excellent job of clarifying Trungpa's teachings, which I sometimes

found difficult to grasp. He proved to be charismatic for the ladies. On an occasion he proclaimed that a particular woman was irresistibly attractive. I assume he didn't mean in literally when he asked, "Where is the nearest motel?" This attention was ambrosial to the feminine ego, and even I got a taste of it. In time he put on weight from too much rich food and excessive drinking. He did admit that he and others, compared to other Buddhists, were self-indulgent. There were complaints about him from the members of the Dharmadhatu. His Ambassadorship was withdrawn. He returned to Boulder with his new bride from the Dharmadhatu. I have since learned that he is doing well in the business world.

Something fell through in the renting of the town space, and the Sangha finally moved into the front half of my loft. The young men, with their knowledge of construction, began the changes. They built a separating wall with a Clearasil window to let in light from my space. The dull gray floor was painted a high gloss lapis lazuli blue. The next project was the putting together of a traditional Tibetan altar. It was made up of tiers of rectangle boxes ranging from large to smaller, to smallest. The first tier was covered with yellow satin, the next with red satin, and the top tier with blue satin. There were protecting panes of glass placed to cover each surface. Bright orange cushions were arranged in a semi-circle for the meditations. This altar was symbolic of the Nirmanakaya Buddha, the Shambhogakaya Buddha, and the Dharmakaya Buddha. Kaya refers to the body of the Buddha. I got some resistance by comparing Tantric Hinduism with Tibetan Tantra. I saw a correlation with the Hindu concept of a Cosmic Physical Body, of which our individual bodies are a part; the Cosmic Subtle Body, with which our individual minds are connected, as well as our connection with the Cosmic Causal Body. The Hindus even speak of a Fourth. I have seen a crystal ball on Tibetan altars symbolizing the Vajra State of pure consciousness –

the Fourth of Hinduism. We couldn't afford a crystal ball.

May I dare to go where angels fear to tread by equating these Tibetan and Hindu symbols of a triune nature of self and the cosmos, with the Physical Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father, the three in one of Christianity? A few Christian mystics speak of a unitary consciousness – the Fourth or the Vajra State.

We did not bow before the altar as to an external Buddha when we gathered for our sittings in our new Tibetan shrine room. The altar was meant as a symbol of our own Buddha nature. The first step to getting in touch with the Nirmanakaya aspect of our Being was to practice mindfulness of our breathing; to experience the inter-relatedness of our physical body with the Cosmic Body. Following our natural breathing is a way to come down from our conceptualizing heads – as Fritz put it – “to lose our minds in order to come to our senses.” It is a way of becoming aware of the exchange of Life, the breathing in and the breathing out of the atoms of our bodies in a continual birthing, dying, and being reborn, all in the Now of pure Awareness.

From listening to Swami's lectures I became acquainted with the Hindu idea of several bodies, which are called koshas. Whether we call ourselves Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Moslems, atheists, etc., if we are functioning through our physical senses we look out and perceive a physical world. Sharing a common language, with its fixed concepts, we try to nail down our perceptions of reality, more or less, and for good or ill!

A divine beauty and significance is seen in our world if our subtle senses emerge either spontaneously or through our spiritual practices. A “Heaven and earth declare His Glory” sort of thing. I believe that I had a glimpse of the subtle world while gazing at a sycamore tree as it was transformed into heavenly beauty. My experience was LSD induced, but there are numerous accounts of transporting epiphanies. To quote a piece from Traherne, “The dust and stones of the street were like pure gold; the green trees transported and ravished me. Eternity was manifest in the light of day.” William James is quoted as saying, “Our normal waking consciousness is but one special type of consciousness while all about it parted from it by the flimsiest screens there lie potential forms for

consciousness entirely different.” We read the Christian mystics as Vedantists, and you can probably come up with a lot of relevant quotes, but I doubt if you have heard much about Tibetan traditions.

In the hope of tying some of these ideas together comprehensibly, I'll repeat myself a little. When we are in touch with our Nirmanakaya, we experience our connectedness to the physical Cosmos. With the opening of the subtle senses of our Shambhogakaya we relate to a subtle world of consciousness. We experience a deeper level of spiritual awareness through our Dharmakaya. In other words, our bodies within bodies open out to ever-greater vistas of Reality; the Reality we are always looking at, but for which we need finer senses to perceive in depth. When the final barrier of embodiment is crossed there is union with our Buddha Consciousness, Christ Consciousness, our true Self, the Fourth of Hinduism, and the Vajra State of Tibetan Buddhism.

## 29

We had created a Tibetan Shrine room comparable to many, and just in time for the visit of Trungpa's Regent, Ersel Tensin. Trungpa had chosen this favored disciple to take his place at this own death. Chris M. opened his home to the Regent and a couple of his entourage. Our students hadn't gone so far as to hang red satin on the walls, but every inch of the house and yard had been inspected, corrected and improved. Ersel had been born Thomas Rich and became known later as Narayana. He and his partner Krishna had been disciples of Swami Satchitananda in Hollywood. They often had eaten at the restaurant where Dennis was the bookkeeper. Dennis would sit with them and, apparently, he would go on about his wife Sarada. In Boulder I attended a party where Narayana and Krishna were present. They looked at me and realized that I was that Sarada!

I used to tease Ersel, palms together, with the salutations of Narayana namas tute. I couldn't continue to be so familiar with him in his exalted

position. He remained his usual friendly, humorous, and relaxed self. I thought I noted a bit of megalomania in his confidence that Trungpa's idea of a Shambala Society was going to sweep the country. This vision of Trungpa's I found more obscure than anything with which I had been presented. Ersel gave us formal talks, and like Trungpa, during them he would sip saki and smoke cigarettes. In a party atmosphere an intimate of his entourage would light his cigarette the moment he put it to his lips.

A few of the young men were given the position of guards. Having guards around Trungpa and the Regent had been recently introduced. There was always a guard at Chris's home. I was present there one noon to help with the meal. In preparing to cook fish for Ersel and his guests I floured it, topped it with a pat of butter, and put it under the broiler. A newcomer rebuked me furiously for flouring the fish, as he was sure that Ersel wouldn't like it that way. I felt angry with him, but I didn't say anything. As the meal was being eaten I went around the corner, keeping out of sight, to listen to the conversation of the diners. I did hear Ersel exclaiming several times how good the fish was. I smiled to myself. The guard said I was arrogant in eavesdropping. This was too much! I left and returned to my loft. I admit there had been a contest of egos. I defended my cooking. I felt that the newcomer was rude and cock-sure, and the guard petty in asserting his authority. I worried that our Sangha was becoming competitive as to who was the most devoted to our Beloved Leader. There were other things that bothered me. While we were at the Town Center a small "red book" was introduced for us to read through every two weeks. It was so filled with Tibetan symbolism that it was like gibberish to me. Long chants with mysterious Tibetan meanings were introduced to mark the ritual beginning and ending of our sittings. These chants began to chafe like badly fitting clothes. I'm reminded of our Convent schedule. We nuns with a number of devotees, gathered every two-weeks in the Temple to chant Ram Nam – and in Sanskrit. Ram Nam is full of Hindu mythology and surely incomprehensible to many.

The Swamis meant well in their attempt to transplant in the West the devotional rituals of India. I have come to feel that these rituals can only have a shallow life in isolated monastic groups, and can

hardly take root and grow in the broader secular Society. From my experience I've come to see that Vedanta Societies that include these rituals are becoming a home away from home for Hindu immigrants. Swamiji's vision was of having these places for presenting the West with the wisdom of India. With a friend I attended a celebration of the Birthday of Ramakrishna at the Vedanta Society of Toronto. The Center has a marvelous old building, with a large auditorium, and a spacious upstairs recreational room. That day the hall was packed with 350 devotees for the Puja and Homa fire, and they were all Bengalis! Upstairs we were served the prasada of rice, dhal, curried cabbage, and the typical over-sweet deserts. The room was filled with the cacophony, to my ears, of Bengali chatter. Earlier I had watched the familiar Puja and Homa fire. I had felt unmoved as a spectator. I had been able to get deeper into the spirit of the ritual by doing it. I even felt a little bored, and there was nothing esthetic about the Shrine or the performance of the Puja that inspired me. I thought, if the young girls sing one more bhajan I'll scream, and of course, they did! As a part of performing the Homa fire I had taken ash from the quenched fire to dab a little on the foreheads of the worshippers. A young woman had been designated to put the sacred ash on our foreheads, and as she looked at my white face she apparently judged me a curious Westerner. She passed me by!

Trungpa was a charismatic Teacher, and he attracted many students. After a period of emphasizing mindfulness practices he gradually introduced them to the Vajrayana. The prospect of my getting deeper into this aspect of Tibetan Buddhism had at first an intriguing taste, but it proved indigestible for my western stomach. There are second and third generations of Swamis and Rimpoche's leading small enclaves of their teachings and practices. As an exception, I learned from my great nephew, who lives in Paris, that Solange Rimpoche leads a very large Sangha of which he is a member. The Dalai Lama has many followers, and the non-dual Vedanta still holds a strong appeal to intellectual Westerners. I'm seeing that the basic precepts of Buddhism are flourishing, and can flourish in any social or religious context. Post-Convent it was to the practice of mindfulness that I was originally attracted. It is to this practice

that I have returned – after a couple of sagas in between.

The period between '78 and '79 was a time of growing mystification about my Tibetan connection. I had completed 20 thousand prostrations, but I was becoming dissatisfied, and vulnerable. The story of my being sucked in by deceptions, empty promises, and later to suffer harsh treatment, that did actually result in the beginning of the wisdom of “no hope”, (in Trungpa’s sense), is hard to believe in the telling – but –

Once upon a Sunday at the Beach Art Show a young man, calling himself Shon, approached me to do a portrait of himself.

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Shon had come to the beach that day with his sister Nancy. She was later to play a part in his schemes concerning me. I’d like to think that her cooperation was innocent and well meaning. Nancy was sincerely devoted to her brother. She even seemed to idolize him. Shon was born in Santa Barbara and he grew up there, but one day, and without any explanation, he moved to Hawaii. Nancy was happy to have him home on a visit.

An appointment was made for him to sit for his portrait. As a portrait painter my attention was drawn to his dark eyes that were set far apart, and with their enigmatic expression. He had a beard and mustache. His hair was very dark, glossy and longish, and his skin had a hue that suggested he could be of Near Eastern descent. He played on this assumption by assuming the name of Shon Karim. He was born George Dube, and his family was of Portuguese ancestry.

Shon came to pick up his portrait a week later. He was pleased with how I had caught his likeness, and he paid me the usual \$50. He then commissioned me to do a full-length portrait, and he launched into explaining how this painting was to be pivotal in a movie soon to be produced. He rattled on about what seemed to me an improbable idea. A long lost work of Leonardo had been unearthed, and

it was a painting of Christ as the Good Shepherd. This depiction of the Christ figure looked exactly like a popular Rock star of the day. I’ve forgotten the convoluted details of the scenario, but the Rock star was taken as Jesus having come again. Shon was the actor to play the One who had returned.

The project intrigued me, and appealed to my vanity as a painter as well. Shon came for a number of sittings, and he always showed respect for the Shrine room as he passed through it to my studio space. One time I had to shoo him out of the back door, as a sitting was to begin. After it ended a couple of the Sangha members came back to see what I was working on. Warner remarked off-handedly of the painting as J.C. Tomaline, who had been a Catholic nun, spoke satirically of “Our dear Lord.”

Shon came to see the painting when it was finally completed. On entering my studio he reached out his hand, reverentially, towards the representation of Jesus on the easel. Then we sat down to talk for awhile. He spun out tales of his life, and his stories seemed pretty “tall”, including his being a Taoist Priest at one time. To flatter me he made a passing allusion to my deep spirituality. In the course of the conversation he claimed to be 22 years old. He could pass for that, but I quipped, “22 going on 28.” He laughed but I proved to be right.

Shon became serious and spoke philosophically of the world as a testing place. He spoke a lot about the necessity for gratitude. I pressed him further on his ideas, and he gave me his rendition of the Book of Job. If we are not grateful for what we have it will be taken away from us. Without gratitude for our new circumstances, even if they are less to our liking, they also will be taken away because of our ingratitude. We will find ourselves sitting on our pile of “ashes”, till we learn to accept gratefully whatever be the condition of our life. This was a preview of his acting as the one who does the “taking away”, and of my unbelievable experiences of outrageous deprivations.

I was aware of my suspension of disbelief on hearing his stories. I was beginning to be blinded by a certain charisma of this young man. In a subtle way I had begun to identify the Shon who sat for the painting with the mystical Jesus Figure I had painted! (I was identifying the “object” level with the level of concept-images – unconsciously). I had

come to the point of wanting to believe in this soft-spoken, control-mad man who was deceiving me by playing the Angel of Light.

He didn't take the painting. He was to come on another occasion with his sister for her to judge what I had done. I remember feeling the excitement and anticipation of seeing him again, as I heard them approaching the loft. Nancy was enthusiastic about the painting. Shon insisted that Nancy and I see one another after he would return to Hawaii.

The day of that return arrived. He had been mysteriously vague about to which island of the Hawaiian Islands it was. He called to say goodbye. I amazed myself by asking boldly, "Do you care about me?" He answered immediately and in a clear strong voice, "Yes I care about you – I love you – I am your eternal friend." This was similar to my "living room epiphany." As before, I was emotionally hooked by the feeling of being loved. In such a short time I had come to feel that I could trust him absolutely, and love him without reservation!! I even wrote him a letter to tell him that. Forgive me my hyperbole, but the oyster of my heart opened to a cunning grain of sand. My pearl-making imagination did the rest.

Shon didn't take the painting because it was only meant to be a set-up to draw me into the fold. He had also approached two young men, who were wealthy and brothers. He wooed them with extravagant displays of friendship. He gave them expensive gifts, and told them his fascinating stories, interspersed with hints of his having a Mission. Shon had a sharp perception of people's vulnerable spots, and he played on them. Illusions and promises of SOMETHING were the genesis of how he gathered a group around himself on the island of Kauai.

Nancy and I did get together. Once a week she drove up to my back door, and with happy greetings, common to those who share something precious to them, we drove off to the local health food restaurant. She told me about her early life with Shon (George). He had counseled her in all aspects of her life. She spoke of going with him to a movie that captured his role-playing imagination. It was Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. She said that he had seen the movie twelve times. In my early teens I had seen Naughty Marietta twenty-eight times. I was "in love" with Nelson Eddy, and I

unconsciously identified a bit with Jeanette MacDonald's soupy role.

Nancy told me of how heart-broken and even angry at Shon's disappearance into Hawaii. During his visit she said he had begun to introduce her to what he called the Significance. The little she told me sounded intriguing, and that increased the aura I wrapped around my perception of Shon. Nancy and I were like a fan club reinforcing and energizing our idolization of this guy. He telephoned her regularly from Kauai, and I hung on every word of what she repeated to me of their conversations. Nancy said that she and I were both to play roles in the Significance. Just now I would be red-faced to reveal those roles, as even then I saw their absurdity, and yet part of me had wistfully embraced them.

The three young men of Santa Barbara and a half a dozen others who lived in Kauai had been drawn by this Pied Piper were beginning to fill out the cast of Shon's Significance. A youngish man called Cal was one of them. He had paid a visit to my studio after Shon had returned to the islands. He showed up looking very professional. He claimed to be part of Shon's movie production. He talked up the movie idea, and how important my painting would be. He said he would pick up the painting in due time. He came, as well, to "bear false witness" to Shon's healing powers. As his story went, he had traveled to Hawaii to die from cancer in pleasant surroundings. He met Shon who had assured him that under his care he would be cured. Cal was weaving more threads into the veil hiding the awful truth of Shon as a Liar who taught others to Lie.

I gathered from Nancy that Shon and Cal were long time buddies. Cal played the part of Butch Cassidy to Shon's Sundance Kid. I assume that they recognized the difference from their play-acting and reality, but I'm not sure. Later in Kauai I heard Cal address Shon affectionately as Sundance. Nancy also filled me in with the details of how as a team they worked to con girls. Their first aim was for them to be attracted to Cal, and then Cal would turn them over to Shon to be his "Angels."

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Maggie was one of those angels, and she devoted herself tirelessly to Shon. She was feisty, but utterly subservient to his needs and wishes. She stole for him. She lied for him. She slept with anyone who might then provide him with free services such as dental work! Maggie was originally from Canada. When we were there she was living in Toronto, but moved around with us during our time in Montreal. She played Shon's sister, and in one case got a woman to house him, along with me, and his three-year old daughter. There were other young women as well, and they were happy to be of service to Shon. One of them called Shon an Angel! I'll tell more about this period later. It took Maggie years of seeing Shon with other women before she finally got her man. Last count she has borne him three or four children. I heard this from talking to Cal on the phone from his home outside of LA. He keeps me up on the Shon news.

I have yet to speak of Kari. Nancy mentioned her as being with Shon on his trip to Santa Barbara. She had a son by him, and was pregnant with his second child, but they were not married. Hearing all this rattled me as I thought of Shon as a holy man and a celibate, an example of how extensive were my misperceptions of this guy.

Shon had gone back to Hawaii, and all I had of him was the painting. I mooned over it. I felt a growing urge to be a part of his mysterious Mission that he hinted was of great spiritual importance. My obsessive wish was becoming like the Pearl of great price for which I was soon to leave the Sangha, my painting, my relationships, and to voluntarily give him all my money in my reaching towards another mirage of "hope"

Shortly after Shon had left Santa Barbara I had an unusual experience. I was invited to a party, and the guest of honor was a Tarot Card reader. To me this was just a fun game, and not to be taken seriously, but I wrote a serious question on a piece

of paper that was then burned. I asked, "Is it possible for me to be a part of Shon's Mission?" The cards I drew from the pack were laid out in a pattern. The central card signified my question. The picture on this card was of a "young man on horse-back, wearing a wreath of victory, and surrounded by staves of unseen companions." I couldn't but interpret this card as symbolic of Shon's Mission. To the left of this card was a "King with reddish beard and hair." To the right of the "King" was a picture of "an arm holding up a torch through the clouds." The card that symbolized myself was "the fool walking blithely off a cliff." This was getting spooky! Above the central card was "A blazing sun and a boy on horse-back." Was this Shon's son? Below all these cards was the "Emperor with a long white beard." Shon later interpreted this card as the Director, as he never used the term God. As to the answer to my question, there was a card showing "three damsels wreathed in garlands dancing in front of a castle." That sounded good. There were two other cards standing for my present life. "Stultifying" was the reader's interpretation of them. He continued with, "you are going to a sunny place", and somebody is to come in three weeks with the answer to your question. Don, with reddish hair and beard came to see me in three weeks. It was during his visit that my connection with Shon's presumed wonderful Mission began. If those "dancing damsels" signified a final good, that goodness was the hard earned wisdom from my experiences with Shon, beginning in Santa Barbara in October of '78 till we parted company in June of '88, and from where I am writing now in Canada.

The remarkable thing to me was that the Tarot Card reader, going only from his reading of the Cards, said to me in a forceful way, "Go! Even if it should turn out to be a disaster." I did go – and it did! Before my giant misstep both Nancy and I were invited for a two-week visit over the Christmas Holidays. Shon's brand of rolling out the red carpet was taking us to the beach. It was a delightful to bounce and swim in the warm and fabled Hawaiian surf.

We met Don's wife Helen. Their house was in shouting distance, but behind Shon's mansion that had seven bedrooms and five bathrooms. His house was on a cliff over-looking the ocean. Both Don and Helen were initiated Vedantists. They had put their Shrine stuff away in a closet. Helen's parents were

also Vedantists, and they came to visit their daughter occasionally. Shakti's mother was also a Vedantist, and she had a fabulous estate nearby. Considering the fact that there are only a handful of Vedantists on the mainland makes such a gathering of them on this little space in Kauai statistically unlikely. I, of course, knew Hari-Priya well, and we met up occasionally. I tried lamely to give some palatable explanation for what went on at Shon's place. I know her as a very open-minded person, and she was quizzical about the whole thing and my being a part of it. Prabha came to the Island to be her guest. She came over to meet the people I was with, and was favorably impressed with them, as they appeared attractive and normal. They were impressed with her as well. Although Prabha didn't look it she was beginning to feel her age. I was thoughtless in having her traipse with me, down a precarious hill to where I would go to be alone. It was a secluded cove, and the ocean lapsed shallowly over rocks.

I had assumed from my first visit that our going to the beach would be a regular outing. I didn't have that pleasure again during my three years in Kauai. Shon had a huge TV set for seeing movies, and the future held seeing many of such. On our Christmas visit I had the strange experience of Shon's ability to make things appear and disappear. He referred to these events as "changes of reality." I'll not try to be an apologist for Shon's "powers", even after the many unexplainable happenings that I experienced both in Kauai and in Canada.

There was one uncanny event that I will describe in some detail. The movie that Shon put on for us to see was "The Bishop's Wife", with David Niven, Loretta Young and Cary Grant. Cary played an "Angel" who had come to help the Bishop, and he performed numerous "changes of reality." After the movie Shon's son, not yet two years old did an untypical thing considering that he had shown great attachment to his father. As we watched the movie we sat bunched together. Little Jamil went around behind us, cowering. Shon asked him to come down, but he stayed put. Shon turned his back on the boy, and in a voice barely above a whisper said, "get down here Cary Grant." The boy rushed down to his father as though released from a spell. Could Shon have gotten directly into that child's willing? We too were actually mesmerized by him, but he had to work through our deep longings, Idealism's,

our vain desire for self-importance, and a wish for a kind of life "out of this ordinary world." Etc.

Don once confessed to me a thought that he had at the beginning of his involvement with Shon, which was, "What the heck, my life is dull and meaningless (even with Vedanta?) So I'll go for this "thing" of Shon's.

For Nancy and I everything seemed sweetness and light during our visit. Helen and Kari, both lovelies in their youth, appeared very friendly towards one another, and to Nancy and I. By the time we were to return to the Mainland it was decided that I was to come back and live there. My public part in Shon's set-up, that I gleaned later, was that I, an older woman, would provide gravitas to a group of young people gathered around a mysterious new figure in the community.

As Nancy and I waited to depart at the airport an extraordinarily pretty girl delivered a necklace to each of us. The jewelry (very cheap) was meant to be a symbol of our commitment to Shon's – and at this point, Shon's "whatever" comes to mind. This was my first encounter with Shon's most intrepid devotee, Maggie. My necklace broke before I returned – not a good sign apparently.

Returning to Santa Barbara I broke the news of my plan of going to live in Kauai. Dennis was dismayed. The Sangha felt betrayed. John Welwood spoke seriously to me of my getting into a Jim Jones type cult. Someday I hope John, my closest Sangha friend, will read my story and know how near right he was!

There were things I had to take care of before departing for Kauai. A Sangha member was happy to take over my space, which left the rent for the Sangha section unchanged. I sold my easel, art supplies, and the old upright piano that my mother had given me. I had taken piano lessons in my pre-teens, but I always felt frustrated in my making so many mistakes in playing a memorized piece. After I left the Convent, and on another of my mother's

pianos, I hit on the idea of letting my fingers move over the keys spontaneously. I just had to remember to always strike the black key of B flat. Even with this limitation to my musical expression I was pleased with the never to be repeated configurations of running chords and melodies – and without flubbing! At an informal get-together of our Sangha, John who plays the flute and I at the piano put on an impromptu jam session. Everyone was surprised that it sounded “for real.” I experienced the delight of two separate individuals creating music as though being one person.

There was a grand piano at the Kauai house. I sat down only once to play that piano. Someone who had heard the playing from outdoors, and thought someone was playing a classical piece. Coming inside they were surprised that I was doing the playing. Shon had no use for my form of creativity. The piano was for Cal to play his songs, and then to give Shon the credit for composing them. Cal sang and played to entertain our neighbors. They were a part of an exclusive community where we all had to pass a through a gatekeeper. Cal dedicated a song to each of them. His pretense at graciousness worked in creating a friendly disposition towards these “new people”.

Back in Santa Barbara, and along with making practical arrangements, I needed to give attention to my now strained relationships. Dennis resigned himself to what he saw as my disturbing decision. Our Ambassador made sure I didn’t go off with the notes of our Vajrayana Training. To the Sangha my desire to leave seemed without cause. I assured them that I had nothing against them personally or the basic Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism, but I couldn’t say out-right that it was an accumulation of that little “red book”, and the inclusion of all those arcane Tibetan chants that made me vulnerable to Shon’s Siren song.

Years later and on a visit to Santa Barbara, Dennis and I went to see what had happened in my absence. The Dharmadhatu had long since dissolved. The loft had been taken over by an artisan. Trungpa had died. Ersel had died prematurely of Aids. There had been a schism in the Scene over this. Our Sangha members had dispersed in all directions and I don’t know whether any of them kept a connection to Trungpa’s work.

The day before I took off for Kauai, Vijali, in her car, followed me in my Honda Civic Hatchback to ship it off to the Island. While I was driving there I noted, and at the same time tried to ignore, the static in my gut about what and into what I was launching my self.

The next day I flew off to my Destiny. Don met me at the Lihui airport, and we drove to the House in the Hanalei district. We arrived. Shon was in Honolulu. My reception by Kari was cool. I had an exaggerated sense of being highly valued as Shon had worked on creating this perception of myself. Others were aware of my being merely useful for Shon’s purposes. I came to observe that people were intent on putting one another down. Shon wanted it that way as it increased everyone’s competitiveness in their relationship with him – as to who was the most devoted.

I had arrived in Kauai a week or two after one of the faithful had defected. Shon had recently moved into his still uncompleted house, and immediately had it noised around the community that he was a Rock Star who had lost his band in a car crash during a tour in Europe. The defector had gone to work for a real Rock Star on the Island who knew about Rock bands, and he disputed Shon’s claims as false. The weird goings-on at the House on the cliff were no doubt related to him. I heard Shon’s people strategizing about damage control. They went around to the neighbors and tearfully disclaimed any smears made against them.

I’ve written to you about the stages of my being sucked in by Shon’s strange power to project an almost divine self-image. My ability to see him clearly became clouded by spiritual cataracts, as it were. A “hope” had been rekindled. Oh God! To hope in Shon who was the veritable chimera of “no hope.” My use of the word chimera came out of the blue. I had not used the word before or remember hearing it being used, but I must have. I looked up chimera in the dictionary and read: (1) an imaginary monster made up of incongruous parts (2) an illusion or fabrication of the mind. (3) An impossible dream – hmm-m-m.

Subtly Shon impressed us with the idea that he was Jesus “come again”, but he never said this directly. Not one of us was a Christian or knew much about the Bible to question the notion. He counted heavily on our belief, to whatever degree, in

reincarnation. I had been steeped in the Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist teachings about reincarnation. Both the Dalai Lama and Trungpa were (?) times reincarnations of the Heads of their Lineage's. Their "coming back" was as Bodhisattva's to release the world from the sufferings of birth, death, and rebirth. Thich Nhat Hanh remarked wryly that Westerners found the idea of reincarnation exciting and desirable, whereas the Hindus and Buddhists eagerly seek liberation from it! In the Convent we had little concern about being reincarnated, probably on the promise that we would be liberated at death, if not before, by the Grace of Ramakrishna.

Shon also appealed to our need to be special people. He called us Significant, which in his sense of the word meant that we had been with him in the past; that we were reincarnated Biblical people! No one could really believe this. Our belief was in Shon, a kind of "whatever you say, Shon."

Kari and I went over to Helen's for dinner the day I arrived in Kauai. Don read us a letter that had supposedly just arrived from Maggie. She was attending to his needs in Honolulu. She wrote in graphic details of his being ill to the point of turning blue and monster-like etc. This was a set up as something for me to remember in future situations.

In the mornings I heard Kari vacuuming the wooden floors that were yet to be carpeted, and of her keeping busy in what sounded like rearranging pots and pans in the kitchen. I had been given Shon's room upstairs. It had a picture window opening to the view of the ocean. I explored the house. At the end of the upstairs hallway was a loft-bedroom with a bathroom next to it. Adjacent to this loft-room was an ordinary bedroom used by Cal. Shon's room had a large and separate bathroom shared by another large loft sleeping area at the other end of the hallway. This loft was part of a balcony over-looking the spacious living room below. I went downstairs and looked into a small bedroom, which had a bathroom and sauna next to it. At the side of the house facing the mountains was Kari's loft and bathroom. Her room opened out onto a porch. Shon stayed with her as long as I was in his room. As one entered the front door one passed through a vestibule and on around to a galley like kitchen. It was open to the living room a few steps below and included a sunken eating area. The grand piano I mentioned had it's own raised room. Speak of multi-level

architecture! And there was a ground floor below. It was very large and had a pool table. I don't remember anyone ever playing pool. Since this area had a kitchen and bathroom it was adequate for living-quarters for two people.

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Shon returned from Honolulu and was greeted as a Prince. He sat with us for a few minutes. He remarked that "Kari was a basket ball with legs." She was close to her time of delivery. Shortly after his return Shon came upstairs to visit me and he was bearing a gift. It was a beautiful oriental garment that he claimed he wore as a Taoist Priest. I put it on feeling a little blessed. That was the last time I saw it. Actually Kari's mother had brought it back from a trip to China as a gift to Kari! On another occasion Shon came into my room and we walked to the window to look out over the ocean. He asked me if I had a sea creature that I particularly liked. I immediately had a mental picture of a dolphin leaping out of the water with an arched back. I described my thought to Shon. We turned around. To my amazement there was a crystal dolphin matching my fantasy on the desk. He later took the dolphin away as he did with all of his so-called gifts. But I had other unexplainable experiences involving this dolphin – and even here in Canada

As long as I was staying in Shon's room Kari would tell me when I could not come down stairs. Her excuse was that Shon had "turned blue and monster-like" and was not to be seen. Shon claimed to rarely eat, but I suspect that at these times Kari was preparing him a sumptuous meal. These, my continuing obligato of comments about what was really happening, are obviously in retrospect.

On February 22 of 1980 Kari gave birth to a baby girl who was named Calista. Helen attended her as Shon has a Howard-Hughes-type phobia about what he takes in through his sense of smell. He avoids what he feels is polluting – certainly hospital smells, or any odors of bodily waste, perfume, car exhaust, and smoke of any kind

Within weeks Maggie gave birth to a premature baby girl named Christa. Maggie lived with Andy in Honolulu, but she had slept with Cal. Which one was the father? Shon favored Cal for future schemes of controlling him. Years later I learned from Cal that a DNA test proved that Andy was the father.

Billy and Toni moved into Helen's. They had a two-year old daughter and a baby boy who yelled all night probably from colic. This annoyed the neighbors. Helen and Don's space was gradually becoming limited to their upstairs bedroom and bath, because of the influx of live-ins. These people that I mention are to be the characters in the drama that was to unfold. Helen did the cooking.

The honeymoon was over for me. I experienced the dreaded meetings. Shon had us all gather in a room and we sat cross-legged with our backs to him. He chose one of us to be humiliated. I had my turn. Shon accused me of feeling jealous that Kamal had been included in a special outing. Actually I was happy for Kamal. Shon turned to Kari and Toni as witnesses to his accusation. They had been on the other side of the property concerning the event, what to speak of having access to my inner feelings, but they loudly corroborated my guilt! Obviously he demanded that everyone back up any of his statements whatever the facts. Kari and Toni had heard the Commandment of "Bear no false witness." Did they want to show their great devotion to Shon? Had he given them the permission to take pleasure in doing the forbidden for his Cause?

The day came for me to have my privileged use of Shon's room taken away. He sent me over to Helen's. I was to clean her house, which on his inspection he had judged as "filthy." I was billeted there for a while. In the middle of the night we were often called to the main house to see a significant movie. Kari sat behind us to report any ungrateful nodding off. I'll describe our seeing the movie Saturday Night Fever. Shon had the scene played back of John Travolta's famous dance on a floor of many colored. Lights. This time we were all sitting quite a ways back from the huge TV screen, and he had no instrument with which to press a button and turn the film back. How did he do it? On this second seeing of John's dance, when his knee touched the floor there was another configuration of

the lights. Shon replayed the scene again and that time the lights formed a cross. With a final replay, on John's knee touching the floor, all the lights went out leaving the floor black! We found this astonishing and very entertaining. He demanded that we write notes of appreciation for the display even though he was just upstairs.

In my final days in Kauai I gathered together hundreds of notes and letters, as he never threw anything out. There were angry letters from young women for having been "taken." I found a note from Shon to Steven advising him to lie about everything! Shon, of course, lied unashamedly for his hidden purposes. I generally trust other's honesty, so it took me a long time to uproot my tendency to believe what he said. I mailed the collection of letters to Dennis with the idea of using them as reference material. I intended to write of this cult leader with his need for absolute control of the people and the world around him. The letters from his devoted, at that time, were full of such declarations as "I will do anything for you anytime, anywhere for I know you are the Truth and the dispeller of darkness." And another example, "I will always stand at your side no matter what." Ha!

Helen's personality had a down to earth feel about it, so I was surprised to hear her say one time, "all for Jesus", as she seemed to be endlessly juicing carrots for Shon. He told Helen to report back to him any of Don's veering from what he expected of him. She was obedient and even put tape recorder under the conjugal pillow. Don did complain to her about the need for "all the bull-shitting." And Don was very good at it. I had had the experience of listening to him lay it on with newcomers. I'll refer to one time, which was during a visit of Harvey and Donna Haber. The day before I had been sitting in the bank as Shon made some transaction. I turned around to see Harvey and Donna standing there! During their visit to the house a day later, they told me that they had left Scientology. I knew that like Cassie they had gone head-long into Scientology, but I didn't know that they had risen to the top echelon of Ron L. Hubbard's "religion" by their acceptance to live on his boat. As they listened to Don their sensitized antenna picked up on his hyping of what was obviously a cult situation. Dennis told me much later that he had seen Harvey in Santa Barbara, and that he had read in the papers that Donna was leading a Zen group!

I was called back to the main house to be seen again as a respectable cover of what was going on. I was given the small downstairs bedroom. I watched Billy spend his days in custodial gardening and repairs around the House. I was disturbed to see Shon castigate him brutally if he stirred-up polluting dust. But Billy never contradicted Shon's claim to have "taken Billy back in time." We were all fond of Billy and he seemed an honest guy. This shook our instinctive doubts that Shon could do such a thing.

Billy's wife Toni threw herself into climbing the "Significance" ladder. At our regular meetings when Toni would speak up with "you guy's" it was a prelude to lambasting everyone for not caring about Shon's health. She put herself in the category of she, Kari, Shon – and us! From almost my first encounter with Shon, he claimed to suffer from terrible ill health. He said that he coughed for hours and so loud that the neighbors could hear the coughing. One morning at the House, he and Cal were sitting on the kitchen floor together for some reason. I looked at him and told him how he appeared to me, that I observed his glossy hair, and that his eyes were clear and his skin smooth and of a good color. I didn't go so far as to say what I felt, which was that he was a perfect specimen of robust good health. One of his persistent claims was that he frequently coughed up blood. However I never found any blood stains on his clothing, the carpets, the bedding, the towels, or anything. Another ploy to get everybody's sympathy was that his throat was chronically inflamed making it painful for him to swallow food. The most outrageous assertion was that he never slept, and he described sleep as "being in the arms of Satan." Isn't there a quote about repeating big lies over and over, and that big lies were apt to be believed? Kari would come downstairs and ambiguously remark that "Shon was out of it."

We had the excitement of a movie star as a guest. I don't know if you have heard of Marjo Gortner, or have seen his movie called "What Became of Red Ryder," but he had come to Kauai, and someone suggested that he visit the House and meet Shon. He did come and Shon welcomed him lavishly. Apparently Marjo was drawn by a "something" he liked and felt he could trust in Shon. Marjo was later very impressed by Shon's correct prediction of the outcome of an all-important play-

off game. As Shon predicted the Cincinnati Bengal's winning and he had named the exact score. I found Marjo to be idealistic and non-cynical, considering that his first movie was as an expose of the evangelistic church in which he had grown up. There were shots in that movie of him as a precocious child preacher, who at five could work-up the congregation to a religious frenzy. As a young man he perfected his skills. Now there were scenes of people falling over in their ecstasies – and with a flash to the back room where the ministers were greedily counting the take for the night.

Marjo came to the house on a number of visits over a three-year period. One time he stopped off on returning from a big Bash thrown by the Marcos in the Philippines. Shon happened to be in Honolulu at the time. He brought me a gift of tea, but it was in the form of a solid pack with a decorative image. He told us some of the details of the Party, and I felt he was pleased to have been invited as one of the many celebrated guests. Marjo was to play an unwitting part in the climactic collapse of the house of Shon.

Shon made sure that everyone of us were kept constantly busy. There was no time to reflect on what we were doing or why; it was just a do and do situation. I was given the job of nurturing a new lawn around the house. Weeding was my constant challenge. I persistently pulled up every sprouting weed, and finally after a number of months I had a lawn without weeds. My accomplishment impressed Shakti's mother, and for which I felt some pride. Helen and I were sent off on a kooky project of finding golf balls hidden in the bushes of the golf course. This turned out to be a fun thing to do and a challenge. It was like hunting for Easter eggs. Eventually I began to climb down ravines in search of caches of balls. We were doing this because Shon wanted golf balls to practice hitting them off into the ocean. My mother had taught me as a young person how to grip a golf club and swing it properly. I had a chance to hit a few balls too, and Shon was impressed as I often hit the balls on the club's "sweet spot." Don and others got into finding balls, and they donned scuba gear to recover hundreds of them at the bottom of the lake traps around the greens. During the last days the police were puzzled by the barrels of golf balls under Helen's house.

I wanted to be useful in a practical way, and I offered to go into Lihui to help in the grocery

shopping. Toni objected to my participating knowing that our food and hardware needs were largely “lifted,” that is, stolen. She felt they couldn’t afford to have me go and expect to pay money. I was held in contempt, as they correctly assumed, that I would not be willing to “liberate” things for Shon’s Cause. I was therefore kept out of the loop. That loop became a large circle in which the drive to be the most devoted was equivalent to “liberating” the most. A greater opportunity to excel in their ambition came with Shon’s plan to move his people to Australia.

Joe and Michael had given over to Shon a great deal of their money. It was used to purchase property with a big house in Australia. A young man was sent to manage the new acquisition. Clothing and household items of all kinds would be needed for the move. Large boxes from “shopping” expeditions arrived from the mainland. It’s a long story with too many details to go into, but several of the men managed a huge heist from a hotel kitchen for pots, pans and cooking utensils. Kari came out one morning to announce triumphantly that a container had been filled and was on the way to Australia. A Biblical cloak was laid over the exodus. It was as though the “chosen people” were now to go to the “Promised Land.” Shon’s megalomaniac scheme was abandoned because of unexpected circumstances.

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I had received a letter from Lex Hixon. I’ll never know of other letters that might have been sent to me as Shon wouldn’t have given them to me.. However my letter from Lex, which he had read, he considered useful to his plans. Lex hosted a TV show on spiritual subjects in New York, and I knew Lex both through Vedanta and Trungpa’s work. Shon asked me to write to Lex and invite him to the Island, which I did. It so happened that Robin and Skip were both on the mainland. These two young men were long time friends of Don and he had excited them about Shon’s “thing.” Skip was there to round up old friends to join him in his new Cause.

Robin, after my letter to Lex, had been given the project of contacting Lex directly with the invitation to come to the Island. He was to do this along with a lot of praise of Shon – and this from hearsay, as Robin was under the onus of never seeing Shon or hearing his voice to prove his devotion!

Coincidentally Vijali and her new husband Oz were visiting me at the House. Oz immediately felt a claustrophobic atmosphere. Socially I had been with Oz once or twice, and I found that around his undisputed authority it was difficult for others to have anything to say. But Shon snowed him with talk and rude questioning, and he was able to establish dominance in the encounter. With Vijali, Shon used his particular “talent” to impress her. She was both attracted to him and skeptical about what was going on. One evening as I was doing the cooking I said, “Oh dear I need a lemon.” Shon was leaning on the outside of the kitchen counter. He opened his palm and let fall out a lemon. Vijali had seen similar manifestation performed by Sai Baba in India, and so she was not over-whelmed by Shon’s display of his “powers”

The day came for Vijali and Oz to leave and not a minute too soon for Oz. Cal went upstairs to visit Oz in his room, and supposedly in the spirit of a game he bound Oz’s hands in a mock imprisonment, as much as to say, “We like you so much we don’t want you to go.” This touched off a deep fear in Oz, and understandably so! The “game” was over and Vijali and Oz left hurriedly. Oz’s experience with Cal had far-reaching consequences. Back on the mainland Vijali told it all to Alfredo, who had been Dale’s working buddy for years. He in turn relayed the story to Dale. Dale then passed on the incredible tale to you nuns in the Convent. By happenstance Lex was visiting with you at the time. Lex was told the story, which had evolved into Oz being handcuffed and practically having a gun held to his head! Robin managed to get in touch with Lex with the invitation to come to Kauai. He had the unexpected shock of having his offer rejected together with being told the scathing details of what had gone on at the House. Idealistic Robin was horrified and conveyed what he had heard to Skip. Not surprisingly Skip’s excessive “love” for Shon instantly reverted to jealousy of Shon’s leadership, and he felt free now to pursue what had been his secret attraction to Kari. Skip returned to his home Island of Maui and not to Kauai. Kari volunteered

to go to Maui to urge Skip to come back into the fold. What followed on Maui was their passionate love affair. Skip and Kari returned to the House, and with the help of Kari's visiting friends they made off with the children.

I saw Shon's expression the moment he realized that the children were gone. This thirty-year old man, his face suddenly drained of blood looked to be a man of fifty. A few days later Kari phoned Shon. He begged her to bring the children back. It took a few tense days to negotiate an agreement that she and Skip together with the children could live their independent lives in the poolroom apartment. They did some of their negotiating at Helen's and I witnessed their extraordinary "coolness", as if they both had been trained in high stakes diplomacy.

Actually both Skip and Kari seethed with resentment towards Shon. Kari had told Skip that Shon had always raped her, which inflamed his hatred of "the one upstairs." I found a framed photo of Shon on the poolroom deck, and the glass was shattered as though someone had stomped on it. Shon made repeated attempts to get Kari alone, so that with his renowned powers of persuasion he could urge her to come back to him. This enraged Skip. Shon made a trip to Honolulu, and they took the opportunity to take over the whole house. Helen was separated from Don and she was now living with Michael. They came over one evening and I was instructed that if Shon should call I was to say that Skip and Kari were keeping their agreement of staying in the lower area. I said I wouldn't do that. Kari slapped my face and ran outside screaming something in her frustration. Skip remarked that I really believed that I was his Mother. Aside from this nonsense I couldn't hate Shon or identify with them.

Skip reached his tipping point and threatened that if others were not with him he would go to the police and implicate them all in shoplifting. He was the worst of the thieves, but he knew that he would have immunity in his telling on others.

Toni had moved to the House to help Kari in the care of the children. Kari, thinking that Toni was on their side, asked her to help them abduct the children again. But Toni secured them for Shon instead. Shon returned the boy Jamil and the baby Christian to Kari, but he kept Calista. He gave

money to Toni to go to the mainland with Calista, who was then almost three years old. Toni was to keep in touch with Shon wherever she was, and within three rings of the phone. Back in Honolulu Skip and Kari lured Shon to their hotel room on the pretext of his exchanging cash for the sixteen gold coins that Kari had scooped up in leaving the House. I'm surprised that they managed to handcuff Shon, and it must have been under extreme duress that he told them where Calista was. Kari took off to retrieve her daughter. Shon waited for Skip to nod off in front of the TV, and still handcuffed, he managed to escape down several balconies in time to warn Toni of Kari's coming and to go elsewhere.

I overheard Helen, Michael and Joe strategizing as to how to respond to Skip's threat. Maggie was alerted. She came in a van and drove into the garage. It was midnight. She with the help of Michael and Joe gathered the loot, always ducking out of sight below the window level. Paranoia was setting in about the possibility of their being under surveillance. They put the incriminating evidence in her van. Maggie then drove off to put the stuff in storage. Later, in daylight, others came to scrape the house clean of anything they could use including my down sleeping bag and my good leather boots!

Maggie's next assignment was to travel to the mainland. The plan was that she would take over the care of Calista from Toni and wait for Shon's coming to join them. An important part of the story was how Shon got total custody of the children. Cal had flown the coop again in rebellion to Shon's domination over him. Kari and Don went off with the up-front purpose of finding Cal, but they really just wanted a romantic escapade. Kari paid for her tryst with Don by Shon taking her to court and getting legal custody of the children. Don was in love with Kari. He thought of her as "the most wonderful woman in the world." I might comment that this is a common delusion. This distressed Helen and created friction between herself and Kari. There already was jealousy and competitiveness between the men. Shon's custody of Calista gave him a legal cover for taking her, at least for a while.

Toni returned to Billy and her kids. She looked for the money that Shon said he had hidden in some toys for her. Finding no money she felt betrayed. She joined the others in their growing

anger and concern about Skip's threat to charge them with shoplifting. Now it was becoming a matter of everyone being out to save his or her own skins. Lawyers were hired. Joe, Michael and others eyed the House to get their money back. Shon countered by getting in touch with Marjo to tell him that he had given the House to him. Marjo had no idea of the pressure cooker of events that were about to blow. I heard Shon say, "I'd fill the House with straw and burn it down before Joe and Michael got it."

Marjo visited Kauai after hearing that he had been given the House. He was eagerly anticipating taking possession of it. I was the only one in the house at the time, and I listened to his enthusiastic plans of inviting Willie Nelson and Clint Eastwood as guests. He said I would remain as caretaker and hostess. In high spirits Marjo returned to the mainland.

### 35

And then there was the hurricane. I huddled in the sauna and only ventured out while the eye of the storm with its eerie silence lasted. Safely back in the sauna the hurricane turned its destructive force in the other direction. Nature seemed to be symbolizing the volatile emotional turning for and then against Shon. On the morning after I looked out to see that the roof of Helen's house had been blown off. Kamal had moved into the poolroom after Skip and Kari left, and he was away during the storm. But he returned and together we easily entered Helen's house through a jarred opening. We moved the valuable things into a protected area. The phone in the main house wasn't working so I used the phone at Helen-Michael's. I called Shon in Honolulu. I wanted to reassure him that only a few tiles had blown off the roof. No one had been at Helen-Michael's during the hurricane. Now Joe and Michael had to rent an apartment. Helen was on the mainland with her parents. She was facing the fact that he, in whom she believed and served, was not the One she had imagined. Earlier she had piously resigned herself to having her two dogs, a cat, a

guitar and a music player all taken away from her by Shon. It was his wont to deprive all of us of anything we enjoyed or that gave us comfort. Now Helen was bitter and very angry.

Skip carried out his threat. I was alone in the House when the police pounded on the door. I hardly had time to unlock it before they would have broken it down. I remained in my room as they searched the house for stolen items. Other policemen, looking like seven-foot giants stood at the entrances with big guns. Finally the searchers walked out with a few garments still dangling price tags. I not being an owner they just squinted at me with suspicion and left. Skip had not included me in his charges. No doubt the others also said that I had nothing to do with the allegations. Ironically because "she wasn't devoted enough" I was kept out of these activities. Now I was disdained for being "too devoted"!

On Marjo's return to the mainland he persuaded Virginia, a former girl friend, to go to Kauai and represent him in his ownership of the House. On an occasion Steven and Michael came to retrieve things that I explained to Virginia were really theirs. She defied them fiercely claiming that the House and everything in it was Marjo's. She even called the police against my protestation. They came and Steven and Michael backed off in anger assuming I had colluded with Virginia.

Shon's car was available for my use even as he was negotiating from Honolulu to sell it. He called me with the instruction to gather up the prints in the house and bring them to him in Honolulu. I stacked the frame prints in the back of the car and was on my way to the airport. But a police car blocked the driveway. The officer asked me if I had gone into Helen-Michael's and used the phone. I answered, "Yes, I had." I was charged there and then with breaking and entering and of making an unauthorized use of the phone. The officer drove me to Lihui to be incarcerated. I had the usual mug shots, fingerprints and all. The officer who drove me to the police station and the other officers I encountered were respectful and considerate in their behavior towards me. I found this quite a contrast to those Beverly Hills "cops."

I was alone in a cell. The light was kept on. Periodically an officer would look through a small window in the door to make sure I didn't try to

commit suicide I suppose. I had my one call and it was to Michael. I pleaded with him to drop the charges – that I would reimburse him for the telephone call. It was Michael’s assumption that I had colluded with Virginia that angered him enough to get back at me with this minor offence. Actually he saved me from felony charges of transporting stolen property, as the prints belonged to Steven and had been “lifted” from him.

I, the only innocent one was in jail for a week before Michael dropped the charges against me. The others had their lawyers and were free to go about their lives. Don was in Honolulu celebrating his wedding to a new girl friend, and I heard that he laughed about my situation

A Grand Jury indicted Shon on examining the details of his offences. He hired a lawyer who got him off on a \$1000 bail. Shon jumped bail and flew to the mainland to join Maggie and Calista. Before he left he emptied his bank account, gathered huge amounts of cash from several safety deposit boxes, and a bag of gold coins, plus the money from the sale of the car.

Marjo returned to Kauai again with the intention of fighting to keep the House. Joe, Michael and others had already put a lean on it. I overheard Marjo on the phone with either Joe or Michael and he said, “my people will be in touch with your people.” But Marjo finally gave up his claim as he realized the disgrace of being connected to the scandal and hullabaloo about a “gang of robbers” about to erupt in the papers. And by the way, Joe and Michael got their money back from the purchase of the house and property in Australia, and after many years the House was sold and the money was divided among the claimants and their lawyers.

Shon called me from somewhere on the mainland. He said, “a plane ticket has been bought for you. Go to the airport in Honolulu and pick it up.” I faced a dilemma. I described my difficulty in making a decision to Virginia. I gave her a lame rationalization for having given my inheritance and my savings to Shon. I said that I meant it as a sort of contribution to a retirement plan for living in this beautiful place. And now I had no money. I couldn’t go on living in the House that was circled by those who wanted me out. She could also see that I had no other choice than to go.

The day before I had seen a disillusioned Margo off at the airport. There was one more day on his rented car. I found an old suitcase under Helen’s house. My boots had been stolen, but I found shoes that were too small but I had no other choice than to wear them. I left a check written out to Michael of \$80 to cover that telephone call. This would clear out the small account that I had been allowed to have. The next day I drove away from the House in Marjo’s rented car. Kamal happened to be on the other side of the Island. No one saw me leave. I flew to Honolulu and picked up my ticket at the airport. I was on my way, virtually in the dark as to what was to unfold.

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My ticket was to fly me to Denver, Colorado. I mused on the fact that I had been born in Denver. My mother had traveled there to be with her mother at my birth. When I was six weeks old my mother carried me back to our home in Beverly Hills. Arriving at the airport I had time to reminisce as I sat in the luggage area. I had memories of spending summers with my grandmother in her little house in Colorado Springs, of the running creek and woods behind the house, which I hesitated to explore. I was four years old and my brother who was with me was four years older. I must have been a brat as I always whined that my brother got more food than I did. One morning I was abruptly brought up to what I can call a kind of adult awareness, as my grandmother stood before me, red-faced, and said, “which one do you want pig?” She was holding two plates in her hands, each holding two fried eggs that looked exactly alike. Her anger awakened me to a consciousness far beyond my years. I had no association with the meaning of the word “pig”, what to speak of the derogatory sense of being called a “pig.” My response was a calm witnessing of what I heard and saw. At the same time I became aware of my inner landscape as a wide open and empty space – the years to fill with thousands of labels, concepts, and images to associate with pleasure or pain and responses of “having my feelings hurt.”

I had been living at the Temple for a year or two before I experienced Amiya's sharp tongue cutting into my psyche. I had previously felt protected from her slashing tongue by our sort of mother-daughter relationship. Her remarks had usually been directed towards the devotees. I don't remember what Amiya said, but I rushed to my room in tears, yowling inwardly about how she had hurt me. Then I heard my own voice, not sounding much different from what I usually hear in my head, but its utter calmness was a stark contrast to my agonizing about "how could she!" My calm self simply said, "you are reacting with pain to what she said." I immediately sat up. The tears stopped, and I became intensely interested in seeking the cause of my painful reaction. I realized it wasn't Amiya's words that hurt, and so it wasn't Amiya that I was to try to hurt back. It was a matter of turning around and having an honest look at my all-virtuous self-image. Whatever she said just didn't corroborate that image, and that was what hurt! For an example, if she had accused me of some kind of lying I could look within and remember the little fibs, evasions of the truth, and the probable lies that I didn't want to admit to because of my self-esteem. I began to feel a kind of glee in turning inward to destroy my false self-image, which was the actual culprit of my "hurt feelings." From that time on if I felt the sting of another's criticisms or put-downs it would be with a grateful "aha", and I would go about bringing some light on a dark clot of pain-causing self-deception. There were times when this was very difficult to do and I often failed badly.

I had picked up the old blue suitcase and a duffel bag, and then I waited expectantly for Maggie – I supposed. The place had emptied out as the passengers retrieved their luggage and departed. I sat alone for a long time in that cavernous building. I saw a woman approaching and she passed me by without glancing my way. I recognized Maggie despite her disguises. She continued to walk on a ways and turned around probably satisfied that I had not been followed! What I saw as an act of paranoia that she apparently felt was necessary and reasonable for protecting Shon in their now shared life of "looking over one's shoulder." That I had to henceforth comply in this bizarre zigzagging around a destination always grated on my nerves.

Maggie and I went to a department that handles registered births. I picked up a registration

of my birth, which was not much use in that it was not certified. Even Maggie realized the impossibility of Shon's hope that I could get someone else's birth certificate that I could use. When I later learned of his scheme it was clear that he was out of touch with reality to the point of being crazy.

Maggie and I boarded a plane for Detroit. On our arrival we went, probably roundabout, to a hotel. There I saw Shon and his little girl Calista. Maggie flopped on the bed as though relieved after doing her job. I sensed that her bringing me there was an intrusion on her exclusive relationship with Shon.

From Detroit we traveled by bus to Niagara Falls. Maggie had managed to bring along a hotel pillow for Shon's comfort. In a hotel at Niagara Falls Maggie made friends at the hotel bar, and plans were laid for us to go with them for a dinner party on the Canadian side. Maggie strapped gold coins around her body, and cash was strapped around me. We as a group of tourists, without luggage and in a hired cab, drove across the Rainbow Bridge. The officer at the Border control was told of our going for dinner in the Tower restaurant to enjoy the colored lights over the falls. We were allowed over this International Border without a problem.

During dinner Maggie disappeared to find us a hotel. She deposited the gold coins under the mattress and returned as we were having desert. Shon, Calista and I slipped out to go to the hotel. Maggie went back with the others to return with our luggage, as she was a Canadian citizen.

Maggie had contacted an old friend to drive us to Toronto. We settled in a hotel with a kitchen for a two-week stay. I kept up my irritating insistence of having my morning tea. Shon considered himself as knowledgeable about nutrition. What he dismissed as an unhealthy brew is now considered source of antioxidants. What I saw around our hotel were high concrete and glass buildings and asphalt streets, which was a shallow look at a city I came later to see as quite fabulous.

Another of Maggie's male friend's, and this one was recent, offered us to stay at a lakeside chalet on Lac Notre Dame out from Montreal. Laura, the ex-wife of her friend was a co-owner of the chalet. She showed up after we had moved in. She didn't object to our presence but rather fell in love with

Shon on first sight. How many times I have witnessed this phenomenon. Laura would drive us down the mountain to get our groceries. On one trip, and as the radio was playing, Shon turned to me in the backseat and said for me to take note of the significance of the next song, and he named the song. In a minute we were hearing that song. Laura turned to Shon and asked, "How did you do that?" How did he do it? At the end of my story I will include a few of my experiences for which I would appreciate someone's explanation.

Maggie deposited us at the chalet in Lac Notre Dame and then returned to Montreal. Shon left soon after to join her and leaving me to care for Calista. As they were together in Montreal Maggie acted as his sister in making liaisons with young and attractive women, just as Cal had done. She must have balked at doing this, and I see her cooperation as an example of her selfless devotion to him. Those women in turn seemed willing to do anything for Shon. One smitten young woman offered him her place and her bed for him to stay. Calista and I stayed there too for awhile. She had been told that I was Shon's mother. I've forgotten to mention that I refer to him as Shon but he had different names as he moved to different places. I don't remember what he was called at this point. She came to me and asked if she could hope to marry him, since she was thirty-three, and he had told her that he was twenty-five. I was non-committal. Actually Son was thirty-four years old. Shon loved to play tennis and he did a lot of this sport in Montreal. One of his "angels" brought him cold drinks. His tennis partner looked on cynically impressed.

Shon hoped that with the Maggie's help he could find the "right" women. With this elusive "woman" he sought to create a family of himself, his "mother" and Calista. He felt that that would be a perfect way to hide in Canada. Shon on his own was on the lookout for this "her." He walked around a University and stopped at a desk to ask a pretty woman for the time. Her name was Madeleine, and she later described to me her delirious exaltation of that encounter; of how she had driven around town savoring her new found love. What could I say? We were in a hotel in Quebec City before we had the invitation to be at the chalet at Lac Notre Dame. The rent was \$1000 a month for which I would exchange a gold coin for that amount in Canadian money. Shon invited Madeleine for dinner. When

she saw me at a slight distance I'm flattered that she thought that Shon might have another woman. Up close she realized that I was the right age to be his mother. I saw Madeleine as pretty, haughty and that she had latched on to Shon. He saw a lot of her during his frequent forays to Montreal after we had moved to the lake. On one of his sporadic returns to Lac Notre Dame he went over to the other side of the lake and found a chalet for sale. I was with him at the prospective buyer's home in Montreal. Shon sat there flipping a huge wad of U.S. currency as he negotiated the purchase. The sale was completed, but it had to be registered by a Notary. Shon couldn't own any thing in his name for obvious reasons, so he put the chalet in Madeleine's name under a cover letter, which stated that I, Ruth Folling was the real owner. The Notary was puzzled that I couldn't produce any I.D. to prove I was who I said I was. I couldn't tell him that my passport, driver's license, and Social Security card had been confiscated and destroyed by Shon. However he took my word for the name I gave to him. A difficulty arose in Madeleine being named in the chalet transaction. She was married and had not told Shon this. He immediately became paranoid that her husband might try to get a hold of the property. Now he had the problem of removing her name from the Deed.

He brought me down with him to Montreal to help in his search for another "right one." I was to approach young women and say, "My son is producing a documentary on the life and struggles of single women, and if they have a child all the better." I lied to the women something in that vein. Now I was doing it! In a boutique I came upon Sylvie. In time I learned that she was twenty-six years old and had left her husband because he was into drugs. She lived in a co-op apartment that she part owned and helped to administer. Amazingly she had a son about the same age as Calista. She had her friends over for tea and sympathy, and she advised them about their problems. She seemed to me to have an angelic nature, with utter integrity, honesty and social concern as she volunteered to help in an old people's home. She was also finishing her college studies and held down a part time job. I would be getting ahead in my story to speak of the corruption of this paragon of a virtuous young woman.

An appointment was made for her to meet Shon in a café. Apparently it was a matter of her instant adoration of this man. Within a few days of her meeting Shon I read a letter that she had written to him in her broken English. She expressed her desire to please him in every way – an echo of the Kauai type devotional letter. Again I have to ask, “What did this guy have that enslaved people to him?” As far as I can see he is totally unyielding. He only takes. He controls, uses, abuses, and discards others apparently without a qualm. Kari, who had been his queen bee, and whom he treated rather well, finally got out from under his domination. Sylvie left him after having four children by him. Her intention was to write a book, *Ten Years of Abuse*. From the first she had happily turned over her substantial inheritance to him, which he squandered on his whims and desires. He demanded of Sylvie an absolute obedience to himself. I never saw her complain about this. Seeing her subservience to her “god” I often thought how much like the Catholic nuns she was in that the nuns were obedient to the Rule as the will of their God. Somehow Sylvie came to rationalize her cooperation with Shon’s cruel treatment and severe deprivations of her own son as well as of myself. How powerful seems to be the need of turning to the “other”, real or imagined for the fulfillment of the need for love; a need that can get under the skin of our socializing to where “anything goes” in the attempt to please “him” or “her”.

My psychological analyzing aside, the practical business at that time was to have Sylvie’s name substituted for Madeleine’s on the document of sale. She, Madeleine and I were in the office of the Notary for that delicate purpose. I think that Shon had made it clear to her that her name had to be removed because she was married. I was to imply that Sylvie was just a convenient stranger. I pretended to doze off a little as though all this was just a dull legal formality. Sylvie was asked to give her full name and address, but Shon had forbidden her to say where she lived lest his presence be traced. Despite this anomaly the Notary trusted Sylvie for her sweetness and innocents. He called me “the swan.” In these my last years I think of Huxley’s novel *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, as I would be mindful of the impermanence of life’s forms.

Earlier Shon had given money to Madeleine to buy a jeep for him. He had an accident up in the mountains, but from fear of being questioned by the police he fled the scene of the accident. This left Madeleine to pay for the insurance, and be penalized with “points” on her driving record, which is a serious matter in Canada. Shon had told her an outlandish story of why he was illegally in Canada, and she was besotted with him enough to take the brunt of his actions. She even accepted the gall of his insistence that she must give him back all the money when she sold the jeep!

We were without transportation so we had to move in with Sylvie in Montreal. She bought a second-hand Volvo, and trips were made to the chalet – usually without me. Once we were settled into her co-op apartment I spoke to Shon about his freely going into the city with Sylvie. I warned him that, “Hell knows no fury like a woman scorned.” should Madeleine see them together. And she did! She tore out of a restaurant and created a scene on the street. Shon had betrayed her, and what incensed her the more was that she saw that Sylvie was pregnant!

After this episode Shon decided to sell the chalet. Sylvie traveled to Nova Scotia and found a suitable house. Shon went up to see it and he remained there. Sylvie returned to Montreal to cut her ties with her family, friends, her home, her job and her independent life to follow this Pied Piper. I prepared for our up-coming trip to Nova Scotia by cooking a pot of beans and potatoes for us to eat on the way. At our first stop Sylvie went into the restaurant connected to our hotel and had a hot meal with fish. She left me in the room to eat cold beans. Her “social concern for the “old” had evaporated in her following Shon’s instructions to do just what she did do. She could plead, “I was only obeying orders.” O God! I too am guilty of this.

The newly acquired house was in Parsboro, a small town in Nova Scotia that had recently become famous for the discovery of dinosaur fossils. A catholic church was next door, and there was an R.C.M.P. station a short way down the road. Shon’s paranoia flared every time he saw a police car drive by. Shon’s first problem was to decide how I could be kept isolated from their lives. The house was huge as it had an upstairs and a down stairs. He finally settled on a small room for me. It

was upstairs next to stairs that led down to a dreary room with a toilet but no sink. I was to use this grungy little room for a painting studio as well. Down a short hallway from my room was a door that opened to where Shon and Sylvie had the master bedroom and the children their large rooms. They all used a large bathroom with a bathtub. Shon had a thing about soaking for a long time in bathtubs, and it seemed he would stay in a shower forever. I was only allowed in their part of the house to clean it. Sylvie was not to lift a finger in the cleaning, the dishwashing and the laundry. I had no access to water for my personal bathing, and I simply forgot about brushing my teeth, even if I had a toothbrush and toothpaste, which I did not have.

In my drab and unheated studio I was to do paintings, which Shon would sign as the artist. He gave these paintings to those who were influential in the town, such as the Priest, our new neighbors, and others whom he met. He was aiming at establishing a friendly relationship with this small community. Perhaps no one remembered the warning of, “Beware of Greeks come bearing gifts.”

Soon after our arrival the Priest invited us to a sumptuous meal. It was my last real supper! The Father often sought Shon out to talk with him. He seemed captivated by “what?”, as were others who met him. As a family we went to church, presumably as Catholics, Shon going for the sake of appearances, and I beginning to feel attracted to Jesus in a Vedantic sense. Besides my job of doing the paintings, I was to write letters in Shon’s name. The letters had to be at least twenty pages or more! In my letter writing I could express my insights about religion and philosophy that I had accumulated from my years in the Convent. The people received them practically as epistles from this mysterious and intriguing new comer.

I did many portraits from the photos of the members of the community, especially of their children. I became good at copying the Old Masters such as Vermeer, Van Gogh, Rembrant, Leonardo and etc. But I had to be locked out of sight as I worked lest anyone discover that Shon was not the artist.

Shon continued his sham of being ill with some vague disease. It was his way of keeping out eager admirers from barging in on him. One time Sylvie had difficulty in restraining one parishioner

who had been told by her that Shon was upstairs suffering great pain. He wanted to brush by her to get to the side of “his brother” that he might pray for him. How everyone was blinded to Shon's robust health is a mystery.

Sylvie’s time to give birth to her baby approached. She traveled to another town for the delivery of a girl, Felicia. She had given some lame excuse for leaving town, as she wanted to avoid it being discovered that she was not married to Shon. We remained in Parsboro for another year after Sylvie returned. Shon had always felt claustrophobic in this small town where everyone was interested if not nosey about everyone else. We moved to Brookville, which was about twenty miles out from town and where there were virtually no neighbors. The property was reached by turning off the highway and down a steep hill to a valley floor. The house was set back about two hundred yards from the shoreline. The front yard was spacious, a huge triangle of grassland, bounded by streams that flowed down to mingle with one another as they reached the sea. I took many walks on the sandy shore, and I could look up at dramatic palisades. In the distance I saw a monumental rock to walk towards, and there were smaller fascinating rock formations along the way. I have pleasant memories of the beauty of this Nova Scotia coastline.

We were on the Bay of Fundy, which is famous for it’s very high and low tides. In the summer months at full moon the tides go so far out that the highly nutritious seaweed called *dolce* is revealed. I gathered and dried the *dolce* on the hot sands. In the same season the surrounding hills were lush with blue berries. I spent hours gathering the berries for others, and at the same time I could stuff myself with them to supplement the paucity of my diet.

The house had a living room, a fully equipped kitchen, a small bathroom, and there were sideboard heaters. The Master bedroom covered the whole of the upstairs. It had windows that opened to a wide and lovely view. I thought this made the house particularly desirable. Shon and Sylvie shared the room with Calista, Nicola who was Sylvie’s little boy, and Felicia in a crib.

Down stairs was a large back room. It was meant to be a studio for a former owner. It had a door to the outside, and there was an inner door,

which opened to the back entrance. This door led into the main part of the house, and it had a half window. This was my room for two years. Once I ventured into the entranceway. I looked through the window into a smaller room opening to the kitchen. I saw a yogurt maker that we had used at the chalet. I realized that they made yogurt. I was not given any of it. Sylvie saw me. I hesitate to say that she caught me, but there was a sneer on her pretty face. I was sure she intended to report me. From then on that inside door was kept locked from the other side.

Shon was always a pack rat. Kari had complained of his taking up storage space by piling up huge boxes of old clothes and useless items. In the back of my room he did the same thing, and he added the children's broken toys to the junk. He brought in a huge inflated inner tube presumably to be used for playing in the surf, but the ocean was never warm enough for that. He had a devilish grin as he added this ugly thing to the other useless stuff.

There was a large freezer on the side of a wall. He hid a small piece of paper under the lid so he would know if I had opened the freezer to see what was inside. All the items I might want from the refrigerator also had those precautionary pieces of paper! My living space was contracted around my single iron bed and an old Barka-lounger from the Parsboro house. I put up a makeshift screen to hide the ugliness in the back of the room. We had moved to Brookville in the summer so I had yet to miss the lack of any heating arrangements. Shon was disappointed that there was any electricity in the room at all, since there was evidence that the interior of the room hadn't been completed. Occasionally Shon had guests from town, and I was invited into the main part of the house, as the guests would expect me to be there. I remember the visit of the Father and his housekeeper Nun. Sylvie was with us. I was expected to do a little play-acting so I began to whine about being a neglected mother in law. Perhaps it was because of my real mistreatment that I actually began to choke up and cry. It was fascinating to see the Father and the Nun snap into their roles as spiritual comforters! Sylvie was pleased with my "performance." At other times I was not allowed to even use the bathroom. I "went" outside. I had no sink in my room, and any bathing or washing of my clothes was as impossible as it had been in Parsboro. I watched as Sylvie regularly hung out machine-washed laundry. Others have

exclaimed that my not being able to bathe was one of the most shocking and outrageous aspects of my "Shon experience." But for me it was the terrible hunger, and come winter the struggle to keep warm. I'd wake-up in the morning and have to scrape the ice from my windows. I covered them with cardboard as some kind of insulation, but it didn't help much. I wore a piece of woolen under pants under my jeans that had belonged to Sylvie's ex-husband. I came upon a very stained and used parka lying on a rock. It had been left forgetfully by a Postman who had become devoted to Shon. He must have been doing a job for Shon. I was aware of appropriating it to help keep warm. I even wore it to bed.

I insisted on having more blankets. Shon gave them to me reluctantly as though I was selfishly depriving others. He always implied this when he provided me with anything – including food! These blankets, unused, were kept folded and put away in the entrance area closet. A comedy of errors arose when I asked Sylvie for a hot water bottle. She could not translate this term into French and was upset with my request. I eventually got a hot water bottle, but it sprang a leak. Shon wangled an electric pad from one of those to whom had been so "generous." There was no question of buying me one. I thought of a chicken light for some warmth, as they are used to warm newly hatched chicks. Shon got one for me since it was a light bulb. It hung over my bed, and I was to use it when I sat up in bed to write those letters in Shon's name

My breakfast was oatmeal with watered-down skim milk powder. It was given to me in a beaten-up and stained plastic bowl. I suggested peanut butter as part of my diet arguing that it didn't cost much. For lunch a minimal amount of the peanut butter was put on one half of a day old McDonald's type hot dog bun. This was topped with a poached egg and delivered to me on a broken dish. I added some dolce that I had gathered from the beach. Supper was soup of thickened white flour, mainly potatoes and with the core of a cabbage or the thick stems of broccoli. In Parsboro I had gathered lots of dandelion greens to supplement my soup, but they didn't grow well out there. I still insisted on my tea, but it was not given to me without long delays.

Sylvie handed me my food and tea through the inside door. In winter she would sheath her arm in

the sleeve of a sheepskin coat to make it appear that they also suffered from the cold. Later I observed the coat placed by the door for that purpose. Shon and Sylvie had heat in their part of the house. Shon took those leisurely baths that I spoke about. Sylvie was a superb cook and she prepared plentiful meals – at least for Shon and Calista. A large TV was in their living room. I feel that Sylvie, in her hunger to please Shon and gain his affection was dragged to unfamiliar depths by his demonic demands.

“That terrible food” as Sylvie described it in a letter that she wrote to me years later. The “doggie bowl”, broken dishes, the hunger, cold and humiliations were a far cry from, “I do care about you. I love you and I am your eternal friend.” I walked down a “yellow brick road” to my disillusionment, being blinded by my illusion that Shon was some kind of Wizard of Oz. It’s not that I didn’t have some warning. Shon told me of his interpretation of the Book of Job. He took everything away from me, but now I feel grateful for all that I have back, which I used to just take for granted. In this sense I can thank him as a friend, as well as for my wiser “no hope” perspective. On an occasion Shon made a koan-like statement that I can meditate on. We were walking back and forth on a patch of beach at Brookville. Sylvie would have been able to see us from the house. He suddenly stopped, and looking at me said, “Theoretically I don’t exist. All that exists is Love.”

Early one afternoon Shon brought in for me a small TV. I watched the 5 o’clock news shortly after he brought it in. David Mansbridge announced Christopher Isherwood’s death of cancer at age eighty-two. (Christopher was an old friend. He and I had lived at the Hollywood Vedanta Center in the early 1940s, during a time when he was collaborating with Swami Prabhavananda on what would become a widely-read translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*.) This was the only time that Shon allowed me a TV. He removed it after the newscast

My food rations improved near the end of my incarceration at Brookville. Shon had set out a net to catch herring at high tide. There was enough fish that I could have some in my soup. This didn’t cost Shon anything. I’ve often thought that some of Shon’s deprivations had to do with having to spend money. He was mind-bogglingly stingy! He had a chicken coup built. He didn’t want to share the few

eggs so he lied that the eggs were mal-formed and uneatable. Beehives were put out. Shon came to me and falsely complained that hundreds of bees had died – the implication being – don’t expect any honey. Shon’s centripetal selfishness expanded only to his own flesh and blood and to Sylvie when she was pregnant or nursing. He knew that people admired a generous person. He had put up a good show of that in public.

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A small storage shed was a few yards from the side of the house. It became my studio. I was confined there for hours and sometimes over night in painting portraits and other kinds of paintings. These were meant to be those generous gifts from Shon. I actually enjoyed doing the painting and particularly the challenge of copying the Old Masters. From attempting this I learned new techniques that stretched my abilities beyond what I had produced in Santa Barbara. I later used what I had learned to once again make a living by my painting.

In the winter I used a bucket in the shed as my toilet, and I had to carry it through three feet of snow to empty it in the woods. I could go in and out of the shed for this purpose. Shon brought my food in a container when I was painting, and he put it on the step. He unlocked the door and then moved twenty feet away with his back to the shed. He wanted to avoid being polluted by the paint fumes when the door was opened for a few seconds. He came back and locked the door. In his paranoid fantasy a stranger might come on the property and out of curiosity open the shed door. With the door locked what would I have done if there had been a fire?

These are just the highlights of an outrageous litany. Even today it is with dropped-jaw amazement that I write to you about them. I haven’t included what I had gleaned years later about the abuse of Sylvie’s boy Nicola, and of Sylvie herself. I’m including the letter, which I mentioned receiving from her years later

*“Hello Granny,*

*I want to wish you the best for 1994! At this time I want to tell you the truth because you deserve to know what really happened. When we lived in Parsboro in 1985 I witness you being subjected to cruel abuse and also my son Nicola. George burned his hand – starved him. Later we moved to Brookville. I became the victim myself. He pulled the hair off my head and then he hit me. I was always bruised nose bleed – black eyes – and all my body covered because he hit me with a ski pole. You were always in the studio so couldn’t hear. But it was worse – sodomy – sexual to mention few. Then Nicola chained day and night in the bath - room for year until he was bleeding – starving I was choked one time and two. Other time he put a pillow on my hear and I thought I was “gone.” (I know you were suffering also) We were all starving except himself. I was ordered to prepare gourmet meal sometime even deer meat or even once the goose even when I was pregnant with Shawn I was constantly abused. At that time I realized he was mentally really sick, and it was a blessing to see Nicola on TV [in a missing-child advertisement] and I was relief to return him to his father. George used to set us up telling each other about each other (I never said anything about you and he ordered me to make that terrible food for you. He fooled me good and he fooled you good.”*

There are other parts of her letter concerning her estimations about Shon. This is her profile of George Dube AKA Shon.

*“He has no conscience  
totally self-centered (self-indulgent)  
has poor judgement  
no patience  
has no restraint  
doesn’t learn from experience  
he has the ability to impress and exploit others  
he is totally impaired in his relationships  
low tolerance of stress  
reject authority  
lie constantly  
rationalize and project guilt  
irritable, disappoint and distress others  
unable to understand and accept ethical values – “*

Everyone can agree that Shon was a sociopath and monstrously abusive, and they call for his punishment under the law. But the question looms large as to why I put up with the abuse. It is difficult to give a plausible answer. Somewhere in myself I resolved to stick it out. It did not occur to me to cry out to family and friends to rescue me from the consequences of my wrong choices. I just rallied my wits to cope from day to day. I wasn’t docile either, as I would pound on that inner door and scream out my protestations sounding like a mad woman! This scared Sylvie and she became fearful that I might go to others, or to the dreaded R.C.M.P. This would be the end of their hiding. I suspect that Sylvie actually wanted this in her heart. It didn’t occur to me to do that either

At times in my life I have called myself a “hard nut to crack.” It is an apt analogy. The shell of my image of “I” petrified in a name and definitions is as resistant to being cracked as a walnut. Spiritually speaking cracking the nut of “I” is necessary in order to discover the “Meat” of the real I. Everyone is enclosed in such a shell unless they are enlightened. Therefore the world is populated with “nuts”! Forgive the double entendre, but aren’t we all a little crazy? Someone said that what is called sanity is shared illusions – the illusion of “I and other”.

In my youth I was drawn to the non-dual Vedanta. I had that powerful living room epiphany. My so-called devotion resulted in my being emotionally trapped in an attachment, a fantasy of loving a separate personal “Other”, which did not lead me beyond my “I.” In the enclave of the Convent my separate sense of “I” remained intact, and was fortified by the spiritual connotation of being titled a “nun” or a “Pravrajika.” I remained divided in my spiritual aspirations. Eagerly listening to lectures on the non-dual aspect of Vedanta, I made efforts to assimilate these truths. But I was immersed in the narrative myths of Hinduism, and particularly our reading of the day to day story of Ramakrishna, which made him so human and spiritually charismatic. I performed the rituals and mouthed Sanskrit mantras. I think the shell of my “I” was hardened not cracked by my piety. Convent life for this reason and other experiences became painfully futile and I left.

Then there was a seven-year period of being involved in Trungpa's teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. "Cutting through" the spiritual materialism of the concept of a separate "I" is a way of "shell-cracking," but my mindfulness practices were too shallow to protect me from being caught in Shon's sticky web. I can thank Shon for his unrelenting grip on his kind of "nut-cracker." With it he crushed my hope, "1: Trust, Reliance. 2: desire accompanied with the expectation of fulfillment. 3: one that gives promise of the future" (Merriam Webster). I'm wondering how I could have felt and wrote to Shon, "I've found in you someone whom I can trust absolutely." In our life experiences it can be expected that we could lose trust in other people and things, but never, ever, give up hope in the "promises of the future." I'm remembering the koan that Fritz gave to me. It was "All that exists is Now."

Fritz had also said to me, "If you are grateful, you are cured of resentment." It may seem improbable that I am grateful to Shon. In any case resenting him would be like resenting the bad weather when I voluntarily step out into it. I had been badly "conned," but I bought it! I'm sure that Shon feels that his maniacal treatment of me was for my spiritual good. Hitler evidently felt his actions were for the good of the German people. I'm convinced that no one perceives himself or herself an evildoer

I would not personally seek for Shon's imprisonment. However, I've had an on-going prediction in my mind that a full-grown Nicola might well so seek. He was a precocious child. He learned to speak English in two weeks after Sylvie got together with Shon. I observed how over time he came to hate both of them. He hated his mother for abandoning him for Shon and to Shon. But he was cunning in submitting to Shon out of what he must have felt as a sheer need to survive. If I should ever be called upon to testify in his case against Shon's abuse of him I would. Such child-abuse cases are not subject to the Statute of Limitations

I made a prediction to Shon that it would be the picture of Nicola on the desks of the R.C.M.P., and not of Calista, even though Kari had called on the Law to help find her daughter. Sylvie made an agreement with Nicola's father that she would return him after a year. Three years had passed. Sylvie

assumed that he wouldn't care. It made sense to me that Nicola's father would want to know where his son was, and I said so. One morning soon after I had warned Shon he happened to glance back at the TV, and just in time to see Nicola's picture and name on Child Find. He panicked as he imagined people in the town would have seen it as well. He called on his devoted Postman to drive himself, Calista and me to Toronto. His paranoia erupted into an explosive need to get out of town – and fast! Sylvie was to remain and handle whatever might arise from the announcement on TV, but nothing came of it. She began stuffing her spindly boy with food in the hope of fattening him up. Nicola had not grown at all, whereas Calista had shot up inches. Sylvie intended to return Nicola to his father and beg for mercy

Within an hour after Shon's panic shock we piled into the Postman's car-truck and were on our way. To what, I wondered.

The front seat of the car had room for three people. The back had been converted to a kind of pick-up truck. The Postman must have used it for the mail and parcels he delivered. Shon, Calista and the Postman sat in the cab that had a heater. Such had been Shon's rush that I was rudely helped into the back. An old sleeping bag was tossed over me, not even giving me enough time to get into it. The trip of eight or nine hours climaxed Shon's acts of what I can only call his cruelty. There was the agonizing cold, as it was January; the confinement in a cramped space, the awful discomfort of being bumped up and down on a lumpy metal floor. Shon looked in on me at the first stop. I asked to get out and have something to eat with them. His answer was, "of course not." He brought me back a box of what we used to call a "doggie bag".

Was there no compassion in the Postman? Poor man – he was like Sylvie and others, utterly spellbound in following Shon's instructions. Part of Shon's ploy with the Postman was to use Sylvie's extreme prettiness to attract him to her. He had also

used this baiting method in Kauai. All the guys were encouraged to vie for Kari, and they hated each other the more in the competition. Sylvie was to encourage the Postman in his becoming smitten with her and at the same time to persuade him to perceive me as an insufferable, over-bearing mother-in law. She told him that I was always spying on them. Apparently the Postman did go so far as to kiss Sylvie, and I was supposed to have seen this and been outraged etc. This could be a partial explanation for his cooperating with my “torture”.

When we arrived in Toronto the pressing necessity in Shon’s mind was to contact his faithful servant Maggie. She came and checked us into a hotel. The Postman on returning to Parsboro was to wait a week and then pick up his beloved Sylvie and Nicola and drive them down to our hotel. I have found that wherever Shon is he draws attention to himself by the strange behavior surrounding him. On an occasion Maggie and I were not allowed into the room for a period. We had to sit out in the hall and were uncomfortably aware of the confused and inquiring glances of the staff.

Speaking of the strange, I had an experience at the hotel of what seemed to be an incident of Shon’s powers. A fire alarm was sounded. People were instructed by loudspeaker to leave their rooms and exit by the stairs as the elevators were now shut down. I happened to be alone in the room, and Shon came to get me. We walked to the elevator and Shon pressed the down button. It opened for us and we arrived at the hotel lobby. The elevator door opened and we walked out as all eyes looked at us in amazement

But I want to go back to the drama in the hotel room. A lot of us were confined in a small space, and Maggie was often with us. I watched as Nicola struck his mother with a bitter cry of, “You always dress me in rags!” I was surprised at her utterly passive response to her son’s accusation. One night Shon pushed her out of their bed. She didn’t complain and with that same passivity. Sylvie slept the rest of the night on the floor. How submissive could she get? There was still that “thing” about food. Sylvie prepared large wrap-around sandwiches for Shon, Calista and now Nicola. Since she was not allowed to make one for me she tried to filch food from a buffet table in the dining room for me. Maggie told me that she almost got into trouble

for this. I don’t remember what I was given to eat. Shon did offer me a dried peach. I knew it had been sulfur-dried (and so did he), because I had been put on a raw food diet plus dried fruits as a child. I had been told that sulfur-dried fruit was unhealthful. I mentioned all this to Shon. I didn’t mind how the peach had been dried, but its sweetness would hurt my teeth. I declined his offer. Sylvie was only with us for the time it would take for she and Shon to instruct Nicola as to what he was to say and not to say to his father to whom she was to deliver him in Montreal. Amazingly when Nicola was returned he held out for a long time before revealing all.

We left the hotel in Toronto and Maggie drove us to a near-by city. Shon, Calista and I were ensconced in a cheap motel room. It had a mini kitchen. Shon drew the invisible line that I wasn’t to cross in case I might want to look in the refrigerator! He kept food in it for himself and Calista. They sat on their single bed with their backs to me as they ate their meal. I lay on my bed hungry. Maggie brought me some bread and cheese – bless her.

Maggie bought a newspaper and began looking for a house or apartment to rent. It was January and the worst time of the year to expect to find much. However there was a house advertised in Niagara on the Lake. Maggie knew of this area as very beautiful having many orchards of peaches, apricots, apples and acres of grapevines. It has recently become famous for it’s wines, particularly ice wine. Niagara on the Lake was once voted the prettiest town in Canada.

An appointment was made to come and see if the house was suitable. It was a few miles out from the center of town. It was reached by driving down what is called a firelane to the edge of Lake Ontario. Meeting the young owners Shon and Maggie played a young married couple. I thought they were being ridiculous in their forthcoming about a marital problem – Shon’s impotence! Was this a weird seeking to be thought of as honest people? Shon and Maggie were enthusiastic about the place. I was too. Almost as an after thought the owners mentioned a single living arrangement down on the lake. It was decided that we might as well look at it. As I climbed down the stairs next to the deck I heard and saw the pounding of the waves on the shore. It was evening. The inside seemed gloomy with a lot of furniture seen in a dim light. It had been a

boathouse converted into an open space concept. A small kitchen had a separating kitchen counter. A sleeping area was set apart by a narrow closet the length of a bed. There was a wall to the sitting room and sliding closet doors to the bed area. We passed the sleeping area to look into a very small room that was ready to have a toilet, shower, and sink installed along with a sink in the kitchen. At the time this apartment was used as a bedroom for a visiting mother-in-law.

A deal was made on the spot. Shon offered them six thousand dollars in cash for six months rent to be handed over with the signing of the lease. I suggested to Shon that he might want to include the lake apartment for keeping their lives separate from mine. Shon thought this a good idea and it was included in the deal. This boathouse apartment has been my little spot on earth since February '88 till August 2004 as I write. The young owners, having the promise of six thousand dollars in cash, thought it a Godsend. It was an unexpected help for their upcoming move to Florida. They began the finishing of my space right away, and they realized that the improvements increased the value of their property. I had to sign the lease as Doreen Spencer, which was a name taken off a deceased person's birth certificate that they had some how got a hold of, and I then became stuck with the name. Jody sometime refers to me as R.S.D. – Ruth, Sarada, and Doreen.

Calista remained with them at the lake until Shon arranged for Maggie to take her to Seattle, Washington where Kari lived. Maggie arrived at Kari's place as had been mutually planned. There were police officers present to supervise Calista's return. Shon sent along her bike, her clothes, and the paintings that I had done of her. Kari was so happy to finally have her obviously healthy and normal daughter back that she dropped any charges against Shon. I had observed how Shon had always treated Calista like a little princess in contrast to his treating of Nicola – I almost wrote, as a stray dog. She was always given the best food, and he provided her with everything to make a child happy.

Sylvie returned Nicola to his father, but it was through lawyers. She was afraid he would charge her for abducting his child. She joined Shon in his newly rented house. Maggie was always near at hand. She provided them a TV, an air-purifier, and transportation when necessary. This scene of

“domestic musical chairs” would have confused the young owners now in Florida.

Fortunately my place came completely furnished but with second-hand things of course. There were bedding, knives and forks, cooking pots and dishes. The young owners thought to bring me down a teakettle and a hotplate before they left. But there was no improvement in the food I was given. It was the same white flour, and I had to insist on a cabbage for a vegetable. I managed to convince Shon that sliced cheese and V8 juice was not expensive. Once Sylvie brought me a bag of potatoes that had grown sprouts four inches long. I asked her if the potatoes had been bought in this condition from the market. She must have railed inwardly at having to answer, “yes”.

Up at their place were large containers of dried fruits, nuts, and grains, as well as a sack of %100 whole-wheat flour. Sylvie had mentioned in her latter-day letter that she had insisted that these foods be given to me when they left the lake. They were. After their departure Maggie was at the house to gather up all the household items into a van. I stood by as she emptied the refrigerator. As she stuffed these odds and ends of perishable food into a box, probably to be thrown out, I asked if I could have these tasty looking leftovers. In obvious obedience to Shon my request was denied. I came to know later that if I had helped myself to what was in those large containers I would not have been given the fruits, nuts etc. when they left. Shon's acts of tyranny to the end!

Our move to the lake was on the first of February 1988. By April Shon was restless to get back to the States. First he and Sylvie made a trip back to the house in Nova Scotia. They took with them Felicia and a new baby Shawn. They spent a month there during which time they were able to sell the house (on paper the house legally belonged to me), and then they returned to the lake. With the money from the sale of “my” house they were ready to cross the Border. Shon assumed that I would be coming with them. I made it clear that I would remain in Canada. Considering that I had no money, no legal status, and no identification my decision to stay could have seemed wildly irrational, but for me to go with Shon would have been insane!

I had looked out of my window and considered the stones on the shore. I realized that I

could use them as canvases for Indian faces and wildlife studies, that I could sell my stone-art and start making a living. I had the paints and brushes from my work in Nova Scotia. I knew it would take some experimenting in priming the stones for the oil paints. My ideas resulted in first selling my painted stones to the neighbors, and then at craft-shows. Later I will tell you the details of having little places to go to everyday to paint and sell my stones. Barada, I have the conviction that if we have a clear picture in our minds of our intentions it is as though the universe responds by bringing about the needed circumstances.

The day that Shon and Sylvie were to leave for the States they asked me to go with them as they planned to cross the Rainbow Bridge on foot. I was to act as the “granny” to give an air of a Canadian family on a day’s outing to visit the other side of the Falls. Maggie was prepared to follow with their luggage and things in her car. Having done this for them I walked back over the Bridge exulting in being a free woman. I had a cup of tea before getting a taxi back home. Shon had given me \$50. The taxi cost me \$20. I wondered why I felt no anxiety about my situation! Maggie as I learned had been instructed to help me out. One afternoon as she drove me home from grocery shopping, and on turning into my place I said out of the blue, “I’ve never looked into the Bible.” Shon had left me a small portable TV that I kept at my bedside. I happened on a program called “Faith Twenty.” At the end of the program the Minister offered a free booklet for daily Bible study. I called the station and asked that I might be sent such a booklet. They gave my name to one of the members of the Church who lived within walking distance from me. She called me and feeling her friendliness I asked if I could go with her to her Church. The following Sunday she picked me up and with her I went to Church with a serious intent for the first time in my life. My first impression of the congregation was that they sang the hymns with such gusto and musicality that it seemed their singing was lifting the roof. This even brought tears to my eyes. Thus began my Christian-Bible exploration. After the Service my newfound friend invited me to dinner. I had Sunday dinner with her and her husband for the years that I attended the Church.

I gathered that the mainstream denominations looked with a cocked head at the Christian Reformed

Church. The Evangelicals were sure that the Christian Reformed members were not really “saved.” I considered the Church members to be a thinking body of people. I assumed that my take on Genesis, which I considered as an allegorical story pointing to a deeper truth but not to be taken literally would be acceptable. However, I never spoke of my views to others. Actually no one ever spoke of his or her “faith.” This puzzled me in that after a sermon people would go into the recreation room for coffee or to another member’s home and there was never any discussion about what the Pastor had said.

In time I learned the narrative of the Bible and the characters of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac and Ishmael, of Jacob and Esau, of Joseph, Moses, and the stories of David and more. Soon I could quote the Bible like the parishioners. I was baptized into the Church in May of ’89, and under the name of Doreen Spencer by which I had become known. Recently I have read a book by Tom Harper *The Pagan Christ*, that the whole of the New Testament and the Old Testament are allegorical and not to be taken literally! He quotes from Alvin Boyd Kuhn; “There is not one iota of history as we know it in the entire Bible!” The thesis goes that the ancient and universal allegories have been retold in the Biblical account and that we miss the deep spiritual truths if we insist on the people and stories as historical – even of Jesus. Barada, I’m sure most Hindus do not take their stories in the Ramayana, the Gita, and the Bhagavatam, of Krishna dancing with the Gopis and the epic tales of Rama and Sita, as historical fact. Do you?

After parting from Shon I was in a six months period of creative excitement. I expressed my freed-up energy in my painting and in writing poetry. In a spontaneous out-pouring I wrote an almost versified telling of my story culminating at the point of my attraction to Jesus. My devotion was a notch deeper and more compatible than our living room Bhakta. I mailed this short Memoir to Dennis and he passed it on to you at the Convent, and then to others. You wrote to me in a heart-felt sympathy on my finding my proper Ishtham or Chosen Ideal. Dennis reacted with offense in my turning to Christianity. He had had negative experiences of “us and them” exclusivity in relating to Christians.

As to practical matters Dennis and Jody went to the office of the U.S. Social Security and laid

their lives on the line, as it were, in declaring that I was alive and needed to have my Social Security card reissued to me. It was. Dennis came to Canada with my certified birth certificate and certificate of divorce. We drove over to Buffalo in his rented car to apply for any Social Security benefit I might have accrued. It was \$94. By an odd good luck, Dennis had kept our joint tax returns from the early 1970s, which showed my earnings at Metamorphosis.

I met Marilyn at a craft show. She had come over to my table to see what I had produced. She and her husband Bill had just moved into a beautiful house and property next door, and that fact surprised us both when we made the connection. She happened to be looking for some domestic help and I got a job of a couple of hour's work twice a week.

In Parsboro I had to do all the work inside and outside the house. There were the dishes and laundry and cleaning up the mess and disorder created by Shon and the children. He said that if I expected to eat any of the food grown in the garden I had to do the weeding. I spent hours on my knees in this task. There were beans, squash, cabbage, rutabagas, and a couple of other things, and I received only some of the rutabagas. Dandelion greens were my main vegetable that I found growing wild. In Brookville they didn't grow very well. My work there was all outside but doing my painting in the shed. Two beautiful white geese landed on the property, and if I had a tidbit to offer them I would call out, "Come goose, come goose", and they would quickly round the corner. My daily job was to clean up their excessive droppings so that Calista could play on the grass. This was all a kind of slave labor under a demanding over-seer.

But working for Marilyn was a pleasant and friendly experience. I found I could call up the fine points of housekeeping that I had learned – reluctantly – from Prabha. As a young girl my Aunt Ben taught me the right way to iron a shirt and this was useful as my job included ironing Marilyn's clothes – mostly shirts. My work was light and the hours short, but it meant a supplement to my income. For this I am thankful to Marilyn, Prabha and my Aunt Ben.

Marilyn was working as a flight attendant for Air Canada, but Bill, having sold his investment firm, was retired. On Marilyn's flights to Bombay, India she arranged for items of clothing and jewelry

to be imported for her proposed Import shop in the town of Port Dalhousie. I sat in her shop while she was on a ten-day flight, and I could also sell my stones, a few of which she had put in the store. Around the corner of the hall was what was called "The Little Gallery", and it was for rent. Marilyn gave up her importing venture, and I moved into a gallery space about the size of a big closet but with a window. It had glass doors that opened out and shelves were attached to them. I had enough space to fill the shelves and hang pieces on the walls. There wasn't a lot of traffic on this second floor shop, but people, often by chance, would show up and be surprised by and interested in my artwork. People bought what I did, and I began to make a living in selling my painted stones, which were unique at the time. Bill had driven me back and forth when I was sitting in for Marilyn, and now I had a problem of getting to my gallery. Fortunately I inherited a bike from a parishioner. However, I was fearful of biking on a two mile stretch to the Canal, as people drove about fifty miles an hour. I hitchhiked to the Canal, and the kind people who had picked me up let me out and I walked a short distance to where I had parked my bike at the back of the Church. I biked the last four miles on the sidewalks.

As I gathered stones on my beach I needed large stones to use for my wildlife studies etc. I was also on the look out for small stones about the size of a quarter or a 50-cent piece. These were meant for paintings of the face of Jesus. On the backsides of these stones I wrote, "Come follow me." — Math, 4:19 and my name. With a couple of these stones in my pocket I stood on Ladera Lane holding up a sign saying, "to the Canal." This is a man-made canal, Barada, that allows ships from the States, overseas, and from with Canada to go both ways through a series of locks. The Canal was about two miles from where I stood hoping to get a lift. I met a lot of kindly people over an eight-year period. When they let me out from my goings and returning I thanked them with one of my Jesus stones. I could have been called a Jesus freak and an evangelist at this period! I still would agree that following Jesus, his teachings and his example is a worthy thing to do – or attempt to do. There are hundreds of these little stones out there. I often meet people who stop me and pull out a Jesus stone from their purse or pocket to show me, or to tell me that their stone was on

their living room mantle. I came to be known by many in the community as the Rock Lady. A local newspaper wrote an article about my work as “The Lady of the Lake.” A young man who had once picked me up, and after a long interval gave me a lift again said, “I was wondering what happened to that neat old lady.”

Serendipitously a Dr. Nolan was one of those kind people who gave me a lift. This was before I was giving out Jesus stones. We talked about medical ideas, and I inwardly resolved that if I ever needed a Doctor I wanted him. It took me until '92 to apply for Permanent Residence Status in Canada. Carrying my proper papers I went to the department of Immigration. I told them of my illegal years in Canada, but this remarkable country had a law that if one should be illegally in Canada for five years or more a very compassionate document allowed the applicant to apply without having to return to their own country. A very influential member of the community supported my request to remain in Canada, as well as the Pastor of the Church. I was accepted for Permanent Residence Status, but I was required to have a physical check-up. It was discovered that I had high blood pressure, a basil cell cancer on my face, and that I had had a thyroidectomy when I was twenty-six. All these problems had to be assessed and given a favorable prognosis by specialists. I asked for Dr. Nolan and he has remained my wise physician and ever-closer friend over a twelve-year period from about '93 till July 2004 as I write. A cosmetic dermatologist removed the cancer on my face leaving no trace of it. These two Specialists gave me a good prognosis. In Canada we are required to have a family doctor, plus an ophthalmologist has removed cataracts from both my eyes, and a regular dermatologist burns off little basil cell eruptions every year. Lately a gastroenterologist diagnosed a benign form of colitis with which I can live comfortably with a little help from Imodium, and all this medical service is covered by O.H.I.P., or the Ontario Health Insurance Plan. Prescription drugs cost me nothing as well. I am disturbed when anyone puts Canada's Health Plan down. This in brief is my health care situation for which I am grateful.

Marilyn and Bill became my good friends. They and Dr. Nolan have witnessed my journey into and out of Christianity. It took me a long time to discover that the beliefs of my Church were

untenable for me. I listened to a Pastor who represented the Christian Reformed Church on a radio program called the Back to God Hour. He gave a series of talks on Genesis 1, and I was alarmed at his pronouncement that Genesis 1 and the whole Bible were to be taken unequivocally as literal history. He argued that they must be taken literally that Christ's death on the cross be the Atonement for mankind's inherited sin of Adam's disobedience of God. He interpreted the Bible narrative as leading through history to God's sending his Son to suffer and die on the cross in payment for that Original Sin. I had been comfortable in cherry picking from the sermons of our Pastor, but on discovering “the devil in the details” of Christian dogma I ceased going to Church even though my fondness and admiration of the members of the Church remain. The Church and more especially my friendship with Weis was a needed refuge directly after my Shon experiences. We in the Convent accepted the teachings of Jesus, and that he was a Divine Incarnation. We assumed that there must be a basic agreement with Vedanta. I explored the differences in what was new territory for me – religiously speaking.

The Hebrews have a term that they translate as “missing the Mark.” Christians translate this term as “sin.” These different translations imply to me an enormous psychological difference. Punishment or Atonement is not called for in our missing the mark, but guidance as to how to correct our aim. I believe that Jesus came to do just that and was killed for his compassionate efforts. I do not question that he was an extraordinary human being, but there have been others like him in the past and present. I would say that His Eternity is in what he really is, and our Eternity is coming to know what we really are, and that to me is hitting the “Mark”.

My Christian experience was a living out of another spiritual fantasy. Fritz would say to us during the workshops and to me in our private sessions, “in my fantasy you are feeling” – whatever. He was making the point that we see each other and the world through the filters of our perceiving minds. When I speak of my fantasy of Jesus I can refer to the movie “The Last Temptation of Christ.” If I had seen this production of Scorsese’s fantasy of Jesus during my years in the Church I would have been dismayed. Scorsese’s version of Jesus was of a wimpy human being hassled by a hovering, demanding God to do Something, but exactly what Jesus never seemed to get a clear answer from his pleadings. If the concerns and actions of this Jesus were observed today he would be diagnosed as a neurotic, or even a psychotic from his hallucinations in the desert scenes. He fanatically led his people to revolt against the Romans, but he ignominiously slunk off led by his friend Judas whom he begged not to leave him because he was afraid. Another blow to my fantasizing would have been the scene of Jesus living a normal human life of love, marriage, sex and children and being happy in it! I’d imbibed in my Convent life Ramakrishna’s hostile attitude toward “woman and gold” (sex and money) as the obstacles to spiritual realization. We nuns in the Convent, “in my fantasy” felt that we had clear passage to spiritual liberation because we had renounced marriage and making money. Therefore in my Christian experience I had been reassured that Jesus was celibate. I would have been shocked at the idea of his making love to a woman.

In watching this movie I had the realization of the radical changes in my view of Jesus, and how Scorsese’s view of him and virtually everyone’s view of him are inevitably different. Long ago I saw a cartoon of three images of Jesus sitting on a bench, the mild Protestant Jesus, the Jesus of the Catholics crowned with thorns, and a burly, rough-hewn figure. There was the caption, “Will the real Jesus please stand.” Neither of them could be the “real” Jesus of course. People do have different ways of

imagining the person of Jesus, but as far as I have discovered the unquestioned belief of innumerable sects of Christianity is that Jesus’ death on the cross was redemptive of their sins and that He was physically resurrected. I think that even if some irrefutable evidence turned up to disprove His physical resurrection most Christians would still believe, because they needed to believe. It was painful for me to have to part company with my Christian friends, and even more painful to be no longer welcome in their homes if I could not stand and say with them, “I believe” once the fog of my superimposed vision was lifted.

It was a terrible thing for tyrants to order the killing of the messenger of bad news. But we can kill the one who brings the “Good News by idolizing this messenger. It is obvious from my story that I was serious in my idolizing. I even idolized Shon! Old Calvin had a great insight when he described the human mind as an “idol factory” – very Korzybskian.

Marilyn gave me a brochure of the courses to be given at Brock University in the spring. I signed up for the course on “Exploring Buddhism” to be led by a Thay Dhoji. He was a monk from Thich Nhat Hanh’s Plum Village in France. Thay asked each of us what we wanted or expected from the course. I said that, “I want to deepen and clarify my practice.” I was thinking of my work with Trungpa and others. Thay visited me at my place on the lake and he charmingly called it my Hermitage. This description fits my life-style now. I have a few close friends with whom I keep in touch. Jody calls me on my birthday and on Holidays. Dennis calls frequently from California and we continue our on-going dialogue of thirty years and more! I freely share my radical views with him, as I am doing now with you.

But now I will come back to my day to day narrative. Biking to Port Dalhousie was not only a practical form of transportation for me, but it was also very enjoyable, what to speak of being a good form of exercise. It was natural that when I started to say to my self, “It’s time to get a car” that I objected to the idea because things were going well as they were. Again and again and ever more firmly I said to myself, “It’s time to get a car.” I had been going to my Little Gallery for about six years when the building was sold to be converted to a small hotel. Fortunately I found a corner for my work in a

shop just across the ally way. It was in a craft shop working in partnership with a tea room. I continued to bike to my new venue, and I found my new spot even more enjoyable as there were more people coming in for tea and shopping. I was still attending my Church at the time, and during the gathering for coffee after the sermon Bill R. approached me. He had always been very friendly, but on this day he happened to ask me if I needed anything. And I gave way to that imperative of "It's time to get a car", and answered, "I need a car." His response was that he had just looked at a car to buy for his daughter, but his wife said she didn't need one. He said it was a 1987 Honda Hatchback, but that it was a standard. I learned to drive with a stick shift so that wasn't a problem. The car was for sale by another member of the Church. Within a few days I had myself a car. But since I had not driven or had a license to drive since I left Kauai I was required to go through the new system in Canada of obtaining one – beginning with a permit to drive with a licensed driver in the car for one year! My good neighbor Bill offered to devote one hour or more a day for two weeks to help me get back my driving skills. It worked. I regained my confidence at the wheel. In the meantime the tearoom and craft shop closed, but Wendy, who had been my neighbor in the studios, opened a tearoom in Virgil and she invited me to have a nook in her tearoom to continue selling my stones. Virgil is about the same distance from my place as it is to Port Dalhousie, but for me to bike there was out of the question. It had been just in the nick of time that I got my car and license. I'm remembering a relevant quote from Christopher Isherwood's *My Guru and his Disciple*. It was, "But there is a part of the mind which does foresee and plan, far ahead of our conscious intentions; and it has its own ways of hinting to us what it intends, though without making itself embarrassingly clear." I'd say that in this case it almost did! I drove to Wendy's for about a year and then she went out of business.

I'll always be grateful to Bill for his trust in getting into the car with me. Marilyn felt he was very brave to do so as she felt I must have been nervous and rusty in handling a car. Later we all laughed about her worries.

I continued to have commissions that I could complete at home. The last commission was conceivably the easiest one that I ever had, but I

simply did not want to accept it. It was as though one door had closed and another door was about to open. I gave my paints to Marilyn for her projects, and she had retired from her job as a flight attendant on Air Canada. She had come to love India from her many flights there, but she had mostly stopovers in Bombay. She was planning a trip back to India to see and experience much of what she had missed, and that included Calcutta. I was eager that she goes out to the Belur Math Monastery and Temple to see the Arati service that had so over-whelmed me years before. I wrote a letter of recommendation for her and her companion Winifred. She did go to Calcutta and on out to Belur. Marilyn gave my letter to a young monk who immediately escorted them to the head of a long line of devotees waiting to have an audience with President Maharaj. Winifred asked the young monk how they were to greet this august person, and she was told that it was customary to kiss the President Maharaja's feet. This must be an added custom as I remember it was a touching with our hand the feet and then the hand to our head. Winifred had not been enthusiastic about the whole scene in the first place, and she recoiled at such a gesture. The news of the letter must have been conveyed to Maharaj, as the first thing he asked the two of them was, "where is the woman from Santa Barbara?" He must have assumed I was with them. They told President Maharaj that I was not with them and that I now lived in Canada as they did. Marilyn said that she was a long time neighbor of mine. The tone of his question indicated what kind of rebuke I would have received for leaving the Order. Marilyn and Winifred were given chocolate bars and they left the room. They did go and sit in the Temple, but they had missed the Arati. After a couple of mosquito bites Winifred said, "let's go."

Since I had retired I now had the time to finally come around, after many starts and stops, to writing this long letter to you Barada. I have written of my experiences through many years, and there is much that I have not included. I don't want to lay a huge book on you! I wish so much that you would reciprocate with your insights and struggles on your path. However you are not much of a letter writer, and I realize that composing music is your passion. I will be content if you read my story as a friend.

I think of Helen often and I wonder about how she is doing. I spoke to Don on the phone while I was in Hawaii on a visit to my brother, and he had no news of her except that she was still living in Kauai. I'm interested in the subsequent lives of Kamal, Michael and Joe. Joe and Michael had moved into the House after I left Kauai. Joe went out surfing, which he did regularly, and a shark attacked him biting off the lower part of his right arm. I liked Joe and I feel sorry that he has to cope with this tragic loss for the rest of his life. I speak on the phone to Craig (Cal) once in a while. The latest news of Shon and Maggie was that they left Australia and are now back in Honolulu. Shon, he said, is living with a wealthy woman on Diamond Head, and Maggie and the children are in a separate house!

Soon after Shon and Sylvie were back in the States they, with Felicia, Shawn, and their latest child Kalini, got together with Shon's children by Kari – Jamil, Calista and Christian. I can imagine that Shon enjoyed being with most of his offspring at one time. Apparently Kari and Sylvie spent a lot of time with each other, and they pooled their resentments of Shon by conspiring to have him join them at the Mall. They had alerted the police who came and arrested him. He was taken back to Hawaii to stand trial. His bail was set at a million dollars making it impossible for him to skip bail again. Actually it was Joe who had charged him, and the only solid evidence that he had were golf clubs that Shon had stolen. He had always cleverly had others to do the stealing! He was sentenced to time in prison, but I don't know for how long. He complained to Don of being abused by the inmates. Sylvie visited him and he related his sufferings to her. He begged her to marry him in order that he could be released. He made those assertions of "wife beaters" that he had changed. She relented and they were married. As I understand it the judge did release him on the grounds that he was a married man with children.

I will continue now with the rest of Sylvie's letter to me.

*"When he was free he raped me & I conceived a fourth child. It got worst and worst abusing me and the children it never stopped. I finally went to the police and he is out of my life forever on June 1994 I will obtain my final divorce & it is awful all the horrible I have been – I wrote a book in discussion with publisher (ten years of abuse) hopefully I will be able to get \$ from my book because I really need it to look after 4 children won't be easy & also I want the chain of abuse to stop – I am very angry because I know that him and Maggie are still abusing others. They had their third child (nine month old now) and are not about to stop."*

At this point in Sylvie's letter I'll not repeat her assessment of George as a sociopath as I have already included this part of her letter earlier. I'll continue her letter.

*"this is him purely. I was taken by him and you too. This Oxford graduate – in reality he has a 12 grade diploma from S.B. He never did none in his life. He still needed me but I have my life back and my children are under my control – he is dangerous he make kids lie and steal – he fooled me good & and he fooled you good. I am very angry because I had everything – my house my career – I lost every thing my \$ from my inheritance how can I go back to work after ten years away –*

*I had to tell you so you will be aware next time he needs you.*

*Best wishes – best luck*

*Sylvie*

Sylvie's broken English is far better than my broken French! I've not heard from her since this letter. Anyone in the "Significance" could relate his or her experiences to hers. Each of us in our own ways, on being free from our entanglements with Shon have wounds to heal and lessons we have learned about ourselves. My stepping into the House of Shon, which was a kind of land of Oz, was the beginning of opening my eyes to how *I looked to others* for what was right under my nose and inside my bones.

I want you to know, Barada, that I am grateful to Swami for transmitting to me the realizations of the sages of India. I came to appreciate the profound philosophy of Tantra, in a way that is rare for a Westerner, and to perform its rituals. Performing these had more of a transforming effect than the intellectual studies of the Brahma Sutras, Patanjali's Aphorisms and etc. On my own I did study Shankaracharya's Crest Jewel of Discrimination, and one idea he spoke of looms in my memory, which is that our perceived world is our projection. This perception of his and others has become important as I delve more deeply into how I "see" the world.

I encountered Tantra again in my practice of Tibetan Buddhism. But in the latter the symbolism was up side down as it were. The Male Deity is dominant over a passive Feminine aspect of the Deity, whereas in the worship of Kali she dances on top of the prostrate form of Siva. From Trungpa I learned the practice of being mindful of my breathing is a process of becoming aware of the inner workings of my mind, and this practice came before I was introduced to the visualization of a Deity or what we in Vedanta call our Ishtham. There was no equivalent practice given to me in Vedanta. I was instructed on visualizing my Chosen Ideal, and I just hit the ground running however unprepared that "ground" was. I came into my Convent life with an unaware picture of the world and myself. Allan Watts wrote, "an unconscious philosophy tends to be a bad philosophy." I hid under the spiritual cloak of seeking to fly upwards away from earthly concerns, rather than the difficult job of digging down through the layers of illusions that I had accumulated even in my short life. I've come to see that looking deeply into the phenomena of where I am actually at is an all-important first step in order to find the ultimate. I've paraphrased Thich Nhat Hanh a little here. He has been my teacher and inspiration for Vipassana Buddhism, which stresses the practice of mindfulness with no visualizations of a Deity or need for a God.

From a Fundamentalist point of view I might be considered an atheist or and "unbeliever." But I am not trying to lift my self by my own bootstraps. Rather I am learning to let go and trust in an infinitely wise and compassionate Intensioning – that "bores holes in our skulls to see" and see deeply. I could also call this the Holy Spirit of mindfulness revealing that "We live and move and have our being in God."

As I get up in the morning I prepare myself a mug of green tea with grated fresh ginger, honey and skim milk powder. I take it to my chair by the window, and I often have to remove one of my cats. I've enjoyed watching the seasons as they come and go, from times of snow and ice to the new life sprouting everywhere after the thaw. The summers can be hot, and the fall with its changes of light and the fragrant crispness in the air seem magical. Like a spreading umbrella, the branches of a tree arch over my view of Lake Ontario. I take note of the changing seasons in the leaves of this tree. One morning I came up with a poem about my observations.

Straggly thrashed raggedy by the winds of fall  
That will not rest till all  
The leafing trees stand bare.  
Once pulsing branches and twigs pushed forth buds  
that grew  
And grew to foliate their hosts anew.  
We too were buds but hidden from view  
Birthed to grow in varying strengths and beauty  
Till  
Straggly thrashed raggedy  
By the winds of time  
Finally lain bare of me and mine.  
How to escape this endless budding to bloom and  
fall?  
Our life's Eros pressing beyond this circling  
dimension  
A consummate ascension  
Embracing All

These questions and aspirations frame my sense in which I see consciousness as inseparable from Life as Eros. I can imagine that from the instant of the Big Bang this Eros thrust upwards through eons of evolution, inventing ever finer forms through which to embrace its “Ground of Being” of Tillich, the Sat-Chit-Ananda of Vedanta, the Nirvana of the Buddhists, and in Christianity, the Mystical Marriage. I’ll include a partial quote from a writing of a Christian mystic.

*“Here is naught but and eternal staring  
At the Light, by the Light, in the Light  
And the coming of the Bridegroom is so swift  
And he comes perpetually in his abysmal riches  
And he returns with such radiance  
That he seems to have never have come before.  
For his coming consists outside all time  
In the Eternal Now  
And this is why the eyes by which the spirit  
Contemplates the Bridegroom  
Are opened so widely they can never close again.”*

I’m sure we both could agree that this a consummation devoutly to be wished, and for you more devoutly than I. Every aspect of seeing is a concern in my spiritual aspirations. I’ve talked about my tensing my eye muscles as a “war of the muscles.” But war connotes a struggle between good and evil. I see it as a contest between a love, or as life’s basic thrust to reach out to its Source, and of fear as in “it is dangerous or forbidden to reach out.” Barada, do you remember seeing those three monkeys who put their hands over their eyes saying, “see no evil”, and their hands as earmuffs with a “hear no evil”, and their covering their mouths with a “speak no evil.” And I’ve noticed mothers shopping with a child in tow, and if the child reaches out to touch something is harshly rebuked with “don’t touch!” My parents didn’t say anything to me about what is “good” or “evil,” but I must have absorbed a lot of such concepts from those around me. I love to read Thich Nhat Hanh when he says such things as “if you touch anything deeply you

touch the whole Universe.” And also to read that “Your body contains Nirvana. Your eyes, nose, tongue and mind contain Nirvana. If you look deeply into them you touch the Ground of your being.

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You have remarked several times in a letter or card that, “we are an aging Convent.” I am growing old right along with you. I’m recalling the time when I was very young. I stood beside a hibiscus bush and observed the myriad of flowers at different stages of development. I saw how the energy of rajas brought the blossoms to the sattvic point of radiant beauty, and how they slowly fell to the power of tamas or entropy. I tried to feel that I would grow old and die like the flowers I contemplated. In this meditation I think I hit on something of a Buddhist practice. As Thich Nhat Hanh says, “one way to touch the world of no birth and no death is to touch deeply the world of birth and death.”

I have begun to think about these three energies of Hindu teachings. I had heard them talked about academically in lectures and classes, but the gunas are included in the devotional songs we sang to the Holy Mother and to Ramakrishna at our evening Vespers. We sang of her as guna moyee and guna moyay and of him as nirguna guna mai. My phonetics isn’t the best, but you will recognize to what I’m referring. The meanings are the same in both songs. I would translate them as meaning that they, as embodied human beings, are made up of the energies of their own transcendent Spirit. And of course I presume that they knew that.

I’m gazing out of my window onto the vastness of Lake Ontario. Today the waves are choppy. I watch as the waves rise to a peak and fall back into the water from which they are inseparable. Could the waves be like the dancing energy of the water? To me the lake and its waves represent the myriad of life forms that come and go, of you and I, our cats, the bird that I just saw fly by, the bug crawling on the floor, and all the plants out there. A

co-dependent arising as a Buddhist would say. In basic agreement a Hindu would say that, we are all *guna moyee and guna moyay*, but we don't know it! After all these years Barada I am reflecting on the songs that I sang umpteen times.

And speaking of aging, Dennis recently mailed me photos of my younger days. I could hardly recognize myself with all that hair now so thin and gray. The flowering that I call "me" is faded and shriveling. What I sought to prepare myself to see I now see, but not without resistance. It won't be long before this "me" falls back into the dust to be "blown away by the wind and the place where it was remembers it not." The dust will be taken up into new forms.

"Thoughts come and go. Emotions come and go. Molecules come and go." as Depak Chopra remarked. Living mindfully of our dying and being reborn every minute, with each in breath and out breath, opens us to the insight of being the Witness of these comings and goings like watching the passing clouds in the sky. We come to the realization that our (Cosmic) sky consciousness generates the clouds, and is inseparable from them. Hindu and Tibetan Tantra visualize the Union of the Male and Female Deities as symbolizing our (Transcendent) Awareness joyously embracing its own endlessly creative energies. The ultimate enlightenment of the Buddhists is that Nirvana is Samsara, and of the Vedantists that "All is Brahman." Ramakrishna would say, "Brahman and its Power is like milk and its whiteness"

This letter to you is from my need to tell you my story, of my high aspirations, of finding and losing my way and finding it again. Margaret Atwood, a Canadian author said, "All that we have at the end of our life is our story. I consider my story as an allegory like Dorothy's journey to the Land of Oz; of my hoping in a "wonderful Wizard of Oz" to give It to me. Lord knows I've Wizardized divine Incarnations, Swamis, Rimpoche's and Shon. Now I honor them, and innumerable others, as my Teachers who as much as said to me, "Go back Home." At birth we began the journey that we all must make. As our eyes first opened we reached out through a clouded awareness much like our fellow animals of this earth. We evolved into our human consciousness as an ego-self, with its confusions, misidentifications (of the levels of abstraction) and

sufferings, its good times and its bad times. I am convinced Barada that our life's purpose is to go back from where we started – consciously. This is a return journey that we share in different ways. In my view, and to paraphrase St. Paul, it is a seeing through a glass clearly, with the wisdom to love all that we see and touch as the wonderful Wizardry and Being – of our Self.

This long letter – written yet unfinished – I dedicate to you Barada, and to our friendship of many years.

With love,  
Sarada

**Appendix: Experiences for which I need an explanation**

After my first crystal dolphin experience I accompanied Shon to the loft area which over-looked the living room below. I saw my crystal dolphin on a table. He remarked that it looked lonely. He asked me to extend my hand to his outstretched hand. This was similar to the position of shaking hands. He was wearing a T-shirt. I began to feel something warm and bulging between our palms. He let go and I was holding another crystal dolphin! (I have it to this day.) It measures 5” in length not counting the uplifted back flipper. It is 4” around. I placed the dolphin next to the other one. We then went over to the railing to look down at the living room below and on out through the windows to the sea beyond. We turned around to see the porcelain head of a Madonna placed between the two dolphins. The following morning I went with him to the loft again and the table was bare! I stood in front of him and the table was behind me. I turned to see the two dolphins and the porcelain head back on the table.

Shon and I were living in a chalet in Canada. He was opening a box of things Maggie had retrieved from storage in Kauai and then mailed to him. He took my first crystal dolphin out of what it was wrapped in, and handed it to me. Unfortunately the dorsal fin was split down the middle leaving an edge sharp enough to cut a finger. I suggested that it could be sanded smooth. He took the dolphin from me and smiling handed it back to me. The dolphin was “cured”! The fin was now in its original condition. How did he do it?

During my time in Kauai and on an arranged occasion, Toni, Cal’s sister was sitting on the top step of the staircase leading to the upstairs. Shon sat two steps below her and I sat two steps below him. He had given a Bible to Toni. Then he reached out his arm towards me and a huge Bible emerged from his hand for me to have. This phenomenon was similar to the time a lemon fell from his palm to impress Vijali. He had us look up a passage in the Bible. We read the assigned passage. We were then to put our fingers on the spot and close the Bible. We opened it again and it was a different book of the Bible and a different passage! How did he do that?

Shon would use ordinary playing cards to display his “powers” when in small groups or in a one to one situation. When he lay out the cards he would always correctly name the card he turned over.

One afternoon I met Shon in the hall and he asked me to think of a card from the deck of cards I was carrying. He took the deck and opened it to the

card I had in mind. Another member of the group came down the hall and he asked her to think of a card. He split the deck to her choice of a card.

Now I would tell of a strange experience with the deck of Tarot cards that I had brought with me from the States. I brought them because of my Tarot card party experience. I was sitting at a desk in Shon’s room. He was seated on his bed. I was turning the cards over as I looked for a particular card. He remarked that the next card I turned over would be blank. It was! There are no blank cards in my Tarot deck. He took the cards and asked, “What will my future be?” He turned up a blank card. Then he took them both for a for a second and put them behind his back to bring them back and they were no longer pure white cards but they had their usual symbols. So– ?

I had a really weird experience while I was in Canada. We were living in our chalet at Lac Notre Dame. I was watching a TV program and there was an advertisement that a the Movie the Exorcist would be shown on that channel at a particular time. I had always wanted to see this movie. I turned on the TV at the appropriate time. The title of the film appeared in large red letters on a black background. The movie began and what I saw were two Bedouins speaking in Arabic I guessed. A minute later there appeared a short clip of what was obviously apart of the Exorcist. And then suddenly I was watching Steve McQueen in the Great Escape! What was happening? On an impulse I switched to another station to find it was playing the Exorcist.

I watched it through to the end. I knew that Shon did not want me to see this movie and he was just upstairs in the balcony area and he had a TV up there. Aside from this incident that I’ve just described, there were times when we were watching the same program, but there was a gap, a very short time gap, when there should have been absolute synchronicity.

I had numerous other unexplainable experiences often of appearances and of disappearances of some object. He certainly had no accomplices. Does anyone have an explanation for these phenomena?