

Driving Intent



One Woman's Journey in Creating Reality



Diana D. Adkins





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By

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This book is dedicated to everyone who,
out of courage, quest or boredom,
follows their heart to create their dreams.

Prologue

Haven't we all had an idea or a dream that appeared in our minds and simply would not leave us alone? If it wasn't too crazy, perhaps we acted on it. If it was, however, scary, crazy or huge, we probably thought, "Nope, I can't do that," and shut the door on it to return to the busyness of our lives. Whenever the dream surfaced, we'd reinforce our conviction that it was beyond our reach and return, again, to our busy lives. This book has been just such an idea for me.

For eleven years this book lived at the back of my mind and ever so persistently rose up to whisper, "*Write me.*" It didn't care that I was busy. It didn't mind that I was avoiding it. It never changed its voice, never wheedled and never begged. It simply said, "*Write me,*" regularly and persistently. Eventually, I tired of the persistence and *insistence* that I actually do it. I arrived at a period in my life where I had both the voice and the time, and I thought, "OK. I want you out of my head."

I turned to my journals. I turned back time to my memories of being driven by huge and seemingly impossible dreams. As I worked to get this story out, I realized that I could see it more clearly now. I had gained a broader perspective of its implications than I had while living it, and I saw even more instances where I had set an intent, made a decision or wished fervently - and it manifested.

While I was aware that I was attempting to shape my reality, it wasn't until later that I understood this story as a lesson in intent; a lesson in having an intent for what I was dreaming, and moving forces into play to achieve it. The simple truth of this lesson is that energy follows thought and intent. Hold a dream (desire, vision or idea), give it energy (by taking steps towards it), and manifesting it actually stands a chance. By doing this we are setting energy in motion, and more energy joins the momentum to bring into being the miracles this story recounts. Hold your vision unwaveringly, take steps towards it, and you can create your dreams, your heart's desire.

Every single thing we see in our man-made world is proof of this. All of it started out as a thought, an inspiration, Divine guidance or the proverbial light bulb flickering to life above our heads. Those inspirations were followed by experiments, by opening to possibilities and opportunities, by taking steps in the direction of the goal, and by never giving up. Ideas of what constitutes 'action' are broad, limited only by our imaginations and our often rigid belief in what is

impossible. Don't believe anyone that tells you that you can't succeed. No one -- including yourself.

This story was a lesson for me, and it could be a profound example for you if you choose. They say Thomas Edison made hundreds of attempts to create our light bulbs. He had a dream. I had a dream. He didn't give up. I didn't give up, either, despite some rather outstanding obstacles. While life has taken me ever deeper into this mystery, the simple truth - that energy follows thought and intent - has never wavered but grown clearer and more defined (see epilogue). I am here to tell you. This story is here to tell you. Others have been here and told you - we can all do this - which means you can, too.

So, let this book be what it is - a story of one woman's journey into wild and crazy Indonesia. Or, let the book be what it is ~ one woman's journey into the heart of intent. It's an adventure in creating reality and a lesson in being careful of what you ask for. Here's how it happened to me.

at thirty-six
she leaves her country
hungry
her body is much the same
and it's her mind
that keeps changing her face
a hundred different hats
has she worn
although, none for any
definite period of time
perhaps that's why she is going
to give them all a good roll
~ Anonymous

Leaving

“Aren’t you going to be scared?”
“Uh, let me think.....nope.”
“Seriously? Why not?”
“Well, I’ve been scared in LA and DC, but I have never once been threatened in Asia.”
“I think you’re crazy to go alone.”
“Want to come?”
“Yes! No! You know I can’t.”
“Huh. If you say so. I guess someone has to stay home and keep it all going.” My colleague and I sipped our wine, and I reflected on how many times I’d had this exact conversation.

~ Chapter 1 ~

The stewardess roamed the cabin looking for stray tourists and seat trays not in their upright positions while I stared out the window, tears streaming down my face. Behram, I could feel you there, feeling me leave, but letting me go as you moved on; a good Buddhist, letting attachments fall away.

I couldn't seem to stop the replay. We're outside New Delhi's airport; you're looking deeply into my eyes, holding them as you reach to your neck and remove the red protection amulet I had never seen you take off. Holding my gaze, you place it around my neck as the air catches in my chest and I realize what you're doing. The grace, the blessing you were giving me, dear teacher, lover, friend. A part of you I'd take with me, lying against the heart that knew it must go, but couldn't remember why.



My plane taxied off, and New Delhi fell behind clouds and tears as we rose toward the sun. They say you either love India or you hate it. I didn't know until that moment that I loved it. I had fallen in love with this country of so much contrast and humanity that it was always full, sometimes too much so.

"Would you care for a drink?" Perky, smiling, the stewardess patiently waited for me to turn from the window and my dreams. I tried, but couldn't hide my tears.

"Yes, please, a glass of red wine?"

She passed the glass and the tiny bottle, careful not to stare at me, and I returned to my window. Vaguely, I noticed India's smells were fading as we climbed through the clouds. No smoky, spicy musk allowed in this cabin. What was so present on the ground, and even in the airport, was letting go, just as I was, just as Behram had. I sighed.

I loved airports, traveling and humanity in most of its shapes and forms. In India, along with its sights and smells, I loved the eyes. They told me so much. They welcomed, inquired, plead, begged and rejected, all without a word being said, a word being needed. Yes, despite the occasional mad intensity, I loved India: crazy bus rides, buffalo walking the streets, dead bodies tied to taxi roofs on

their way to being burned at the temples, people everywhere and barely missing headlong tumbles into beautiful, laughing children.

One afternoon in the southern town of Bangalore, I'd thought about having Behram's children. When the intensity got to be too much on the outside, I created my own craziness on the inside. Having children with him would never happen, and I knew it; but daydreaming eased the tension of being constantly watched and stalked out of curiosity. Stalked out of the hope that those American TV shows just might be right, and I really would choose someone to bed that day. I stood out like a sore thumb -- white and blonde, amid brown and black.

That day I'd gone out to wander the city alone, lost in my daydreams, until I found a cool, shaded park. Sitting on a park bench, it was a while before I noticed I had been gradually surrounded by random men. I pretended to ignore them. Carefully, out of each corner of my eye, I saw them narrowing the distances between us. One on my right side, one on the other, and still others were behind and in front of me. Was there anyone else in the park? Another foreigner or any women? No, I was alone, and it was time to move on before their shared curiosity made them brave. I didn't sense any real danger, and believed that I was safe; but I was not one to push fate or my luck too far. I left the park and turned, looking back to see every one of them still standing under the sun dappled trees, staring at me.

Even so, it was very hard to say goodbye to India. I knew I would have to return to this country of shock and reverence and death and life and the most beautiful eyes I had ever seen in my life. India was a part of my planet, and I had come to love them both deeply.

~ Chapter 2 ~

I flew from India to Thailand; and in the next few weeks I learned to live with the hole in my heart left by leaving Behram. Time went by in a daze of some of the worst humidity and tropical heat I had ever experienced. Outside of the northern Thai town of Chaing Mai, I went to the forest temple Behram had spoken of to photograph its treasure, a statue of The Starving Buddha. The only one of its kind (then), it shows the Buddha sitting in meditation after his many years of fasting. His body is gaunt and skeletal, the skin stretched thin over bones you can



count. Startling, simple and profound, to me it represented the lengths Buddha went to find that the ‘middle way’ between extremes was his way. I would share that photo with Buddhist monks on my return to the States. They would press it, reverently, to their foreheads. “I’ve only seen it in books,” they’d tell me, and I had a large reprint framed for their walls.

Wandering northern Thailand, I began remembering why I had to leave Asia. There was a line in the Sufi Caravan song, “Wanderers, worshipers, lovers of leaving...come,” and it held for me the essence of my life’s journey. It’s as if the Divine Mystery is always beckoning me onwards. “Come, come,” it calls to me...and I follow. Leaving was just something I did; although it helped to know that nothing was ever lost. I found in myself a compulsion to either learn, or to create something new, that first appeared as a restlessness which changed to boredom if left unexamined and unexplored. I chose the passion of new adventures and challenges when the restlessness became too great. I also chose the love and the connections with people that were not defined by time or close physical proximity. What mattered most to me was never lost since it was contained within me, and within those who chose to remain in my life.

So, I remembered why I was leaving Asia. First and foremost, I was running out of money. Second, I was tired of traveling. I wanted a place to hang my hat for a while, and I was ready for a home. Most importantly, however, these months of wandering had given me a new purpose to fulfill. So, yes, it was time to go.

This new purpose was as compelling as it was unexpected. I had certainly not been looking for a purpose at the beginning of my travels. Six months before, I had come down through South East Asia’s Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore to Indonesia, one of my primary destinations for this trip. Indonesia is an island country with over 13,000 islands spanning the equator from the peninsula of Malaysia down to Australia and across to Papua New Guinea. While Bali was all many people thought of as Indonesia, I had wanted to visit Yogyakarta on the island of Java since I was eighteen years old and living in ‘The South’, where I first taught myself the art of batik.

~ Chapter 3 ~

It will probably help to understand me if I explain a bit of what drove me back then, when growing up in ‘The South’ was...interesting. I was born into a culture that was common back in the fifties and sixties: middle class, racist and

confused. My family lived in Chapel Hill, N.C., which was a progressive college town, yet that progressiveness only added to the confusion of so many things changing so quickly. The whole country was poised on the brink of new discoveries while firmly keeping one foot planted in tradition.

Having so many people being conservative, racist, confused or some combination of it all was just a feature of growing up in The South. These were the years when Black & White or Ebony & Ivory paradigms were being broken and new ones created. It took a while, as we all know, and some people and places never got it....ever. "I'm not racist," was heard everywhere, but then they'd tell you about their 'black' friend. Not just their friend, but their 'black' friend or their 'white' friend, and that very distinction creates the separation of racism.

Cultural evolution continued, and other comparisons came along with the Hippie era, like 'right versus left', 'liberal versus conservative' and 'gay versus straight'. What do you mean we can love each other, love the one we're with, and all people are created equal - even in The South? The South hiccupped (and sometimes threw up). I questioned if 'The South' could grow or change. I found that yes, it could; although it was taking longer than I'd ever dreamed possible.

Somewhere in my early teens I either realized, or decided, that I was different; different from my family, different from my surroundings and very different from The South. I didn't know if it was a decision, my personality or some destiny type of thing. I couldn't tell. I simply acknowledged the truth - that I'd ended up quite different from my family and our southern culture.

My parent's divorce came when I was twelve, and it was a big turning point for me. My three younger siblings and I ended up living with Dad, which was revolutionary in the late 60's. Being the oldest made me, essentially, the live-in slave as cook and babysitter. Not much fun for a twelve year old. When I was sixteen, I was tired of raising three siblings and my Dad. I wanted a break.

I researched the law in North Carolina and found that I could legally move out at that age and my father had to support me. I didn't think that was fair, so when I approached him and told him I was moving out, I thought I was generous saying, "And Dad, I won't make you support me." He looked stunned. He didn't argue or yell. Yes! I knew my research was right. His eldest daughter was planning on living in an apartment with her girlfriend. He stomached that. When, a few days after I'd moved, my boyfriend and his cousin came to town to see me at Dad's house, I drove over to pick them up to take them 'home'. This time Dad

looked nauseous. It was really unsettling to watch him standing on the front porch, totally shocked, furious, ill...and powerless. Then I turned the corner, and he was gone. My two month summer adventure turned into more like four before I finally returned home safe and, thankfully, no worse for the experience.

It was in my next year of high school that I won an award for one of my drawings. That gave me the confidence to keep looking at the art world. It attracted me, but for some reason I couldn't find my niche, couldn't find a medium that really drew me. During and right after high school, I worked in an art store affectionately named after its three foot tall owner, Billy Arthur, who ran the store with his five foot ten inch wife, Mrs. Billy Arthur.

Working at Billy Arthur's opened me up even more to the world of arts and crafts. A large store in Chapel Hill, it had two levels of everything you could possibly need, to do whatever you could possibly want to do. Roaming the rows, hunting for customers or avoiding the beak-nosed, bespeckled, stare of Mrs. Billy Arthur (looking for slackers), I came upon some odd looking tools and dyes that were used for making batiks. My curious mind wondered what on earth batiks were, and that was the start of a new passion.

Batik would be the first thing in my life that I became a master at (despite my father's rather nasty habit of telling me I was a master actress).

So, at eighteen, after surviving the hippie scene, motorcycles, fast cars, faster boys and the race riots we held to prove we were all worthy and equal no matter what the color of our skin - I began to learn the first art medium that really moved me. I don't think anyone in The South even knew or cared what batik was at the time. It was perfect. I could be different *and* mysterious since no one would know what I was doing. I could create without competition for there were no competitors.

Did I mention it was perfect?

I began learning this rare art of creating designs by using hot, melted wax on fabric to resist liquid dyes. I smoked up my apartment from the hot wax, and turned my hands and sink black from the various color combining experiments, but I didn't mind. I learned there were whole countries using this art form, and that it was developed in Indonesia where their traditional fabrics were created using batik. I was pretty good. I held workshops at the store and sold pieces at art shows that were blooming in parks and towns all across early 70's America.

Batik was a passion, and as such was effortless. Issues with over-dyeing and combining waxes to get an effect that was just so - none of these did I view as problems. It felt like coming home. It fit me as if it was in my blood somehow, and I didn't try to define that; I simply went with it. I dreamed of some day traveling to Indonesia and studying from the masters there.

That dream of studying batik in Indonesia is what prompted my current journey to S.E. Asia. I had finally traveled to the source, to the place batik began. After visiting Bali, I had headed to Yogyakarta on the island of Java, then the capital of batik. There I had arranged classes with Tulus Warsito, a prominent batik artist. Through his gentle guidance, I bent my mind around new concepts and techniques I had never dreamed were possible. Indonesians are true masters of their craft, and I marveled at their technical and creative ability. I fell deeply in love with the art, the culture and the people. I wanted to return some day.

~ Chapter 4 ~

As I continued to wander around Thailand's tropical highlands, I began thinking about my other passions. I dearly loved to travel, and I also loved sign language. I had come to learn sign language when I was 'thirty-something' and working at a non-profit in Moscow, Idaho, called Stepping Stones. Stepping Stones provided services for what were then called mentally retarded and disabled individuals. A number of our clients and residents communicated using sign language; and once I became the Director, I insisted that the staff learn it. It was fun for everyone, and I loved it! Sign language allowed me to express myself with my body, face and eyes and not just words. Like batik, it had a deep, inexplicable feeling of 'rightness' for me.

So there were two loves of my life - batik and sign language - which were conspiring to create the new dream of my life. It felt like I could combine the two. I could bring my passion of working with the deaf and disabled to my passion for batik. I knew that people with disabilities were underserved everywhere, but especially in third world countries that could barely help themselves. I could work with the deaf and disabled, teaching them batik as a cottage industry and a means of income. I wanted to do this in Indonesia where batik was a part of the culture, and I didn't have a clue where to begin. I just felt that I could, somehow, do this.

This was my new purpose, my new goal, and it was a biggie. But first I needed money and a place to hang my hat for a while. My months of wandering

S.E. Asia, Nepal and India were coming to a close, and it was time to leave...and my lover of leaving was ready.



I flew from Thailand back to the States, and found myself blessed with friends in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, that had an open basement for me to land in while I reintegrated. Scooter and Jenny said I made an ideal housemate, and I loved that I could help. I cleaned the house, washed the dishes and took care of the small things so these working parents could have a breather. It was a joy to have dishes to wash again! By now it had been over eight months since I'd had a floor to sweep or a place to cook, and (I never thought I'd say this) I had missed it.

I also began to hit the pavement in Spokane, WA, and Coeur d'Alene looking for work. Job first, home next. The pickings seemed slim, and the available openings for my level of management were few. I had spent my working career either self-employed or as Finance or Executive Director of non-profits. I had my passion for working with the deaf and disabled and doing batik, too, but there were no jobs for these. My heart began to sink. The initial optimism I had returned with began to waiver as I interviewed for accounting assistant jobs. Even here I hit block after block because, as they said, I was overqualified. They wouldn't hire me, and I sensed they were afraid I'd threaten their jobs.

As my finances dwindled, I found myself doing what I always seemed to do: I'd set an intent for what I wanted, I'd go for it and start steps toward it, but if my ideal didn't manifest in a couple of weeks, I'd start feeling hopeless. Desperation would follow the hopelessness followed by a fear that I wouldn't be able to find anything. At this point I asked myself what was wrong in taking a little more time? The desperation and fear raised themselves up and said, "If you don't take the next job you are offered, there may not be another. Times are hard here, jobs aren't plentiful, and you're running out of money. You need work." And all my learning flew out the window on the wings of fear. I took the only job offered to me: station accountant for an NBC affiliate TV station in Spokane, Washington. I then beat myself up for weeks for selling out to a media I didn't even watch.

The job, however, meant I could find a place to live, move my things out of storage, and begin my new life. The job also meant I could save money so that I'd be better placed to fulfill my new mission of teaching batik to the deaf and disabled in Indonesia.

I was looking forward to living in a bigger city, which would be a ‘first’ for me. I just hadn’t counted on Spokane being such a conservative, western ‘cowboy town’. There was one metaphysical bookstore in all of 300,000 people; and while I had sometimes been a ‘closet spiritual person’, I was hoping for help in busting out. Or at least some company. Most of my friends were either not openly paying attention to their spiritual sides, or were atheists. I’d hid my own spirituality when I married one of those (atheists) and now knew I could no longer hide this part of me. Spirituality was too ingrained, too much a part of me.

It was the late spring of 1990. I settled into Spokane in a sweet one-bedroom house while I also settled into NBC. At first I thought I must be crazy to work there. In our area of the complex, several different departments were contained within one massive room with ‘offices’ separated by low partition walls. The walls of the different areas of service had their own color, and accounting’s was tan and ‘boring’ while the sales department’s were red and dynamic. Low walls were great, though, for overhearing conversations and watching the sales people stand up to talk. They’d waive their arms to punctuate their points to people on the phone who couldn’t see them. I loved watching them, voyeuristically peeking over the low walls.

My department, on the other hand, was full of *seemingly* straight ‘tan’ people. I had just traveled Asia studying Buddhism in Thailand, Nepal and India, exposing myself to a wide array of spiritual and mystical beliefs, and here I was in the middle of Middle America. Then I discovered that my seemingly ‘tan’ co-workers were the most honest, hardworking and friendly people you could meet.

My nearest neighbor down the cubicle line was a devout Christian. They all were, more or less, and they taught me one of my biggest life lessons - that people could appreciate the differences when we all remained open. Them and me. For them, I must have been some exotic being dropped in their midst with my stories and pictures of Asia decorating my office. For me, I liked them and I was curious about them; so I paid attention and listened as they told me their stories and their woes. On the level of the heart there are more similarities than differences and here in the heart, we understood each other. By the time I left we were all friends. My boss came to me for personal advice, and joked about me ‘putting up a shingle’ as so many others came to talk to me, too.

Looking for alternative teachings in the area, I quickly found Spokane’s sole Buddhist group of Tibetans and began going to their events and practices for some community. Tibetan Buddhism was quite different from the Theravadan

Buddhism I had studied in Nepal and India, but I was desperately in need of Sangha: the community of practitioners on this spiritual path. I had chosen Theravadan Buddhism because it had not embellished or expanded on the Buddha's original teachings of mindfulness. Other schools of Buddhism included a wide array of gods, goddesses and practices beyond what the Buddha taught. My tendency was to go as straight to the 'horse's mouth' as I could before branching out. I yearned for community now, however, so I began attending their events and practices, enjoying the deep compassion and respect for all beings that the different schools of Buddhism share.

Their center was in a house on south Spokane's rising hill. As I entered the living room, it was as if I had stepped back into a temple in Nepal. All wood had been stained a rich, dark, polished brown. There were low tables and sitting cushions arranged around the room's center. These tables held the amazing tools of their religion, most of which I was familiar with from my travels in Nepal. I especially loved the bells. Tibetan bells are large and ornate, made of brass, and make the purest tones. They resonate on many levels and the sound reverberates for a long time. You can imagine it gets very noisy when they all get going, but...oh, what a sound!

Buddhist tapestries lined the walls, and a large altar to the Buddha almost filled the far wall. Rooms to the sides of this main room held sitting areas for meditation practice. The entire place had a sweet calm about it, reflecting the peace that prayers and meditation bring. In back there was a lovely garden with sitting areas amid the flowers and trees.

A 'Lama' is like an ordained monk in Tibetan traditions. There were two Lamas at the center, Lama Yonten and Lama Inga, a man and a woman...who were married! They met after each came out of their three year solitary retreat to become Lamas. I think I was more shocked at the three years in solitary retreat than I was that there were sects of Buddhism that allowed marriage. I became quite fond of Lama Inga, though. She was a small, red-headed German woman who radiated peace and calm. It was through her and a 'clean the Stupa day' that I met Sun Bear's group. Sun Bear was a Native American leader, author and teacher who welcomed non-Native Americans onto his path.

So, one fine day a group of us went to clean up the stupa (a stupa is a white, dome-shaped monument that's used to house Buddhist relics or to commemorate significant events). Their stupa was on the same mountain that housed Sun Bear's house and vision quest property. The mountain had been used by Native

Americans for ceremony and vision quests for a very long time, as pictographs in the caves at its base implied. We had gone up to clean and paint the stupa and make any needed repairs to the one room hermitage hut on the property. Sun Bear's group came over to help, and it was fun for everyone to work together, sort of like old time barn raising. They were having a sweat lodge later and invited Lama Inga and I to come. To my great surprise, she agreed, and got naked with the rest of us for the sweat.

I had read Sun Bear's work and valued his teachings, so I was in awe of the group at first. I rarely met famous people and Sun Bear certainly had some fame. I began dating Randy, one of his managers, and began learning more about how they did vision quests. I was from the belief that spirituality needed to be available to everyone, and that some aid should be there for those that needed it. My accountant's mind figured up their out of pocket expenses to be small (especially since everyone fasted and camped!), so I didn't understand why they didn't offer scholarships. It soured me towards them. Admittedly, my final avoidance of them was also influenced by my relationship with Randy. I found him caught up in the fame and power games of working for someone of spiritual notoriety. I did not want to play like that, so it ended before it had gone very far.

My search for spiritual community continued without much success beyond the Buddhists and a Tai Chi group I studied with. My friends in the area were close ones, and I liked to say that we all 'grew up' together in Moscow, Idaho, (two hours away) where we had all lived. We went to college, got married and had fun there. We were lucky to have developed friendships that were lasting lifetimes. Later, when our tribe had scattered through the Pacific Northwest, we stayed connected; and life took on the rhythms of the seasons. We'd do biking, volleyball and rafting spring through fall, skiing in winter, dancing and dinner parties year round. It was great fun and helped me handle the transitions from Moscow's college town, to exotic S.E. Asia, to Spokane's 'cow town'.

But my heart, opened in Asia, needed more. My friends were beloveds, and a community, but I wanted spiritual kinship while I worked and saved money for my dream.



Restless, I picked up Shakti Gawain's *Creative Visualization* again to re-inspire myself. I had read and reread her books over the years because they resonated as truth in me. Frank Herbert, in *Dune*, wrote, "The teaching of religion is largely a hoax. The true teachings can be recognized with ease because they

awaken within you a sensation that it is something you have always known.” I had experienced this before, the sensation of something striking a deep cord of awareness within me. I would know then, that on some or all levels, there was truth for me there. Gawain’s books weren’t about religion but connection; tools to connect to my highest potential and my highest self. That’s what I needed: all the tools I could get.

Gawain taught (and I believed) that if I held a vision and put all of my focus on it, I could manifest it. Many events in my life had come about with this practice. And this new purpose of mine was a big dream. A really big dream. To go to Indonesia, to live and work with the deaf and disabled teaching batik, was no small feat. You can’t ‘just go’ and live in a foreign country simply because you want to. There are rules and regulations and permits and many types of visas, and I had no idea how to manifest getting there. I believed I could, but I still didn’t have a clue as to how. This was in the early 90’s before the internet took off, so I researched at the library; but it was like finding a needle in a haystack. I didn’t know where to begin or what the possibilities even were.

Being passionate about my dream, and supported by Gawain’s teachings, I was convinced that, no matter what, it would happen. Every night before sleep I would imagine it. I’d see myself there in a variety of scenarios, like shopping in a market or teaching batik or riding a bus. I imagined myself doing all of the mundane things we do when we live someplace. Because my trip to Indonesia was still so fresh in my mind, it was easy to visualize myself living there, doing what I loved. After a few months, I expanded my visualization time to include mornings when I woke up. Just going into sleep and waking up from sleep, I had read, were prime times to set the energy moving, and I rarely missed a day or a night.

I decided to see myself there with the changes I wanted physically, too. I envisioned that my hair grew long and my fingernails grew stronger, and I lost weight. I’d see myself in my visions with long hair and a skinnier frame; and I believed that this, too, would happen. I figured, why not dream the whole dream?

So the months and seasons moved on. I still yearned for more spiritual community. I did Tai Chi and went to local events that I hoped would bring me in touch with others on a spiritual path, but it was hard. I missed the times in India and Nepal where one’s spiritual life was a part of daily life, where offerings were placed at the statues everywhere and reminders of the Divine graced practically every street, square and wall...and certainly every life.

~ Chapter 5 ~

My own experiments with religion and spirituality was a unique blend of things that started in my childhood. I was raised Christian Methodist when really young, but we stopped going to church regularly at some point. In my youth I played at the games of the times, like holding séances in Girl Scout camp. We figured, “Enough of the hiking, already!” We wanted to explore the ‘mysterious and forbidden’ that was coming back into vogue. We’d hide in our platform tents during rest period and pull out a flashlight to use as our ‘candle’. It was scary and exciting and really fun until we hit some snags and scary results.

The snags came in the form of other girls telling on us and getting us in trouble (séances were strictly forbidden by the Girl Scouts). The scary parts came in the form of actually getting, well, something. A backpack would mysteriously fall over or a sudden wind would rattle the tent flaps at just the right moment, and we were certain it was a message from the beyond. Once, I was blinded by a sudden burst of light surging out of the flashlight. I fell backwards and screamed, which made my friends all scream, which of course gave us away. That one terrified us all.

In grade school, I was tested by Duke University’s Para-Psychological Institute for telepathy when they used local grade schools to run experiments. I scored twelve out of twenty, where ‘normal’ was four. Twelve was high, but not the eighteen or more that really got Duke’s interest. I was given a set of telepathy cards, though, and I tormented my cousins and friends by making them practice it with me.

That practice honed my gift, and long after I’d lost the cards, I made them from index cards. They used the symbols of a square, a circle, a triangle, and one of three wavy lines (one on top of the other). Each of these four symbols is made into five cards each to make a total of twenty cards. The person ‘reading’ numbered a piece of paper from 1 to 20 and marked what symbol they picked up from the person ‘sending’, who would simply focus on the symbol, holding it in their mind. You could be sitting across from each other or, as in the case of Duke University, miles away. Since thought is an energy form, it isn’t dependent on proximity or time/space limitations. It was fun!

Later, in my mid-teens I joined the Jesus Freak movement, a mix of youth from high school into college. They were devout Christians and many were ex-experimenters in the drugs of the times. We fully embraced our faith, though, and

that didn't condone drugs or premarital sex. We would meet regularly, holding prayer meetings weekly. At other times we would descend, en masse, on Main Street in Chapel Hill to 'witness' to passers by. We'd hold prayer meetings and lay on hands for healing; some would speak in tongues or receive visions and we generally had a good time worshipping together. This was the early 70's. The Jesus Freak movement saved many a student from LSD flights off college dorm roofs and other accidental deaths by providing community: a safe place to talk with people who were just like them and had 'been there-done that' - and come out the other side.

My parents tolerated it all until they couldn't. Finding me praying with guys alone in a wood's clearing was too much for them, and they began to forbid my participation. Then, too, I became disillusioned when the Jesus Freaks said people would burn in hell if they smoked pot. I mean, really now. While I wasn't smoking then myself, the God I knew had a lot more going on than worrying about people smoking herbs, much less sending them to everlasting hell for it. I figured that it in no way measured up to all of the liars, thieves, murderers, adulterers and Satan worshipers (who were also coming into vogue again) that were running around. Nowhere in the Bible did it say you would burn in hell for this, and I found their insistence annoyingly pedantic.

This Jesus Freak period in my life had come to me in the middle of Dad's own seeking, so when I left the movement, my ever questioning mind had a new place to land.

After my parent's divorce, Dad took a year off to search his soul, study and discover what he was really doing with his life. As he explored various spiritual ideas, I got to go along. I learned energy work in Silva Mind Control and prowled the University of North Carolina's graduate library (Dad was a professor there) for everything from Wicca to the Occult to Tarot and Spiritualism.

Dad began dating Louise (whom he would eventually marry) and became involved with her father's spiritualism group; and so again, by extension, did I. Louise was a medium then and channeled a specific entity, while her father had a center for spiritualism outside of Chapel Hill. It was at his center that various spiritualist speakers came for classes and workshops.

Dad discovered he had a talent for exorcism, and he really tried to help people. In the beginning he believed that this gift to exorcise spirits came from God. We'd sit up nights on the front porch, and he'd tell me stories of people's brains

and bodies being tormented, bruises appearing as he worked to exorcise the unwelcome spirit out of them. He never brought it home, so it seemed like a distant scary thing instead of up close and personal.

All sorts of ideas were explored in our house. We held séances, had pyramids in the living room, Ouiji boards on the coffee table and rocks full of energy under the beds. Speakers from the Pleiades would come to the center and speak of our past lives, and Dad and Louise would go to Black Mountain to visit them and their UFO landing pads.

It was all rather exotic, really. I had fun trying to trick the entity Louise channeled. I'd bring random people I'd just met to séances to see if it really knew details about them. I figured that Louise had never heard me talk of these people, and I usually didn't know much about them, myself; so she couldn't be 'reading' me. The entity could come up with pertinent details, to some degree, though I remained skeptical.

Everything was going along well until the movie 'The Exorcist' came out. Or, rather, until I saw it. Being teenagers, my friends had considered getting taking LSD before the movie, but by what I consider grace, hadn't. Can you imagine watching that movie hallucinating!? The movie was scary enough in its own right, but what freaked me out was that my Dad was doing exorcisms. He was a psychiatric social worker by day, and he exorcised entities from people nights and weekends. The horror stories about some of his clients had always been 'out there'. That movie brought them up close and personal in full color on a big screen. It was a reality check that scared me to death.

After that, strange things continued to happen around the house, but they had a whole new meaning for me. Some, like disembodied knocking, flashing lights and things moving around had annoyed me before, and now they terrified me. One night, after an especially bad Tarot reading for myself, I had the feeling something was genuinely after me. It felt like I'd been targeted somehow by the 'bad guys' because I was beginning to avoid the spiritualist's farm and séances - and all of it.

That night I destroyed my Tarot deck and everything I had relating to spirits and spiritualism in a nice hot fire in the backyard grill. I begged not to have to go to the center anymore. I told Dad to tell all the spirits to leave me alone. I was done. And shortly after this I left home, running to an apartment in town.

Dad and Louise eventually “realized the error of our ways”, as they put it, and did their own running ~ to God. They became very fundamental Christians, which I respected, because they held to the full letter of their chosen religion. It had its moments, though, especially since I was a young, opinionated teenager and had spent time in the ranks of the Jesus Freaks. I knew Christianity, with all its loopholes, and we had some rather amazing discussions. Regularly. King David and Solomon saved me more times than I could count because, between them, they were murdering and adulterating men - and yet they were favored by God. Hard to argue with, and biblically true. I insisted that, if God could favor King David and Solomon, then no one could really know the mind of God - so stop with all the judging...*please*.



At an early age, I'd also made a commitment to try anything...once. Consequently, I experimented with the pastimes of the seventies (the ‘drugs, sex and rock ‘n’ roll era’); and was impressed when I made it to my 21st birthday. I had survived the times, and while I wasn’t excessive, when I played, I played. As part of my running, I dated non-spiritual people, with the exception of John, the first ‘love of my life’.

I ended up running across the country with John. He was spiritually inclined towards a Don Juan/Castaneda-Native American Indian philosophy that fascinated me, but also scared me. As did John, eventually, so I ran from him and his sometimes violent anger.

My fear of spiritualism could have played into my marrying an atheist. (Ya think?) Dave didn’t believe in anything he couldn’t see, touch, taste or feel - and he couldn’t see ghosts. I remember one night being really scared at things ‘moving about the night’ and pulling the .22 rifle we had into bed with me. When he came home I called out, “Dave, is that you?” He apparently hadn’t heard me. He was saved (there’s that grace again) by finally saying something before his head cleared the stairs to the bedroom as I was ready to blow whatever was coming up at me away. Yes, I was skittish.

Dave and I lived on an eighty acre farm in the western foothills of the Continental Divide, about thirty miles outside of Moscow, in northern Idaho. Like most farms, we were constantly building, improving and working on it. He had built the two bedroom house that was fairly modern and mostly unfinished when we married, with lots of windows and an upstairs loft. A huge picture window looked out

over the rolling fields and woods while more glass gave views of the yard and farm buildings. We had a beautiful, old, two story barn for the horses, cows, pigs, chickens, dog, cats and pet goose that loved to terrorize children (and me) while it guarded the love of its life ~ which was Dave. About half of the property was wooded, and the rest held fields we farmed and Christmas trees we share-cropped. Perched near the path of an elk crossing, I once looked out to see fifty head of elk racks (antlers) peeking out above the hay in our field they were lying in. It was peaceful and beautiful.

Life as a 'back-to-the-lander' was amazing and for a while was my new 'religion'. We grew most everything we ate, and most everything the animals ate, as well as working jobs to keep the mortgage paid. It was a good life but one day, looking out across the fields and woods, I could see my life unfolding as a progression of chores defined by the seasons. We planted in the spring, made hay in July, harvested wheat and oats in August, put meat in the freezer in the fall, skied in the winter and repaired equipment and fences year round. There wasn't much free time and Dave wanted to spend what 'down time' we had just relaxing around the farm, whereas I wanted to go to a movie or out to dinner in town.

For him, life on the farm with me was everything. For me, I felt constrained, and eventually ran from what I felt was his hermetic possessiveness towards my freedom. Again.

That same fear of spirits was probably why in Asia I gravitated to Buddhism and not Hinduism or Animism, and Theravada Buddhism and not Tibetan. Theravada Buddhism was simple, cut and dried. It was Mindfulness practice. You meditated. You watched the breath. Stuff arose and passed away. It didn't bang on the walls of your house and flick lights on and off or send things flying across the room. Still water, calm mind. No ghosts at the levels I was studying. Sure, Buddha had to deal with Mara (translate that to be a demon) and temptation, but I wasn't so far along yet that Mara would pay any attention to little ol' me.

In my late twenties I found myself living in Moscow (Idaho), divorced, with my astrological Saturn Return shaking up everything I'd spent the last eight years building. There didn't seem to be much more for me to run from.

Or so I thought.....

~ Chapter 6 ~

“What?”

The clock by the bed glowed 2:43; and despite my deep sleep a moment ago, I was now fully, painfully awake. Fear so deep that it clenched my body, sent my senses searching, searching and...*OH NO*.

They found me.

My world stopped. They found me. Outside the window, expanding into my bedroom and into the closet the ‘spirits’, the evil blackness I’d encountered at Dad’s house, had finally found me. A black, cloud-like haze, blotting out my window and the street lights outside, was converging on my room, and I was powerless; held by my fear, feeding the evil more energy with my fear.

It grew larger as it fed. Fear is a powerful source of energy and gives things power and a strength they would not have alone. It was almost at the bed. My mind screamed at me, “*RUN!*” But I was powerless. I couldn’t move. All of my energy seemed caught in my throat, caught in the horror, caught in the fear as the blackness came closer and closer to me. I knew that if it touched me...*NOOOOO!*

And suddenly it was gone. Gone! My mind reeled. What happened? What made it go away? And it was with interested detachment (shock?) that part of me watched myself not completely freak out at seeing the man sitting at the end of my bed. He was just ephemerally leaning against the bed post, very calmly observing me. A somewhat amused calm, actually. A half smile played across his face as he watched the conflicting emotions I was cycling through. While my mind thought I should be afraid, I found that I was genuinely not.

This wavy haired, robed man made the evil go away, and my senses told me it was completely gone, as they also told me this man saved my life...and changed my life. I had just met my first spirit guide, guardian angel, protector or whatever you want to call them, and I was deeply, deeply grateful.

For years I had been using Shakti Gawain’s process around creating a mental ‘sanctuary’, a safe haven to do internal work in. This guide said we could work there, and we began a lifelong relationship. My sanctuary was on an ocean cove with a barrier reef that kept predators out. I told the sharks that they could come to

this safe haven when I wasn't there; but when I arrived, they had to leave. Immediately. I wanted no fear when I swam with the dolphins.

Working with the process, I acquired other guides over the years. I did visioning work in my sanctuary and used various practices to work with my subconscious. I did inner child work there, working through past traumas. I'd be working with 'me' at a certain age, and would then let that 'me' stay in the sanctuary to continue healing. Eventually there were a lot of 'me's' there, which could get confusing since they're all named 'Diane'! So, I started calling them 'the girls' and naming them by the ages they were when I worked with them, like 'Three' or 'Eight'. That is weird but worked.

Meeting Karuna that night on my bed and his stopping the 'evil' showed me an aspect of real power...and freedom, which is my personal 'Holy Grail'. I picked up my studies and my practices. I knew with a certainty in my soul that the only difference between me and the spirits (besides the good vs. evil thing) was practice and *skill*. I pulled out my archives, dusted off my neglected abilities and honed them. I devoured everything I could get my hands on in quantum physics, Pranayama yoga and energy work. If I could raise my energy, focus and intent, I could protect myself. I knew this from long ago, but now I embodied it.

I got really clear on one point: I didn't want to have to rely on anyone (embodied or not, angel or other) to save me. The operative words here being 'have to'. I would take all the help I was offered, within limits, but I also wanted to be able to save myself. The truth was, I'd been hurt and abandoned by people that said they loved me and would be there for me, and I no longer had faith that anyone would be around when I needed them. Except me. So, I'd save myself when I could and pray for help when I couldn't. If that help came in the form of angels, animals or humans, I wasn't picky ~ as long as they weren't evil or too scary.

"Only one who devotes himself to a cause with his whole strength and soul can be a true master. For this reason mastery demands all of a person." Albert Einstein

~ Chapter 7 ~

In Spokane, I gave up on finding people that shared my unusual spiritual interests and decided I'd settle for finding anyone new doing anything outside of the traditional. I didn't. The Tibetans were great, and Tai Chi was great; it just wasn't enough, and Sun Bear's group, well....

After a year of settling in, learning how TV stations worked and ‘sports by the seasons’ with friends, I was no closer to Indonesia and my dream. I knew that action was needed to give energy to my intent, but what action? I was already visualizing morning and evening, and I **knew** I would manifest this, but how? It still eluded me.

One day I decided that, since I *was* going to go to Indonesia, I should start to learn the language. Why not? It would keep me engaged.

I began to think of intent as a lot like a car. You can own it, sit in it and even turn it on; but you have to step on the gas to go anywhere. You have to take some action - fill ‘er up, turn the key and step on the gas - to get Intent going down the road.

What could I possibly do in pre-internet Spokane to get my Intent moving? And then I got it. Spokane had one Asian market at the time, and I asked if I could put up a sign: Indonesian language teacher wanted. The lovely Asian man said yes, and pointed to the glass countertop. I slid my index card in next to a handy man’s card, and prayed. I had my Intent, gassed her up with my daily dreaming, turned her on with determination and now I stepped on the gas. I was ready for *movement*.

A couple of weeks went by without a word.

I started getting nervous. I checked that my card was still there. It was. Then one night I got a call from a decidedly accented male voice. A wonderful man named Siong offered to teach me Indonesian. He and his family may have been the only Indonesians in the whole city because no one else ever called. There’s that grace again.

My education began in a local burger place over cokes every other week. At first there were the vowel pronunciation differences. It turned out theirs were just like Spanish, which I had never studied. An Indonesian/English dictionary helped with most of the words, but word stress and some of the sounds were hard to get my tongue around. Take the word for mosquito - nyamuk. The ‘nya’ was a three part sound involving tongue rolls and nasal hums that I simply couldn’t get. I really liked that Indonesia didn’t have a past or future tense, though, so I might actually retain this language. While I felt productive, like I was doing something

towards my goal, my progress was slow because there was no one to practice with. Little did I know, though, that this one act would jettison my entire dream.

After a couple of months I could be polite and say, “Good morning, my name is Diane,” and a handful of other phrases coherently; but I still had no one to practice with. I had talked with Siong about my dream and he, too, had no idea how an American girl could go live and work in Indonesia - much less with the deaf doing batik. He did, however, wonder if teaching English might be a way to get into the country. He had a friend who had a school on the island of Java - the same island I’d studied batik on. He said he’d ask his friend.

Teaching English felt as far out of reach as the rest of my dream. I knew nothing about it. I mean, I spoke English, but teaching it? I wasn’t able to find out much, either, until one day.....

“Deanna (This is how my name, Diane, translates phonetically in Indonesian due to their vowel sounds.), my friend Sutoyo and his wife are coming to America. Can you meet them in Seattle?”

“When?”

“In three weeks.”

“Oh no! There’s no way I can go over then. I’m out of town. Tell them I’m so sorry. I’d like to, but I can’t. Are there any other options?”

“No, Deanna, I don’t think so, but I will ask.”

Then two weeks later my phone rings.

“Deanna. Sutoyo is here. Can you come?”

“To Seattle?”

“No, to my house.”

“You mean he’s here, in Spokane?!”

“Yes, yes, Deanna. Can you come?”

“Give me directions, I’ll be right there!”

Oh my God! I was so excited! Sutoyo was Chinese Indonesian and owned an English School called Triad in a city called Bandung on the island of Java. He also had schools in the cities of Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Surabaya. This was the closest I’d gotten in over a year to any lead at all.

I drove to an area of Spokane I wasn’t familiar with and got lost in my nervousness. Arriving as fast as I could, I finally met Siong’s wife, then Sutoyo and his

wife, Lina. It was a casual evening of questions and answers and general information. Sutoyo spoke highly of his program, saying it was one of the better schools and he had plans to expand in the future. I didn't speak of my overall intent of teaching batik to the deaf, preferring instead to share my love of the country and the people.

I told him I wanted to go back and live there, but didn't know how. He said he only hired certified teachers and that he didn't have any openings, nor did he foresee any in the near future. My heart sank only a little, and we exchanged business cards. I left feeling that at least I knew more. Something had, at least, finally happened.

~ Chapter 8 ~

I continued with my Indonesian lessons, and with life in Spokane. I was dis-entangling from one lover, Jack, who I felt was never going to fully grow with me. He was too content to use my stories and experiences rather than create his own. He'd heard about my visualizing, energy work and work with prana (basic life force energy); but because he didn't have his own experiences, when he told others about energy it was all 'off' and he couldn't answer questions. I felt like I was being sucked dry, and I became angry and resentful.

"Do the work," I'd tell him. "You have to practice." And he would for a week until he'd get scattered and stop. I came to see that I lack patience with people I felt wouldn't help themselves, and in frustration, I had to get away. I wanted more in my life and in my partners. Always the 'more' that eluded me, or was it that it grew and changed as I grew and changed? I suspected the latter.

You'd have to imagine that the girl who said she'd 'try anything once', would have an adventurous life. It was more than that, though. I was searching for what I called 'The Truth'. The truth and my freedom - and in a sense they were synonymous. The Truth would lead me to Freedom - and to have true Freedom, I would have to have learned The Truth. Could I have one without the other? That was a good question that I put in the 'pot' of my consciousness to cook.

For now I wanted to get on with my current goal. My dream of Indonesia and all I had planned did not contain one handsome, extremely distractible American man named Jack. So, we broke up, thinking to remain friends. Things were moving in my life. I could feel it. My commitment to my dream never wavered. I knew it would happen, yet still I did not know how.

Then one day there was a knocking on the wall of my cubicle at work as Marlene, in American Sign Language, signs to me, “You have a package.”

Oh please, don’t let it be more flowers from Jack. He wasn’t letting go easily...flowers, coffee and scones on the hood of my car before work....were sweet but ‘inappropriate’ for friends (and it had the feeling of courting me). Actually, I was experimenting with being friends while he seemed stuck in a new wooing stage.

“Really? Let’s see,” I signed back.

I’d had to work on ‘the suits’ at NBC for a long time to get Marlene hired in the mail room. Deaf since childhood, she was a good lip reader. Because I knew sign language, I was able to supervise her as the mailroom was under my station accountant duties to supervise. I’d told them that she could write and still communicate when I wasn’t there and, besides, handling the mail room didn’t require phones. I even pulled the “look how supportive we’ll be and how good this would look on our EEO reports to have hired people with disabilities” bit. I finally won them over (I was sure thanks to my boss, Bob); and as Marlene handed me the FedEx package, I thought of how well it was working out with her.

“Thank you,” I smiled and signed as she left.

Flipping the package over, my heart did a complete standstill. Indonesia! It was from Indonesia! They had FedEx in Indonesia? My mind got all excited. Oh my God! What was this? It was from Sutoyo in Indonesia!

Ripping the seal, I pulled out a letter and a contract. A *contract*? Scanning the letter’s details, I realized Sutoyo was offering me a job. A job in Indonesia! Chills and elation and awe and disbelief coursed through me simultaneously. I couldn’t believe it. The Universe, or hand of the Divine, had just reached in and taken hold of my life. A year-and-a-half of holding my intent with unwavering determination and, even if teaching English wasn’t my dream, it was a foot in the door - a first step, an action step. This was amazing and almost unbelievable.

I read the letter again. My God, I wasn’t imagining it. He needed me there to start work by the third week of August, and I had to become certified to teach English as a foreign/second language before he could hire me at all. Certified by Cambridge University. Cambridge? In England? But how....and there was the

name of a school in San Francisco, English International, that provided official Cambridge training and certification. The school trained teachers for the RSA Certification (short for Royal Society of the Arts) to be 'Teachers of English as a Foreign Language' (TOEFL).

In shock, I took a break and a walk outside. I really couldn't believe it, but a third and fourth read through the letter confirmed that it was true. Sutoyo was offering me a job in Indonesia. I imagined the news brief: Small city girl with big dreams has miracles happening in Spokane, W.A.!



That same Friday afternoon, I called the school in San Francisco. They only had one course scheduled that would get me in and out in time to get to Indonesia by mid-August. They had one seat left in the course. They faxed me the application that afternoon. I filled it out and sent it back on Saturday. They reviewed it and called me Saturday afternoon, also sending me a language exam to take. I nervously (it's an English school, for goodness sake!) did the exam and faxed it immediately back to them. They called me on Sunday for a phone interview (they work seven days a week?) and accepted me into the month long program intensive that began in San Francisco in two weeks.

Yikes! Two weeks? I had the last seat in the last course available, and it really did feel like miracles were happening....but two weeks?

I walked into work Monday morning and told my dear boss, Bob, that I had to resign. Later that day I called my landlady and gave notice on my house. I was still in shock. Everyone in my world was in shock. The Universe had just moved in huge ways to manifest my dream....and it wasn't finished yet. More miracles were to come.

I called my Mom and told her what was happening, and she didn't exactly freak, but she wanted to see me before I left the country. Mom volunteered to fly me home for a visit. Yes! I called my Dad, told him the story, and he said he'd loan me money if I needed it. Double 'Yes'! I called my dear friend Kathy, told her what was happening and that I'd be going to N.C. before Indonesia. She 'just happened' to be there then for a conference, so we'd get to connect and go to the beach for a day or two. Triple 'Yes'!

My amazement was tempered by the reality of what had to happen, and happen quickly, for me to accomplish it all. And there were the hard parts, too. Everyone I worked with had become close to me, and it was with sadness that Bob accepted my resignation. While we were so very different, our acceptance of those differences allowed us the grace to go beyond it all to a place of respect and love for each other.

My 'lover of leaving' had its painful side, but I knew that nothing that mattered would be lost. We were friends and that didn't have to change. (And it hasn't.)

My financial concerns, however, were not minor as I had only been working again for a little over a year. The Cambridge course would take almost all of my meager savings, and I had to buy my airline ticket up front, being reimbursed if and when I completed my one year contract with Triad, Sutoyo's school.

I had no idea how I was going to pull it all off. Borrow money? Thankfully, Dad would help if it came to that. I also had a new car I'd have to sell, but I needed it to get to San Francisco. Then there were living expenses while I was in school in San Francisco, which isn't a cheap city. I mean, it's California, right? Idahoans always equated California with expensive, so I figured renting a room would not be cheap.

Well, I'd gotten my foot in the door all right, and all I could do was keep having faith that this was simply meant to be. I kept telling myself that it would all work out - somehow.

I started packing the house.

Bob advertised my position on Monday and by Wednesday (we're talking the same week here) had hired my replacement, leaving me the following week to train. Another miracle since nothing ever moved that fast at NBC. My house was rented on Tuesday (yes, the day after I gave notice) to the end of my lease. Yet another miracle! I now had a little over a week left before driving to California. I needed a storage unit for all my stuff and a yard sale for what I was getting rid of, but here problems arose.

There were storage places close to me, one only a mile past the station where I worked, but none of them had openings before the beginning of the next month. The closest I could find meant a one hour drive towards Post Falls, Idaho; and I

hated the thought of that, so I balked. Despite their prodding that it could be gone tomorrow, I waited.....and prayed.

Then on Wednesday of the same, magical week, another miracle arrived:

“Diane, a call for you on line two.”

“Who is it?”

“A lawyer’s office.”

Lawyers? That’s strange, I thought, but, “OK, thanks, I’ll take it.”

Pushing line two, I wondered if I’d done something I was getting ready to regret, “This is Diane.”

“Ms. Adkins, I represent the family that bought your ex-husband’s property in Deary, Idaho. They are interested in buying your adjacent ten acres, and I’m authorized to offer you \$10,000 for it. Are you by any chance still interested in selling?”

Have I mentioned miracles? They just kept on coming!

I’d had that property listed for a year with no bites on it, so I’d let the listing drop. I hadn’t even thought about it in the flurry of packing and training. This came totally out of the blue in a huge way, just when I needed it. Miracles. Intent manifesting.

“Yes, I’m interested in selling it, but I’m leaving for Asia really soon, so I don’t know if there’s time.”

“We’ve already done the preliminary title work, and the transaction doesn’t have to take long. In fact, we could have it handled within a week or so. It is very straightforward.”

I thought back to my years of paralegal work for attorneys and realized he was correct. There were no buildings, our divorce had been clean, and the title was clear. This really could happen. The next thought I had was about the loss I’d be taking. When we’d divorced, the land had been valued at between \$1,500 and \$2,000 an acre. I had gone with the higher value to minimize the amount of land I’d be taking from Dave. I had felt bad at taking any of it, but that was the only way to get the communal property settlement from the marriage. I took ten of the eighty acres for \$20,000 and Dave kept everything else. Today, I was losing

\$10,000 on the deal, but I figured that \$10,000 was more than no thousands, and so I agreed. I mean, you just didn't look a 'gift miracle' in the mouth, now did you?

They had the money up front and the title was, indeed, simple and clear. We could close before I left for San Francisco, and my money worries were, quite suddenly, over.

Right after this my boss Bob walked up to me at work and handed me a one dollar bill.

"What's this for," I asked him, puzzled.

"I want you to buy me a lottery ticket. I can't believe the luck you're having", and I saw he was absolutely serious. This wonderful, bespeckled, suit and tie comptroller was dead serious.

I grinned at him, took his dollar and said, "OK, Bob, but I have to tell you, it doesn't work that way."

~ Chapter 9 ~

It doesn't work that way, but how does it work? Miracles continued to happen. A good friend of mine living south of San Francisco was leaving for a month and, you guessed it, the same month I needed a place to stay. Miracles. He offered me his house (Wednesday of my magical week), and I continued my packing.

The end of my two week whirlwind was close, and I still had no storage unit. I desperately wanted to avoid a two hour drive, schlepping all my stuff. Friday came. My last day at work was sad and excited and hopeful and finally here. Friday, the day before my scheduled yard sale. Friday, the day before I needed to move everything out of my house. Friday, two days before I cleaned my house and began my journey to San Francisco....and I had no storage unit.

"Excuse me, Diane. You have a call on line two." Could it be line two that was making these miracles happen? It bore looking at <grin!>.

"This is Diane," I answered, absently.

"Diane, I'm from South Hill Storage Units, and we had an unexpected vacancy this morning. Your name has been at the top of our list for some time now;

and I appreciate that you may have found another storage unit, but I thought I'd call. Do you by any chance still need one?"

"I most certainly do! This is excellent! I'll take it." And with that I got up and danced a jig around my surprised replacement. *Another* miracle had blessed my life.

I made a little over three hundred dollars at my yard sale and moved everything else three miles down the road, exactly where I'd hoped to store it. Friends helped me clean the house on Sunday, and I headed out Monday morning, adventures starting and a smile on my face. This was cool!

Never before had I experienced so many events happening so perfectly, precisely and correctly. This was the stuff of fairy tales that happened to other people, not me. Every night I would go to bed and pray a 'Thank You' for the incredible things happening to me. It was like a chain of events that had waited for all of the pieces to align and unfold, astonishing in the perfection. Had I not experienced it myself, I may never have believed it possible.

My miracle week was telling me this was right, proper and meant to be. I had stopped questioning any of it. I felt a calmness about the direction I was going, and a deeper conviction about 'ask and you shall receive'. It might take time, it might happen differently than we imagined, but we do receive. There were few words that could fully express my astonishment, or my deep gratitude. And, I only had one wee breakdown in the two week process! *Another miracle.*

~ Chapter 10 ~

My month in San Francisco taking Cambridge's RSA course was difficult. Really difficult. England had developed a remarkable system of teaching English. You've got to figure that a country that had occupied so many other countries would have a real need for a system of teaching English that worked.

It was brilliant, but challenging. We had to unlearn everything we'd ever experienced with educators. I was soon shown how the entire American teaching model centered on students being lectured to by teachers and professors, who talked on and on while students quietly wrote it all down. This didn't work for teaching English (nor many other things, actually), but it's what American education did. We had a lot to *unlearn*.

The RSA model understood that students learning English had to talk, which meant teachers had to shut up. They called it 'TTT' - Teacher Talking Time - and we were rigorously graded and reprimanded for too much TTT. Day two they had us teaching, while they sat at the back of the room grading us. Talk about pressure!

We didn't have to learn English, either, as there were plenty of books to give us the rules. We had to learn a style, their 'Zen of Teaching English', and it went against the grain of every person in my course. We had been habituated to teachers talking (a lot!) and breaking years of habitual patterns quickly did not come easily.

I sweated bullets. My first lesson plan took me four hours to prepare, and it was only a half hour lesson. Add that to my three hours a day commuting (my friend's house was *way* south of the city) to our six hours of course work a day, and I was quickly becoming exhausted. I had to get this though. It was the ticket to my dream, and to the whole world, I soon discovered. With this certification, I could go to any non-English speaking country and get a job. My world had just opened up for me in a big way, and I was tired but thrilled.

By the time I finished, I felt the RSA course was the most remarkable program and tool I'd learned in a very long time. All teachers should be made to take this course since it opened the classroom up to sharing, exploring and a level of dynamism I'd never experienced before. Granted, it took a lot of work and creativity to continually create that dynamism, but that's what was expected of us. England was proud of their program and had every right to be.

I left San Francisco in a Friday afternoon's traffic not knowing if I'd passed or not. We'd be mailed our results within the week, so I drove out of the city I hadn't even had time to see. Returning to Spokane, I landed at Billy and Rebecca's house to recover and sleep. I also had to sell my car, my last remaining hurdle. I didn't know if it would be easy or not, but since I seemed to have the Universe on my side, I expected the best ~ and received it. I sold it immediately and didn't lose a dime. Miracles! And then my certification arrived in the mail. I passed. *YES!*

Now I was finished. I had my trip to North Carolina to visit family ahead, but I was packed up and ready to go. All of this had manifested in the space of two months, miracle by miracle, and in ways I couldn't have dreamed up if I'd tried.

I reflected back over leaving Asia not so long ago, with a dream, a vision. I'd had no idea how to manifest it and only a deep, inexplicable desire that it be so. All along I knew, somehow, it would happen.

I loved batik, and I loved working with the deaf; and I couldn't explain that to anyone, really. Why did I love it so much? How did one explain love? It was a feeling, a joy I felt working with both of them, but beyond that there were no words. I wondered if it might be some past life carryover, but I really didn't care. It didn't matter. All that mattered was that I had held my intent, and once I finally took proactive steps toward it, I had been supported beyond my wildest dreams. I was on the road, behind the wheel of this car called 'Intent', and I had my foot placed firmly on the gas.

Now, a visit to my family then off to Indonesia. A piece of cake, yes?

~ Chapter 11 ~

"Aren't you going to be scared, I mean *living* there, all by yourself?"

"Uh, let me think.....nope."

"Seriously? Why not?"

"I've told you! I've been scared in LA and DC, but I have never once been threatened in Asia. Politely offered to be 'serviced' sexually, yes, but never threatened. It's fun, it's different, it's exciting."

"I still think you're crazy to be going alone."

"I've heard that before, and you know I'm not crazy."

"Yeah, I know. You're just brave. I couldn't do it."

"Sure you could, you just have to stop saying you can't. Argue for your limitations, and they're yours, you know."

"Yeah, well, I still think you're brave."

"OK, whatever you say."

~ Chapter 12 ~

Heading home to N.C., it seemed that patience would be the primary theme this time. Held, and lost.

It was a recurring picture, and I didn't know if I was improving. Actually, yes, I was improving at keeping it; however, the net effect was much the same. It seemed no matter what I did there was still anger and frustration thrown back at me. I wanted to become more patient.

My attitude at my family's anger was still condescending. The conversations and arguments were so completely boring and senseless to me that I apparently belittled them by my process of non-engagement (thereby making it passive aggression?). I had to get around that one. It was a form of self-importance that smacked (reeked?) of, 'I'm not going to lower myself to your level'. It felt crazy making. There were much bigger battles in life than creating these.

Like the one I was having with my ego, my 'I know what I'm talking about' stance. How to find a balance? I often *did* know what I was talking about, but it should not matter that anyone else knew it, too.

Part of their problem with me was that I questioned everything, and I always have. The issue, however, seemed to be a matter of my intent. Did I 'question' to change their minds and trap them in a net of logic, or did I question for clarification? Both, it seemed, with the greater emphasis on the former. And, sadly, I was good at it.

We'd been trained oh so well as children in the art of sarcasm by both Dad and Mom, but it didn't make me feel good. I needed to alter the balance. I knew that change, attempted from any position other than for ourselves, opened us up to ego.

We humans don't really change *for* other people. We change because we choose to, because we see something that attracts us, not because someone asks or tells us we should. People see a cardiac arrest in their future and change their lifestyle; they'd see love and then change themselves to receive more of it, or to give more of it. I wanted to change myself because I hated what it felt like to argue like this, to cut someone down so that you could feel better. I chose this battle over the 'she said you said' ones.

Dad and Louise were a family exception in that they were constantly on the go with new experiences. It was a relief to finally get to their house, and our time was too short. Dad never once broke into sarcasm, which was an absolute, miraculous first.

He was the one who had taught us all, the master of that unfortunate game. He also knew it drove me crazy, just as he knew I'd tell him so. Was it easier for him to just behave, or was he sobered by the fact that I was on my way to live in a third world heathen country and truly God only knew what might happen to me? I suspected the latter.

They also left me alone on the religious front. A few years after they became Christian fundamentalists, we learned to leave the issue of beliefs alone. We left a lot of issues alone. I think it was simply understood that, from their point of view, I was going to hell; and they loved me anyway.

There was great comfort in that, and the fact that we came to this workable understanding was to our credit. They knew I was going to Hell as surely as I knew I wasn't, so we let each other be. We didn't try to change each other. That's a lie....we didn't try to change each other's spiritual beliefs.

I tried to change Dad all the time.

For starters, he blamed himself for 'taking me away from Jesus'. I had told him countless times that he didn't take me away from the Jesus Freaks, and that he was the last person I was listening to at fifteen years old; but he preferred to be a martyr over the whole thing.

I told him he was full of himself, that he needed to just get over it, and finally that he needed to forgive himself. He didn't. We'd had this conversation so many times that I finally told him, "Get over yourself, Dad!"

I loved my father, but he carried such guilt for being an exorcist and spending years running around spiritualist circles that he had become like the self-flagellating monks, emotionally whipping himself for his sins. Where was the forgiveness, Dad?



In August, 1992, after a lovely visit with my friend Kathy at the beach, I left North Carolina, my family and my attempts to acclimate to heat and humidity.

Funny, I once swore they would never see me in N.C. between the months of May and September again because it was too darned hot. I really should learn 'never to say never', but there you go. There was usually intense humidity and heat in N.C. in August, but history will show that this particular August was to be an exception. "Just for me", I thought as I walked around in the record cold spell, shocked and not a little unhappy. Jakarta was going to be brutal after this.

Which explained why, upon the stewardess opening our trans-pacific jet's doors, I practically staggered. The air was like an invading force, taking everyone by surprise and I knew (I mean, I'd been there before) that I'd be drenched in my own sweat if the passengers didn't get a move on. Fast!



Welcome to Jakarta. I once wrote that Asian countries should be posted 'extremely tactful deceit required upon entry' because of their rules for extreme politeness and never showing their feelings. Sort of like the South, yes? So I hid my tiredness from jet lag and approached Immigration with a smile on my face and a sense of adventure at entering a whole new world. Again.

At least for this trip, Sutoyo and Lina's driver should be waiting for me. Jakarta wasn't known for being safe, and I remembered my first trip there when I was afraid to go out around town alone.

I'd made it to Jalan Jacksa street, found a hotel (thank you Lonely Planet travel books) and the next day met a lovely group of foreign travelers (two couples and a single guy) who all had the same story.

They'd gotten on a bus and suddenly someone was falling into them as the bus took a curve, causing them to lose their balance and start to fall. People helped them up, and by the time they were upright the bus had stopped, people got off, having lifted their money belts and passports. All five of them - same story. They'd been there for four days waiting for replacements. Yuck.

My eyes had floated up to the wall above their heads and a poster offering a reward for any information on a young American girl that had disappeared. Oh my. My eyes floated to the check-in desk and a sign above it telling me that a tourist bus could pick me up at this hotel and take me straight to Yogyakarta. I mustered my courage to walk around the corner to a store selling snacks, and then got

straight on that bus and away. I wanted none of Jakarta ever again. Another never say never!

This trip, I was smiling as I saw Triad's logo and my name, misspelled, on a sign that could only be held by their driver. I was no longer afraid of Jakarta, but was ever so thankful for the ride. Jakarta was a big, hot, dirty, smelly, crowded and crazy city, and I had not come for it. I'd had to argue with Sutoyo before he understood that there was no way I would work for them in Jakarta. I was already settling for Bandung, a place I'd never been before, and felt I'd done my part to compromise.

Before leaving for Bandung, we visited the Jakarta school, and it only cemented the wisdom of my decision. As I climbed the stairs of the dilapidated building to the floor their school was on, a rather large rat dove behind the steps. A HUGE rat! And, the whole place had a dark, depressing air to it. No, I had not come for it.

~ Chapter 13 ~

The air cooled as we climbed in elevation to Bandung. The city was in the mountains under the shadow of a semi-active volcano, and I would be spending the next year of my life there. Lush jungle in every shade of green, bamboo forests, small villages and the smell of open cook fires gave rise to shanty town style outer city limits. Bandung was large, the third largest city in Indonesia, and the largest I had ever lived in.

We stopped in at the school to say hello to Sutoyo's wife, Lina, and give me a brief tour and introduction. This was a definite improvement over the Jakarta school. While it was at 'Indonesian standard', which meant it needed a coat of paint and some repairs, it was definitely not horrible.

The office staff was shy, friendly and curious about me. They spoke English and laughed when I tried out my limited Indonesian. The teachers hadn't come in for the day yet, but I heard there was a Kiwi (i.e. New Zealander) and an American, a couple of Indonesian teachers and me, with possibly more coming. I laughed remembering Sutoyo saying he didn't think he'd have an opening. It was immediately apparent he was hiring several people; so he must have known, and probably played me, but I didn't care. I was in Indonesia!

Our next stop was the teacher's house, or rather, duplex apartment. Housing and transportation were provided as part of my contract, and I was pleased. The three bedroom apartment was great! Much nicer than I expected and a cut above Indonesian 'standard'.

There were, of course, the usual things like no hot water, few electrical outlets, no refrigeration, no shower or bathtub, etc., but there was new bamboo furniture, nice beds, wardrobes for clothes, many cupboards, a real toilet (that you scooped water in to flush), a 'mandi' (a tiled reservoir) that held the water you scooped out for bathing and a back yard with a covered porch.

The back yard was enclosed with ten foot high walls with bits of broken glass embedded in the top to discourage thieves. It also sported a papaya tree and a star fruit tree! Yay! Fruit out the back door....along with very large rodents that came to eat the fruit. This, I would soon find out, would be a problem. The answer to that problem ended up being inhumane. Indonesians used sticky boards the rats and mice would get stuck on, screaming (as I horribly found out) until someone went out and hit them over the heads. No way was I doing that. None.

I was quickly finding that Bandung was much cooler than the lowlands, too, which was delightful. It even had a western supermarket, complete with western hair products, Asian 'Oil of Ulan' (an Oil of Olay knock-off), Corn Flakes and rice cakes ~ all at three times the cost US\$, but who cared. I wouldn't have to go totally without some 'luxuries'.

One drawback to the house (besides the rodents) was that it was quite a distance from town and the school, in a fairly well-off neighborhood. The house across the street had stained glass and a satellite dish peeking out above their walls, if that tells you something. It meant I probably wouldn't be close to my neighbors in their locked, walled compounds; and it wouldn't be easy to get into town for shopping until I figured out the local transportation. I noticed there were some warungs (little road-side stalls that cooked different foods) on the street leading in to our neighborhood that would suffice until I found the markets.

~ Chapter 14 ~

Life in Bandung began. I had a few days off to settle in and adjust to everything, which was good because I found myself in my 'jet lag spins and depression'. These still seemed to hit me a day or two after a long oceanic flight.

My first encounter with serious jet lag was when I had flown to Egypt with my friend Cindy, and I was in the American Express office in Cairo on day two. The office had two floors that were reached via a metal circular stairway. I had finished my business upstairs and was about to descend when the entire building began to spin. It seemed to rise up and begin to swing dance around me.

To the surprise of everyone on both floors, myself included, I gasped and sank immediately to the relative safety of the stairs. This had never, ever happened to me before, and I wasn't really sure what was going on. Was I sick? Had I hit some energy swirl? Was the lighting affecting me? I had no idea. Once the 'swing dance' stopped, I resumed the stairs and left, only a little embarrassed. The world continued to do this off and on throughout the day, though, and I was a bit unsettled by it all.

Later that chilly Egyptian night, when the 'out of the blue' depression hit, I left the flat Cindy and I were staying in and, walking past all the guards with Uzi machine guns (this takes some getting used to), I headed to a Chinese restaurant I'd seen down the street. I spent one of the most schizoid nights of my life in that restaurant. There I was in Egypt, in a Chinese restaurant, eating an American hamburger, listening to England's Rolling Stones on the restaurant's radio and crying my eyes out. I've since learned that this spinning and depression was how jet lag affected me, thankfully for only one day!



My job of teaching began with observing a banking class and three other general classes, all of which I could only describe as 'BORING'! I immediately saw the value of the RSA training, and with my 'acting skills' (thanks again, Dad) I should be able to liven my classes up.

I met the teachers, local and 'expat' (short for expatriate - people from a foreign country living abroad), and instantly became friends with an Indonesian teacher named Sonja. I adored her. She was the most articulate Indonesian I had ever met, with twinkling blue eyes and a sense of humor I never tired of enjoying. Until recently, the Dutch had occupied Indonesia, and their gifts were noticeable in the occasional blue/green eyes and in the pine trees dotting the hills, their dark evergreen a stark contrast to the vibrant bamboo and palms.

It was Sonja who showed me the town, where the actual markets were, where the huge covered Pasar Baru market downtown was, how the transportation

worked and what areas were safer than others. Finally, a normal market! The veggies were much better than in the supermarket, the meat was reasonable, the atmosphere delightful and the prices good.

By 'normal', however, I meant third world normal, not western, air conditioned normal. The stalls were all open, often the floor was dirt or paved with drains to wash the detritus down, the meat was on tables, pig heads with tongues lolling, chicken feet and other body parts ready to buy and vegetables in mounds next to jars of shocking pink sweets.

I was in heaven. I'd learned traveling in India and Nepal to have iodine on hand to soak fresh fruits and vegetables in to kill the germs - before they could kill me. Meat was cooked thoroughly (and no, I didn't buy chicken's feet or pig's heads) and was no problem, except in identifying the cuts. We definitely have a different butchering system than Indonesians, who seem to simply hack the meat up, never having seen (or cared about) our orderly butcher's cuts.

My biggest problem was the lack of refrigeration in the apartment. In every home in Asia without it, people went to the market daily for their food since everything spoiled so quickly in the humidity. I was challenged to have any time to get to the markets, and I began to lose weight. Lots of it.

I seemed to remember visioning I'd lose weight, but never dreamed it would happen like this! I was practically starving. This was becoming a big lesson in 'be careful of what you ask for'. I'd wanted to lose weight; I just should have envisioned it happening in a healthy way. Not like this.

At Triad, I immediately became friends with the staff. I discovered that Indonesians remain very 'young' until they marry. It's a cultural practice found in many third world countries that the youth are protected, and in some ways pampered, until rites of passage like marriage occurred.

Family values were amazing in Indonesia, and several generations would share one household. They are very close knit. Their words for 'Mr. and Mrs.' (Bapak and Ibu) translated as the same words for 'Father and Mother' in English. Everybody older than you, of a higher social standing or profession, or married, or older than twenty was called Father or Mother so-and-so. Here Sutoyo was Bapak Sutoyo and Lina was Ibu Lina, for those that used this form of address. I rarely did, there or in the States, but now I was 'Ibu Deeana', which took some getting used to.

Strict cultural values dictated societal behavior; and as far as I could tell, it was all picked up by innuendo and facial expressions. Parents never talked with their children about sex or relationships or dating or...anything...I was told. They wouldn't dance touching each other unless they were officially dating or married - which explained their strange love of line dancing. It seemed many were allowed to start dating as early as sixteen, but only as friends, never lovers, which most of the population wouldn't dream of outside of wedlock. They all tended to get married after college (for those that could afford to go) and a woman's virginity at marriage was still critical, although like many places, many men screwed around a lot.

I wondered if on Java (a Muslim island) it was viewed differently because Islam in Indonesia permitted men to have multiple wives *if* they could afford to support them all. I'd even heard that the first wife had to give her permission, but don't know if that is true. Once I got to know the women, though, I realized that they didn't like it at all - polygamy or adultery. They had sayings like 'just out the door and he's already in bed', and some sayings that meant you couldn't trust the men once they had left your sight.

I didn't know it, at first, but I was at a brothel once with a friend who was trying to buy a used car. There I was, sitting on a patio bench waiting for my friend, and I looked up across the patio to see a row of large windows. Behind these were young women in pastel baby-doll pajamas, standing at the windows observing me as interestedly as I was observing them. It took a minute to dawn on me what I was seeing, and the man coming out of a side room buckling his belt helped it dawn loud and clear.

I had no idea! So what was I to do? I smiled and waved, and wondered if they thought I was coming in as competition. It was guaranteed that no western woman had ever entered this fish bowl before!

My new Triad friends were all in their early twenties and emotionally like an American teenager. They were quite a contrast to me at thirty-six, but they were fun. Another shock was in store for me when one night the guys from school took me to the Transvestite Street ('Jalan Banci'). Yanna and Fitri delighted in watching my response, which was shock. I learned that Banci, pronounced ban-chi means Banshee - a female spirit. As these were all men transitioning to women, they told me they truly were 'female spirited'.

So, there we were, driving down the street chatting with transvestites dressed up in only mini skirts and heels, showing off their beautiful breast implants. I mean literally. I couldn't believe it - there were half naked people in the streets of Java! Amazing. And they *were* beautiful. They would come up to the car, tease and joke with us, invite the guys to hang out and warmly welcome me to their country. Never, *ever*, would I have imagined this possible in this very Muslim country. They then asked us to please come back and bring our foreign friends so they could practice their English.

It turned out Indonesians had a lot of tolerance for transvestites. The cops would periodically do a raid on whichever street they were using that month, making them move on, which they did to another street for another few months until they moved on again. When people wanted to go there, they'd simply ask a cab driver to take them to Jalan Banci, and you'd arrive at the street of the month. I also discovered that their surgeries were done in Bangkok or Singapore, not Indonesia, and usually financed by a rich 'friend'. Indonesian tolerance apparently had its limits.

After two weeks of living in Indonesia I had the following reflections:

- 1) Patience, compromise and the ability to go with the flow were all things I must master in order to survive there;
- 2) 'Tidak ada masalah' meant 'no problem' and was the unofficial motto of the country;
- 3) I must learn to have no set expectations;
- 4) There was almost no organization (in any area or level of life) as defined by western standards; and
- 5) I had minimal to no control over anything unless, perhaps, in my own bedroom, but even that was suspect.

An example of no control happened one weekend when I had planned to be home, blissfully alone as I'd been yearning for, when my friends, Maggie, Melissa and Yanna, suddenly appear, unannounced, on Saturday. I then found out that Melissa would now be living there, in the house, part time. I had just been at the school on Friday, but do you think anyone told me? Oh no.

Then another time Tugi, the 'house boy' (their words, not mine) who worked at the school and lived in the back bedroom in exchange for his work, made a huge mess in the kitchen. He and I were going to paint some of the more awful puke brown kitchen walls, and he was to wait to start until I was there to

supervise and help. Of course, he began anyway, figuring how hard could painting be? Tugi had never painted before, so if you let your imagination run wild, you'd have a sense of what I came home to. I'd asked for white paint; I got (more) brown.

You think something would work, and it wouldn't. Everything was messy there! They even threw their trash in the streets, streams and yards, which was where I found Tugi's discarded paint cans and dried up brushes. I came to realize that they had not been long in the world of plastic and that before it, if they threw something away, it decomposed quickly and was gone. Plastic didn't decompose at all, and they hadn't realized that yet, thus the trash everywhere. For many, if it was a little messy ~ no problem. If it was a lot messy ~ still no problem. So rather than bitch about it I sighed deeply and adjusted. And moaned just a little. Well, I moaned regularly, it turned out.

Still, the staff kept coming around, entertaining me with stories and helping me with my Indonesian language studies. From them I learned that Sutoyo was opening a school in Yogyakarta, but of course he had not spoken to me about it. After all, it was a center of batik, and I actually *wanted* to go there; so I'd have to scheme on that one.

The more I learned about Sutoyo, the more I heard that people felt he was an arrogant, conceited and cheap employer. He apparently treated everyone on the staff like dirt. I was thankful he didn't treat me that way, and I had not seen or heard any of this myself; however, most folks thought he was a pig. He was not around Bandung enough for me to know. His wife Lina and I had been having fun, so we'd see.

Lina took me to have a 'crème bath' at a hair salon, and these are a 'must have' if you ever make it to Indonesia. Crème Baths are an intense, one-and-a-half hour head, shoulder and upper back massage using aloe vera straight out of the leaf and some silky creams. My body could feel the effects from the deep tissue massage and my hair felt great. I'd have to do that again since the two dollars it cost was well within my minimal budget and the results were worth it.

The end of September found me having a long weekend, so I decided to brave one of the famous bus rides to a town named Pangandarang on the coast. Careening at breakneck speeds down streets full of rickshaw type bike taxis, three wheeled food carts, chickens, children, animals and everything else raw humanity could muster had me thinking, "They are race car drivers on the foot paths of life."

One motto of the country was 'From Bamboo to Boeings in 50 Years', and they were trying hard to make that leap. I stress 'leap' here because Indonesia didn't even make its own automobile. They did compile imported parts into a vehicle called a Kijang, but hadn't manufactured their own yet. And here they were trying to build an airplane - in Bandung, actually. While I thought this was insane, I was happy for the large expat community it brought in. My friends were from all over the world, and I loved that.

Arriving alive in Pangandarang, I found a sweet room in a small motel, or 'losman', called Mini III for under \$3.00 a night. Maman, Catherine and family were warm, cheerful people that welcomed all visitors to their losman with huge smiles, making everyone feel at home. Pangandarang was relaxed in the extreme with beautiful beaches, snorkeling, guitars and songs on the beach under the stars, and always the lovely Indonesian hospitality and kindness. These were some of the warmest, most soft spoken people on Earth, and my love affair continued, with Pangandarang now in my top four favorite places on Earth.

I also took a trip in October to see the new school Triad was starting in Yogyakarta. The thirteen hour bus ride, in pouring rain, thankfully went without a hitch, except in my lower back. I found the school to be fairly nice, with much more light than either Jakarta or Bandung. Housing would be a problem if they put it in the school, but there were places to rent in the surrounding areas.

Yogyakarta had changed in the two years since I'd been there. There was now a mall, Pizza Hut, Dunkin' Donuts, many new hotels and fancy restaurants with prices to rival the larger cities. Who knew? The areas I had roamed on my travels were still there and not changed dramatically, which was a relief. The downtown was much the same since it was already well established. Life moved on, though, and the desire to be more 'American' was in evidence everywhere. I'd hear "Bill Clinton Good," accompanied by a vigorous thumbs up signal often. At least America was in good favor these days, which made my life much easier.

Returning to Bandung, I found that Sutoyo had put an Indonesian fellow in my house to live. This guy just sat in the living room, basically stalking me. He watched every move I made, and the whole thing felt wrong.

I was then approached by the next door, missionary neighbors who asked me what was going on with the guys going in and out. I told them that the apartment was rented by Triad for its teachers to use. The new guy was on staff, so Sutoyo

put him there. They informed me, quite strictly, that this was inappropriate in this culture. Indonesian men absolutely did not live with western women and to do so made me out to be, basically, a whore in the eyes of the neighborhood. Huh.

I went in to talk with Sutoyo, telling him all I'd heard, and he understood, moving the guy to live in the school. When I questioned if it was OK having Tugi live there, Sutoyo said that since he cut the grass and such, folks would know he was a 'house boy'. I had reservations, now that I'd been enlightened, but it didn't seem to cause any more concern, at least that I heard of.

One day Tugi caught me looking at my palm and consulting a book on palmistry I'd brought with me. When he understood what I was doing, he had me take a look at his hand. I was shocked to the core to find that he only had two lines on his entire palm. Two! And this despite the manual labor he did. One must have been the life line and one the heart line, but I couldn't actually tell with all my other reference points nonexistent. I figured that his life was so simple that his palm was reflecting that, and yet it was still unbelievable to me.

What did it actually mean, anyway? I looked at my palm, full of every imaginable line, and reflected on my rather complicated life. I then looked back at his palm and the absence of lines, and it made sense. I was seeing a validation of palmistry at a basic level because Tugi's nature was one of the simplest I'd ever encountered. I later checked other Indonesian friend's hands and, sure enough, most of them had the usual network of lines you'd expect to find on most people's palms, with some more cross-hatched than others. Their lives also reflected the increase in lines as they were more educated and their lives less 'simple'.

The end of October brought my favorite holiday - Halloween. It turned out that Indonesia doesn't celebrate Halloween, so the staff was really interested in it. Given that many of the expat teachers at Triad were missionaries, it figured that they'd had no real contact with this particular pagan holiday. So, I decided to throw a Halloween party for the staff.

For days beforehand, I was barraged with questions about what costumes were like and what Halloween was all about. Trying to explain ghosts to a people already familiar with jinn, black magic and curses turned out to be harder than I'd imagined. How to not scare them, yet have them fully get the fun of it all? I did my best and waited to see.

Other problems were where to find decorations and what to serve for drinks. Corn did grow in Indonesia, so I raided a dead field for some stalks, got some squashes and made jack-o-lanterns, cut out some paper ghosts, put out a bunch of candles and sat back to admire my work. Not bad, under the circumstances. The next question concerned drinks. Given that Java was a Muslim island, I didn't think they'd drink beer, but I bought some for the expats I'd invited. I got sodas, chips and munchies, pulled out my tape player for music and called it good.

The staff arrived en masse, and I opened the door to the most amazing set of costumes! They had outdone themselves being the grim reaper, clowns, painted faces, funny hats and rock stars.

Everyone piled into my living room, and to my surprise, we went through all the beer I'd bought and had to go for more. As they said, for one night they were being 'bad Muslims' and drinking. The picture I took of the group is one I'll cherish forever. Huge, somewhat tipsy smiles on delighted faces. It was a great success.

~ Chapter 15 ~

At Triad, Sutoyo had me working furiously with another American teacher, named Jay, to put together a proposal to teach English to P.T. Arun, a natural gas company in northern Sumatra that had partnered with Mobil Oil. They were looking for training for their Indonesian staff and professionals to learn how to say 'no' three different ways, some letter and report writing skills and more advanced language skills. I was to be one of the teachers because of my business background, and I suspected they wanted clues on how to deal with Americans in business. Jay was the other teacher because he was older, very good in both languages and had been in the country for many years, so he knew the cultural issues.

The fact that they needed to say 'no' three different ways was a big clue into Indonesian culture. Indonesians are some of the most polite people on earth. Yet, they are not honest, in the sense that they would do any and everything possible to make you happy and not hurt your feelings. They always wanted to help you and give you some answer....even if it was the wrong answer.

I learned quickly that if asking for directions, you had to ask several different people because half of them probably didn't know and would tell you anything to make you happy.

They also said ‘no’ only under duress, and someone had to decline an offer three times before it was believed. So people were making offers three times so that you knew they really meant it, and you had to politely decline three times if you didn’t really want it. If they went four offers, they were being really serious about it, and if you declined again, so were you!

If you went to someone’s house, you would be offered refreshments and you should never, ever, decline as it was most disrespectful. And you must never, ever, show anger. Happiness and reserve were totally acceptable, but frustration, deep joy and any anger were not. It was the whole concept of ‘saving face’, which seemed to mean living within a narrow bandwidth of emotions. I wrote a poem that described how I felt about that...

Posted

In a totally foreign land
I tread a line
that the years make me
see but dimly.
The qualities I’ve spent
twenty years developing
are severe liabilities here
where the word ‘reserved’
takes on new parameters.
Say what’s wanted
to be heard;
never ever
lose face or temper or
feelings.
Countries should be posted
‘Extremely tactful deceit required’
upon entry.
It makes me scream,
but then that’s wrong, too.
The things I’ve spent my life pursuing
are in need of some revision.
Honesty without tact in large measure
seems to serve no one.
Or is it honesty without the wisdom
to apply it successfully?

‘Think before you speak’;
as a child I heard often
and as a child now, I struggle
with my new lessons.

I did get into trouble several times, hurting my friends’ feelings when I allowed them to see that I was not happy. I was amazed at how easy it was to do. I didn’t even have to be angry at them, like when I wasn’t pleased with a teaching schedule and sarcastically muttered ‘Oh great’ to myself as I walked by. Thankfully, Herlina valued our friendship enough to tell me that I had crossed the line and hurt her terribly. Who would know?

~ Chapter 16 ~

Triad’s proposal to teach at P.T. Arun was accepted, and I was surprised that Sutoyo felt he had to bribe me to go up there to teach. He offered me a bonus on top of my meager wages for the month, and then two weeks of that month off as paid vacation. This was very strange and very suspicious. What was I getting myself into, anyway?

I wondered if it could have anything to do with Tony arriving to live in the teacher’s house. Tony was from England, and I actually liked him. He’d taught in Thailand and was fairly arrogant in a funny sort of way. He loved to be catered to, grasped quickly the nuances of the country and wanted us to hire a ‘servant’.

Once I saw how sloppy he was, I agreed that it was time to get someone in to help out. Besides, I had tired of trying to wash clothes on the floor of the bathing room as I couldn’t seem to get all the soap out. I was also tired of having to iron even my underwear so that all possible parasites were killed, along with their eggs. If you didn’t iron absolutely everything, the damned things would hatch and bite along pressure points from your bra, pants and underwear leaving large, itchy welts.

Most westerners I’d told this to were going ‘Ick!’ about now. It’s true though. If you live in a third world country with water as bad as Indonesia’s, you iron your undies and bras, T-shirts, shorts, jeans, sheets and towels. Everything was ironed, and the heat killed whatever the bleach and soap didn’t.

I liked Tony, but stayed uneasy with Sutoyo’s generosity as it was totally inexplicable. It never dawned on me, either, that neighbors would be up in arms

with Tony living there as he was a teacher, and obviously not Indonesian. No one ever commented again, and they must have let it go. That, or they figured it was normal, and we were sleeping together because that's what westerners did, right? *Not!* At least, not all of us. It also helped that a Triad vehicle, with the logo clearly visible, came to pick us up and drop us off daily.



Jay and I flew into Medan, on the island of Sumatra, a day or so before we began teaching. We were picked up by P.T. Arun's private jet for the last leg up to their facility on the northeast coast. What a trip. It was my first time in a private jet, and I loved it. Nobody cared if we were upright, or belted, or where our seat tray was. As they drove us to our hotel in the early evening twilight, I could see fires burning out of the refinery's tall smokestacks that dotted the countryside. It gave the area an almost demonic feel.

The people were anything but demonic; nor was the countryside by daylight. Perched on the ocean, the entire facility was surrounded by fences, neighborhoods and all. The hotel we were housed in was fairly modern with a restaurant, satellite TV, phones, real toilets that worked (with lids!), showers and decent beds. Everything was 'contained' on the vast area the plant occupied. We were chauffeured to the classroom near the plant daily, and Jay and I worked out a teaching schedule that wouldn't drive either of us crazy or make us exhausted.

I really enjoyed teaching there and made friends quickly. The group of 99% men were as delighted with me as I was with them. They were eager, industrious and Jay had primed me with 'insider' jokes to set a friendly tone to the otherwise dry material. They ended up testing out to almost 90% improvement from when they started, and they knew how to say 'no' in three or four different ways.

We taught this section in the form of: we are unable to..., we regret that..., thank you for xyz, but..., we aren't prepared to..., this is outside the scope of..., we appreciate you and...plans/timing/goals have changed. We had fun.

On our one day off (Indonesians work six days a week), a group decided that since I loved snorkeling, they'd take Jay and I out for some fun. One 'student now friend' named Syamsul borrowed a company motor boat that would hold six or seven of us and off we went.

It was beautiful on the ocean, looking back at the palms and sunlight on the quiet sea reflecting a clear blue sky. We snorkeled and played, and it wasn't until our return that calamity hit.

We'd been roaring along when all of a sudden the engine died. No amount of magic would make it start, and we were beginning to drift a bit. It was decided that, since we had our flippers, four or five of us would get in the water and 'push'. We weren't that far from shore, and the theory was that if we got close enough, we could catch the waves rolling in.

We're in the water, laughing and pushing the boat, and it was actually working. For some reason, however, the 'captain' (who came with the boat) decided he'd try the engine one last time. Did he think that there were five people swimming around the propeller? Did he consider that the blade of a power motor would cut through a body like cheese? Oh, no; that was quite beyond him.

So here we are, swimming and pushing, when all of a sudden the motor gives a cough and roars to life. I practically drowned just ducking away. Jay was right next to the propeller's other side and, thankfully, escaped without injury, too. No one was hurt, but I wanted to kill that 'captain'.

I completely lost face that day and didn't care. I climbed into that boat and let him have it until I caught myself and sat down, examining my expensive camera and lens that he had kicked into a puddle under a seat. These were filled with water and ruined. I rode for a while in stony silence until the joking and teasing were too much for me, and I grinned. How could I stay mad at these sweethearts for long? Cameras I could replace.

In the course of my teaching on Sumatra I met a woman, Rosmiati, who was to become a life-long friend. She was so remarkable for an Indonesian! She was bubbly, talkative and quite bored with teaching the expat community how to speak Indonesian. When she heard about my travels, she asked me, 'Deanna, how can I do this kind of travel?'

A check at P.T. Arun's library turned up a *Lonely Planet* book (the backpacker's bible to the world as far as I was concerned) on S.E. Asia. Armed with the book's maps and information, Rosmiati ended up quitting her job and traveling over to Malaysia and into Thailand - all by herself! I had told her everything she'd need to know and that she'd meet friends to travel with along the way. It wasn't

really dangerous as long as she kept her eyes open, head clear and money belt hidden. I really drilled that in, as Indonesians were so darned trusting.

I couldn't believe she did it, frankly, but not before she introduced me to Medan and the famous (infamous?) Hash House Harriers.

~ Chapter 17 ~

Medan, capital of the island of Sumatra, was one very hot place. I headed there after our P.T. Arun contract ended to take advantage of the two week vacation and to see the area. Sumatra was known to be a very Muslim island so care had to be taken with what I wore. Women were basically censored in Islam. That's my take on it, anyway, and a blond, white woman traveling alone just *must* be loose and free. After all, didn't all the T.V. they watched tell them so? So I wore below the knee length skirts and kept my shoulders covered.

I'd seen this bigotry before when traveling through Malaysia. It had been hard being snubbed and ignored, as if I didn't exist. That, or being the recipient of outright hostile glares at my audacity at traveling Malaysia as a single woman. When I thought about it, I remembered that I had sworn that, after Malaysia, I'd *never* go back to an Islamic country again!

So much for 'never saying never', since look what I'd done. I had pulled back into my life experience the exact thing I had said 'no' to, or had been 'against'. I was learning, as always, the error of my prior thoughts. Malaysia was far more fundamental than Indonesia, much more judgmental, and was trying to reinstate Islamic law in the country. That would be the 'cut off your hand' for thieving, or take out eyes and other body parts if your crime was not one that warranted death – which depended on the crime. Also, foreigners would not be immune to the laws of the country. So, while I adored Indonesia and most Indonesians, my upcoming travels to Lake Toba had me a wee bit nervous.

It was said that the taxi drivers in Jakarta were mostly 'Batak', which was a tribe from this region of Sumatra; and that they were aggressive and proud for Indonesians and...did I say aggressive? That was definitely *not* an Indonesian trait, except, perhaps, here and in Jakarta.

First, though, I was heading up to a place called Bukit Lawang to see the Orang Hutan (Orangutan) monkey reserve. The name Orang Hutan literally translates as 'Jungle People' because these large apes resembled humans to the

Indonesians. After a rather interesting hike through the jungle, fording a fast moving river (the only protection from being swept downstream was a length of rope across it) we came to the reserve.

Large platforms had been erected in the trees where the Orangutans came to feed. Because tourist trips happened at scheduled times, there were a few in the area before the guides escorted us up to a viewing platform and started hauling fruit out to feed them.

The Orangutans were amazing with their red-orange faces and big bodies! At least six adults came in to feed and entertain us with their antics, playing with the youth in their clan. Carefully keeping a distance from the group of tourists, they cavorted, made faces, scratched, teased each other and played. After an hour or so, we humans were shuffled out and back the way we had come, surviving the river and jungle and bus ride back to Medan. I loved every minute of it.

In Medan, Rosmiati had arranged for us to go to a Hash House Harrier's (HHH) weekend 'run'. I had never heard about the HHH and learned that it was first started in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, back in the 60's by some bored, fun loving and athletic expats. (I never learned what the word 'hash' referred to ~ whether hashish, food or some foreign slang.) Medan, situated just across the water from Malaysia, apparently took it up early on.

On a weekend event, a large group of people (expat and locals alike) gathered and took over a park or a hotel, which we did. Someone had gone out before us and planned a jogging run through the jungle, and on Saturday everyone met mid-afternoon for the event.

A large tent roof had been set up in a clearing in the jungle, and we all drank bottled water to help counter the water we were losing through copious sweating. Then the organizer got us all started. The really slow walkers took off first, followed by the regular joggers, who were followed by the really fast runners. They timed it so that everyone usually ended up finishing around the same time.

The trail we followed was marked here and there with pointers. I thought it cool that only biodegradable chalk or thin paper streamers were used to mark trails as they would quickly disappear in the next rain.

The HHH's philosophy was to leave a place exactly as they found it, with no trace of our passing besides footprints. The trail we followed went up, down, over,

under and around everywhere! Nothing, including rice paddies, was out of bounds for our run. There were false leads at times that someone had to follow to determine if it was the right way, or a dead end. Calls of 'On On' (meaning 'on' the trail) rang through the jungle as those ahead helped those behind to determine where on earth we were going. The jungle was usually so thick that you couldn't see people ten yards away, so calling out 'on-on!' was really helpful.

I was sweating buckets, unaccustomed to exercise in that heat and humidity, but managed to keep up with a walk-jog combo. The jungle was gorgeous, yet I was thankful for the trail because some of what grows and crawls around there could probably kill me. Eventually, the end was in sight as I caught a peek of the tent set up where we had first started off. It was a circular run, I realized. Cool!

I arrived, thoroughly soaked from sweat, to find most of the walkers and all of the fast runners that had passed me, laughing and drinking beer. The big national beer producer, Bir Bintang, sponsored the HHH runs throughout the country and provided kegs for the events. Kegs. As in plural.

Just how much beer did these people drink, anyway? I'd seen a lot of drinking the night before, but this seemed a bit excessive after draining every bit of water out of our systems running. I was about to discover new definitions of excessive.

The HHH in Bandung (I later discovered) said it was a 'drinking club with a running problem', and that seemed to be the score for all Hash House Harriers. There was a master of ceremonies that kept everything rolling, including us. They had a ritual called a 'down-down', which meant you had committed some 'crime', like being new. You were called up, front and center, and given a full tankard of beer. You had to drink *the entire* tankard before they stopped singing the 'Down-Down' song, or else they'd give you another.

I managed the first one, having watched another newbie go ahead of me. The problem was, there were a lot of 'crimes' to be called on. I got nailed for talking to someone, which they called having a 'private party'. Getting a bit tipsy, I simply held on to my glass, not drinking, when I got nailed for 'drinking warm beer'.

Definitely feeling the effect of all I'd drunk, and quickly, I thought I'd get out of any more by not having a glass in my hand. That's when I got called up for 'drinking no beer'. They got me another time for 'not drinking enough beer'. I

was almost stinking drunk, and the only thing I could do was stagger away before they got me for more!

How was I to know that they always got new people totally drunk, or 'pissed' as the Aussies (Australians) called it? In hindsight, their Hash names like Brewer's Droop, Ewe Smell, Buffalo Buddha, Ram Butt, Celibate, Bonnie Balls and more should have clued me in that this was a rather rowdy crowd.

We left the run area for the hotel, and a very drunk group (of mostly men) were diving off the roof into the bar's pool in their underwear and generally creating a rowdy, fun loving mess. The hotel staff good naturedly kept slim hold on the party, and it was obvious the Hash had been there before. More down-downs continued, but I was no longer bound by Hash rules and escaped most of them. I really liked these people. They were all professional engineers, scientists and consultants dealing with the stress of living in a world where very little was, by their standards, 'normal'.

My experience was very full, and I knew words could not adequately describe the entire debauchery of Medan's Hash House Harriers. I ended up meeting dozens of men, but one in particular attracted me and I figured, "Why not?" Why not spend a lovely evening in arms with this very sweet, single man?

So I did, and it was lovely; yet in the morning I had to continue my travels and found a hotel in Medan to recuperate in that was within my slim budget. Ick. The pickings were not good, most places being drab and unappealing, so I was not long there. I headed out to Lake Toba and their fearsome 'Batak' people within a day or so.

Taking a bus into the highlands through exquisite country, I came upon Danau (Lake) Toba, a blue jewel of a place at higher elevation and cooler. Hiking, talking with other tourists, finding magic mushrooms, renting a motorcycle to tour around, visiting small art stalls and getting caught in the rain with weaving women, I was thankful that I now spoke enough Indonesian to have conversations. It opened this world up to me. We could talk, laugh and joke around together, sharing and trying to understand each other.

I relaxed. I did not encounter aggressive people, though locals did look at me more straightforwardly. I found a few interesting things to buy, especially a short wooden staff. It was a person, carved in the style they 'keep' their ancestors in. Really.

When ancestors died, some of them were kept...around. They looked like they had been dried out with their knees drawn up to their chests, arms wrapped around their knees, head up, and they were usually strapped into chairs. I wondered if they were tied down so they wouldn't unceremoniously topple over. I never did figure out how they could dry a whole person, given the humidity, but they did. I imagined that taking out the insides would probably help. I also didn't know if they kept them around like that forever because there were certainly plenty of grave sites.

This ancestor staff called to me from across the market, and I immediately named her the 'Grandmother'. I liked her. She was stern but not shriveled, and had a very regal face. With both her body and the staff section, she was around twenty inches tall. I still have her, and she comes out now and then on special occasions when I need a 'talking stick'. Whoever is holding her 'has the floor' to speak, with her stern countenance urging they speak only their truth.

The rest of my vacation was simply fun, relaxing and uneventful. I returned to Bandung the first week of December, tired from my four weeks gone and happy to be home - despite Tony having trashed the house.

I wondered how much my sexual liaison in Medan at the Hash had opened up a flow of yearning for loving arms. The liaison had been fun, passionate...and empty. Too much beer being part of the culprit, I knew, yet sex without love was only sex. Even good sex. I felt no need or want of *only* sex. Even good sex.

I wanted it, sure, but I craved a sharing of souls and intimacy. I loved the grand camaraderie in Medan, the stimulating conversations and the companionship I found there, and I prayed for that here in Bandung. I did not want to walk alone, and I prayed, please send someone to walk with me. I sent my plea out to the Universe, from my heart, with an openness to acknowledge whatever came my way...with the following caveat taken into account.

While there were people here offering sex, I had not found one outside of Dede, offering love. And Dede, from Pangandarang, was twenty-five and Indonesian, and I had sworn off Indonesians...and anyone under thirty.

That must sound really rude. The thing was, many people in third world countries saw a 'bule' (pronounced 'boo-lay', slang for white people or albino) and they thought 'green card', and ticket to the freedom lands of America or Europe.

Think about it. They saw someone they thought was beautiful, rich and would have sex with anyone at any time. In a country where men could have several wives, who *wouldn't* try if they thought it might significantly better their lives? I mean, how exotic can you get?

I spent an entire class with TOEFL level college students wanting to study abroad, trying to convince them that their ideas of westerners was not true: we were not all rich *or* sexual maniacs. They told me, in no uncertain terms, that they believed this about westerners because it was what they saw on television all the time - and these were the more highly educated Indonesians!

I had to think about that. If all I had ever seen about foreigners was that they were rich, had sex at the drop of a hat, and I thought they were all beautiful (no matter what, because of their white skin); I'd probably think this too. Thanks to shows like 'Dallas' and Hollywood movies, which was all they knew about Americans, I had a hard time feeling like I was being seen for myself.

On a trip home to the States, I clipped newspaper articles about the homeless, the poor and sexual abstinence because no one in Indonesia believed me. At all.

So, unless he was educated abroad, I figured that having a relationship with an Indonesian would be adding fuel to the fire. I wanted to show them that not all people in my country acted like the cast of 'Dallas'. That did, however, leave all the expats as fair game.

Yet, there was another 'problem' with expats. So many of the expats in Bandung were married men, coming to Indonesia for work with the airplane industry. Some brought their families, most did not. Those that didn't, or those that were single, usually took Indonesian girlfriends, usually twenty to thirty years their junior.

There was a group of women, perhaps getting too old to marry (by Indonesian standards), that were out and about and looking in Bandung. It was amazing that such beautiful, young women went with such older men, who were often in their forties, and in some cases even in their sixties. It was equally amazing that so many men found a twenty-three year old Indonesian 'girl' interesting companionship. They were drop dead gorgeous, for sure, and friendly, good people, but their emotional equivalent in the States was around sixteen years old.

This dynamic never ceased to amaze me, but I understood more once I got to know the girls better. They were really looking for a way out, a green immigration card, a husband and an end to their believed poverty. The men, making huge salaries by even U.S. standards, bought them anything they wanted, often had them living with them, gave them money for their families and generally spent a tiny amount of money to keep their girlfriends living at standards they could never hope to achieve on their own.

Were the girls happy? Rarely, it turned out. They knew what the score was with the married men; although they never gave up on the hope that he would divorce his wife and take her back to the States with him. I saw many broken hearts when contracts ended and the men returned to their countries. I saw jealousy and back biting directed at me if the ‘bule’ men paid me too much attention.

It was a very odd situation all the way around, and these women were my ‘competition’. So, how was I to attract someone when there was such Indonesian beauty everywhere, eager to do whatever it took to snag their man? I met women who were intelligent, resourceful, mature for their ages and, in my opinion, real treasures. In the end, each of them was to be disappointed. Only one of the women I knew, Honey, ever married a westerner.

As Christmas and New Years approached, I thought about all of this. Wondering what to do, I realized I had no idea ~ about men or the coming holidays. I couldn’t magic a man out of thin air, and travel at any holiday was expensive in the extreme with the jacked up prices. My Mini III hotel went from 5,000 rp. per night up to 50,000 rp. per night, which I could not afford, so I was home bound.

As it turned out, I met the sweet, elder gentleman living across the street in the big house with the satellite dish, named Bapak Eddy. Eddy was ‘Indo’ (Indonesian-Dutch mix), retired from both armies, had outlived two wives, loved to have people around and invited me over on Christmas Eve for a glass of spirits.

I’d met him before, briefly, and found him quite entertaining; so I accepted. We went upstairs to a sort of sitting room where he had a surprise to show me. There was a special concoction he had that would, “Make you very strong, Deanna, very, very strong!”

I was suspicious. He was acting like he was going to proposition me, and the man must be ninety years old! I figured I could take him, given how small he

was; but he kept telling me how this drink made him very, very strong (with a sneaky grin on his face), so I began to wonder.

He went into another room and came out with a glass urn, about twelve inches in diameter and filled with an assortment of things in a blue liquid. I peered at it and at first only saw the sea horses and strange plants and roots. He then directed my attention to what was occupying the very center of the jar, and I just about threw up. There, curled up sweetly and totally intact was a baby deer fetus. What on earth!

Eddy told me the story of (way) back in his younger days, when hunting and guns were still allowed, he had shot a deer that had this baby inside her. He had started this concoction, and it had been going ever since. Amazing. There was absolutely no deterioration of that deer fetus.

I figured it was a combination of the plants and alcohol that kept it so well preserved. I mean, there was an entire menagerie of stuff in that jar besides the deer and sea horses, most of which I couldn't identify beyond the coral and shells. And then there was the rather beautiful blue color of it all. Fascinating.

He pulled out two very tiny glasses, each able to hold a shot or less, and proceeded to take the top off the urn.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m getting us a drink.”

“Of that?!”

“Yes, this is the drink I told you of.”

“You want me to drink that!”

“Yes, Deanna, it will make you very strong.”

I simply looked at him in disbelief. He must have realized that I wasn't having any of it because he started telling me that he has been drinking this for years, and it hasn't hurt him at all. I thought about that.

If I had understood him correctly (and he *was* speaking English), then this stuff had been in this jar for almost forty years. Forty years! And he was one of the oldest people I'd met around here, so he did have some lucky charm going, but...drink it? Oh hell, I once said I'd try anything...once...and if I haven't stopped at rattlesnake, why stop at blue seahorse deer stuff?

I accepted the glass; we toasted each other and the season, and he sipped, so I followed suit. Slightly sweet, very strong alcohol and other flavors I guess must be essence of sea horse, coral.....and deer. Not bad, really, until I once again looked at the urn. I almost threw up at the thought of it, even though the taste wasn't bad at all. Thankfully, I controlled my stomach. Eddy offered me another glass that I gracefully declined. One of those was more than enough!

Later, Eddy invited me to Christmas dinner with his family, which was a very pleasant affair. The blue urn never made another appearance, and months later I almost regretted that it had not. Eddy never hit on me, either, and we ended up with a vague friendship, which was quite nice. Another 'never say never' as I'd once thought it impossible to befriend my wealthy neighbors.

~ Chapter 18 ~

While working in Medan, Jay and I had a discussion of Indonesia's 'hauntu', which are our equivalent of ghosts. I learned they could inhabit houses, even *be* the spirit of houses, whereas 'jinn' (another sort of ghost being) were more in trees and natural things. It began to explain what I'd had in my house in Bandung.

It all began one night when I was teaching Tugi English. We were sitting in the living room, which was separated from the kitchen by these eight or nine foot high cupboards that created the wall separating the two spaces. The doors of the cupboards faced into the kitchen and contained the dishes, food and cookware, while their wooden backsides created the living room 'walls'.

Next to one of these cupboards in the kitchen was a table. It was against the side wall and held the dish drying rack on one end, and the little propane stove top affair at the other end, furthest from the cupboard.

Tugi was practicing away, and suddenly there was the sound of a glass falling over in the dish drainer. We both looked up, and I thought it was odd that something fell; but we went back to the lesson. Fifteen minutes later, something else fell over in the dish drainer. This time we both got up and went to look at what was going on over there. Nothing. I was thinking that one of the resident gecko lizards must have moved off the walls and was playing around, but they weren't big enough to knock over a glass. Weird.

I stabilized everything in the rack and we went back to our lesson. Ten or fifteen minutes later, yet another glass suddenly fell over in the dish drainer and

Tugi flipped out. He turned ashen, mumbled something about hauntu and went into his room; turned on all the lights, locked the door and (I was convinced) hid under the bed.

This was very strange, indeed, but I was still unconvinced that it couldn't be explained by some other means than ghosts, although, I was hard pressed to come up with what that could be. I sent my senses out, checking, but I didn't feel anything amiss in the ghostly realms; so I decided, rather than worry about it anymore, I'd go to bed.

A few days later I was carrying in a load of clothes from the line outside, and as I opened the back door into the kitchen, a metal cover for water glasses picked itself up, out of the dish drainer, and threw itself into the cupboard door about two feet away! OK... 'it' now had my undivided attention.

I picked up the lid, hefting its weight in my hand, and then put it back in the drainer. There was no gecko. There was not one thing that would cause this four inch wide metal lid with a plastic handle to launch itself into the cupboard. Not to mention that it first had to levitate up high enough to clear the sides of the dish drainer. Not to mention that I had seen the whole thing clearly. Not to mention that there was an associated blur, or shadow, assisting the lid's aerial shenanigans.

I put the clothes down in my room. I closed my door. I sat myself down right then and there and grounded myself by breathing deeply, energetically reaching deep into the earth for stability and support. I pulled in prana (the basic life force energy) with my breath, bringing it into a ball in my solar plexus, just below my sternum. Each breath made the ball of energy bigger and bigger, and I imagined it pushing anything that was not 'of me' out of my body and out of my energy field, as I breathed it through every part of me.

I continued breathing in prana, filling my body until it was completely filled with light energy, and energy began to pour out of every cell. I intended that the energy flowing out of me create an energetic 'shell' around me to shield myself. I called in more prana from the room and environment to make my shield really thick. I said my 'mantra' about this light being my protection, that only light shall enter, and only light shall exist within it. I let the shield expand bigger, taking up a lot of the bedroom.

Then, and *only* then, did I begin to feel into the house. You've got to figure that living with an exorcist had made me very careful about contacting other entities. This form of shielding was my own, serving me well over the years.

Indonesians have a practice they call a 'Selamatan', which is a welcoming ritual. If you moved into a new house, you were to take a broom, water and dirt from your prior abode to announce yourself in your new one. You swept the floors with the broom. You put the dirt in the yard around the house. You watered plants and washed sinks and floors in the house with some of the water.

You were basically saying to the house spirits, "Here I am, and I am taking care of you; so please let me live here in peace." If you were building a new house, you usually sacrificed a chicken to show your good intentions by 'feeding' the beings that lived there. I hadn't known about that when I arrived, nor had I brought all this from America with me. So, now what?

I began to feel into the house and was met with amused curiosity. It was like the house, or the house's spirit, was wondering just who I was and seemed amused that I was taking all this quite seriously. Amused and appreciative, actually.

I explained the whole situation; that the school had leased the place for its staff, that Tugi, Tony and I all worked for the school and were living there because we had to, but that we liked it very much. I expressed my gratitude for the house being such a wonderful space, airy and full of light. I said how much I appreciated the fruit trees in the back yard and the flowers that grew there. I asked if it would, please, let us live here in peace, and I got the feeling of "Yes! Welcome here!", and its feeling of amazement that I was actually 'talking' with it. Trust me, I was amazed, too.

I talked for a bit, explaining that I came from far away and that I'd been aware of spirits my whole life. (I didn't share the bits of being scared to death in the past.) Nearing the end, I asked if it would please not throw things around anymore and got the definite feeling that I was ruining its 'fun'. I explained how Tugi was terribly frightened and that he hadn't slept a wink until he started sleeping in one of the classrooms at school instead of coming home. At this, I sensed acquiescence, and I was fairly certain there would be no more 'trouble', at least while Tugi was there. We ended on a friendly note, and I was more relieved than I was surprised that I could actually communicate with this place.

But I could. It didn't feel foreign to me at all. It didn't feel familiar, or like other entities I'd encountered before, either. I sensed that if I was to go searching for things, I'd find them in this country of so much black and white magic. I also realized that this was very different from anything I'd encountered before, and it was likely that I didn't know the rules here. While I had learned skills, I had absolutely no desire to go 'hunting'. I decided that if things came my way, I would decide my course of action then. If nothing did, I was happy to leave it at that.

~ Chapter 19 ~

I'd been watching myself grow restless, and was reminded of how much I could be doing, yet wasn't. I saw the spark to action, and watched my 'lazy' spirit. Perhaps....no perhaps about it! Laziness was something I must overcome if I was to develop spiritually. I had been bored, yet I had not read, meditated or done yoga or Tai Chi. Nothing. I recognized the pattern as similar to Spokane. I became so bored that I pursued the spiritual as a last resort against 'mundania's' madness.

That's a shameful admission, but true. In my laziness, if I didn't find external stimulation, I looked for it internally. The external stimulation I did find here was not rewarding. I also knew that I found a great centeredness and peace if I did my practices.

So, this was the Buddhist samsara (basically a distracting life which created suffering) that was so easy to give in to. Laziness! That was a blockage within me to be overcome. I knew I should view it as a challenge, yet again samsara bound me. I even watched myself making the choices. Yet, I knew that it was a matter of discipline and doing my practices, for a few days, until the benefits were felt and then the practices would become a drive in me.

I had a week off coming up and planned to go to Pangandarang to take advantage of a thoroughly relaxed place to begin. It was just as easy to get bored there, at the beach, as it was in Bandung. I also knew that the drinking and running around were not me. I did it, but it deadened my spirit and left me unfulfilled. The spiritual rewards from my practices were great, so I'd go to the beach and do them.

From a letter I wrote my friend in the States:

“Dear Cindy ~

Oh, this search for comfort within the self within the world! Why are we so different from so many? I see contentment in people around the world. Some bred of ignorance, some of resignation, some of real happiness and some of factors I know not of. I watch my own contentment, when it’s present, and I marvel, until I am again immersed in the grade school of life.

Some days I feel so close to a wordless understanding, and then I awake to this nameless unrest. I look back over years of its influence ~ leaving Chapel Hill, leaving Dave, leaving jobs, homes, relationships and America. Always the moving on because I no longer experience satisfaction, or maybe it’s growth. In many respects, I did not even know what it was I sought, except adventure and to end the unrest.

I vacillate between accepting that any routine eventually bores me and that it’s part of my character, with the desire to be content even amidst the routines. Perhaps I am too greedy! I have a high percentage of contentment, until it comes to this nameless, stirring, moving thing within me. And I think I know the answer, yet I do not follow.

Have I learned to enjoy unrest? What keeps me from doing what I know will work? My laziness? Or are there really demons interfering as my father believes? I am fairly certain the demons are my own unruly nature. So where is my spirit to fight it? Why do I not rise to the higher levels I know I am capable of? Fear of even further alienation in a world that already has trouble understanding me?

Yet, I know how to survive in both the spiritual and the mundane. They do not have to be mutually exclusive. Some days I stand on the edge, I look forward and I look backward, but I do not move. Perhaps, too, it is my attachment to my past, the fear of flying forward due to fear of losing my past.

That strikes a bell, a nerve within me. You are in my past, yet I know I would not lose you. Or would I? Would I lose the relationship as it now stands? Maybe, yet a new one would evolve. The Runes have said I must acknowledge, and then completely let go of my past, in order to move foreword.

Nerves are rushing in response as I write this. Completely let go. Another ‘nerve’ just spoke, “But the past is all I have!” Hmmm. Yet attachment to the past could blind me to a new reality if it doesn’t conform to the past’s patterns. Letting

go. I've had to let go of so much here, perhaps I am better prepared to try than I thought. We'll see.

My birthday, and I sat with the concept of letting go last night. I was on a mountain top. Behind me was my life, and I reflected on it, the people and events. I honored it all and thanked it all for bringing me to the mountain top. I turned; looking forward I saw bright light, pale white yellow gold.

A scene appeared, a landscape of mountains, streams, trees, plains and a notable absence of anything human or man-made. It was completely serene, yet I did not move from my mountain pinnacle.

I looked back and noted the past. The colors were warm, subdued yet not gloomy nor bright. Almost a womb. All faces were smiling and not one was begging I stay there. Yet I felt reluctant.

On one hand the bright future beckoned me to jump. On the other hand, the letting go stopped me. I could sense my readiness to jump off. I also sensed my wanting a little more time with the womb of my past. Its importance could never diminish as I am a product of all that has been. Yet it has also been a security. It has served me even as it has, perhaps, bound me.

I sense my readiness to let go, to jump off the mountain into the golden light of things to come. This day I will. So be it!

Hugs...me"

But I didn't, really. I was immediately back in the 'daze', or is it the 'snooze', of life.

~ Chapter 20 ~

I came home from the school one night to find three strange men in my house and a note from Sutoyo asking that one of them, Iman, be allowed to live there. Damn him! Of course he didn't say anything to me while I was at school, face to face. We had gone through this once before. 'Jaga nama baik' means 'guard my good name'. If you wouldn't guard it, Sutoyo, then I would.

I had a talk with Sutoyo, asked him please, please find another place for this guy to live, and he said he would talk with him. Then the next day Sutoyo sent Tony and I letters asking that we allow Iman to live there, and that he wouldn't bother us. Sutoyo didn't get the point. Iman wouldn't bother a fly! The issue was

that, in this culture it was wrong, and I didn't want to be slandered like that in the minds of the community. I'd discovered that Tony and I living there together was 'bad', but they thought it was normal in our culture. Bringing Indonesians into the mix took us from 'bad' to just plain immoral, and Sutoyo knew it. He apparently sent Iman a letter, too, saying not to bother me. Poor kid, he was caught in the middle.

So I went to my British friends, Jan and Roger, for counsel and to my Bapak Eddy across the street. Eddy said he'd have a talk with Sutoyo. I wondered if Sutoyo was doing this just for convenience, or if he was angry with me for asking for a raise. I'd discovered that we were being paid far less than other teachers, and I had asked for an increase in my four hundred dollar a month salary. Now I was thinking that I may need to be careful, unless I was just being paranoid.

Then one day I came home and Toto, our housekeeper, hadn't shown up for work, yet my bedroom door had been opened last night and again today. Coincidences? Was Sutoyo doing room checks now? I wondered what locals would think of a newspaper article that read 'Triad Director forces women to live with Indonesian men against their will!' Not well, in this culture!

It had become all out war, and Sutoyo was being a real turd. He sent new letters threatening our living in this house, and threatening that I may not be living in Indonesia much longer. Tony was keeping a low profile, smart man. He had realized, though, that having others here was a violation of our contracts that stated that teachers would live with teachers. Tony would try and approach Sutoyo. While Tony was quite diplomatic, I warned him to be careful. Sutoyo left for the beach and a needed rest, which gave all of us one, too. Maybe he was the sole reason for the stress I'd been feeling lately.

I had begun to notice culture stress coming up. Maybe I was the one needing a vacation? I was used to doing so much that it felt like I was stressed at doing nothing. Weird. I also found myself getting irritated at the things that didn't work here, or took forever to do, or that simply worked differently than in the States. It was challenging my patience and my sense of humor had plummeted.

A letter from Behram arrived right after I had prayed for help and understanding. He counseled to never lose the yearning in my heart for deeper meaning. Never. Everything in life could be our teachers, and the time would come when the student was ready. Guess I was ready. Still, what a jewel that man was.

Teaching and playing continued. Play gave the 'war' a bit of relief and my mind more to dwell on. There was a new pub called 'The Haven' opening, and I went with some of my Aussie (Australian) friends. What a bash! So many very drunk people. So many men. Whew! I had fun! There was the guy I met at the Laga, the Scott with his Brit friend, Nanda from India, and the guy with the Kenny Rogers look. Guys everywhere! My Aussies were in fine form and then Bruce showed up. What a huge surprise.

I had met Bruce with some of the other Aussies in their group several months ago and we'd run into each other now and then. I was really attracted to Bruce, but he was married. Rats! Everyone had a good time at the opening and later, we ended up back at his hotel with some of the others. Once they left, we talked about our attraction and how I wasn't intimate with married men without their wives permission. He told me that his wife didn't want to know. She knew, he asserted, but she didn't want to hear about it. He said we had a green light. Every one of my intuitive sensors was up on alert, but he was being authentic with me, and I believed him. We made delicious love many times and, yes, sex definitely released some stress and improved my outlook on life.

The morning after The Haven, sleeping late in arms that really sent me, was delicious. Or was it his body? Or would it be anybody's body? I found myself faced with the same story: wanting to feel, wanting someone to feel, and yet the depth wasn't there. I couldn't fall in love with him so couldn't be overt, or even pretend, really. I mean, this guy was married and everyone knew it! And while it may be an open marriage by denial, it had its limits, and it didn't feel right to go too far. He wanted me to meet him somewhere. Somewhere no one that knew us would be. We could let go and pretend, if just for a weekend. No....not pretend. To enjoy fully and openly. I said I'd think about it.

For us, for that day, we went to our friend Tony's hot shot house for a BBQ. This Texan was a really nice guy despite the house and salary I couldn't even imagine living with. What a contrast: these twenty-four hours of total luxury, compared to the relative austerity I lived in here. Everyone, as usual, had enough to drink, and at one point Tony asked me if I'd like to enjoy a threesome with him and Bruce. They must have talked about it together because, about now, Bruce walked up and asked if anyone's dreams were coming true that night. Laughing at how tipsy they were, I said, "You know, guys, some fantasies are best left fantasies." I then wondered if I'd kick myself for the rest of my life at turning down the only offer I'd ever had for a ménage à trois. I mean, I did say I'd try anything once, didn't I? Yes.....but not like this.

~ Chapter 21 ~

I headed to Jakarta to visit my American expat friends, Debe and Suresh, in February, again stepping into the lap of luxury. I was shocked to discover that their apartment rented for over three thousand dollars - that's U.S. dollars - a month! In Indonesia! I mean, they were nice, for sure, but \$3,000 nice? As his oil company paid for it, they didn't care, but I did. And we wonder about the cost of oil on the one hand, and the lure needed to convince people to leave their relatively sane countries and come to these crazy third world countries to work. I still cared. And I still, gratefully, enjoyed the hell out of it.

Debe and I spent the afternoon talking about men, relationships, life and generally catching up. When Suresh came home, we went out for Mexican food at a place called the Green Pub. What an oddity ~ western music from a live, loud Indonesian band and Mexican food with a whole bunch of bules, uh albinos, uh westerners. I ran into friends from Bandung, too! Surprise! We later went to other expat hang-outs in the form of pubs and a disco. Jakarta was a big city and trying to act like one. You'd find \$3,000 apartments, \$10,000/mo. houses, discos, rickshaws, ghettos, livestock, Calvin Kline and cholera all within a few city blocks.

At one point during the evening, Debe said that I exuded self-confidence and that might throw men off (yes, we had talked about my wishing for a partner earlier). She said, "Look at you! You're sitting up straight, head up, relaxed and you look people in the eye." Huh. "And that's bad because of.....?" She had me look around at the women in the bar. Whoa. What a shock. The women sat sort of slumped over, they all had their head's tilted at angles and they talked to the drink they were holding instead of the man they were addressing, only shyly looking up now and then. It was sort of coquettish. I think I'd read somewhere that tilting the head to the side was a sign of submission, sort of like dogs giving in to aggressors when they're baring their necks or their bellies.

Was I too self-confident? Me? That was a hard one to change, even if I wanted to. Contrary to what my father had said about my acting skills, I didn't think acting the way they did was even possible for me. They looked silly, not to mention manipulative.

Yet, Debe had clearly shown me the difference between the women with dates in the bar ~ and me. Huh. Maybe I was focusing on men that were just too young. That could be. I couldn't tell the difference, really, between a 30 yr. old and a 40 yr. old. I simply couldn't tell. Then, too, I'd watched the older men

chasing much younger women who, now that I thought about it, acted just like these women. I wanted a relationship, not a leash! I wanted a partner; and I wanted to test myself, putting the things I'd learned into practice. I was too self-confident?

Left, Right, Enter

Kiri, kanan, masuk
are Indonesian for left, right, enter...
and a play on words for men
trying to find their way in.
Works for busses
and women,
or so goes the play.
Bet they wish women
were as easy as busses,
tho' I hear some are.
And those that aren't?
Relegated to backyards,
work and feminist mags,
the nether, hinter lands of
mind, moss and
life 'bout the night.
Nothing to wake yourself up for,
as the back gate rattles
in her wake.
Gone in the night she is,
and she can't go back.
Is she tired of trails,
swinging gates and wakes?
Probably.
Bet she wishes most men
weren't so easy to leave.
There's a tale started
some backyard warm
'bout a strange one
that could sniff the trail.
Learned the ways of the wild ones,
that one did.
Wasn't afraid, well, not too bad.

Not enough to stop.
That one sensed the trail
half nose, half heart,
half left, half right.
They say he lives, this one.
They say he's an endangered species,
rare indeed.

After some thought, and more observation of the women in the bar, I told Debe that I was holding out for someone strong enough to handle me. What I meant was that I was holding out for someone strong enough to handle me inside himself and who wasn't intimidated by my 'self-confidence'. That, and one who had a spiritual aspect to his life, the lack of which had begun to make me stop dating the men I met. It had become important to me, and I prayed that it wasn't an impossible dream.

Debe left the evening early, and Suresh and I ended up talking the night away about his problems. Who knew? Men getting scared - and they didn't handle it well at all. Who does? They had the added weight of 'not supposed to be' scared on top of it, too. Suresh was afraid of vulnerability. (Who isn't?) Yet for men, it was harder.

Look at their training. I'd always figured that men weren't given the tools to handle the evolution of the female. Whole paradigms had changed, and no one had given them a new rule book. I mean, they were raised by mothers, right? But the mothers of their generation were born in the 1940's, as were the fathers. So, in 1993, there was little to help them understand just what, exactly, was shifting in their female counterparts and companions.

I didn't absolve them from not using the common sense and basic consideration we were all given (and which they seemed to ignore in favor of macho), but I did give them a break now and then.

Reflecting at home later I thought, "Listen to yourself, Deanna! You had Suresh telling you how scared men get, and you're not willing to be a bit coquettish to help their lack of self-confidence?" Huh. It wasn't that I was totally (though mostly) unwilling. It was more that I didn't know how. How do you stop being who you are? Suresh said that my 'toughness' was a front. He said I wasn't tough at all, but scared and a marshmallow inside. I think he felt that I was

egotistical, believing myself brave instead of scared. I mean, I was brave and I was soft...and I was scared.

I had worked hard to earn the progress I'd made in my life. After my divorce, I vowed that I would never have my life defined by whether there was a man in it or not. I had been raised to go to school, get married and have children, but the most important of these was to get married. Women weren't complete unless they had a man in their life, or so said the culture I was raised in.

I rebelled.

It took quite a while for me to be comfortable going to the movies or to dinner by myself. I had to argue with my mind and the social training that said 'she must be a loser if even her girlfriends don't go out with her', or 'why can't she find a date', or 'there must be something wrong with her if she can't find a man'. Strange but true back in 1988 when I divorced. So I just did it.

I made myself do the things I wanted to do regardless if I had a date or if there was a friend to do it with me. I did it regardless of whether some people really did have those thoughts about me. Those first few movies by myself were really uncomfortable, and dinner out alone was even worse.

Eventually, all that practicing gave me my trips to the Middle East and then to Asia on my own, as well as my trip here. I had gained self-confidence, yet was that really putting men off? It felt like it could be. When I was not self-confident I usually ran and hid, so people rarely saw the scared side of me. And men? There must be some that didn't need coquettish, right? We would see.

~ Chapter 22 ~

It was March, 1993, and I'd been in Indonesia over six months. It seemed like forever on one hand and like nothing on the other. So very much learned here! I'd noticed that:

Strange?

Seeing such strange things
that will soon enough
be normal,

I turn away.
Away between the
next and last.
It's where I am, been,
and going to watch
a while longer it seems.
There's comfort that
the amazing and odd
can soon become normal.
Not so much a revelation
as a confirmation
of how it all really works.

I was surprised that things I'd found really different on my arrival were now normal, like their customs, a hole in the ground for a toilet, the emotional suppression, the foods, busses, plants, geckos, clothing, cooks stoves, building materials.....so very much! I'd traveled with all of this, but living with it changed everything from the exotic to the norm.

My best friend Cindy came to visit me! She was a veteran traveler, so I didn't have to worry about her, which was a relief. I'd shown her the Laga Pub's Thursday night music, the Malibu disco, the huge Pasar Baru market downtown, the regular supermarket for kicks, we cooked dinner for ten (whew!), we visited the Jalan Banci folks, a cricket match, the volcano Tankuban Prah, more dinners and friends and the school before she headed to Yogyakarta for a week on her own.

When she returned, we went to the Hindu island of Bali for a week of beaches, mountains, temples, swimming with the dolphins, rented cars, motorcycles, shopping, performances and only one argument. It was a biggie, though, for sure, but only one wasn't bad for two strong, independent women. She had fun, I had fun and Bali hadn't changed much since I was last there. It really was a tropical paradise, as long as you got away from Kuta and Legian's craziness.

Kuta and Legian are very crazy towns. They consist of wall to wall shops, bars, restaurants and hotels laid out along beautiful, white sand beaches. Bali is the 'play land' for Australians, and Kuta was their main destination. I saw more drunken Aussies there than anyone should have to see. They were often oblivious to local customs, doing things that amazed me.

One day I watched two drunk, gorgeous hunks of Australian male flesh adorned only in tight bikini swim briefs walking down the street, drinks in hand. I somehow knew they would try to get into the restaurant I was observing them from, and was aghast that they considered their lack of apparel remotely appropriate. Sure enough, they drunkenly tried, and sure enough, they were repelled. I was relieved and disgusted, but this behavior was frequent in the party town of Kuta. Cindy flew home from Kuta, and we bid each other a teary farewell. I took a bus back to Bandung and prepared for a trip to a semi-active volcano with Bryan in a couple of weeks.

Bryan was one of the dearest guys in the world, and I thought he had a crush on me. It was only a little delicate since I'd been seeing Bruce, and they worked together. Actually, there was an entire Aussie crew there working on the train communication systems, and most of them had become friends of mine. When I thought about it, we'd all developed a combination of Hash House Harrier-Teacher-Aircraft-Local crowd of friends that did a lot together. Because Bruce and I were just having an affair, I was technically and literally still available. Bryan was definitely a friend, one I really liked, but one I was not interested in as a partner.

We were going to the great Mt. Bromo volcano in East Java together. According to the *Lonely Planet* guide, Mt. Bromo had risen on the side of the ancient Tengger volcano's caldera (a crater-like center). This main caldera was over six miles across, and was a 'crater within a crater', in that it also held a central cone with its own central area. As do most magnificent places, Bromo had myths and stories associated with it.

I was surprised that 'Bromo' was the Javanese pronunciation of 'Brahma', the chief deity in the Hindu triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The history of some of the early inhabitants of the area could be traced back to Hindu roots, thus the name.

We rose early for sunrise at the summit, which was only minimally hindered by thin clouds. We then headed down the steep sides into the caldera, which was vast and desolate and phenomenal - miles of sand and lava stretching to the steep slopes and peaks on the other side. Reaching the center, we walked around the inner cone before crossing the caldera, coming out only God knew where.

And really - only God knew where because we ended up in a village that time, and everyone else, had forgotten.

It was the strangest town I had ever wandered into in my life. Ever. It looked normal, and the first indication of strangeness was a young boy on the otherwise empty street who didn't seem to know Indonesian. I was used to that, though. I'd approach someone, ask them a question in their language and they'd say, again in Indonesian, "I don't speak English!"

It was as if they saw a foreigner and didn't believe we could possibly have learned Indonesian, so they completely blocked out that they were being spoken to in their language. It was the oddest thing. I now usually replied (in Indonesian), that I also didn't speak English, but that didn't seem to break their block, either.

This boy simply stared at us. He didn't reply, make a move or even blink. We kept walking and came upon another person, this time asking for a restaurant. She just looked at us, too. I began to suspect that we may well be the first foreigners they had ever seen. We kept walking; hungry, tired and increasingly frustrated.

Then, to our great surprise, we saw a person, a man I believe, that bore a very distinct resemblance to 'The Hulk' from the comic books. The mountain here was so steep that walking on the road had you about knee level with the top of the six foot high corn growing below you on the mountain side. They had literally planted vertically on slopes that seemed impossible. The Hulk was coming up a path from below with a bundle of corn stalks and he, too, simply stared. As did we. His resemblance to the Hulk was spooky weird.

The very distinct impression that this was a village beyond time, and beyond the science that says inbreeding causes genetic issues, began to make me nervous. Had they escaped the country's spread of one, unified language? Did anyone here speak Indonesian? Did they eat? What the hell had we stumbled into, anyway?

We saw no hotels, no restaurants, not even a food vendor. A few more people made themselves visible, and they didn't look 'normal' either. It wasn't just their bodies, but their clothes, too. It was as if Barnum and Bailey's Circus had held a clothing sale there. Stranger than strange.

We turned a corner to find a bunch of women that were crazily dressed, with yellow makeup rakishly spread on most visible parts of their body, grinding grain. At least I *think* they were grinding grain. What they were actually doing was beating grain to death with these big clubs, in the dark; the only light coming through the open door. Our mouths simply hung open in disbelief.

We finally found an older gentleman that understood Indonesian. He directed us to a small stall where we were able to get some food, a coke and directions to the road out of town. We had to walk a very long way before a truck finally came along and gave us a lift to the next town. We truly had stumbled into a remote mountain village of incredible farmers that time and Indonesia seemed to have forgotten.

As it happened, the town we landed in this time wasn't far from where Bryan's company was working, so he called for a car to come for us; and we were saved further adventures in strangeness. Exhausted, happy after a good meal, sleeping in a good, warm bed, I smiled. What very grand adventures I had! And I was really happy that I wasn't alone on this one. Thank you Bryan.

~ Chapter 23 ~

Teaching continued to be fun and not very challenging. The banks and businesses I was sent to were entertaining, as were my high school students. The TOEFL students, however, were another matter altogether. They were serious. They had to get this 'English thing' in order to further their education abroad, and for some reason they thought it had to be a drag. In all fairness, a lot of it was, but it could still be fun. Getting them to loosen up, however, took a lot of work; yet in the end, the effort was worth it.

I combined lessons in how to survive the States into their English topics. For example, I taught them that if they were in a park in any city in the United States, they should not assume that the person sitting alone on a park bench was lonely. They might be, or they might be taking a much needed break from people or a stressful job. Being by yourself did not always equate to being lonely, as it did in Indonesia. I told them that they could go sit and talk if they wanted to, and the person might talk back; but if the person got up and walked away they were not to take it personally.

I suggested that they also not just go up and hold their friend's hands, especially the men, or put their arms around them unless they were very good friends (most especially the men). It was common in Asian countries to see men going arm in arm with other men, and women doing the same. They hadn't learned our aloofness and paranoia, and I hoped they never did; but I also didn't want them getting punched or avoided.

We also talked about not believing everyone that approached them. If someone approached you to show you their art collection, and you didn't know them, do not, I informed them, just go. At their disbelief around this, I asked if they believed what the taxi drivers in Jakarta told them, to which I got a resounding 'NO!'. So, there were 'bad' people everywhere, I said, and they had to stay alert. (Remember, Indonesians will do anything to help people, and they all think we are rich and beautiful, somehow missing the backstabbing, thieving, murdering aspects in western countries....sigh.) They were like babes ~ beautiful, trusting, caring, helpful and innocent babes. I also told them that they would meet amazing people who would bend over backward to help them out, but that they should get a feel for it all before they simply trusted everyone. They'd head off to New York or LA and I'd pray.

One day in class, after reading a story of a man keeping a 'space' all to himself (it was one, empty, desk drawer), one student's response was, "Ego!" You've got to figure that in the third largest country in the world, where several people shared one room, that they would have rather different ideas of being alone and needing space than we did. They simply did not understand our need of either. They didn't do *anything* alone, and they shared practically everything. They didn't go to the corner store alone. They were uncomfortable if left alone for long. They didn't need space and room to breathe. They believed that one-half inch was enough (between on-coming cars and busses!). They could no more comprehend a single person living in a two bedroom apartment than they could understand that people might think they were gay if men went arm in arm together. Why would anyone do that? These things simply didn't exist in their world and were incomprehensible to them.

~ Chapter 24 ~

From Brooke Medicine Eagle, "If we create our outer reality from our inner reality, what would a person have to believe and carry inside them to create the outer life situation they are living in the present?"

That was one good question, and I had given it a lot of thought regarding myself. First would be radical independence causing my current aloneness. How many years had I sought independence and the ability to be OK alone? Many. I remembered it clearly. I certainly had aloneness (and a growing sense of being careful of what I asked for).

Second, I was actually living in Indonesia. I'd spent a year-and-a-half working on that one, and I had gotten there. My inner reality had said that, no matter what, I could; and here I was.

Yet once again, I felt myself growing restless with my restlessness, a period I usually committed myself to some purpose within. A purpose took the focus off being alone and occupied the time. I decided my next home and job must be approached very seriously now. That would occupy the restlessness. It would focus my mind on a mission, but would not solve my desire for an intimate relationship. I was missing some important link here, and I knew it. I resolved to think more on my inner reality creating my choices for this outer reality, especially with men, and especially the times to come.

And especially with Sutoyo sticking more men in this house! Even Tony was getting irritated. I finally mentioned to Lina that five people living in our small apartment was crowded. I was thirty-seven years old! This was ridiculous! She said she'd check into it for me. Tony spoke to both Sutoyo and Lina, and was told the two extra guys (besides Tugi) would be there for two months.

Tony figured this was, essentially, breaking our contracts. These stated that teachers would live with teachers, not office personnel. Sutoyo's focus was, apparently, on his anger with me because Cindy stayed with me, believing I should have asked his permission. The thought never dawned on me, or Tony, for that matter. I was older than Sutoyo, and well past the age of asking permission to have company. They knew she was coming, and her visit had been talked openly about at the school. Sutoyo reasoned that putting Iman in with Asep and Tugi for two months was the same as Cindy staying here for nine days. Guess we're still at war.

I had men coming out of my ears. That was another aspect of my current outer reality. I had men everywhere! I even had a couple of twenty-six year olds try and pick me up one night. I wanted one man (singular not plural) to be in relationship (not an affair) with love (and yes, sex) and mutual respect and consideration. It did not have to be this hard! And yet it was. *What* was I missing here? I had men everywhere, so I was manifesting like crazy. Yet, the obvious lack of intimacy and depth meant that inside I was being unclear somehow. That, or the Universe was sending me all these men hoping I'd kiss a frog to find a prince. I balked at kissing toads. It seemed I wanted my prince to arrive complete. Yes, I'd have to feel into that one.

James Taylor may have said it best, "...holding out for true love...waiting on an answer...like everyone she knows...ready for a change and everywhere she goes, she's just a little bit on the lookout....questions still remain...it's not that she's so sad....wondering if she's pretty....feeling just a little small...she thinks of going home...hold tight to your heart's desire...never, ever let it go...tend your own fire, lay low and be strong...wait it out, wait it on out...let it come round...wait a while...let no one ever fool you into giving up too soon...wait it out..." I resolved to try. I really had no other choice.

~ Chapter 25 ~

A day in the life of a 'Guru' (Indonesian for 'teacher' ~ even English teachers ~ which delighted and amused me) went something like:

- Up at 8:30 because I read until 1:00 a.m.
- organized papers
- went for copies and to mail letters
- sunbathed
- drew sarong designs to batik
- consulted runes, journaled
- prepped for teaching
- went to grocery store
- taught
- made dinner
- read newspaper
- started reading a new book
- slept

Another day could read:

- Up at 8:30 because I read until 1:00 a.m.
- organized papers
- sunbathed
- prepped for teaching
- driver comes late so copies don't happen
- stepped outside and am drenched by a monsoon torrent and splattered by mud
- roof of car leaked on me all the way to school
- the bapao food seller was nowhere to be found for lunch, so I didn't eat
- the class I prepped for was taught by someone in error last week

- the next class was late due to rain, I had been given the wrong tape to use and wrong lesson to teach
- the tape deck we use for listening skills breaks
- the next class was on time, and again I'd been given the wrong lesson and this tape deck broke, too
- the office buys new tape decks without counters (the most critical element we needed for lessons)
- get home late, finally eat dinner
- too tired to read, went to sleep

Flexibility was definitely a requirement for living and working in third world countries. Everyone needed flexibility because third world countries had redefined the phrase 'shit happens'. There were just too many things that could, and did, go wrong in places where so much was held together by rubber bands, duct tape and plastic. I swear things worked much better when they stuck to bamboo and rattan.

And then there was rubber time. Indonesians actually had a concept of time called 'Rubber Time' (Jam Karat) and I compared it to the 'New York Minute':

"Many have heard of the New York minute. It's a bit like the N.Y. joint, only faster (though this is hotly debated). It's believed to be the fastest minute on earth and not to be confused with the L.A. or even the Hong Kong minute, which are marginally slower. As you might guess, these are all faster than a European minute, which may be the closest to 'real time', wherever that is. In the end, all of this time-warping loses relevance when compared to the Indonesian minute. The Mexican minute has long been believed to be the slowest minute on Earth, but only by those who have never been to Indonesia.

Indonesia stands in a class by itself with the time to beat all (time). It alone can appear to move while actually standing still; or actually move, yet appear not to; and yet somehow keep up with most minutes going. It has been aptly named 'Rubber Time', and it usually confuses newcomers because it seems that whenever you leave or arrive you're never early or late, or on time, for that matter. It's one of those times (and places) where you can come and go and still be where you started, or finished, after what seems like a hell of a long time. It also seems to spiral, loop back and even expand, which confuses everyone since yesterday, today and tomorrow all suddenly appear as one, and you begin to seriously suspect you can't keep track of time at all.

The Indonesian language has wisely developed to accommodate this unusual time play. There is, for example, no past tense. This could lead some to conclude that the past either didn't exist, wasn't that important anyway, or that it's merged with the present in such a way as to allow us to correct past mistakes, or even re-live the past - which did seem to happen an awful lot there.

Their word for tomorrow is equally flexible. It can stretch to mean the day after today, all the way up to weeks or even months beyond that. It has, on occasion, extended into years. It leaves everyone (except newcomers) in a state of perpetual preparedness since what was promised is likely to happen at a moment's notice, but usually with no notice at all. It gives new meaning to the Scout's motto 'be prepared'. Rubbery.

The only relatively finite word they have would be 'today' or really 'this day'. There is some question if that means from sun up to sun down, or from midnight to midnight, but that's another story altogether. It is conceptually interesting when you consider, then, that all Indonesians live in the present - this day being all that is since there is no future and no past to speak of. Hence the feeling of time expanding, but this, too, is only an issue for foreigners since adaptability is a trademark of Indonesia.

So, for those who have plenty of time, Indonesia is a most excellent place to visit. It is, however, thought to be dangerous for some since it is not easy to find time, and so easy to lose track of time that making time to do all there is gets tricky. Especially so for westerners who have been known to have trouble adjusting no matter where you put them or what time it is."

~ Chapter 26 ~

June 12, 1993, and my journal reads: "I was remembering my dream of dying (when I was killed riding my bike by a street cleaning truck's brushes) and how after death it was as if there was only awareness. It was as if I was deep in the cosmos, and I sensed a great connectedness and awareness; but there was no feeling or emotion. None at all. Just awareness. I awoke feeling that it was the absence of love that bothered me most. I remember I woke up sobbing.

Having read the Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, I asked myself how much, then, I would grasp and cling to my perception of love during death? Enough to hold me back from merging with the Divine? Had love been there, in

my dream, I would have had no desire for more. But it wasn't. At least not as I currently define it. So, yes, it appears I am attached to love."

I was attached to love, and I was fearful of it. I felt that only with my guide Karuna had I known truly compassionate and unfettered love. To me, all others have had strings attached. That's why I mistrusted love. Few beyond Behram had come close. And Cindy? Why did I have such difficulty with her? Why, of each and every friend, was she the only one I had such hesitancy with? She was my oldest 'best friend'. I could say she was the one that loved me most, yet somewhere I sensed the strings of dependency and that subtly shifted me away from more depth with her. So, I had an aversion to dependency? In all honesty, I'd have to say yes to that one.

I think it was the years of living on a farm that solidified that in me. After my divorce, friends thought I needed a pet. How about a dog? A cat? No? What about fish? I said no to one and all because I simply did not want something dependant on me for its survival. I'd had three kid siblings dependent on me way too early (like at twelve years old). I'd had horses, cows, pigs, chickens, dogs, cats and our goose (not to mention my husband) dependent on me. I'd had lovers dependent on me. That was enough. I remembered wondering what was up with these friends of mine, anyway, that they kept trying to give me things that required feeding. Why wasn't being alone OK? What was everyone so darned afraid of, anyway?

Did I have an aversion to love? Did I mistrust so thoroughly that I avoided and thwarted the very thing I yearned for? That was a good question. I could see how my controlling family had created a rebel, so that anyone trying to control me met with disaster. Mom's leaving when I was twelve had left me feeling abandoned for a while. A lover trying to strangle me to death had not had as large an impact as my husband's trying to cage me, though. I remembered thinking once (only once?) that everyone that loved me tried to hurt me or control me or left me. Was that the truth or just a pity party? The thought was exaggerated, but there was probably some of both. I decided the answer was threefold. I didn't have an aversion to love. I had an aversion to manipulative love, dependency and controllers. As a result, I often mistrusted people in general, too. Enough to stop me? I guess time would tell on that one, but I fervently hoped not.

~ Chapter 27 ~

I met a new American named Kirk. Folks told me he looked like McIver from the TV series, and that he was fat and thirty-two years old. Once I met him I had to laugh. To an Indonesian he could resemble McIver, though he was definitely not fat, and he was probably thirty-two.

Asians had the funniest way of looking at westerner's bodies. I remembered in Thailand, my Thai friend Tae talking about her husband's body. Alan was well built and handsome, yet she thought his muscles looked like 'tumors'. That's really the word she used, tumors! He worked out religiously to have the body he did, which was one most men would die for ~ fit, athletic and very well developed muscles. Uh, I mean tumors.

So, for them to say Kirk was fat meant that he was just bigger than their slim, small, Asian frames. He was, in fact, quite handsome and athletic and a really nice guy. He was boyish and mature at the same time, with the two changing places so fast it was shocking. I was pleased to see he was intelligent and a good communicator. What an odd mixture: young, sheltered, small town boy, naive, apple pie, conservative, intelligent and open! I thought we'd be great friends if he stayed.

Not long after, towards the end of June, I met another man named Pintor. I had gone to my usual Thursday night at the Laga Pub and was having a really good time, floating from friend to friend, laughing, playing, teasing and loving. I noticed this guy at the bar kept watching me. I'd never seen him before, and he very openly kept staring at me, until I finally went up and asked him what he was doing. He said something like 'wanting in on some of the fun', which was honest enough. Turned out he was here in Bandung for four months to do an art sculpture installation. He was half Indonesian and half German, had spent ten years in the States and was twenty-five years old (Rats! Too young!). We took him along with us to the Club Maribu, where I learned he was also a most excellent dancer and quite affectionate. He gave me a ride home afterwards, perhaps thinking he'd stay; but I was oblivious to that so home he went.

Given the bounty above, it was surprising to me that the next weeks in my life centered on a sense of lack. I wrote:

"I keep hearing the same song, repeating, over and over in my mind. I want, I want, I want... a relationship or a good friend. A girl friend or a guy friend,

someone to have good talks with. I know, too, that I do have friends, but we only go to the bars or the HHH together, and I am bored to death with that. Maybe I just need to get laid again! It's been a couple of months now, and maybe that's my 'problem' ~ too much energy build up. Is there something I don't know about that's very wrong with me? Why is this so hard?"

I could call Sonja or Debe, and what could they tell me I didn't already know? Nothing. Absolutely not one single thing beyond 'buck up and keep on keeping on.' My fantasies of dying were playful, self pity notions only, but showed me the depths of my misery. I ached. I didn't want to live in a vacuum. I tried, I helped those I could and went out of my way to give; and though I did receive, I didn't get what I sought the most. I had not lost track of all the good that came my way, either. I was just friend sick and heart sick right now. I was suffering without it, without love as I defined it. *Was* there something wrong with me? Oh, bullshit, Diane! I told myself to, "Get a grip!"

Wonder

I wonder how it is that
I've come to where I am
from where I've been.
The years a glimpse forgotten,
shading into someone I call me
like a meeting of so many strangers.
Each face a separate person,
each memory seems a dream
of so many souls changing.
Into what seems the question of the day.
That was hard, this time rough,
I was gentle then.
There was where I knew,
then when I forgot
and here is where I wonder.
Like sausage, or maybe cheese,
a blend or a mix that's aged to....
can someone age to difficult?
So I wonder if I'm wise or blind.
These faces, are they rough or kind?
Your shadows fade before I find
the answer.

Into what seems the question of the day.
Lately I wonder at
how I've come
to where I am
from where I've been.

Then on July 1st, in one simple evening, my wish for affection and talking came true. I went to the Laga Pub and there was Pintor. I had really wanted to see him, and there he was. Again we went to dance. Again it was so sweet to have affection and my soul drank deeply. He was a very warm person. We talked late, and he said he was 'crazy', telling me stories of his discipline problem. He was a lover of leaving, too, it seemed. He said he was not twenty-five but thirty-one. (Thank you, God.) He said he was a Leo. He was an amazing kisser and dancer, two of my highest priorities. Yet, I could not look for permanence with him and my newly recognized distrust raised its scaled head. He was here for four months only, so a friend, yes. Some warmth and affection, yes. We would see how the rest went.

For now I thanked the Universe for some deep conversation. I thanked the Universe for answering my prayers and, yes, giving me hope. Then I headed off to a Bandung HHH weekend event at the beach in Pangandarang, now my favorite place on Earth.

It was amazing to me that so much fun could be had in one life. I was a charter member of the 'We Be Fun' club that a group of friends and I created in Idaho. Now the HHH were redefining it all again. Drinking? Yes. Lots of folks getting drunk? Yes. Hilariously funny? Oh, yes. Did we run? Several times. We also floated the Green River. I ended up banging my leg on a rock and prayed to all powers that be that it did not get infected. The rivers here were about as dirty as the Nile was, and that's serious. I was also fully initiated by getting my Hash House Harriers name: Ass Kiss Adkins. Well, it was not as bad as it could have been. Rather tame, actually, compared to Ram Butt and Ewe Smell, don't you think? I figured they must sit around (drinking beer, of course) and mull over exactly what name they can create for maximum impact or linguistic flair....and I escaped lightly.

I also got to see that I'd been rather blind and pig headed lately, completely full of self-pity. How could I have so much fun and so much misery in the same week? These people really were friends of mine, for the level they/we went to. They were funny, gregarious, outgoing, generous and kind. It was my longing for

more that was tormenting me. I should just get my head on straight about this one and quit whining about what wasn't valid, so I could direct my energies to calling in what was valid - intellectual stimulation, it seemed!

Having said that, I met another wonderful man named Nanda. He was fiery, passionate, an electrical engineer, Indonesian, educated in Germany and of East Indian descent. And I liked him. I didn't know if he was strong, but if my friend Muti passed him my message to call me, perhaps I'd find out. The quiet, moody, 'dark' types attracted me, but weren't always good for me. And he seemed, at first glance, to be all of these. As was Pintor.

Then I got to observe a phenomenon with me and men that had me worried. As soon as I let a guy close enough to kiss me, I pulled back in my head. It was like I was afraid things would progress to sex too quickly, and that if we had sex, I wouldn't be interested anymore. The universe was answering my prayers, finally and bountifully, with Pintor and Nanda. But, was that what I wanted? For God's sake! Redefining again, Diane? No wonder the Universe was having problems. I still wanted someone that had potential for the long term future of marriage and kids. I didn't see either of these men fitting that yet. Could I see someone and have fun and sex, and still be available for something long term? I didn't know.

I found myself asking why men pushed for sex, anyway? Why? Maybe that's what had me so 'off key'. It seemed men always went for the lust. My mind just interrupted here with a, "Listen to yourself! Was it only last month you said you wanted sex for sex only ~ that you wanted to get laid?" True. "So your request is being answered here! Show a little gratitude!" That might be true, actually. It seemed that I had been oblivious to all the 'answers to my prayers' that were coming through. I needed to think about that. Deep inside I knew that what I really wanted was a partner. Yet, if I wanted that so badly, I should start putting it out there. But I didn't. And that said a lot.

My mind also pointed out to me how this 'wanting' and sense of lack got in my way, big time. Focusing on lack was really a form of negative goal setting. If I could send my 'positive' thoughts out to be manifested, what made me think that the 'negative' thoughts didn't manifest, too? Energy follows thought and intent, so they were *all* going out to be fulfilled. From what I could figure, the desire and the fear must be canceling each other out because life was confusing.

The sense of lack also had me grasping at the idea of every man I met being a potential. I didn't care if that was a 'woman thing' or a 'human thing'...it felt

like a disease. I yearned for them, thought about them and wondered if they'd be the long term type. I was sad when they went and not content when they stayed. One minute simply enjoying them and the next minute wondering what our children would look like. Argh! With this much confusion inside of me, it was no wonder I was manifesting a confusing mass of men outside of me.

I saw, too, that this was exactly what I had put down and 'not understood' in women after my divorce. This drive to have a man is exactly what I had struggled to overcome as part of my learning independence. This was another 'never say never' situation, showing me my judgments and teaching me to see what I'd said I'd never understand. Now I did.

I seemed to keep seeking someone tough enough and smart enough to get through my walls, and I was disappointed when they didn't want to 'fight' it. Or at least argue with it. I had felt all this in the past, and thought I'd resolved it. I obviously hadn't. I still saw it dragging on me. Fool, Diane, you sought permanence in a world that did not have it, and you know that's the truth. I was so afraid of the past pain of being hurt, caged or left, that I defeated everyone that got close enough to touch me and cause me more, before they even tried. I found faults and little irregularities rather than seeing it was my fear, and not their character.

I'd been running, both in myself and with others towards me, for as long as I could remember. I'd crowned it now by moving round and round the world, leaving any and everything that could have been dependent on me. How did I stop running and stop struggling with my fears? Remember that there was no fear but fear itself? What was the answer? I suspected it was to flow and not evaluate 'ad nauseam'. Acknowledge and accept birth, life, death, the constant flow and change of life. I began to give myself advice. "Nothing is permanent, Diane. Nothing. Even pain. You could change it. Try to just be here now. Really. Every moment is a new moment to make of it what you will. You do have choice." This was also the counsel from the Runes. The question was, could I?

I thought of all I was learning. Through Bruce I learned patience, tolerance of idiosyncrasies and an ability to be in the moment, and let it go. I had desperately needed to learn that. I counseled myself again. "Diane, think of it. If someone could show you how to be freer, more flowing and laughing, would it be worth being the rock and center of gravity they need? The balance of air and earth? Couldn't you smile with their whims rather than *at* them? They could take you up, and you could return them to earth. That's quite a balance my dear. Think of it."

Have you noticed the switches to talking between ‘I’ and ‘you’? I was my own patient and counselor all in one. Freud would love me.

My material values were really changing now, too. I was tired of being poor! I wanted to be able to move and flow freely whenever I, necessity, whim or friend felt it was time to, or it was needed or wanted. So, more money. Money had become important. I needed clothes, I wanted to travel, and I wanted more comfort and ease. Hell, I wanted a kitchen and hot water, too! And I needed to get in shape. I was all skinny now, and my hair and nails were great, but I was not in shape at all. I felt a mess.

~ Chapter 28 ~

Life continued in Bandung with my year long contract’s end coming quickly. I continued losing weight and was now down to 130 pounds. Yikes! That was too skinny and gaunt, and I could not afford to lose any more weight. I continued teaching, continued the HHH runs; although I began to leave before the ‘down-down’ drinking began. I just couldn’t handle that level of drinking anymore. The few that noticed and asked received an honest answer, and we continued to gather for dinners or at the Laga Pub on Thursday nights. The Aussies continued to come in and out of town. As did so many others. The only stable folks seemed to be teachers like myself and the airplane industry folks. Everyone else I knew came and went regularly with the dictates of their jobs and contracts ending, renewing or changing.

Pintor and I began seeing a lot of each other. It was lovely, changing, volatile, dynamic, disruptive, passionate and very fiery. I continued to see everyone else, too. I continued to question myself regularly and to work at letting my old fears go. And I continued to dance, as I loved it so very much. I also continued my practices of yoga and Tai Chi. I had brought several crystals, and books of the Runes and the I Ching with me from the States and worked with them regularly. The Runes and the I Ching are like divinatory tools, and I used them to get in touch with my subconscious, intuitive side. They helped me to get around my mind; which I had a well developed reliance on but I saw as too exclusive to be healthy.

Pintor said he thought I was arrogant in the area of my analytical abilities, and I believed he was right. Arrogance was another outward display of an inward condition. The truth was that I was good at interpreting and analysis; but too much self-satisfaction prevented growth. It kept me thinking ‘I’m right’, which prevented any new knowledge, questioning or exploration. I once saw a brilliant kid’s

program called ‘Dinosaurs’ that had everyone chanting ‘we are right’ before a battle over some trees started. A little kid looks at his Dad and asks if they could shorten the words to make it easier for him to say. The acronym for ‘We Are Right’ is W.A.R., and suddenly everybody started chanting, “War! War! War!”

Think about it. ‘War’ is so often the result of this kind of self-satisfied thinking, and the arrogance it produces, whether with people or governments. ‘We Are Right’ stops us dead in our tracks, and keeps us from further exploration. It stops us from expanding our awareness and our minds, causes wars and bigotry, and precludes growth and compassion everywhere it touches.

I also began to reflect on just how much to tell someone about what I really did in life, and when. I mean, didn’t someone have to see me as sane before I told them I worked with spirit guides? Or that I explored crystals and energy fields? That at one time or another I’d studied black and white magic, mind control, ESP, hypnotism, healing, color therapy and Tarot? Would it scare them that I was telepathic, that I’d seen spirits and talked with them, that I sensed energy in the rocks, trees, earth and nature? Would they know about yoga and Tai Chi? Would they care that I’d studied Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, Christianity, Native American traditions and ‘new consciousness theories’? Would they think I was nuts if I told them that I worked with beings in my sanctuary, with effects that touched everyday ‘reality’? I didn’t know.

This was all a part of me, a part of my daily life, and I had not heard one single person there even intimate that they had any background whatsoever in these philosophies or practices. No, I thought I’d go easy on this one.

Except for Syamsul, my boating friend from Sumatra. He contacted me with questions, and I endeavored to share my opinions and reflections with him. I’d been reading the (then) new quantum and chaos physics theories which were explaining many of the more mystical aspects of this world of ours through science. Things once believed to be supernatural were being shown to be possible because of the new discoveries in how atoms and energy actually worked. I told him that everything was energy at its most basic level. It was the understanding of how that energy moved, danced and reacted that was one key to many of our questions.

Physics was moving towards what they called a ‘unified field theory’. Unity...one main, primary, field of creation energy. One theory was that, as it divided itself, it developed into the many aspects of what we call this life and world.

Another was that this field was the palette upon which everything painted itself into being. Could these ‘prove’ the existence of God?

Physicists had seen patterns developing out of ‘chaos’, creating meaning in the madness, and questioned if those patterns meant predetermination. It was predetermination that many religions believed in, almost as a definition for God. Religions chose God’s predetermination to explain the ins and outs of life, ignoring cause and effect or our actions having consequences beyond one’s decisions. Many blossoming ‘new age’ theories focused on working with that unified field, and it had many names. Often it was seen as intelligence only, an intelligence at play, so to speak, experiencing choice through the life forms that were all a part of it.

Others called it the Void, the Nagual, God, Spirit, Creator, the Universe or the Divine. Having that unity with the Absolute would mean that, if we chose to, we could create in our lives as It creates. It was making that link, or that unity, that had been driving me, and most of the world, since it all began. I mean, I had gotten here, to Indonesia, out of working with this energy, and I chose to keep all avenues of experience open to me, much as a unified field was open, so that my focus stayed free from the narrow beliefs of any one thought, religion or philosophy. All this I shared with Syamsul for whom it was very, very new.

I had resumed my work with energy fields. To be familiar with directing energy was important to me because I sensed that was one way to understand it. It took so much practice to just be able to feel and see it, much less grasp all of its potential. But the practice was fun and progress came. It was through Tai Chi that I physically experienced the most energy, moving it around, directing it. Still, my mind created havoc with its desire to know, and its fear of what it might find. “Slowly, slowly”, Behram’s voice would come to my mind.

I began to look for avenues for my future, and ways to test some of these theories. My contract would be over at the end of August, and that was one short month and a half away.

~ Chapter 29 ~

August 1993, finally arrived. One year in Indonesia, and it was still hard to believe that I had actually made it there. Yet where was the dream I’d come with? In many respects, I felt no closer to it, but I knew that was foolish. I mean, I was

there, wasn't I? That's some large number of miles closer than I had been, for sure.

Tropical Lassitude

I think I remember
the day the dream began to fade.
It was in August,
I'd just arrived,
courier of a dream years planned;
all excited, a little tired.
I think I remember the day.
I'd arrived, hot,
and wondering at a day so
clear and wet you could
actually feel it moving palms.
No wind.
I think I remember.
I'd just arrived,
no problem, not yet, later.
First words, foreign tongues,
liquid, timeless stanzas.
No worries....takes a lot...
of time...you know...so...
relax...
I think...
the day...
the dream....

In truth, this year had been one of adjusting and learning. I had needed to learn the culture and the language; and to begin to understand this remarkable country. I'd needed to learn more about myself, too; how I reacted to being an expatriate and what it really meant to be a 'stranger in a strange land'. I had not seen one deaf person in the entire year, no sign language being used. People with disabilities were everywhere, certainly; but social programs were not obvious in such a poor country, and I couldn't find out if they even had any. I'd asked friends and at the school, and no one seemed to know. Everyone said there must be something, but they didn't know who, what or where. It wasn't like there was a phone book with yellow pages I could look in, either.

I suppose I dropped the dream, or put it on hold, actually, since it seemed I kept drawing blanks. Dropped, but not forgotten. The dream still burned in my heart as my survival ‘post-Triad’ consumed my mind. And my time. That, and Pintor.

Sutoyo surprised me by asking if I wanted to continue teaching at Triad. Did I say surprised? It was more like shocked. After so many arguments, threats and troubles, he had become tolerable the last six weeks or so. Buttering me up, I was sure. The man was no fool and certainly knew that he rarely kept his teachers, especially once we knew how underpaid we were compared to the other schools. I decided it better to not burn my bridges, and told him that I was not interested in a full time contract, but I’d think about part-time. I checked out IPTN, EEP, Speak and other English schools, and they were all thinking about what they wanted to do for the coming school session.

I also thought to start my own teaching business and prepare a package to present to companies that I already had a foot in the door with from teaching at Triad. I was the teacher sent on all business contracts because of my background, and frankly, there weren’t that many western business directors running loose around the streets of Bandung. Indonesia was fond of its pomp and circumstance, and despite the fact that I’d taught some fairly prestigious people, it would not be easy. I didn’t have the phone, address and store front to lend me credibility. Still, it was a thought.

There was always editing, too, as most writings in English there were abysmal. Hilarious, but abysmal. It was the joke around English teachers, the random English we would see. There would be things like, in a hotel, ‘please leave your values with the front desk.’ In a tailor shop, ‘drop your trousers here for best results.’ In a restaurant, ‘please take advantage of the waiter,’ or what about, ‘the manager has personally passed all the water served’? Too funny. The best/worst piece I ever saw, though, was from a tourism brochure for the elephant reserve on Sumatra. The first sentence of this piece titled ‘Copulated Elephant’ read, “Romantical touchings that are will causing excited sexual desire was not dominantly to fell by human beings only, but the Elephants are not even inferior in intimate.” Seriously, I could get paid to fix this stuff.

I also started picking up the *Jakarta Post*, Java’s largest English language paper. I saw an ad for the Director of an English Business College in Jakarta and began to wonder if that would combine my management background with my English teaching. I thought it could be perfect. In the back of my mind, though, there

was a nagging question if I would be selling out, going for the money instead of my dream. I figured money would help all around, so I ignored the thought and went back to the paper. In there it listed a head hunter company that was conducting the initial review process. As I had brought my references and resume ('CV' or Curriculum Vitae in the rest of the world), I set about preparing a package to send. Asia was big on appearances, so I knew it would have to look fancier than usual. I had it covered and bound into a book; and once I had it all dolled up and ready to go, I sent it off with a prayer and sat back to wait. Everything took longer here, where waiting was an art form.

I had a sense that the Universe was again working in my life, and I also had the sense to leave creativity up to it. I would do my best, hold the intent and take steps; and even if I had no idea what would turn up next, I knew something would. It was a little exciting, a little edgy. There were changes to come, and I was ready because I felt no fear. My plans would work, at least one of the many, so better get on with it. I needed clothes for work and a place to live!

Finding clothes for my now too skinny 5'8" frame was not that easy. I was much taller than Indonesian women, but usually it was the waist that gave me the hardest time. Asian women have no hips! They're like almost straight lines through their middle, so for me to find something to fit my hips meant the waist was too big. Challenging. And shoes were almost impossible. They didn't make the U.S.A. equivalent of a size 8 1/2 for women. Thankfully, I knew that before I left Spokane and had brought several pairs with me.

Finding a place to live in Indonesia was also really interesting. The first problem was that they wanted the entire year paid up front, in one lump sum. Ouch. A year's rent was usually only around a thousand U.S. dollars for my type of house, but even if Sutoyo paid me off for my airfare home, this one would be steep for me. I'd only been making around four hundred dollars a month and had gone deeply into my savings. Another problem was that few places had telephones, and getting one installed was hugely expensive, taking the usual forever. People didn't actually advertise rentals, either, so it came down to word of mouth. The teachers I knew ended up being my best networkers and Ann, from The British Institute, was my gold mine. She lived up in the mountains above Bandung in a house she had built (did I say she was amazing?) and had her ear to the ground for me, which meant she had asked her housekeeper. Gossip moved faster than lightning there, and the working people knew how to work the gossip and information because often it meant survival for them.

Ann ended up hearing about a guest house that was (maybe) for rent on an estate owned by some obviously wealthy Indonesians. It was a gated property, and the guest house, in my eyes, was heaven. It was all brick and tile and open throughout with the bathroom being the only enclosed room, so it had a bright, airy feeling to it. There were huge windows facing a large covered porch, which looked out over a canyon flanked on both sides by green bamboo forest. Beautiful, serene and quiet. There was no mosque around, either, so no calls to prayer in the wee hours of the morning (like 5:00 a.m.!). The landlords also raised horses (regular sized horses, not the local ponies), that ran around the property for parts of the day. Their stables were lower down the canyon and to the side; but if the wind blew from there, you'd smell them. I didn't mind that at all. There was no question that I wanted the house. The only question was if the owners could be persuaded to rent it to me. I contacted them, met them, and then sat back to, again, wait.

~ Chapter 30 ~

Pintor, Pintor, Pintor.....I kept reliving my dances with you. Oh, so very deeply do we connect when we dance intimately, passionately. Our bodies seemed to flow through our eyes and the rhythm and movement slide together perfectly. I kept seeing you watching me again, the night at O'Hara's Pub, with the eyes you share with your whole family, it seems. I am such a pushover for eyes. They are what draw me in a person. I could get lost in those eyes. Perhaps that was what was happening. I was getting lost....

We met by accident, me with my friends and him with his brother and sister. He was smiling, and couldn't keep his eyes off of me all night. We'd been having a very up and down time of it, and therein was one lie of his. He fought the concept of 'us'. He came, he ran, he said he couldn't stay; but then he couldn't stay away, completely drawn and equally scared. God, he sounded like me. This dance we're doing was a little crazy, and it did not appear that either of us could call it quits. We'd tried, I'd tried. I broke up with him only to have him come back to me and me to him. What was this strange attraction? This can't live with and don't want to live without each other?

Today I felt like I was back on center. Mostly. I needed to remember that I was worthy of love, that I was an interesting and interested person. If that's not what Pintor wanted, that was OK because he was not quite what I wanted, either; which was someone interested in me as much as I was in them. He was a Leo. God, I swore off of Leos after my husband. I mean, what was up with men that

can't ask women questions? Why don't they just ask? What was it, a lack of training? A lack of interest? Some genetic disadvantage? Couldn't they help women explore their depths as many of us helped them? (Or so I liked to think we did.) Did they just assume we'd tell them, whether they wanted to know or not? Huh...that might be true of some women (and men), but it wasn't true of me.

I also tried to keep a bit of distance from it all. We simply took ourselves into exhaustion. We partied, drank, danced, made love all night and then rose too early to do anything in an easy, comfortable way because we were too tired. In all of that, there was little time for talk, simple communication and sharing. It was go, go, go....over the edge now and then.

Perhaps getting the job in Jakarta would be a good thing. I would create the distance we couldn't seem to achieve on our own. We were like an addiction - addicted to dancing, addicted to sex, addicted to the energy and, yes, maybe addicted to the drama. It seemed that if I just ignored his actions, focused on his words, didn't hurt him and fed his ego, then he'd be happy and so would I...although he'd be furious if he read these words. He wanted his remoteness and safety and me, all at the same time.

Now that I thought about it, I had never dated someone and not gotten involved, except maybe once with a man named Tim. Back then, we had lived in separate towns in my Idaho/Washington days. I was also seeing Jack at the same time. So, in a way, I had never been rejected. Who'd of guessed? Was this ego? Maybe, but it was also the truth. Usually, if I had a relationship, we continued until I ended it. And, granted, I did that rather early out of my own fear of rejection. I rejected them so that they couldn't reject me. Huh. I was amazed my marriage counselor had called me the sanest person he knew.

The thing was, despite all the drama of both of us wanting to leave and stay, I was afraid I was beginning to understand this man, and to love him. We experienced the 'merge', the passionate combining of each other's very souls into one energy while making love. I watched his eyes, his joy reflecting mine as the walls came tumbling down, if only for a while. How to describe the feeling of two people entwined on so many levels that there was no him or me or other? To be enfolded in his coffee cream embrace, to be as one, to commune in ways we were meant to share...was a state of grace. Absolute grace. Oh, that making love could always hold this union! I was hesitant to give this up.

And, speaking of unions, Jack (ex-lover from Spokane) called and said he was coming to visit. Uh oh. I grilled him about whether this was any attempt at a re-union, and he said no. Yet I still felt that something was up. To be honest, I'd wondered about him, but not in a long time. Now that I was doing this dance with Pintor....it should get really interesting around here. It was August 20th, and Jack was coming in three weeks. That was so like him and his impulsive last minute ways. I hadn't even heard about the house I wanted! Where would I put him? Would I have a job? Would I have time to show him around?

The head hunter in Jakarta had me in for the preliminary interview after an initial phone conference. His office was in a very swank, modern high rise in Jakarta. I felt a little dumpy in my teaching clothes, but must have been passable because I now had a meeting in Jakarta scheduled with the Vice Premier of New South Wales, Australia. Seriously, the Vice Premier! I had no idea what that really meant, besides government, but it sounded important. This school was apparently well connected. I'd passed phase one, and phase two was coming. They were flying me to Jakarta to have this meeting in the airport as my Vice Premier was in transit back to Australia. That should be interesting. I had to say I was a bit nervous. Thank God my various teaching attire had gotten me through these first couple of interviews, but I would need suits if I got this job.

The interview was very casual and rather fun, actually. He was interesting, asked pertinent questions, enjoyed my direct honesty and said he was going to give 'Chuck' the go ahead on me. I got the 'go ahead'! Yippee! That apparently left Chuck's decision the only hurdle left. Chuck owned the school and had several scattered across Australia. He would start students in the Indonesian school and once they had enough of a grasp on English, they were offered entrance into programs in his Australian schools in a wide range of professions. We had never talked, Chuck and I, so I had no idea what would happen.

A week later I received a fax sent to Triad requesting that I present a proposal regarding salary requirements. They wanted me, as long as I was within their budget. They wanted me! This was remarkable. Chuck was hiring me based on his associate's recommendations and my resume, never having met me himself. Now that I thought about it, I was accepting under the same terms. I was a bit surprised at it all, actually. I had the corporate management experience, the teaching experience and excellent references, but this just seemed too perfect. Dear God...Thank You! I was way too excited to know what this all meant except that I'd be making money again in a town I said I'd never live in. There was that never say never thing again. So now, what to ask for?

Most expat contracts provided a decent salary, a house to live in, a car and driver, insurance, and often travel home plus the vacation time to do it. We ended up agreeing on a medium salary, housing, a month annual leave, business expenses reimbursed, insurance and an incentive program. This implied it wasn't as large or as fancy a company as I'd originally thought, but still not bad. On September 7th, Chuck called me at Triad, and we finally talked. No alarms went off for either of us, so he faxed me a signed contract. I was to start the first week of October. More miracles.

~ Chapter 31 ~

Life began to get crazy, but I was used to that. Another radical change meant another radical month's activities to do it in. I did get the brick house on the canyon, and decided that I would need a get-away from the crush of Jakarta, so would keep it. They had me sign a six month lease, which was perfect. I needed a bed, curtains and some outdoor furniture but otherwise the place was furnished. It needed some major cleaning as it had been empty for a while, but I'd get help with that.

Pintor had his art exhibit coming, and I had Jack's visit in a week; and I also had to get to Jakarta to look for a place to live, have suits tailored, shoes bought, new shirts and..... Adu! (Sort of like 'Wow!', 'Whoa!' or 'Look at that!' in English.) I was crazy busy.

September 14th I spent my first night in my new house alone. No room-mates, no house boys or staff or anyone to mar the mood. I loved this place. It was so very cool. I had my music, all my kitchenware from the Triad place, a new bed and all the things I'd collected from Sumatra and my travels. It felt homey, or would once the cleaning was finished.

I had a very funny thing happen. I hired a woman named Erlana to help me with the cleaning, and she brought her husband along to help. I was out on the porch when I suddenly heard screaming coming from inside. I dropped everything and, running in, I saw Erlana in a complete panic and her husband staring at something on the floor behind the kitchen's bar that I couldn't see. Turning the corner, I was surprised to find that the cause of all the screaming and yelling was one very innocent looking caterpillar. A caterpillar, for God's sake! He goes to kill it and I sweep in, brushing it into a container to carry it outside. Erlana was yelling, "Kill it, kill it!" But I just didn't kill things that weren't trying to kill me first. As it

happened, that particular caterpillar's fur like covering would raise nasty welts on the skin should you brush against it. Seriously, though, I expected a werewolf with all the ruckus they made.

Jack arrived September 16th, and actually made it all the way to Bandung with only moderate problems. I'd tried my best to carefully school him in how to do it. It was really quite simple. You get through the airport, go outside and take the bus marked Gambir, which took you to the train station. There you bought a train ticket to Bandung, and called me before you left, so I could meet you at Bandung's station. Instead of this, Jack goes outside and meets these 'really nice taxi drivers' (Oh God! The Bataks, remember?) Who said they could get him to the train station very quickly. Two hours later, a scenic tour of Jakarta's back roads and an outrageous amount of money lighter, Jack was delivered to the train station. He disembarked in Bandung with all his cases and gadgets, and I saw every single reason I had made the right decision about breaking up with him.

Jack was quite his usual self, all excited at his journey, a bit tired but raring to go from adrenaline and ready to see the town. He told me all the details of all the things that had happened on his trip there, and I just listened (see, I was improving). I got him settled at my place, and we went out to the Laga Pub that evening. Jack was behaving himself and not too overtly appearing like he'd just come around the world to woo me, but I was still suspicious. When Pintor arrived at the Laga, it was obvious I was more interested in him. All we had to do was dance together, and Jack was told I was with Pintor. Pintor and I moved as if we were one being when we danced. It was Jack's turn on the dance floor next, and it was so unnatural it was painful. We were on completely different rhythms. I caught Pintor watching me as Jack and I danced. Good sign or bad? Jack was a handsome, outgoing guy, and it never dawned on me that Pintor would be jealous. Jack was just a friend, I'd told Pintor, because we'd already tried and failed, big time, at romance.

Jack and I left for Pangandarang the next day and a weekend of, well, fun. We stayed in a much nicer place than I usually did with a pool and two double beds. I took him to the spots I'd found, the jungle walk and the river that flowed out of a cave you could swim almost a hundred feet back into. We even saw a huge scorpion on the walk out through the jungle. Renting motorbikes allowed us freedom to explore the coast, returning to quiet evenings talking, reading or writing under the palms by the pool. There were things Jack did that drove me crazy; and I realized the problem I had was with me, and I was improving. Jack was simply

being himself, and this time I could let him have his idiosyncrasies without much angst or comment.

Jack and I returned to Bandung, and I finally had a dinner in my new home. Pintor was properly impressed, and we had some time talking on the porch alone, though one slight touch was his only sign of affection. Anne came, and she thought he was threatened by Jack. She commented on how his eyes followed me and searched me out every time I was away from him. Did it mean anything? Who knew? While I was in Pangandarang, I kept having these very odd feelings of Pintor, as if he was scared and sorry and threatened by my being there with Jack. Maybe it was me, but those were exceedingly odd feelings for me to come up with alone. Jack said I was 'a little in love' with Pintor. He was right, but it was only a little in love.

Over the weekend with Jack, I'd kept hearing my ex-husband Dave's words echoing in my brain, "I need more attention, more affection," and my response, "I'm giving all I can." Life's twist of fate because now I was in Dave's position, and Pintor was in mine. It felt like another 'never say never' because I hadn't understood Dave's complaints at the time. In my mind, I was there loving him, and I didn't understand his 'more'. I was now beginning to understand, and you'd think I'd give Pintor more of a break. Maybe, after this realization, I would. I knew this feeling, and I knew that if Dave had stopped pressuring me, things might have been different. We all need room to breathe.

It was interesting to see myself through Jack's eyes. He rated me as intelligent, beautiful, worldly, kind, giving and caring. I took it all with a grain of salt, as usual, until he made the comment that, since I'd been gone, he hadn't had another relationship because I had 'spoiled' him. He hadn't met anyone that was as dynamic as I was. He said that he did come here to see Indonesia, but he also came wondering if there was any hope left for a relationship with us. (I knew it!) Even though I had wondered the same about him, his visit showed me there was no way at all. Ever.

Jack continued on his travels, and I thought I'd have a day to myself only to find my friend from Sumatra, Rosmiati, was coming to visit with a friend of hers. I was exhausted, but Indonesians were so very laid back and easy going that it was a breeze. I did adore that woman, and she was still doing her 'explore freedom' and traveling around. Newly back from Thailand, she thought she might try and find a job on Java, though I doubted she'd look in Bandung.

Pintor's exhibition opened October 1st and was amazing. An entire room set up with these hand-beaten metal bells that we'd gone deep into the mountains to have made. He had arranged sensors that made them sound and tone as you walked around them. It was magical. The lighting was good, a crowd came; and in my humble opinion, it was a grand success. He seemed stressed, yet relieved, and almost, dare I say it, happy? Hard to tell with the intensity, but I knew him a bit now and some heaviness lifted. We both got to dress up for it, and Pintor cleaned up well. He looked so handsome! He may even have had an offer of another show! That would mean he'd return. Ah, love, my heart jumped at that. Sad, but true. Our time left was so short.

~ Chapter 32 ~

I finally started to fall apart. The stress of so many visitors, so much to do, moving to my house, getting everything organized to then get to Jakarta, crying and crying and trying not to. This was, in some respects, unnamable. I was not worried about doing the job; but there was much more to worry about like housing, transportation and the crush of humanity in Jakarta. I was also grieving. I was losing a lot, and I knew it; and there was a great sadness in me. People said, "Oh, you'll be back," but it was not the same. I wouldn't live there anymore; I wouldn't be there for the times that counted. It was one more move, one more starting over, one more city where I had to go through it all again. I was so tired. No vacation since March beyond the few days grabbed here and there. Today, I was too tired. I blew off going to Jakarta with Pintor and his friends that had come from the States for his show. I'd go in the morning. There was a going away party with my Laga and HHH friends that Kirk, the sweetheart, took me to. My friends were really kind to me as I must have looked like hell. I sure felt it. Looking at everyone having fun, and knowing I was moving on again, was hard. Even though I knew I could make it work; I could survive Jakarta, and I would make friends, my heart hurt.

Where was my strength? Where? I wanted my friends from back home. I was exhausted beyond measure and wanted to cry and be held, yet did I ask? No. Kirk said he felt a sense of isolation in me, and I wondered why I didn't just let down with him. He was such a sweetheart. As was Bryan. They truly were friends of mine. Bryan made me laugh; Kirk made me think of quick come backs to his teasing. I loved them both. They were two people that all I had to do was call and they were right there if they could be. They didn't really recognize that this was what was so valuable about them. So unlike Pintor, who seemed to

always take and not give. He said he had given too much before, and so he stopped. Now he hardly gave at all.

I always felt so silly when I fell apart. It was the ‘simple’ things that got me. Or so it seemed. Hard stuff I could handle. Leaving a place, actually the people, was hard for me. They were really what was important, so a simple hug could make me cry. I was going to miss them so much! I saw now that I did need help, that I couldn’t do it all alone and that I had to learn how to ask.

And Jakarta...I haven’t told the whole story about this job. It seemed there was a strange bit of work going on there. I’d applied for the Director’s position yet my contract with Chuck was as Director of Studies. He hired me with two intentions in mind. He really wanted to open another school in Jakarta, but he had suspicions that his current Director, an Australian named Jon, was screwing with him. So, I had been hired to go in and spy on Jon to see if he was above board, or not. If he was, I’d be the Director of the new school we’d start. If he wasn’t, I’d be the Director of this one. Now, I always wanted to be a spy, but this might be more than I could handle. The truth was that I didn’t want to do the spy thing. I wanted to manage this school, not start a new one.

A couple of weeks prior to my starting work in Jakarta, Jon called and asked me out to lunch. He wanted to meet his new Director of Studies before I started my job. Seemed logical enough. I met him at a café in Bandung, and he apparently had a second house there, too. I disliked him immediately. He had small, shifty eyes. During the polite chit chat, he suddenly asked me what my salary would be. Uh-oh. Why didn’t he know this already? I tried to get out of answering by saying he should talk with Chuck; but he pointed out that, as my boss, he had a budget to manage and didn’t want to bother Chuck in Australia. I felt caught in a bind I could see no way to wiggle out of. When I told him, I knew immediately that I was being paid more than he was. It was more than just his energetic response. His whole body contracted, and his eyes narrowed while my guts wrenched. Why hadn’t Chuck warned me? When I told Chuck about the conversation, he said I should have figured a way out of it. He was silent when I asked him what he would have done.

I got to Jakarta and my friends Debe and Suresh were letting me stay in their guest room until I found a place to live. Thank you! They were being so very kind to me, and this was a great gift. Jakarta was huge, and it would take me some time to house hunt while I also worked a full time job.

Chuck had arranged to fly to Jakarta for the weekend to meet me and get me settled in my new job. Nice of him, actually. We arranged to meet at the Jakarta Hyatt Hotel. Sweet! I arrived to find Chuck and Jon having an almost knock down, drag out fight in the lobby. All I could think of to do was to sit on a lounge chair and watch. They were literally yelling at each other, Chuck's large form towering over Jon, who's no taller than me. I hadn't heard anyone yell in my entire year there, and they were creating quite the scene. People were scurrying by so as to appear not to notice, but it was impossible for anyone in the whole, vast lobby not to notice.

When the dust settled, it turned out that once again my wishes had come true. More miracles. I would be the Director of the school, and Jon would be retained as a consultant. Chuck was quite generous with him, I thought. He'd get one-half salary for the first six months, going down to one-quarter salary for the next three months with a generous commission on all new enrollments he brought in the entire time. And the reason Jon was out? He had simply made Chuck mad. Chuck said he'd had a bad feeling about Jon for months now, and his insolence and defensiveness were the last straw.

I liked Chuck. He was a talker like Jon, but he had a lot more sense and style. He was like a big, robust 'cowboy' of a man, originally from Canada and married to an Aussie, where he'd made his home for many years. Yes, a cowboy that called women 'girls'. Oh well. I liked him anyway.

He and I had a good talk, and I made it crystal clear that if I was going to manage this school, I had to have the freedom to manage it, which meant I had to be able to make decisions without always having to contact Australia. He agreed, with minor stipulations around money, and we parted company so he could do other business. We agreed to meet at the school early Monday morning.

Monday found Chuck and Jon being amicable and me trying to figure out all the roles. Jon said that since I was now the Director, I should have his office; and a tour of the building had me agreeing with him. As a consultant, he wouldn't be in there daily, I hoped; but he said it would take a couple of days for him to vacate it. Sounded reasonable. He also had his 'left hand man', a guy named Hillman, the computer room teacher and technician, who also had to move some files out.

The school was in a shopping center that was well maintained, as was the school, by local standards. It was three stories high, with windows up the street side of it. There was a large computer lab, teachers lounge, offices, reception area

and a meeting room on the first floor. The classrooms took up the remaining two floors with spaces for students to hang out and a small office for the Head Teacher. It was a big step up from the schools in Bandung, and at the rates they charged, it needed to be.

The staff was as curious about me as I was about them. The combined secretary/receptionist was an American! That surprised me as foreigners were only allowed to hold jobs that Indonesians couldn't do. That's why westerners were teachers and consultants and couldn't be shop owners or waitresses and such. Perhaps she was allowed because we were a foreign controlled company, and she had to speak fluent English to communicate with Australia? I didn't yet know, but I was delighted. The teachers were a mixture of local and foreign, and the head teacher was a meek looking American fellow who seemed to be competent. There were a few Indonesian teachers, like Hillman who ran the computer lab, while the beginning English teachers and the student counselors were Indonesian.

Chuck and I went over details, with Jon adding comments, and everything seemed fine. Sort of. Chuck had an afternoon flight home, and I had a lot to learn. Given time, I thought that Jon would be fine. I think he saw himself as a father figure. Hillman would be OK, too. He was a mover and a shaker. The rest would come around. They didn't trust this new change in their routine, and I knew that feeling.

Yet, it was a strange environment I had walked into. Everyone was so changeable, so unstable. I'd asked more than once, my first few days there, "What have I walked into"? And I knew the answer. I'd walked into a challenge. A house divided and rattling, too many doing too much, no direction or confused directions and always changes of mind. I had asked to experience everything in life, but this was daunting. I kept telling myself that I could pull it off, I would pull it off; and I could already see the rewards would be minimal; the greatest coming from my own awareness of my accomplishments.

After several long days, I got to go home to Bandung for the weekend. My flight was delayed, which was stressful, and returning to Bandung brought stress, too. Stress at seeing Pintor, and stress at all my leavings. I arrived, ran some errands and went home, where I stayed. Pintor called to say he and his friends had planned a surprise for me! In they walk at eight, basket in hand, to make a *superb* pesto dinner. Kirk showed up, and we all got very tipsy, eating and talking the night away. Pintor was so different. It was like it was 'my night', and he massaged me, kissed me, fed me.

It was a little unnerving at first as it was so foreign and unlike him of late. He teased me, a great sexual tease, and danced around the kitchen. He stayed the night; and we made incredible love. It was all so much closer and more intimate. We'd see. I had changed through our leavings. I had let him go, and yet I wanted him there, my lover of leavings. He said he was coming back in November, or going to Bali, or, or, or.... He spoke of all the things we could do, places we could go together. Again, we'd see. It seemed every time I thought of an action, within a day he was thinking the same thing. I'll go home, huh, maybe he'll go back to the States. I think of Jakarta, well, maybe he'd check out galleries there. Ah, 'Deanna'....let it go, let it flow. Enjoy the time, the changes and the lovely sexy man making me happy right now.

~ Chapter 33 ~

On the train back to Jakarta, I struggled with my feelings. I'd been unsettled for so long; and then I got my house on the canyon and enough jobs to survive. Then this Jakarta job comes up and I am moving again, house hunting again. Argh! I felt like crying every time I left both cities. Too many emotions. There were plenty of people in my life, but these days I often felt alone.

I did feel that Jakarta was a city to explore; something new to check out. I'd get introduced to people, and it would take six months or a year, and it would be fine. I'd have money; so if something fell through, I'd be better off than I had been, for sure. Still, I had been on one hell of a roller coaster the past two months. Had it only been two months? Oh my, less than that.

Debe and Suresh did listen to me on my return and sympathized with my stress. I needed that, and they always listened. Pintor called, which was nice, too. He'd called daily since I'd 'moved'. Tomorrow I'd start it all again. I had to get a handle on this school and stop the vortex of chaos they had running.

Had I only known, taking the taxi in my nice new suit to work that morning that it would be the day from hell, I might have tried to run. Yet I didn't know. I was getting there early to get a head start on the day. Jon should have cleaned out the office, so I could move in and really begin. There was a psychological advantage to having the 'seat of power', and I wanted that advantage. I was delighted to find that, for the most part, he had indeed moved.

The day was proceeding rather well, actually, and then...

“Uh, Diane?”

“Yes Angela, what’s up?”

“Uh, we have some men from Manpower here to see you.”

“OK. And who is Manpower?”

Manpower were the very official looking men in suits that had come in. Angela told me that Manpower was the employment enforcement agency of the government, and they were asking for me. Me? Strange, but, “Well, OK.”

I went out to meet these men, who I could tell were being nastily grim on purpose. They asked who I was, and I told them that I had been hired as the Director. They asked for my passport, and I told them that I didn’t have it. It was still in Bandung being finalized to transfer here, to our Yayasan. A Yayasan was their version of a non-profit corporation and was the legal entity for Chuck’s business since foreign companies couldn’t own businesses there. They said that I couldn’t be the Director of the company, and I realized my error. I hastily told them that I meant the Director of Studies. I offered to show them a copy of my contract which, thankfully, stated exactly that, and they declined. I offered to show them a copy of my teaching visa, but they didn’t want that, either. They refused to talk with me at all, insisting that we get our Yayasan people here on the double.

I noticed that Jon was absent and even Hillman was not in yet, both being unusual at this time of day. Angela called Rahaman, our Yayasan man, and the ‘suits’ sat to wait for him to arrive. I went into my office to avoid their sinister glares and tried not to freak out, but failed. I had a really bad feeling about this. When Rahaman arrived, he was businesslike but a bit flustered. He spoke with the suits; but they were talking so fast, I could in no way keep up, using words I’d never heard before. Everyone was exceptionally tense, and I was wondering what, exactly, was going on here.

It was finally decided that we all had to go down to their offices, and as I got in his car, Rahaman who told me I was in deep, deep trouble. He said they knew all about me before they even walked in the building, which meant that someone had tipped them off or bribed them to come after me. They were demanding the company pay five thousand U.S. dollars to keep me in the country. Otherwise, I would be deported immediately and blacklisted, so I could never return.

“But I have a visa,” I told him. Yes, but it was for Bandung, not Jakarta. “Tell them I was only consulting until my new visa arrived!” Yes, he said, but

they had been tipped off, and they would not give up unless they got something. Oh God. The thought of being deported, not able to say goodbye to anyone, and losing everything I had there began to break me down. Until I got mad. Who on earth could possibly have pointed them in my direction? Jon. Or Hillman, which was the same as Jon. He was the only one. So that's why he'd been so damned nice and fatherly. He thought he'd be rid of me soon enough, so why not be nice and make the time easy. With me gone, Chuck would still need him there to hold the school together, and he could easily pretend it had all 'just happened', even getting around Rahaman's suspicions of foul play. It would be easy to make it look however he wanted it to look.

This whole country ran on bribery. Tourists and short term visitors rarely encountered it, and I had played my hand so as to avoid situations that might require it. Until today. The World Bank had deemed Indonesia the most corrupt country in the world, a status it won from China (I think it was), and they had certainly earned the title. You never called the police for anything because you'd have to bribe them. You avoided as much government involvement as you could because they supplemented their abysmal salaries with bribes. If you wanted something done, all you had to do was come up with a big enough bribe, and you could get it done. *Anything*. Just like that. As for laws, there were none that could not be bought. Not one.

We arrived at a dismal looking building that housed our chapter of Manpower, and were immediately escorted into the Director's office. Rahaman warned me to not say one single word. They continued to speak at break neck speeds and I didn't understand much. The same men that had come to the school did the negotiating. The Director chose a chair directly opposite mine and stared at me with undisguised hatred and malice. I couldn't believe it. The man didn't even know me, yet there he was trying to make me as uncomfortable as he possibly could. I suspected it wasn't me, but all I represented that he hated. I imagined he saw a privileged woman from a wealthy country, and he resented the wealth that could bring me all the way there. Maybe he thought we were invading his country, easily assuming a status and an authority he'd had to struggle so long to achieve. I didn't know. I finally refrained from looking at him, focusing on the buttons of his shirt or my shoes, so that I didn't have to endure that glare.

After what seemed an endless time but was actually less than an hour, Rahaman pulled out his check book and wrote them a check. As he finished, he motioned me to get up, and I followed him out of the building. He signaled me not to

talk until we were safely in his car. He had gotten the five thousand dollars down to two, but there were warnings accompanying our triumph.

For starters, I could not be ‘the Director’ here. I had to say that I was the Director of Studies or a consultant, no matter what my position really was. I could not, in any way, appear to make a decision outside of that scope. I must say that he, Rahaman, or someone from his office had issued the decision or instruction. I could not act on my own without that, which meant constant contact with him in case anyone challenged me on it. Great. And why, exactly, didn’t anyone tell me any of this to start with? They knew my management experience was from the States, not the most corrupt country in the world!

Manpower made raids daily that week at the most inconvenient of times. They wanted to see everyone’s papers, everyone’s passports; they spoke with Jon, Hillman, Rahaman and almost never me, which suited me just fine. Jon continued to act as if he was being the ‘great white hope to the unfortunate’, meaning me. He glorified himself every opportunity he got. He counseled me to grease palms, good advice that I was not good at taking. Guess I’d have to learn. Ick. So, I reflected, you’ve prided yourself on honesty all your life and now look where you are.....having to learn how to bribe. Where, oh where, were the acting skills Dad thought I was so damned good at?

Finally, the week of hell was over. During Rahaman’s continued talks with Manpower, they let it slip that Jon and Hillman had, indeed, turned me in. Rahaman said they would be gone by Monday, I hoped never to return. Chuck was understandably furious, and I was exhausted. Oh man, oh man, oh woman. The only bright light in an otherwise terrifying week was a dinner party Debe and Suresh had, where I got to spar and laugh and have a good time, meeting Jeanne, wife of Klaus (my sparring partner) and another American named Constance. A very nice, sane evening.

~ Chapter 34 ~

Then I began to fall apart even more. I was so tired, and it wrecked havoc with my sense of humor, and my senses altogether. Why couldn’t it all be simple in love and in life? The ghosts of hurts and harms past encircle our hearts, bind our lips and threaten our dreams. Fear so deep because past harms ruined something we always felt should be perfect. Was that our collective problem? We were raised to believe in perfect love, perfect happiness, perfect lives and they simply didn’t exist? Whole civilizations deceived by a trick of the mind?

So we run from fear when we run from love or pain, or when we run from anything at all. We feed fear when we hold onto love lost, lives lost and changes resisted; projecting those hurts onto a present that might be vastly different. Yet we don't see through the fear. We lived in the past, maintained it and nurtured it to prevent us from creating a future in its image. Because we're still afraid.

We're afraid of ourselves falling and breaking, afraid of others that would trip us and hurt us, afraid of trying because we might fail, afraid of succeeding because it's the unknown, and afraid of succeeding because we actually might. The walls, the guards, the dogs and alarms all monitor the level of our fear. As I discussed with them, reviewed my contracts and maintenance agreements, I was trying to understand my role so that I could also understand others.

How did I get here? Why could I give my love so freely until someone got too close, and I got scared? Heat sensors sent messages to alarm centers that raised the gates and called the guards to loosen the dogs. Some said it was simple: once bitten, twice shy. But then, they raised their dogs, too. Why do we choose this? Because it hurt once, and we don't want to hurt again? Is that all? Who told us it wasn't OK to hurt? Who? Who told us mothers and fathers and friends and lovers should never hurt us and always love us?

What would canceling fear's maintenance agreements mean? Just let them go, get brave, try something different and see what changed? Could we assume responsibility for our actions and reactions ~ all of them ~ and keep the past where it belongs so we can focus on what's *actually* happening now? Was self awareness enough? I saw it was much easier for people to blame others than take responsibility for themselves, and for the truth. That's what was happening with the school. Somehow I was now the target for all that Jon felt Chuck had wronged him about, despite Jon's attitude and mistakes. It had nothing to do with me. Nothing. Yet it was being played out against me. Or was it? Actually, I was a pawn in Jon's much bigger game with Chuck.

One night in my sleep, I heard the sound of one of the apartment doors closing, thinking it odd at that hour. Then I heard the sound of whispers and the shuffling feet. I was struggling to wake up, wondering if I should, if there was someone in my room. I felt, soft as a whisper, someone stroke my cheek. I looked towards my door....it was open and as if a group was there, watching me. I blinked...and the door was closed, no one there.

During the ‘dream’ I was aware I was asleep and trying to wake up. This felt real. I didn’t really sense danger around them, and yet I was not comfortable. I thought about whether to use other power to shield or defend, and decided against it. I thought about the differences in spiritualism from here to the States. That touch was gentle, as if a guest had entered to stroke my cheek in consolation while the rest stayed at the door. Odd. Did I have allies here? Is that what this meant? I did not know but hoped so.

That dream stayed with me. I thought of ‘Dukuns’, Indonesia’s magic makers, and wondered if I should sick one of them on Jon. Dukuns can practice either black or white magic. I had heard most about the black magic Dukuns because they caused all sorts of strange problems. You could go to one and have them hex anybody for a price simply because you were mad at someone. Practically every village had Dukuns, so they were easily accessible; although affording them was not. I figured that’s what kept some level of control on it all. People had to weigh it ~ did their anger outweigh their family eating? My friend Anne’s housekeeper was being hexed, and strange designs began appearing on her skin. They didn’t hurt and went away within a day, but stood out and were very alarming to her. Another Australian woman I’d heard of got hexed by a disgruntled secretary at the school she worked at. Her house had invasions of ants, then spiders followed by snakes, that were far more extreme than the natural infestations that sometimes happened in Asia. The only cure is to let it run its course, which no one does because you don’t know how long or what that will be; or you go to a white magic Dukun to have the spell broken. I hesitated to meddle here with Jon. Things were bad enough without adding magic to the mix, and I did not believe that was a right use of power, despite it being tempting.

With my visitation, these beings were not hostile nor was I being attacked. They were simply curious visitors, and not my first. I was aware I could be deceived here in this country with such different energies and different ways, but I still believed I’d sense any underlying hostility or deceit. I mean, my alert buttons for evil spook attacks could wake me out of a dead sleep, heart pounding and fully alert in a second. This was not like that. They had come, I felt, to console me.

The next morning, I headed to my canyon and bamboo forest refuge in Bandung. I had three days to be home, in the quiet, away from the school and all the chaos of life in Jakarta. Oh, to hear the horses running and whinnying their morning freedom, instead of the cars and busses of the city.

And the bastard found me there.

I answered the late afternoon phone to hear Jon's voice telling me that Manpower was looking for me. "You see, they never got the bribe you gave them. It never showed up on their records, and they are hunting for you as we speak. And they will find you, you know."

It was the last straw. I hung up on him and began to sob the tears of the exhausted and defeated. To think of them hunting me down, to think that Jon could have simply paid them more money than we did, to think that they could be after me, invading my small piece of paradise...was too much. To be picked up here and arrested, away from Rahaman and the legal protection of our Yayasan....I crumbled to the floor, sobbing, giving in to the pain and fear and seeming hopelessness of it all.

There is grace in this world, there really is. This day it came in the form of Pintor suddenly arriving, gently pulling me up, and holding me in his arms as I sobbed for what seemed like eternity. Gently, he led me to the couch, still holding me, softly telling me it would be alright, he was there. I managed to get the story out, the week of Manpower raids, the bribes, Jon's call, and the threats. He stayed with me that night.

Fear. It was a stranger sneaking in, and I was confused, not remembering any time before like this. I closed the door and turned my back, to find its face at the window, its voice on the phone, its image at the back door. I watched my mind that was losing its bid for control of the rising fear. At nerves end, I prayed for strength and wisdom. My reactions were shocking me. Who was this 'being' falling apart? I did not know her. Sure, there'd been the feelings of impotence, but there came, too, feelings of being ugly, unworthy and unclean. It was as if Jon's evil ways were infecting me, or as if feeling defeated meant there was something wrong with me.

I walked through Bandung's mall seeking something, anything, to make me feel pretty or sexy or attractive. I felt so very lost and uncomfortable. I didn't trust what appeared to be reality. It could change before my eyes at any moment. There had been isolated periods of feeling strong and confident, able to handle whatever came. There had been visions of the school doing well, prospering, and just moving along. Inside me, though, persisted this deep unease. It had hold and I didn't know how to handle it, how to fight or how to listen. This was not about me, but it was playing itself out inside of me.

I was committed to a cause and a contract, yet I was so tired. I wanted to give it all up to God. I wanted to rest in my higher self's wisdom. Returning home to my canyon, I did. I gave up. I gave it all up to God and to my highest, and I felt immediate relief. On the other side of nerves and exhaustion, I'd find will. It all just needed a rest.

The next day, alone, I watched while my fears rose again and then let it all out in wails of tears. Then I asked for help. I had surrounded my area with protective shields of energy and felt safe and in control through that light. I called on everything I believed in to help me. The dogs were barking, but no evil could come. My guides had answered my call to banish the darkness and constriction that came from without. For within, I asked for faith and courage, sensitivity and wisdom. Finally, I felt at ease. And I was hungry.

On Sunday, October 25th, I returned to Jakarta with my passport back in hand from Triad. I had until November 7th to exit Indonesia as my visa would expire, and require me to exit the country to renew it. I thought to head to Singapore soon, get the unknown over with, and see if I could actually return to Jakarta. That, or if Manpower had blacklisted me.

I woke that Sunday with anxiety. I met Pintor at a hangout called Toko You; and he was feeling the anxiety, too, as I would be beyond his protection. His family was well connected in Jakarta, though. His Dad was President of a large university there, an uncle had been Minister of Education, and other relatives were well placed in Indonesia's hierarchy. I knew now that to help me would require someone calling in a favor, and that was not to be taken lightly in this, the most corrupt country in the world. He was spinning, thinking of all the different scenarios and ways and things to do that might make this easier for me. I thanked him for his concern, his sweetness, and said I hoped I'd never have to ask. He took me to the train station, and it was so hard to leave the circle of his arms. I had asked for adventure in my life, and had opened myself up to experiencing everything in the world. I had never, however, imagined it like *this*. "Be careful of what you ask for," came flitting through my mind. Yes, well, I'd not been clear enough on that one. I was clear that I was committed to this job, and that I was still scared. Weird to have courage in the midst of fear, but that's how I felt.

Returning to the apartment, Debe had left a message for me that Chuck called and would call again later in the evening.

~ Chapter 35 ~

Still nervous that Jon had somehow put Manpower back on me, I waited for Chuck's call. Little did I know there were even lower depths to be plumbed. Chuck called to tell me that the school had been hijacked by Jon and Hillman. They hijacked our school? The whole school? How do you hijack a school? Unbelievable. Never would I have thought that possible. Wonders, apparently, never ceased in paradise.

On the same day he called Bandung to scare me, Jon had sent a letter to our Yayasan informing us that he had taken control of the building. No one from the Yayasan was allowed on the premises, nor Chuck or I. Jon informed us that he had hired guards to ensure we did not try to enter, and apparently he had retained the services of Yepto. "And who is Yepto", I asked? Chuck wasn't sure but thought it was Mafia. Mafia? "Yeah, you need to go to the Yayasan on Monday and talk to John." Jon? It seemed we had another Aussie that worked with our Yayasan named John. How many Australian 'Johns' were there in Indonesia, anyway? Could this get any more bizarre? I was afraid to find out.

On my way to the Yayasan's office on Monday, I had the taxi take me by the school for a 'drive by recon'. I wanted to check it out and see if it was all a bluff or not. There did seem to be non-student types hanging about the lobby, but otherwise all looked normal. Huh. He really did it? How do you hijack a building? Especially with the many thousands of dollars of someone else's equipment in it, not to mention the business, students and staff? I was soon to find out.

I found the Yayasan's building and noticed that it was just as drab as so many buildings were in this country. Not hideous, mind you, just third world from the 70's or 80's and ever in need of either a paint job or maintenance in its many forms. Entering the level the Yayasan was housed in, I noticed the lack of an obvious secretary or receptionist. "Hello? Selamat Pagi?" A very beautiful young woman came out and said that John and Ruhud were in a meeting but would be with me soon, so I waited.

When I was finally summoned, I found 'the good John' to be a lanky, maybe late 50's early 60's man with sharp eyes, graying temples and, as I was to find out later, a wry sense of humor. I liked him immediately. Ruhud, however, was another matter. He was tall for an Indonesian, medium build, of indeterminate middle age and not very friendly. He just 'was', and a bit of that was harried. I

figured they certainly had a situation on their hands, and I'd be grumpy, too, if one of my holdings had just been hijacked. A rather big loss of face, I mused.

I learned a lot that first morning. I learned that 'the Good John' was an old acquaintance of Chuck's, which was why the Yayasan had taken the school on at all. John was apparently working with Ruhud bringing Australian Steel into Indonesia, and this Yayasan handled their affairs. I was impressed, imagining it to be a large concern and thus time consuming. John said that he was in and out of the country, but that I could come to him with questions. Ruhud would be the one handling things on the Indonesian side; John handled the Australian side (ie. Chuck and I) and otherwise they worked together, consulting each other as needed. At that moment, he planned to be around for the next few weeks.

Then the bad news came. Jon had indeed gone to Yepto's organization which was, most certainly, Indonesian Mafia. The good news was that our Yayasan was also connected with Yepto's organization (that's good news?), but at a higher level than Jon was. And, the Mafia were all lawyers. The Mafia are lawyers? Could this get any weirder? Though in truth, it had just gotten interesting.

Back in the late 80's, Amnesty International and other civil rights organizations had gone after Indonesia for the lawless actions of its Mafia and gangs. Apparently, one too many people had turned up in the canals with a bullet in their back. The whole world began to exert pressure and criticism, very publicly and on a very large scale. For a country where saving face meant everything, this was horrifying. I chuckled at the picture this conjured, actually, because the Indonesian government would be furious at arousing such bad international publicity. They were less than fifty years old as a country, having so recently won independence from Dutch occupation, and they were trying really hard for recognition as a world player. Just not this kind of player.

In the interests of international opinion, the Mafia was told to clean up their act. No more shooting people in the back. Or shooting them at all. The Mafia, quite intelligently I thought, decided they could be just as effective if they became lawyers. So, just as Jakarta's taxi drivers were predominantly Batak (from Sumatra), so its lawyers were predominantly Mafia. And Yepto's organization was Jakarta's Mafia. I assumed the other cities had theirs, too.

"And Jon hijacked the building how?" I asked. He had the landlord transfer the lease into his name, I was told. In Indonesia, possession was apparently the law. He who had the lease controlled the building. "So, why can't we just go to

the police?” As soon as I asked, I remembered how foolish that would be. Their patient smiles accompanied the explanation that a course of action such as going to the police would cost us more than we could afford to lose, in time, patience and money. But we had all the equipment and furniture and computers and students! Yes, they said, that was a problem.

They showed me a copy of the lease we’d been faxed, and I noticed that it was dated in July. July! Jon had been scheming this long before I’d ever been hired. He’d waited, playing out all his options before pulling out his trump card. Turning me into Manpower had been his move to get rid of me; and when that failed, he played his ace in the hole with the lease. Ruhud had a call into the landlord to try and find out how this had happened, and until then, we waited.

John & Ruhud arranged with Chuck that I would have an office in their suite so the secretary, who had her own office near the front door, showed me my new ‘digs’. Ick. In fairness, it wasn’t that bad. It was just bare. There was a desk, a chair and a phone. Blank walls and a side chair finished my tour. She told me how the phones worked, where the bathroom was and where a warung was for lunch, and left. What on earth did I do now, I wondered? I was a Director with no one to direct, a Queen without a throne, my kingdom hijacked and my counselors doing all the negotiating. Great. Just great.

I figured now was as good a time as any to go to Singapore, which housed the nearest Indonesian embassy, to see if I could get back into the country on my new working visa. I’d already arranged with Anne in Bandung and Debe in Jakarta to take care of my things if the worst happened. Debe was confident that I could bribe my way back in, but that wasn’t easy for me in that I didn’t know how to do it. I also didn’t know if I had enough money to pull off a significant bribe. She said she’d front me the money if it came to that, dear Debe. She also said you just slipped them the money like they did in the movies, or you asked to speak to someone privately and haggled. Haggle with immigration? Would wonders never cease?

With all these thoughts in mind, I booked flights that the school would reimburse and headed to Singapore. I decided I needed some down time no matter what, so I would at least overnight there.

I loved Singapore. When I was traveling before in Asia, I transited it twice; one trip being for a week as I got caught in an international traffic jam. I’d been trying to organize getting up the east coast of Malaysia, and there was a

transportation breakdown, stalling me in Singapore where I met two guys I'd eventually traveled with. I loved that, the meeting of strangers who become friends to travel with a while. These two were an American and a Canadian, and the latter was irritating as hell. He's the guy that would walk through gorgeous jungle singing "Can't get enough of them sugar crisps, sugar crisps, sugar crisps...can't get enough of them sugar crisps...." and scaring all the wildlife for miles around. He also couldn't bring himself to eat with his right hand at a special ceremonial dinner we'd been invited to, and where we had been warned we'd need to conform to local customs. He was an embarrassment, and his unwillingness to adapt to the culture had made me so mad that I told him I couldn't travel with him any longer. He was on his own because the other guy, the American, went with me.

I was thinking about them as I hailed a taxi to Indonesia's embassy. Entering Singapore was like returning to the world of 'normal'. Things actually worked in Singapore, and it looked fairly modern in most places. Sure, there were the high rise housing projects with all the laundry draped along balconies and crazily erected clothes lines, but it might be the cleanest country in the world. It was said that people could be arrested for tossing anything onto the streets. I didn't know if it was true or urban myth, but Singapore was really clean. I especially liked the 'Little India' section, and intended to head to a south Indian restaurant I'd found there for my favorite dish of Uttapam. But first the embassy.

Going to Singapore for visa work was a trip that could take three days, or one. The signs in the Embassy's lobby state that it takes three days to process visas. Debe told me that if you bribed the staff, however, they could process your visa in a day. And the bribe wasn't too bad, or hadn't been the last time she was there. Fifty U.S. dollars would usually do the trick. If you thought of the costs of spending days in Singapore, it was cheaper by far to bribe them. Since I'd decided to only take two days for this trip, I would need to anyway. So I followed Debe's advice. As they all spoke English, I asked who I could talk with to have my paperwork processed faster. I was led into a room on the side and told it would take fifty dollars. I paid it and asked when it would be ready. "Today by four," was my answer, and I asked if I could pick it up first thing in the morning? "Of course," with a look that said 'how stupid'. Yet I was nervous handling my first bribe, and I'd learned you never, ever, know.

Another taxi dropped me off at a small, clean guesthouse I'd found on my earlier trip, and luckily they had a room available. This time I opted for the air conditioned comfort and thought Chuck should be grateful that I knew how to travel cheaply. I could have checked into a much more expensive hotel, and

maybe I should have; but I chose familiar streets to another upscale district. Catching the bus to the Indian area, I slid into a chair in the Indian restaurant I loved and sat back to await my Uttapam. Traveling in south India with Behram, I had discovered this pancake type dish as a breakfast alternative. It had cilantro and fried onions cooked in a rice flour type of pancake batter, and it was served with a coconut chutney. That, and a cup of chai tea, and I was in heaven.

I now had almost two days to hang out, relax and explore. After lunch, I opted to go around 'Little India' and buy supplies for home. Walking into a small grocery shop, I got to talking with a woman that worked there. After telling her what I was up to in Singapore and about the lunch I so loved, she offered to teach me how to make Uttapam. I was thrilled! I needed rice flour, urid dahl flour and some spices. The onions and cilantro I could get in Indonesia. She wrote out complete instructions for that, and the coconut chutney to go with it. I left a happy woman.

Happy. I was actually happy, and I noticed that it was a strange feeling. That was not a good sign at all. My friend Cindy and I had once decided that life should be 80% fun, and if that percentage slipped lower, something needed to be done. I must be living in the other 20% lately, and we never, ever envisioned the situation I found myself in these days. I mean, I was in love with a moody, volatile artist, I was a ruler in exile with my 'kingdom' held hostage, and I was a stranger in a strange land. Yet, for this day and the next, I was happy.

That night I hung out with a random mix of travelers talking and sharing stories over a beer. Mine was the best story that night, for sure; although there was always another hard one. One guy, I think he was Swedish, had gone to a phone booth; and while he was talking got his head split open and was robbed. In Singapore of all places! That was the first and only horror story I'd ever heard about Singapore.

I had never been threatened as a traveler and only once robbed. That happened in Athens when I was traveling with Cindy around the Middle East. She had felt sick on our last day in Greece, so I had gone to the airlines to get everything ready to leave the next day. Returning to the hotel, I gave her back her passport and airline ticket and we headed out for a last evening meal. We were in such a hurry, though, that I forgot to transfer my passport and airline ticket out of my day bag and into my money belt.

We found a nice café with outside tables and as it was early, we were the only ones there. We ordered a bottle of Retsina wine and were toasting our marvelous journey's end when I noticed our waiter running up the street. I remember wondering if they had to go shoot the lamb or buy something. Once dinner was over, I reached for my backpack at my feet only to find it gone. I remembered the waiter and his black pants and realized he must have taken my bag while we were toasting, simply holding it by his legs so I wouldn't see it.

I raised one hell of a ruckus at the restaurant, and then headed to the police station where no one spoke English but where we were blessed to have someone come in who did. He helped us with the reports and we left, late, for the hotel. I remember the hotel was called Cleo's. Walking back to Cleo's, I kept saying that this was just too bizarre, that it could not be real. It all had a surreal, impossible feeling to it, and I just didn't believe that I had lost my backpack. When we got to the front of our hotel, I looked in through the glass door and there, on the reception's desk, was my backpack! Someone had found it on the street, and since it had the hotel's card in it he had returned it.

I asked who that was, and it turned out to be a shopkeeper just down the street, so I went to thank him. He told me where he had found it, and on the way back I found bits and pieces of my belongings along the road, as if someone had been running by and tossing out what they didn't want. Looking closely, I even found my airline ticket under a car. Blessings! I was out the best Swiss Army knife I'd ever owned, my wallet and some miscellaneous other items...and my passport. Thankfully, they hadn't found the money I had stashed in a swim tube. I also traveled with a copy of my passport in a separate bag so if it was ever stolen, I'd have the copy. That's what saved me from being stuck in Greece, actually. With that copy, the next day I was able to get a new passport issued and still make our two o'clock flight. Miracles happen.

My two days of Singapore's blissful normalcy over, I returned to Jakarta and passed through immigration with no problems at all. I was again legal and gave thanks that third world countries weren't as automated as first world ones were. That, and that Manpower had probably done nothing more to me. The school was still in process; although we were supposed to have it all settled in two days. I had heard that before. It seemed like every day was going to be the day until Jon or a mediator or a thug (uh, I mean lawyer) demanded yet another item to negotiate.

Ruhud had found out from the landlord that Jon had been paying the rent since April, and so he had assumed Jon had taken over the business. Since April?

Jon had been planning this a long time. The landlord was quite sorry, but what was done, was done. I asked if there was nothing that we could do and got a, 'we're working on it', from a harried Ruhud. As part of the negotiations and in exchange for Chuck paying the bills during the hijacking, I was to take control of all of the financial paperwork and the checkbook and get a computer to use. I knew having the checkbook would not stop Jon from withdrawing money at the bank, but it would slow him down. This had all been delivered in boxes to the Yayasan, and I finally had a project I could work on that I knew inside and out.

Chuck also employed an independent Dutch accounting firm in Jakarta that had been working on audited financials that weren't finished yet. I had calls in to them to determine if we had been paying rent. Turned out we had. I wanted those financials and ledgers in the worst of ways so I could examine them for clues. When I got them, I found plenty. The most shocking was to find that Jon had actually paid Manpower to come in and arrest me out of our own bank account. The nerve of that man! And for a hundred dollars. Only one hundred dollars had bought all that misery.

I was also able to get copies of the checks Jon had written for rent and learned something I really needed to know. At the end of the line where you entered the payee's name were two words which I learned meant 'or bearer'. So checks read, for example, 'Pay to the order of Diane Adkins, or bearer.' *Anyone* in possession of a check could cash it unless those words were crossed off! Incredible. On the back of the rent checks we'd issued to the landlord was someone's feminine looking handwriting depositing them into a bank account I didn't recognize. And, as you've guessed, 'or bearer' was not crossed off of any of the rent checks made out to the landlord.

~ Chapter 36 ~

I'd had a feeling all day of having to start over. It was as if for the last months I'd been on hold or in transit, and now I needed to do something. Where was my life going now? What did I want to do while I went there? I kept having this sense of wasting time. I wanted to study Silat (an Indonesian martial art form), and I wanted to be fluent in Indonesian. I also wanted to start to batik again, and I had to move. I'd been afraid of settling on a house I'd found to rent, for fear that the whole job would fall apart.

There was also Pintor, and I had no idea if he would fit into any of this. I needed to make my decisions very much independent of him. He could be here

two months or two years or gone tomorrow. I realized that I finally had a developed love for him. Not the fall over the edge love but quiet, slow and calm where before it had been chaotic love. I found I was not attached to outcomes. I needed to work on my own process now and indeed begin a new life. I'd be sad to lose him, but I'd also accept it if it came to that. There was a deep acceptance inside of me about Pintor, and that was new.

As days passed I found myself depressed, nervous and all of the Mafia chaos affecting me physically. My hands were shaking sometimes. It seemed like my choice to let myself go crazy, my choice to take life so seriously and to care so much. Pintor and Debe told me it was normal. So much was unstable, so much was wrong, so much waiting and impotence and uncertainty. I was really uncomfortable with those feelings. They seemed to reside in that space where all my negativity hid. It made me doubt myself. It was like a bad seed that starts to grow, and I realized that was an internalization of the outward process. Jon's bad seed was working its way into me, causing me doubt and anxiety. Again, my choice...to believe it, to not resist it and to let it take root. So I took hold of myself instead. I wrote all that was going on and faxed it off to Sydney. They'd asked for a progress report, and I had no good news.

I read dozens of books. I drank too much. I wanted my life back. I actually needed myself back. What had I done in my life, I wondered, for outside interest? There was no 'sports by the seasons' here, except for the drunken HHH. I couldn't, or wouldn't, afford the expensive expat clubs with gyms. I kept wondering what happened to my dream?

Before coming to Indonesia, I had decided what I was good at, what I wanted to do here and how to incorporate both into my life: teach batik to the deaf and disabled. Where had my drive gone to realize my dream? Part of it was lost in the maze of the hijacking insanity. Part of it got lost in the craziness of Indonesia; and the difficulty of realizing *any* dream here. I felt inside and saw the dream's dim seed still alive, and I clung to it. I held it up so I could see it more clearly. Despite all that was happening, I saw that I could still do it, or at least start. That's what it would take, another first step. Just like in all beginnings, I had to take the first step...on the gas. Still, no one could tell me a thing about the deaf or deaf services. So I waited.

Another deadline for handing the school back over to us passed. Mid-November found me having to move into the house I'd found, and I was dreading it. I had so enjoyed the sanity of Debe and Suresh's apartment, but it was time to move.

I'd found a small, two bedroom house, fairly close to the school that would work and that I could afford. It didn't have a telephone, which was going to be hard; but there was a pay phone around the corner I could use and I had a pager.

The house was nice, clean and seemed safe. It had white walls, white tile floors, a regular bathroom and a fairly normal kitchen with a refrigerator. The living room was really pleasant, with glass doors onto a small enclosed garden spot. It also had furniture, so I wouldn't have to buy more. The biggest problem was that only the master bedroom was air conditioned, but I figured I could buy an air conditioner for the living room if all went well. It would work, but I didn't relish living alone, not in Jakarta, not yet. Still, I moved in and made the best of it. I decided to treat myself to a stereo, TV and VCR, so at least I could have music and videos.

~ Chapter 37 ~

"Jon is proving himself to be one piss ant," the good John informed me, and I wondered what the newest challenge was.

"He keeps twisting things around and asking for more every time we negotiate. I think we need to take stronger action."

"What do you have in mind," I asked him.

"Well, it seems you have some choices. You could have him talked to by some of Yepto's men, or, you could have him talked to with some persuasion exerted."

"And what do you mean by persuasion?"

"Well, you know, they could rough him up a bit, do some persuading."

"I can't believe I'm actually finding that attractive," I grinned.

"Or you could have him fall in front of a bus."

"What!"

I looked at John in shock. He was seriously telling me that I could have Jon disposed of permanently. I mean, I knew that still happened in Indonesia, where

they'd traded accidents and drowning for shooting, but oh my God! I never thought I'd be given the power to make that sort of decision. It was like everything stopped and got very quiet. John and Ruhud just looked at me, waiting, while I struggled with the complete shock of murder as an option. Unbelievable. Really unbelievable.

"As tempting as that might be, I really can't see myself taking the bus option. Tempting, though, really tempting," I said. And they smiled.

It was like I had just passed some test. I hadn't panicked, hadn't talked it to death and hadn't chosen it, either. They were more open to me after that, especially Ruhud, which made my life easier there. The thing was, Chuck was getting more furious by the day. I could just see that big Canadian Cowboy raging at his impotence. He was ready to toss it all in. I'd had visits by Steven, the head teacher, telling me that Jon was destroying the school. Enrollment had dropped off; teachers were really upset, and students were uneasy as they noticed something was amiss. Chuck was funneling money into the country to keep a school running that he was exiled from. This was wearing everyone down across the board. On his next visit I asked Steven to get Angela, the receptionist, to come in and meet with me. I needed more information, and I suspected she was one person that may hold some of it, especially around the handwriting on the checks I'd noticed.

Speaking of money, payroll was due to be paid, and there wasn't enough money in the local bank to cover it. I talked with Chuck, and he was going to wire fifty thousand dollars to his international bank, but the transfers took weeks. The money would actually be at his main bank in Jakarta within a day, but we didn't have check writing abilities there as it was a savings account. It was transferring money between that bank and our local bank that took the extra weeks. Setting up an international checking account took too much time, too. I puzzled over that one for a day and couldn't come up with any good ideas. Rahaman was the one that suggested we simply go and pick it up.

"You want me to carry fifty thousand dollars across Jakarta? By hand?" I was incredulous. Yet Rahaman insisted it would be quite safe. No one knew we were doing it, he pointed out, so who would think to rob us? I talked it over with John who, amazingly, agreed with Rahaman. This week could not get any stranger.

So, I called the international bank and told them that we'd be picking the transfer up as soon as it was ready. Three of us grabbed some brown paper sacks

and headed to the bank as Rahaman drove. Crazy, I kept thinking, I was absolutely crazy. Yet everyone else thought we could pull this off, so who was I to argue? There really wasn't a viable alternative, either. We couldn't pay the teachers late since most of them lived hand to mouth as it was. I could use a paycheck, too. No, we were going to do it. And it was going to be fine, I prayed.

At the bank I was surprised to find that the largest notes they could give us were 500 rupiah notes. I hadn't counted on that wee problem. At the time there were 2,500 rupiah to the dollar, so that meant we had to have five separate 500 rp. bills for every one dollar. We needed more bags. We ended up finding some extra bags and each of us carried two or three fully loaded brown shopping bags of money out the door and directly into Rahaman's car. "Lock the doors", I insisted, and we headed to our bank. It felt like a *Bonnie and Clyde* movie, watching every street corner for someone to jump out and get us. I kept looking behind, too, but no one appeared to be following us. We might actually pull this off.

We arrived at the bank without incident, and you can imagine they were more than a little shocked at our deposit. That might have been the most fun of it all, the looks on their faces. Local banks were easier to use, and our Yayasan had set up a new checking account. This deposit went into the new account with mine and Rahaman's names on it as signatory. Jon had no access whatsoever to this money, which secretly pleased me as I didn't think he realized I'd outmaneuvered him yet. The money was safe at this point, and I began to enjoy the adventure. All in all, it had taken us four hours to do everything. When we were done, I headed home for a well deserved drink.

Angela finally made it into the office to see me, and the visit was well worth the wait. She couldn't stand Jon, and I suspected she was more than a little attracted to a woman running the school. I found her cooperative and finally discovered how Jon had managed to fool the landlord. Every rent day he would write a check to the landlord from the school's bank account and hand it to Angela with the instructions to deposit it into his bank account. She'd fill out the deposit slip and endorse the check, then take it to Jon's bank and deposit it as he instructed. On her return to the school, he would hand her a check for the rent written from his own bank account, and instruct her to pay the landlord. That's how the school had written checks for the rent, and yet the landlord received the rent from Jon.

In any country in the world, that was embezzlement. Probably in Indonesia, too, but we were already up to our eyeteeth in lawyers (I mean, thugs). I asked Angela if she would provide an affidavit or a sworn statement, which of course she

would, and I went to find out if Indonesia had notary publics. I wanted it as ‘official’ as I could get it. I also talked with Chuck about filing suit against Jon in Australia. If they didn’t extradite from Indonesia, we could get him on his next home visit. Chuck liked the idea, but I doubt he ever did anything about it.

The CPA’s audited financials and general ledger had the bribe money, as well as Jon’s dry cleaning charges and miscellaneous personal items. They also showed that Jon had been paid his full salary, up to and including October, when the school had been hijacked. I had been told that he was asking for fifty thousand dollars in back salary as part of the settlement negotiations, so I had copies of the financials made which I passed to Ruhud. I still had not been privy to any of the negotiations; Jon insisting he would only meet if I was not there. Why was I such a threat? That made no sense to me beyond a strategy to make me feel belittled and unimportant, a non-player. I talked with Chuck about it. He insisted that I was to be a part of any final settlement meeting, period. Thank you, Chuck.

Then, in the middle of November, Chuck reached a boiling point. He called Ruhud and our Mafia representative, Tommy, and told them he was giving Jon the school. He was giving up. Tommy and Ruhud freaked. They said he couldn’t do that because they’d lose face with Tudung, Yepto’s right hand man. They said they’d have Jon and Hillman out today. Yeah, right. I wasn’t holding my breath, but fear was a good motivator. Chuck simply told them they had better do just that.

This whole thing was still crazy making, so I headed to Bandung for the weekend. Maybe Monday would have me enthroned, but again, I wasn’t holding my breath.

~ Chapter 38 ~

In Bandung I simply relaxed, cleaned house, watched the sunset, visited with Kirk and Bryan and hung out with friends. I kept reflecting on the feeling of standing on the eve of a turning point. I’d just finished Dan Millman’s book, *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, and had reread Bach’s *Illusions*. I was reminded of how I’d left the path, my path...again. Millman’s book spoke of that happening, and Buddhism speaks of it with samsara, the getting caught up so much in life’s ins and outs that the spiritual practice was forgotten. Millman’s book spoke of the ‘restless boredom’ that had followed me all my life. Living constantly in the glorious present, all claimed, was the end of boredom. Be right here, right now, aware of everything. Huh. I knew how to get there, but would I do it?

I stepped off my path of practices, this time, with Indonesia and then with Bruce, Pintor and the hijacking. It had been over five months now, with Pintor. I saw that I got caught up in samsara's dreams that kept me too busy and distracted to do the meditation, yoga and Tai Chi I knew would keep me in balance.

I also knew that I didn't have to go anywhere to do them now that I had two homes with privacy and space. Even without it, the practice was always available. I'd thought back to times when I felt balanced, and I missed that attunement. I was thinking of doing a fast or a retreat, all possible here. Indonesia did not seem to offer privacy beyond one's own home, or glimpses in Mt. Bromo's crater. I'd always held to a notion that I needed the privacy. I'd held to many notions, it seemed. "Argue for your limitations, and sure enough they're yours," Bach's *Illusions* counseled. And it was true. I needed some time to re-digest what I knew...or did I? "Try feeling, Diane," the voice in my head whispered. I was not so good at that. I still had a significant reliance on my mind instead of a balance between mind and feeling, or heart. I prayed this detour hadn't lost me too much ground; although I knew it had. It would or could take time to quiet the mind and loosen the muscles to tune into my body. No time like now to start.

With Pintor so engrossed in another exhibition, our time together fluctuated wildly. We'd spend four evenings in a row together, then take space, to come back again. It was like feast or famine, couldn't live with him, and couldn't live without him. I realized this was all teaching me dissolution and separation, but peacefully. Two lovers of leaving practicing. He felt, and I saw, that he needed to find answers on his own. It was absolutely essential to his life, and I couldn't tell if I should just bow out gracefully or maintain the status quo. I knew I loved him; and I knew he needed this, so I thought to end the relationship. I took the route of non-confrontation instead. With his level of self-absorption in his art, it could actually be a slow petering out. I thought this might be one of the stranger lessons I'd ever gone through or helped someone with. Not being available to a person I cared so much about because they wanted and needed to do it on their own.

Giving him space allowed me the freedom to see him if I wanted, or not if I didn't, which happened more and more when he was in strange moods. I'd seen this with his first exhibition, but now it was more intense. He'd be going along fine, and then these dark moods would strike. It was like all the details would build into a huge black cloud, and he'd get worried, stressed and remote. One minute loving, the next not even there. For days on end.

I began to meditate and focus on my feelings. My throat chakra was quite blocked. It was about communication, that one. I tried to feel my heart beating, but wasn't successful. Not quiet enough yet. I tried to tell myself it was early morning low blood pressure, but I knew better, so I continued my practices.

I thought about how I was going through the days fairly OK in Jakarta, just a little bored and lonely. I hadn't made friends there yet, and it took time. I decided that, since I had been paid, I was going to look for a car to rent when I returned to Jakarta. My Indonesian friends in Bandung thought I was nuts, totally nuts, but then what else was new. They pointed out that *they* didn't even drive in Jakarta because it was so dangerous. I considered that for a moment, then thought of driving in Bandung traffic and figured it was the same, only up a few notches. I could do this. I grew more delighted with the thought, and more determined.

I considered, but did not let this warning stop me: if I am in an accident, I am to drive away immediately, if I can. I was told "do not stop under any circumstances" until I reached the next area of the city or the next town, at which point I could then report the accident. I was aghast and asked, "What if someone is hurt?" And the reply was, "This applies especially if someone is hurt!" Wow. I didn't like this at all.

I was then told the story of a Javanese man on a trip to the city of Banda Aceh on Sumatra, who was in a minor accident with a 'kaki lima', which means 'five legged' and stands for the three wheels of the food cart and the two legs of the man pushing the cart. The cart was damaged, and the man pushing the cart was only slightly injured. The crowd, however, got so worked up that they began to throw stones at the Javanese man and killed him. It was all around their 'run amok' thing. Indonesians were suppressed on so many levels that when they got really excited or angry they 'blew', and they did it in big, out of their mind, ways. This is where the term 'run amok' got defined, and I'd seen it before.

One day working for Triad, I was being driven back to the school when all traffic came to a halt. A soccer game had ended, Bandung being the victor, and hundreds of students were streaming down the street, blocking traffic and cheering. Dozens were streaming past our vehicle when someone recognized me, the foreigner, in the back seat. Suddenly they started yelling, "We won! Bandung is great!" They began smacking the car to emphasize their excitement, and it quickly turned to rocking and shoving as their emotions took over and our car became the focus of all that suppressed energy. My driver turned pale and was scared to death. We both were. The crowd in front of the traffic diminished, so vehicles began to

move. My driver suddenly lurched us forward, causing the students to roar in laughter as we drove away. I found myself shaking.

The advice from almost everyone was that you get out of the immediate area before reporting accidents. The advice also was, despite my CPR and emergency medical training, do not stop at accidents. Period. If anything happened, I would likely be blamed, no matter what. As I was, of course, rich and...you know the drill...which meant that I could afford it, no matter whose fault it actually was. Wow.

~ Chapter 39 ~

Returning to Jakarta after a pleasant Bandung weekend, I found a very encouraging letter from Chuck waiting for me. He said to hang in there and that more money was coming, so I'd get paid again. That was good news. We still didn't have the school back, and even at the end of November it seemed like it would take a lot more time. So much for Chuck's threats.

I searched the expat newspapers and found a 'bomber' car to rent. It was an unfortunate green, 1960-ish Plymouth style 4-door sedan; and it was only going to cost me four hundred a month, which was hundreds cheaper than anything else I'd seen. I also figured that it was so big I'd be a bit protected; and if I did have an accident, it wasn't new so should be cheaper to repair. I got a map of Jakarta, which was a half inch thick book, and drove, white knuckled, home.

The biggest surprise was waiting for me at the house. If I pulled the car in the drive so that the front bumper touched the house, I could just barely close the gate, with maybe a half inch to spare. Thank God it closed and locked because otherwise it would be stolen. Indonesians drove on the left side of the road; the driver's seats were on the right side of the cars (all the opposite of the States). My gate, as it happened, closed on the right side, which meant to get in the house I had to climb over the trunk or through the car once I'd closed the gate. But I was happy. I had new found freedom, a really good map; and I had been studying the trouble spots on my taxi treks around town, so I knew where to avoid, or at least where I might get in trouble. You've got to figure that if the police were corrupt, then getting a ticket would be expensive; but I was a good driver so, "Watch out Jakarta, I'm coming through!"

On December 4th Pintor dumped me. I had wondered if I always left relationships before I could be left. This time was different. This time I didn't, and

look what happened. I hadn't run, though I had kept some space; and I didn't feel like there was anything wrong with me. He was oh so careful to point that out. So, OK, one more karmic debt paid. A lot of house cleaning going on here in the karma center. If I believed that my relationship was karma, what now? Was it finally feeling what all the men in my life had felt? Was it my having caused pain, so that now I was the one receiving it, the one learning a lesson? Maybe, but even if that was true, it still didn't feel right to stop our relationship. That's why I hadn't left him myself. It was like, we're supposed to be going on, Pintor and I. Yeah, and I knew that men in my past had felt the same way about me.

The answer for me was the same as it had been for them: keeping on keeping on and eventually the ache goes away. Pintor just felt so much righter than anyone had ever felt before. Despite all the drama and ups and downs, it felt much more right. And not perfect. He was a man child. I was a woman child. Too many things unresolved, immature and incomplete inside both of us. I understood that. Still, it left a hole that hurt.

We also, just before Pintor dumped me, got the school back. What a trip. There was one final meeting that I was at, and it was oh so interesting. We met in a conference room in the mafia's office complex that held a large table set with a dozen chairs. There's me and the suits. There were four to our party: John, Ruhud, Tommy and I. Jon had four or five people with him, and there were also three or four mafia representatives. All in all, we filled the seats.

During the negotiations I had my one moment of 'glory' and, admittedly, revenge. It totally fell in my lap. Jon informed us that he was still owed \$50,000 in back salary. I carefully pulled out a beautifully bound copy of audited financials, nonchalantly slid them across the table to Jon and his 'group' and said, "Not according to these financials. You'll find that they are from a very reputable, independent Dutch accounting firm, and they are up to date. They show that you have been paid in full." Jon blanched and the men around him very excitedly grabbed the financials, beginning a notably worried discussion among themselves. I suspected Jon had told them they would be paid from what he was owed, and he was now in very deep dung. Thank you for that one!

We had our own surprise in the meeting, however. Jon informed us that he had been acting on good faith and produced an MOI (Memorandum of Intent) signed by Chuck stating that Chuck intended to transfer his business to Jon and Hillman's Yayasan. He said they had been in discussion around it for months. I noticed that it was signed a day before I was hired. The balls on that man! Not

only had Chuck not told me, he had been negotiating behind John and Ruhud's back to leave their company to join Jon's. Then, when the hijacking happened, Chuck had let the group he was ready to abandon, bail him out of his mess. If he had been there at that moment, I might have hit him. I was so mad. Glancing at John, we exchanged one of those looks that said we now understood a lot, and just let it go. I felt ashamed, frankly. John and Ruhud had done so much for us, and this was a new look at Chuck's character.

So, Jon had persuaded Chuck to change to his and Hillman's newly formed Yayasan. Then what happened? Jon found out Chuck was paying me more than him and threw a fit? Changing Yayasans was not dependent on Jon's directing the school. They were two separate businesses. I suspected Jon had simply gotten mad at my being hired. Is that why Chuck offered him such an attractive severance package? To keep him happy so the switch to his Yayasan would move smoothly? Jon would have had the salary deal on top of his Yayasan fees. Had they both just gotten mad and tried a peeing contest to see who'd be 'Top Dog'? I would never find out; but battles had been fought, and the one I was watching now wasn't over yet.

I actually felt that it served Chuck right. He had been amply 'punished' for all his mistakes to the tune of over \$100,000 just to keep the school running through the hijacking. And Jon had just lost face in a huge way around his salary being paid in full. Still, they were negotiating. We ended up getting them down from \$25,000 to an additional \$10,000 we had to pay just to get our own school back. Unbelievable, and one hell of a costly mistake.

As soon as Chuck's wire transfer had cleared our bank, I was back in the school and starting all over again. Angela was happy to see me; the teachers were ambivalent. They still didn't trust that their livelihoods weren't in peril and Jon had, indeed, almost ruined us. Enrollment was way down, and the teachers could see that. I told them that we had acted in good faith; they had been paid throughout the hijacking and that we had some work to do, but we could do it.

I then began to figure the losses, and they were significant. Families had been put on hold, prospective students told we were in transition, and Australian bound students told there'd be a delay. I met with Australian Immigration about getting our students to their country and had to explain what, exactly, had happened. I glossed over it so as not to seem too unstable, stating rather, that there had been a rocky transition with Jon, but all was fine now. They had picked up that something was amiss, and I did my best to let them know that I was intending

for things to be smooth from here on out. I asked that they train me in exactly what their protocol was so that there would be no mistakes. They happily complied.

I met with families afraid that their deposits had been lost, and I received death threats from those same families if I didn't get their money back. The first one was, frankly, shocking. The father was so agitated, terrified that their life savings would be lost forever. I thought about what he'd had to do to save the two thousand dollars we were talking about. That was a veritable fortune in a country where sixty to a hundred dollars a month were average wages. I was certain his entire life had been spent struggling so that his child could have a better education, and thus a better future. I also felt certain this was why he was threatening me, but I was still shocked.

I received so many threats, though, that I finally began to tell people, "Yeah, well, take a number." That was such an 'Americanism' that I don't know if they understood it, but I didn't know what else to say. I then pointed out that if they killed me, they'd never see a rupiah of their money as I was the only person that could figure it out for them. I told them that I would do everything I could to make it right, and I did. It seemed to pacify them; although I never really thought (for some stupid reason) that they'd actually try to kill me. I mean, these were bapaks and ibus, fathers and mothers, not assassins! The records of transactions between Indonesia and Sydney had gotten so screwed up that Sydney was having trouble tracing exactly what money had been received, much less transferred to them. It was all a mess, and not one of my making; but I began working it out. Cleanup was never fun, and this was far from it. Yet, I was making headway.

After getting the teachers settled, the students settled, Australian and Indonesian Immigration settled and things feeling a bit on balance, the last shoe dropped. I'd been meeting with a family in the office and told Angela to do something. I don't even remember what. Hillman, who was still in his job as computer room specialist, overheard me and asked to speak with me. During the hijacking negotiations, Hillman claimed that everything had been Jon's idea, and he had helped Jon so as not to lose his job. We couldn't find a replacement quickly, and so he was still teaching, much to my distaste. I walked into the computer classroom; and as he followed me in, he slammed the door and did a body block so I was trapped. I told him to open the door, and he exploded. Rage and fury had him trembling as he told me that I could not be the Director, that I never could be or would be, that every single thing had to go through our Yayasan, that if he caught me 'directing' anything he'd have Manpower in here immediately; and that if I argued with him

he'd have me killed because he was sick and tired of me. He had gone berserk, yelling and waiving his arms and *this* death threat shook me to my marrow. This man was totally capable of carrying it out. Look what he had already managed to accomplish.

My entire body was shaking. Not at the words as much as at the venom and hatred coming out of that man and the real fear that he was going to hurt me right then and there. He had completely 'lost it' and run amok, which was terrifying. Hillman was really big for an Indonesian and looked like he worked out at a gym beneath that suit. He was also Batak from Sumatra. I tried my best to stay calm and had the sense not to argue with him. But I didn't back down, either. Somehow, managing a calm I did not feel, I simply said, "I hear you, now let me out." He continued to yell and threaten me, and I calmly repeated myself, "I hear you, now let me out." He finally moved away from the door, turning to his desk with clenched fists. I let myself out, walked straight to my office and fell into my chair trembling. Every fiber of my being was shaking, my breath coming in shallow gasps and my mind completely blank from shock. I looked around my office helplessly, not knowing what to do, what I could do. "Breathe," the voice in my head finally being heard. I breathed. It took me fifteen minutes to calm down enough to call Chuck and tell him what happened.

Chuck's immediate response was "fire him", to which I wholeheartedly agreed; and I called Rahaman to tell him that. Rahaman was very evasive, saying he'd consult with Ruhud. I told him fine, consult all you want but neither Chuck nor I were budging. The man had threatened my life! He was a spy and an enemy within the school! And he had been half of the brain behind the hijacking, so he was to be gone. Now. Rahaman said they'd get back with me.

When they did get back to me, the news was that we could not fire Hillman. What! Why the hell not? It turned out that Ruhud had agreed to keep Hillman employed as part of the negotiations. That had to have been Jon's idea. "Hire him yourself," I said, but he was to be out of this school now. They said they couldn't do that. "Fine," I told them. "You tell Chuck."

I ended up being the one to call Chuck, and after he blew up, he said to sell the school. He was finally, totally and completely fed up with the whole thing. It didn't matter if anyone lost face or looked foolish. He would not run the very real risk that Hillman would, indeed, kill me and take over the school again. He was done, and it was not negotiable. This was a week before Christmas, and I hated

that. He wanted me to inform the teachers and students immediately and to close the school at the end of the week with the beginning of Christmas break.

After that, everything began to feel like I was in a completely different world. I spent a crazy week, deciding to wait until the last day to tell them. Some of my waiting was because I was a chicken, some because I felt so bad about it and some because I didn't want more chaos in our last remaining week. I couldn't take it. All dealings with Hillman were handled by Rahaman, so I didn't have to talk with him. I arranged with Chuck to give everyone (but Hillman) a decent parting bonus, and then made ready to close the school. It was awful. Then it was done.

Once we were closed, I spent a number of days finishing up the accounting, going through records and tying up loose ends. I'd been a Queen with a throne for all of three weeks, yet I had done so much in that short time. Now I'd be selling the school and contemplating Chuck's offers. He said he could hire me in Australia, but I wasn't sure I wanted to move there. I loved Indonesia still. He offered to bring me down for a month to check things out, and I thought that sounded like a good idea. He was tossing out all sorts of ideas like starting travel agencies or recruiting offices. He still wanted a presence in Indonesia, but his losses had been significant enough to make him shy of starting another school. I also had to decide if I wanted to work with Chuck. On the one hand, I'd found him to be one of the more generous and equitable employers I'd ever met. On the other, he went behind backs, wheeling and dealing when he could. I was still angry that he hadn't told me about the MOI.

~ Chapter 40 ~

Pintor's new exhibit opened a few days before Christmas, and I couldn't stay away. It was amazing. He was too busy to talk, but I expected that. This time I got to be unimportant, which was a real treat, and so different from his first opening. His brother and sister were both exhibiting that night, too, and his sister did one of the most remarkable dance performances I'd ever seen. It was outside under the stars, low torch light forming a circle with a fire burning in the center of it. She crawled out of the dark, seemingly naked but covered entirely in mud, like a creature rising out of the primordial soup of creation, and proceeded to do....what? A creation story? An amazing feat of movement, control and creativity that showed her to be a master at her art. Fantastic.

Then, a couple of days after Christmas, Pintor came to visit. We talked, cried, sobbed, fought and made love. He told me so many things that were a bit of

a blur, but I learned I wasn't crazy. He said he had just 'flipped out'. He still couldn't let anyone too close; he did care, and he still did. So much said, so much Chevis drunk. Ah well, we did love each other. I couldn't say that it changed anything, except that he confirmed I wasn't crazy. I hadn't imagined all the feelings I could see in him, and my inner knowing had not been wrong. And still, I doubted that anything beyond this affirmation had changed.

He came again two days later and stayed the night. We spoke long again, not so drunk this time. He said that he had crossed the boundaries we had made and had begun to care too much. I asked him bluntly if he wanted to continue to explore a relationship with each other. He was concerned about time with the exhibitions he was lining up to do, one of which was in Europe; but he could not say no. He said that he was tired of moving around, that if he made a commitment to a relationship, then he wanted to commit. He said, "I'm here, aren't I?" The same words I'd said to Dave and others when I meant 'yes, I'm here for now, so I care; but I'm confused as to how to do more'. As it was, we still had to go in different directions for a while, me to Australia and him to Europe. We decided to live and love until we parted, then reconnect when we returned and see about making it more.

New Year 1994....please be better than last year! I did an analysis of the funds I had readily available, and with what Chuck owed me it came to around \$20,000. I could certainly afford to do whatever I wanted. The question was, what did I want? How much would Pintor's decision affect me? What were my options?

There was Australia working for Chuck and Jakarta still working for Chuck. Bandung was an option, working for myself or teaching and doing batik. There was also Yogyakarta teaching and doing batik. Jakarta had more money, but it was a lot to deal with. Bandung had my friends and familiarity but not much money. Yogyakarta was a bigger unknown on all fronts. Australia was out of the question unless something remarkable and unforeseen presented itself. I decided I didn't have to decide yet. I'd go to Australia and figure it out after that.

Pintor and I continued to see each other, but he had little time because of an upcoming exhibition. I found I was used to this, and it scared me. He was like an addiction, defying everything that I really wanted in a man in my life....except for the love. Unpredictable, unruly, passionate, fiery and completely captivating me despite its many unhealthy aspects. I knew it, and I didn't care. Or rather I cared, but wouldn't change it. Seemed he was the same. He walked out of a bar after

watching a friend of mine and I dance together because he was jealous. We couldn't live with each other and hadn't yet managed to live long without each other.

In early January, the school was sold. Our Yayasan bought it, and Rahaman was appointed to run it. Who would have thought? I deeply believed they were nuts; but I was finished and really, really happy about it. I heard, too, that they were going to keep Hillman on, and I simply shook my head in disbelief. I guess they were trying to save face, both with buying the school and with keeping Hillman, given that they had legally owned the school and had guaranteed Hillman a job. But what a dangerous man they were keeping. I guessed that breaking promises made to the mafia could be even more dangerous.

After the school sold, Chuck reiterated that I come to Australia to learn first hand about his operations and then return to Jakarta and begin an agent's office. I believed that I could handle that and there were no low level alarms going off in my head about it. Once again, though, I was going for the money and the resume and not for my dream. I figured that the money I'd earn and the more relaxed job would enable me to pursue the dream. It also seemed that a lot of my expat friends would be relocating to Jakarta, so it wouldn't be so hard living there. I'd said that before, hadn't I?

I didn't see at the time that I was moving along the same kind of path I had when I got this job, without time to integrate all that had happened to me. Then I had seen a 'next step' and a way to stay in the country. I didn't remember or consider that I had just been through one hell of an experience and could probably use a break.

My birthday was a sunny day in Jakarta, and I spent it alone. I made myself a wonderful dinner and reflected on the new life that was beginning. Another ending, another leaving, and I was happy. This time, I was happy. Life, with all of its pain and its joys was waiting for me. I made the prayer that I not die without going for the gusto of life...it passes either way.

~ Chapter 41 ~

Life, however, had more in store for me. There were so many changes and constant flux and flex. First I couldn't keep my house, then I could. Start an office in my house, then not. Start a travel agency, then not. Start an agent's office, then maybe. Get a semi-permanent resident 'blue card', then no blue card. Have

enough documents, then needed more. God! What was up with all this! Signs? Omens? Indonesia?

I met some American musicians that I really liked and offered to show them around some of Jakarta. I picked them up in my car, and we headed around, ending up at a shopping area where I warned them to be really, really careful with their wallets and money. Don't leave them in your back pockets, I told them. Move them up front where you can keep an eye on them. Then it ended up being me that was robbed. I had a cloth bag, clutched firmly under my arm as we walked around. I went to buy a cassette tape, and as I reached in for my wallet, my hand went right through my bag. They'd cut right through everything, probably with a razor blade, and managed to remove my wallet without me knowing a thing. Amazing. Everything else, my pager, note pad, keys, brush and a lot of miscellaneous things were in there, and they'd managed to lift the brand new wallet I'd splurged on in Singapore. Oh well, what could you do? One of the guys loaned me the couple of dollars, and I got my tape. They were shocked that I wasn't mad. "You should be upset," they told me. But why? All of it was replaceable and was a word of caution that I had to stop pretending anything was different for those of us that lived there. We would always stand out; ivory in a beautiful, coffee cream brown world.

I began to pack for Sydney and realized I'd need work clothes, casual clothes and run around clothes. For someone who likes to travel light, it was disappointing to have to carry so much gear. I yearned for the days I'd spent six months living out of (the same) one bag as I crammed the last bits in. I popped in my snorkel, figuring I could rent flippers. No matter what happened, I wanted to snorkel the Great Barrier Reef. It was one of the natural wonders of the world, and one life goal of mine was to experience all of the ancient and natural wonders of the world. Depending on how things went, I'd try and get to Ayers Rock, too. That was the problem, though, wasn't it? I had no idea how things were going to go. Chuck was being really generous, but could I trust him?

February 1994 found me in Sydney, Australia. It was a long trip to get there, even from Indonesia; and my tickets got all confused. I kept hoping to get upgraded to first class and, yes, miracles still happened. Thank You! I had a real shock on the flight over, though. I kept having this really uncomfortable feeling and couldn't, for the life of me, determine why. I was enjoying the luxury of first class, sipping my wine, waiting for the movie, and I was uneasy. About midway through the flight it finally dawned on me why ~ I was surrounded by white people. Whoa. What a surprise. I thought about it and realized it so rarely (to never)

happened in Indonesia that I'd be in an all white crowd. Of course I'd find it uncomfortable.

Flying into Sydney, I caught a taxi to the school, which was quite impressive. Large, modern, multi floored and professional, the school was a busy place full of mostly (though not exclusively) Indonesian students. I got the tour, and Chuck informed me I'd be staying out at his place which was a drive out of town, commuting in and out with him. I looked forward to meeting his wife who, I was told, was out at their 'country' home near a town called Bowral with their sons.

My first few days were adjusting, finding things to do and helping the woman that organized practically everything, it seemed. I was really surprised that it was all so 'normal' in Sydney. For all intents and purposes, it could be anywhere America, with only minor differences setting the two apart. Many Australians had rougher features, I noticed. They reminded me of what I thought of as 'British Farmer Faces'. Otherwise, the clothes were the same, phones the same, cars similar, buildings the same, supermarkets much the same (except for better produce) and a notable absence of Aborigines. Huh. The school was located in the gay district, and I found it a shame that all those beautiful men were all of another persuasion. Gorgeous and gay. Oh well. I settled in to enjoy the 'scenery', the accents and a bit of western style normal for a while.

One Friday, Chuck and I headed to their farm for the weekend with his wife, Annette, and their sons, Alexander and James. Annette was gorgeous, and the boys were dolls. Alexander, the youngest, went to bed early, but James and I spent some time hunting for Brown Recluse spiders. He said he had killed one in his room the night before, but all we could find were the legs. I was bummed we couldn't find the body because I wanted to see one. I thought being able to identify them would help as they were very poisonous, but it wasn't to be.

The weekend passed pleasantly with an auction in the small town, friends of theirs over for dinner, hot tubs and enjoying Chuck's 800 acre farm. For his horses, he'd built a log cabin from logs that he'd had shipped all the way from Canada. He said it was cheaper to do that than to try and find enough logs in Australia. Amazing ~ both the cost of wood and the man's determination to have a bit of 'home' abroad.

The feeling of everything being 'normal' persisted. I was in the country with few people around, plenty of open hills and fields reminiscent of northern Idaho. A part of me yearned for that and another part found normalcy boring.

Perhaps I needed a combination of stimulation *and* the simplicity of country living. The wide open space was so nice and I missed it. I missed having a home and garden and making a place mine. I realized, I was feeling the need to settle down. Having a home must, I decided, be a goal for my return to Indonesia. I could stay where I was, even, but I'd need to buy some household and decorative things and plant flowers in my small patio. I needed to make my house a home.

A week later, some teachers from the school took me out to Sydney's famous 'King's Cross' district. It ended up being the most disgusting place I visited in Australia: all lights, bars and strip joints. The 'Test Tube' took the cake, however. They loaded shots of booze into big syringes, all multi colored by syrups, and then they injected the shots into your mouth. Very weird. The strip joints were disgusting as well. They all had hawkers outside harassing everyone loudly, and one almost started a fight with us. Amazing! Around midnight I'd had enough and took the train home, followed by a taxi to the house, empty for the weekend as the family had gone on a trip.

After a bath, I noticed that the wind was really active, and I went upstairs to check the door. At the top of the stairs I noticed an open window without a screen, that I was sure had been closed when I left. Something banged somewhere in the wind, and my nerves suddenly went on high alert. I was thinking - strange country, strange house, open window, and I was totally alone. I called the cops.

The police were really sweet and checked the whole house for me, finding no one, of course. I rarely got spooked; but spooked I was, and I was glad of the comfort. Chuck just laughed when he came back, "We often forget to close windows around here."

After three weeks, Chuck called me in to his office to speak with him and confirmed my suspicions about his character. He had set me up. Chuck had contacted friends who owned a horse ranch in the country, asking them if I could visit so as to give me a weekend get-away. He arranged a ride for me to get out there on Friday afternoon, which meant I had to leave work a couple of hours early. Since I wouldn't have time to return to the house, I had gone to work wearing business casual clothes, instead of my usual business formal. The woman I worked with reported to him that I had come in less than appropriately attired and had left early. He accused me of taking advantage of his generosity; and I was flabbergasted, pointing out that he had arranged the whole thing. Clearly, ours was not a match made in heaven. He felt I was too expensive and not what he wanted; and as he had decided against opening new concerns in Indonesia, he did not need me.

I had remained concerned about his moral stability and whether I wanted to work for him, too. After everything I had gone through, who would? In the end, he paid me over five thousand dollars in severance pay and sent me packing....which for me meant my trip to the Great Barrier Reef!

During my time off from Chuck's school, I had roamed around Sydney a bit, checking out the Opera House, the opal sellers and looking for Folk Art. It was surprisingly hard to find. There was tourist 'kitsch' stuff being sold in a lot of places, but I was looking for original aboriginal work or didgeridoos ~ or even aborigines. Not to be found easily. I would return to Sydney after my trip to Cairns on the coast, so I decided to wait and see what I could find there.

I flew to Cairns, Australia, the entry point to the Great Barrier Reef. I found Cairns to be a beach town, like most other beach towns the world over. I snorkeled the reef, even swimming after a huge white tip shark. I had bought an underwater camera and was snorkeling along when I suddenly saw this shark swimming about 20 feet below me. My heart stopped completely until I realized it was just going past, and so I swam after it, dived down a little and got several shots. Cool! I then watched it completely freak out a group of tourist divers that were just rising up from a low ledge. As they turned my way, the shark was only thirty feet away with a ton of shark flesh closing in on them fast. Their arms shot up in alarm, and I could feel them practically seize in their gear. As the shark veered away, I gave thanks that it hadn't happened on my dive. No, I did not like sharks. It was a hangover from the movie *Jaws*, I was sure; so I couldn't believe I actually chased a shark until I got the pictures back to prove it. The reef was everything I had hoped for. Giant sea clams, some six to eight feet wide dotted the area with fish and coral vying for most colorful. The 'thousands of fish' won. The sun, sea and laughter of a dozen tourists made me smile. I was relaxing, finally, and it felt great.

Cairns itself was just a tourist town, and I was tired of partying; so besides the snorkeling I'd come for, it wasn't that exciting. I did find some didgeridoos and some aboriginal art work there, along with aborigines getting drunk around the park's restrooms. Something felt really wrong about it. Why would the only aborigines I'd seen be drunks in a park? Had Australia so thoroughly crippled their numbers and spirits, or had most of them stayed in their outback territory? I wished I had the time this trip to find out, but I didn't. As this was before the internet I couldn't easily research, either; and I was really disappointed.

I had time to visit the Daintree Rain Forest, and I took a boat tour up the Daintree River, finding a four inch long seed I would keep for the rest of my life. I

stayed at an eco hostel deep in the jungle, and eventually I knew Ayer's Rock would be another trip. I packed my seed, a 'Traveler's Seed from the Looking Glass Mangrove' (Cool, huh?) and my few purchases and headed home to Jakarta, glad of it. This traveler was ready for a home.

~ Chapter 42 ~

I flew to Jakarta March 1, 1994. The plane actually passed over Ayer's Rock, so I got a good view and a picture out the plane window. I wasn't awed and in love and delighted to be back in Indonesia. That surprised me a little. I'd hyped myself up, for sure, but it was just 'normal' in the Indonesia style of normal. There was no word, no message at all from Pintor, and that broke my heart. I must be absolutely crazy, really, and for the hundredth time told myself to walk away. Just walk away and let him go. As I said that, another part of me (the crazy part) was saying maybe he's waiting for me to call, or wasn't back yet himself. I tried him, but no answer.

I was lonely the night of my return. I had to remember it was within my power to view events as I wanted, 'good and bad' being constraints of my choices. I sat in a position full of choices and the direction of my life lay before me. I had felt that a part of my decision would be based on Pintor, yet I knew it could not be. He would probably drift around anyway.

I wanted to view this time as an opportunity, and a unique one. I had time, money, and I was in Asia. I didn't have to hurry or worry. I could pay my rent another month and give it until then. I decided to go to Bandung to visit friends and see what was happening. When I got there I tried Pintor. He was home at his parent's place but 'too busy' to meet me for a drink at the Laga. That said a lot, didn't it? We'd been apart for over a month. We were to reunite when we were both back, and now I return and he's too busy to have a drink? Say, what? Maybe I was exaggerating, but my guts told me no, I wasn't. Something was very wrong.

That night at the Laga, I was enjoying swapping stories with friends; and in he comes with this black haired Scandinavian woman named Aneka very much on his arm and looking quite the 'couple'. Bloody bastard! The whole thing was staged for my benefit and to leave me no room for doubt that he had made some decisions. Why didn't he talk with me? Why not just tell me, even leave me a note? Why come into my bar with my friends and embarrass me like that? I turned away to collect myself, rage and hurt struggling with composure. I would not give him the satisfaction of seeing how very much he had hurt me. I would

avoid them as much as I could, be civil if I couldn't, but my guts were wrenching. Focus, girl. Relax. He finally cornered me as I knew he would.

"Hi there," was his opening line.

"Too busy for a drink, I see," I wasn't going to make this easy for him.

"Plans changed."

"Apparently a lot has," and I walked away.

I guess Aneka finally found the boyfriend she had so desperately wanted, and he found a way to tell me we were over. Again. A pretty callous way, though. On top of that, out of every person in the world he could have chosen, he chose her - proud, arrogant and very horny. I knew Aneka from her coming in and out of Bandung for the past six months or so. I didn't know if it was her culture, or the way she talked, but she came across as arrogant in the extreme. She'd been chasing Pintor for a long time, apparently all the way to his exhibition in France, I heard later. In some weird way it fit. Watching him, he behaved so strangely around her, 'cow-towing' and almost subservient. It looked like the stories he'd told me about his marriage all over again. He found someone already a success in her career to make up for what he felt he wasn't. He had to have been nervous; but I knew this man, and this behavior was strange.

I watched myself. I could put up with a lot from life, but when people were deliberately mean and trying to hurt me, I 'snapped'. The part of me that trusted them simply broke, along with my heart. People couldn't usually come back to any favored status if I felt they had betrayed me, and Pintor had just betrayed me. I did not deserve that. Why didn't he just tell me? Why be so public and so heartless?

The face, there's a specter in front of me. He's telling me there's nothing more. He's saying it gets no better, that I am condemned to my private hell until death do us part. If I saw anything sad, a grief bigger than the islands welled up inside me. I needed an end to it. How could I be seriously scaring myself with such depressed thoughts?

Months had been spent preparing me for this. My friend in Jakarta, Jeanne, said that it wasn't over yet, and I felt like that was true, in part. Another part of me said no, it was finished. It needed to be finished. I just had a flashback I hadn't remembered in years, of Dave, my ex-husband. We'd been dating several months when he became confused and moved to the east coast with former girlfriend, Evie, to try and sort his feelings between us. He then came back to me. Did I ever

forgive him? Yes, I did. It took a year or so, but I eventually trusted him again because he loved me very much. Would this, another Leo, prove the same? Hadn't he already? Oh God, no. What a horrifying thought. No, I wanted him gone. Right now, I had something else, very important, to do, and it would require all of my energy, plus some.

Farewell

The sun rose on hooded eyes
as she watched mourning;
a solitary figure rising with the dawn.
Her mate, it seemed her very soul
lay beneath her dying.
So still, almost as if he was becoming
the very stone on which he lay.
He did not labor, but she did.
She brought him bits and pieces,
but he would not eat.
She called to him to watch the dawn,
but he could not see.
At noon she brought branches
to ward away the light.
He did not stir, though she sensed his relief.
She paced and fretted
as a mother, lover, child.
No longer aware of the sun's path,
she would not rest, she did not eat.
She nuzzled him, but felt no life
though one eye regarded her,
seemed to call her and
so kept her there.
Did it move?
If not, she did not notice.
She felt the long rays spread their last.
Confused, she watched creation slip away.
Unable to comprehend,
she kept vigil that long night,
not believing that life could ease
so quickly beyond her grasp;
not understanding that her love

and will alone could not revive him.
Just before dawn a breath,
as if a shadow,
slipped away into the night
and she suddenly felt her weariness.
Searching earth and rock
for the bits he would not touch,
she watched his shadow as she finally ate.
When the sun rose again,
it beckoned her to.
She circled once, in honor,
for all that was and could have been.
Eyes sharpened by death and loss
counted the bones on the rock below
before she wheeled, turned, and
caught the shifting, rising currents.

These months had also prepared me to return to Bandung. I was totally fed up with Jakarta. I was so sick and tired of all I had made ‘normal’, but was I seeking ‘abnormal’? All I knew was that I was restless and had been, off and on, for a long time. So a corporate job in Jakarta did not appeal to me. Sitting back, going for my biggest goal ever, my passion for batik with the deaf, well, that still appealed to me. But would it make a difference?

I had this vision of myself leading a peaceful life regulated by meditation, yoga, dance, Tai Chi and batik. Then I got scared that I wouldn’t be able to discipline myself at all or that I’d get bored with that, too. I had always said I wanted to integrate a disciplined practice and now I had a chance to do that. I could live simply, with time to give it a try, and I got cold feet! What’s up with me? Was it only the devil samsara? That’s a thought. It’s what they all said happened, that life interfered with our dreams and goals. Our thoughts, needs, compulsions and fears all got in the way of our practices and in the way of us reaching anything above the most mundane.

I had such a problem with discipline! It was like...come on, a little more samsara before I ‘gave it up’. I imagined a spiritual life meant giving up things that gave me pleasure, but that pleasure, too, had waned. I didn’t think I would go forth trying to ‘give up’ anything anymore and just be me, letting the dream come naturally because it had already begun. I mean, I was in Indonesia, and I now had the money to afford the time. Buddhism reminded me that we develop attachments

to our aversions, too. We can get attached to our fear of trying so that doing nothing keeps us 'safe'. Put like this, it had become a challenge; and I knew that I would try my dream. In a way, I had absolutely no choice. I saw the error of going for the money, and a job that would look good on my resume if it meant not following my heart.

I realized I was really afraid of trying because I was afraid to fail at my dream. I saw the dream as my only salvation, and if I did fail, I was afraid I'd lose all desire to live. That really scared me. My God, was it better to go on as usual, never taking the time to try and so never failing? Wasn't that, from one perspective, actually failing, too? And if I saw this as my last hope for myself, what *really* happened if I failed? Mundania? Death? Weren't they two sides of the same coin for me? And if I succeeded, then what? I figured I wouldn't care at that point; life would have ceased to be mundane and I'd have gained a broader vision. At least for a while.

Doing anything, actually, would give me broader vision. I had now lost everything that would keep me in Jakarta. It had come down to this, and now it was time to move. I had delayed long enough. It was time to pull myself out of the pit of doubt and commit myself with my whole being to the dream I had come here for in the first place.

I decided to move back to Bandung. Besides saving me from Jakarta, there were other good things about the move. I'd be pursuing my dream; I'd be back in a town I knew with friends I loved, and I'd have time to do what moved me. What should I consider important on this 'Quest to Be'? I thought about it. I listed: environment, open space, a home with refrigeration, a real toilet, exercise (as in yoga, tai chi and dance), diet, music, transportation, time, my art and my heart. That was quite a list, but I wanted it all.

By mid-March I had found a house. Amazing what happened when I got clear on an intent! The house was in an area in the mountains above Bandung that was held by a large university, so it was full of professors and students. It was a thousand dollars a year with two bedrooms, a sitting room, kitchen, living room and bath; and it had nice front and back yards. There was a phone, too, which meant that I could take on private students and work as a substitute teacher for the various English schools now that they could call me. The house was situated in another canyon, looking out onto hills fringed by bamboo jungle. It was small and not totally private as it was on a hillside with a road above it; but the back yard was enclosed and there were no houses in front. I had a beautiful, unobstructed view

from the front porch of bamboo covered hills framing a large meadow and bend in the road below. They needed to fix the frig and remodel the bathroom that was falling apart, but that was all. I could move in at the end of March. Miracles. All my houses would now be resolved into one, and one that I really liked. Finally.

One concern I had was my visa. A year-long work visa had just come through for me the month before with the Yayasan in Jakarta. I arranged to meet with John in Jakarta to discuss it, and he was such an angel! He decided that I should come out of the whole mess with something to show for it. So, as long as I did nothing to jeopardize my standing, they would let me keep the visa and not cancel it. That meant I had eleven months free in the country before I'd have to arrange something new. Miracles again! Thank You!

Everything in Jakarta got tied up and finished, and I hired some guys with a truck to get the furniture I'd bought from friends moved to Bandung. Jeanne and Klaus had sold me an amazing set of bamboo furniture that would fill both the living room and sitting room of the house. It was a very nice, high quality bamboo that I loved. I spent my first two weeks there decorating and creating my home.

My home had to be comfortably formal enough for my private students, and I'd use the front living room for that. The middle sitting room was visible from the living room, and the bamboo furniture flowed beautifully between the two. My bedroom was now my haven, and that was important. A sanctuary. It was large enough for yoga space, so I set my yoga mat up along a wall that became my altar. Jesus, the Buddha, Behram and Indians graced my walls, along with feathers, amulets, crystals and shells. I hesitated, thinking, "Oh, what will a lover think?" But I would never hide my essence again. Those who entered that room entered my sanctuary, my meditation, me.

I thought a long time about the next week or so. For years I had wanted to do a retreat, and now it was finally time. I felt no fear, but rather an anxiousness to be doing something seemingly long overdue. I looked at the concept of giving up, and saw I had gladly put aside so much that had brought me heartache and soul ache. Retreat was timely now for it was a retreat in strength, or so spoke the Runes. This one was for my soul, my heart and my life. My ego wanted a smooth body; I wanted a lively one, flexible, strong and fluid. I sought to combine the inner and outer me. I sought to cleanse both. I sought my wild nature, so it could be balanced. I sought quietness and union with myself. I was ready and welcomed the time, seeing it as sacred. So, I unplugged the phone and leapt into the void. I planned to start with a Selamatan ceremony for moving into this new house,

though I wouldn't kill a chicken. It would balance the house energy, requesting permission to stay, and it would be a blessing. My whole being resonated a deep 'Yes!' as I began my water fast and retreat.

The first week of solitude was simple and calm. I had worked myself up to expecting something really cosmic to happen, and I was a little disappointed when it was all just ordinary. The yoga and meditating were great and I'd only had one cup of coffee a day when the addiction outweighed the fast. Isolation, however, was not complete after the first week as I had a class or two to teach. And then something almost 'cosmic' did happen. I was saved from certain death.

I'd started crossing a road in the usual heavy traffic and gauged most of it accurately except for one crazy taxi. I'd have cleared the bus and the oncoming car if the taxi hadn't sped up, changed lanes and come around the bus at high speed. That made me hesitate, and as I looked up, both the taxi and the car were speeding straight at me, barely two feet between them. My mind flashed a big 'RUN!' and then that still, quiet voice said, "No, stand still." The taxi was still swerving a bit, and suddenly I was standing in the twenty-four inches between the taxi and the car, both passing on each side of me by inches, but both missing me. That event went in the 'Oh My God' category of events. My only hope of surviving had been to stand perfectly still, and thanks to the voice, I did. Once I was across the road, I blessed all Indonesians that were so good at judging space. All you needed was a half an inch, they said. By their standards, the two inches they'd had meant miles to miss me. My heart was pounding, everything felt hyped up with adrenaline and shock, and I wasn't even late to teach. A true miracle.

Days into my fast the hunger hit with a vengeance, and it was all I could do to convince myself to go on. The logic ran like: you could be all you want to be and still eat. This isn't the way you envisioned it. Try again another time when there are no classes, etc., etc. A part of that was true, but how sad I would be to not make it to the end. I must wait. And I did, to wake to a feeling of lightness. Spaced out a bit, but very soft and light. Sweet!

After a week, yet another day of raging hunger had me breaking fast that evening. I had spent so much time looking at my picture of the Starving Buddha that I really saw how the Buddha had come through seven years of fasting with the understanding that moderation - the middle road - was the way. I had not had a big 'enlightened experience' and felt no closer, no more connected than I had before the fast. I did see that it was perhaps a precursor, a beginning. I saw that all this

was an evolving process, not an end in itself. I had also found myself forcing the flow when all I wanted to do was to sit and just 'be'.

I had wanted to fast for two weeks, and I hadn't made it. Would I commit suicide because I half-way failed? Of course not. I had succeeded half-way, too. And I saw how it was a game I continued to play with the idea of dying. Who was I kidding? There was no way I'd kill myself. I was too greedy for life and adventure. So why let my mind torment myself with it? Good question. I decided to let that one go for good. It was no coincidence that I woke the next morning to a happiness sweet and uplifting. Sitting on my porch writing letters, a rose had bloomed in my yard under the shining sun. Ah, bliss. Maybe I really was finding a way.

I continued to find refuge in my home. I delighted in the fact that I had one, finally. Rented for a year, paid in advance, and the longest stability I'd had in the almost two years I'd been there. The house was a marvel. It had such a gentle energy. My plants and flowers were all happier! They seemed to come alive as soon as I brought them home. And I found the feeling of happiness was retrievable. I had spent almost two weeks not drinking, finding it easy to stay home and enjoy the wind in the bamboo from the covered porch out my front door. Now it was time to go to Yogyakarta to buy batik supplies and to Pangandarang for a holiday. I planned to study with Tulus Warsito in Yogya, the man I had studied with my first trip there years ago. I was excited and happy. Finally, after living in chaos for so long, I had created stability and a home.

I did all of it. I went to the beach, then to Yogya to study with Tulus and to buy my batik supplies. Taking the train back to Bandung with all my goodies, tanned from time on the beach, I relished the freedom I now had to follow my heart.

~ Chapter 43 ~

I set myself up teaching several private English classes a week, just enough to pay for food, and then got on the substitute lists with all the local English schools. Life began to take up a routine for me. I'd wake mornings to make coffee and sit on my porch in my fan-backed chairs, watching the day begin, thinking, watching life and feeling. I had a lime leaf and a lemon grass plant in my front yard, a papaya tree in the back, bougainvillea over the high back yard walls and flowers in pots on the porch.

I had developing friendships with people in the neighborhood and Anne was just down the hill on my way in to town. Other British Institute teachers lived on the upper roads above me, as did Pintor and his parents. That was unavoidable, actually. The only decent house I had found was just two roads down from Pintor's family's home on the side of this mountain. They could be worlds away, though, as each road was a dead end branch off the main road into the area. I doubted he even knew I was there, until my new neighbors, Werner and Wiwid, had a birthday party for Wiwid. Pintor's brother and sister were there when I arrived, and while it was good to see them, I didn't doubt that Pintor would soon learn I was in the neighborhood. Ah well, it didn't matter as Marintan, his sister, told me Pintor was returning to America. I felt relieved, actually. A potential stress point removed.

And though it had been a couple of months now, with Pintor I'd had my first glimpses into love's real form and to count its bones, and it had gone way beyond the addiction and the drama. I knew inside myself that he had really loved me and that he had run scared, and I knew that he needed to do his thing, find his way on his own for once.

So, no trying to get him to admit he had been an ass. He didn't need that at all right now. With Aneka, he had his hands full as it was, and I got some pleasure in thinking he deserved her. This was new to me, loving someone so much and seeing this was how it had to be. I was letting go because I knew it was right and necessary for both of us. Somehow, I was learning through sadness and missing him.

I also figured that if I could find love once, it must be repeatable; but right then I was not interested. I wanted to lick my wounds and put it behind me and to that end, I spent time partying and engaging with friends. Too much time, after a while. Combine that with the reality that every single thing took forever to accomplish in Indonesia, and months went by. My newly resumed spirituality suffered but wasn't extinguished. It was hard to party and still get up and practice, for sure. I began to feel empty again and even my wisdom seemed to have, again, fled the undisciplined me. I did, though, still find quiet joy in a butterfly, a beautiful flower and stunning sunsets. While my heart was sad, I did allow beauty to penetrate the rest of me. As I was falling asleep one night, it was as if energy - lots of waves and colors - were washing over me; and this line kept going round and round in my head: 'where I live there are no boundaries.' None but my own, that's for certain.

I reread '*Seven Steps to Inner Power*', a book that had been my 'bible' for years as it resonated so deeply within me. I thought of all the things that had

happened in my life as a result of those laws and marveled that, while I knew their reality, I so easily forgot. What's up with that, anyway? Thought manifests. All thought manifests. When would I get that on a level that made a difference, that I incorporated deeply enough that I didn't forget it all the time? She said that you'd know something was from your 'silent master' (which I translated as highest self) when you had a sense of peace about it. I could see that, and I was ever so slowly gaining it. I never ceased to wonder how long it would take, though.

~ Chapter 44 ~

I eventually got sick with some bug that wouldn't go away. Sonja took me to Boromeaus Hospital to meet a physician. I met with a Chinese doctor, educated abroad, and it cost me all of 13,000 rupiah (which was about five dollars) to be diagnosed with 'masuk angin'. She didn't officially say masuk angin, but masuk angin means, literally translated, 'enter wind' and her diagnosis spoke directly to it. And they meant it literally, too. There was a belief that the wind could enter your body and cause all sorts of damage such as I was experiencing....ie. the flu. I was told not to drink anything cold, don't go out in the night air, don't breathe it and avoid anything and everything cold. She gave me a half dozen prescriptions of which I filled two - the antibiotics (just in case) and the cough suppressant. I suspected the rest were for vitamins. They were totally drug happy there, and the general populace didn't know the difference between vitamins and an antibiotic. It's like they think "the more pills, the better," or else they were bought off by the large number of pharmaceutical companies in the country. I wanted to be well by the time my friend, Babette, came with her two teenagers; so I gave in to antibiotics, something I rarely did.

Babette and I had met in Idaho, after my divorce and during hers, somewhere in the mid 80's. She, too, lived in the country and was down to earth like me. We became lifelong friends, and I adored her kids Zach and Juta. It had been fun to know them as they grew up and just as much fun now. Babette had known Debe back when they had both lived on Bali in their teens. It had been Babette who introduced me to Debe, who I also adored; so I was looking forward to having fun with everyone.

And we did have fun. Debe loaned me her car, and I picked them up at the train station in Jakarta, taking us all back to Debe's. The next day Babette and the kids and I took the train to Bandung, and then a day or two later we took the bus down to Pangandarang. I was happy to get out of town. I'd learned that the Indonesians had gotten mad at the Chinese Indonesians and were planning riots

protesting their bad treatment at the hands of the Chinese the coming weekend. The problem was that westerners were lumped in as 'bad guys', too. I guess because they thought we all had money, and so must also be bad. To me it was all tied in with the 'run amok' issues. They get mad, and because they are so repressed, any and all past angers arise, including a perceived inequality of money/caste/station in life. We were heading out of town anyway, but word on the street was that foreigners needed to be scarce or gone. We chose gone.

I learned one thing on that beach trip that made me very happy. According to Babette, Pangandarang was exactly like Bali was back in 'the day' before rampant tourism took over. I had heard so many stories of how idyllic and perfect it had been that I was curious and envious of what that had been like. I had come to stay at this place near Pangandarang called the 'Gecko'. It was a few kilometers out of town, in the middle of a coconut grove. Christine, an Aussie married to an Indonesian artist named Agus, started the losman. She actually paid the local farmers to not cut down the coconut grove, thus protecting the trees and our lovely environment. There was no traffic, little noise beyond the roar of the ocean and music in the evening. Next door, literally on the other side of a wall, an Italian man married an Indonesian woman and started another losman that also served food. It was great, actually. I would stay at the Gecko, and then eat some of my dinners of homemade Italian pizza and beer next door.

It was paradise on earth. Quaint bamboo rooms were built just off the ocean in a coconut grove with palms, bougainvillea and beautiful flowers. With breakfast included, the rooms were three dollars a night. Breakfast, though, was always interesting. Besides pancakes and sometimes fruit and toast, there were what I affectionately called 'UFO's', meaning 'unidentified fried objects'. It seemed they were a local favorite, and were actually quite tasty; they just weren't my idea of breakfast. UFO's were free, and I could order scrambled eggs for an additional charge.

The Gecko was off the beaten trail and motorbikes could be hired on a daily basis to travel into the village of Pangandarang or to the other attractions around the area. I loved it. Babette and I relaxed, talked and were content, but we moved into the village the last few days for Zack and Jutta. Teenagers needed a bit more 'happening' to enjoy themselves, so we headed off to Mini III losman owned by my friend Maman and his family. Everyone fell in love with us, especially with Zack and Jutta, and the pictures from that gathering are some of the sweetest I have. We nicknamed ourselves 'The Waykool Family' and they named me 'Dukun Di'.

I made my usual 'art exhibit' of offerings from the ocean on my front porch. We hiked into the jungle and found the famous Rafflesia flowers, the largest flower on Earth. We ate at various restaurants, swam often and simply enjoyed ourselves. It was quiet and slow and nurturing, and I flourished in the relaxed atmosphere.

There is a word in Indonesia, especially in tourist areas, for some of their men, and that word was 'mosquito'. Mosquitoes would tell you anything and lie completely to make you happy and have you believe they were sincere. We had a lot of mosquitoes around us and I found myself judging the twenty-seven year old professing love for the 'eleven years his senior me', just as I found myself wanting to believe him. I knew, though, that the same words would be professed to another woman next week and the week after that. All of it was an attempt to better their lives. All of it presuming, again, that westerners were beautiful, rich and would have sex with anyone at any time. Thing is, they were talking to me, the woman who was going to prove to their world that not every western woman was like that. So I flirted and abstained.

And then they started *really* talking to me. I was familiar, I'd stayed there often and they knew me. I heard stories of heartache, feelings making them 'crazy', the search for a lover to believe in, betrayals and abandonment. They were looking for love, yet the western women came and went, leaving them behind. They'd have meaningful weeks together, the women telling them they loved them, only to leave and never be seen again. They said they searched out the foreigner, the 'bule', because they wanted more experience in their woman, but I believed it was because their regular rules of conduct were suspended with western woman, and they could have sex. That, and westerners were exotic, mysterious, new and usually fun.

We eventually returned to Bandung, and Babette and the kids returned to the States after another week or so in Jakarta. I went to Jakarta one more time before they left and met her 'Papi' and heard stories of their life back on Bali. It was fun, but I was eager to get down to work. I now had all my batik supplies and dyes, and I wanted to start making art!

So I did. I set up my wax stove and pots in the hall by the back door for ventilation and light. I made shelves above that for the powdered dyes, wax, frames and special waxing tools. I created an enclosed space to hold jars of liquid dye away from the sunlight. It worked great. I sat cross-legged on the floor to work, and the wax fumes rose to the high ceilings or out the door. There was a

water spigot by the back door and buckets for dying, and I was set to go. One day I'd been experimenting trying to get a true black dye when Sonja arrived for the lunch I'd promised her with news of 'another day of military dictatorship under the guise of benevolence.' Three magazines had been shut down for honesty. Imagine that. The students, scholars and intellectuals were getting angry and more riots were threatened. As a foreigner there was nothing I could do, so my mind turned back to black. Black dye. What was I missing? Something elusive....ah, well....a Middle Eastern lunch awaited my Christian friend in Bandung, Indonesia, served by me ~ an American mix of many things. Just another day in paradise.

Then another weird thing happened 'in paradise'. I came home one day to find men in combat fatigues essentially stalking, or making some covert approach, to the house directly above me on the hill. What on earth? I went in and locked my doors and kept an ear out but didn't hear a thing beyond a lot of vehicles arriving. As it happened, one of the college students that had been living there killed himself in the bathroom. How very, very sad. The other students moved out immediately and word on the hill was that the place would be empty for a very long time because no Indonesian in their right mind would live in a house where a suicide had occurred. When I asked why not, I heard stories about jinn or the dead remaining there and haunting the place. Indonesians were extremely superstitious about things like that and would avoid even the street in front of the house. I wondered if that meant that the foot traffic to peer down into my backyard when I was working would then peter out. I sure hoped so.

Chapter 45

The 4th of July found me, surprisingly, missing fireworks. I thought back to the amazing displays I had seen growing up, and how much I loved the lights and sparkles. Perhaps it was that review of the past that caused me to reflect on life, and how there had been some strange realities in mine. Like fireworks.

I remembered when I was twenty-eight years old and realized I might be human. It's true. I was in the middle of my divorce when it suddenly hit me that I had failed. I could not fix the marriage or my feelings, despite how much I had tried. I felt like it should have gone differently than it had. We were supposed to grow together, not apart. Had I not seen clearly enough, or had I acted out of some other motive I'd labeled love when I'd married him? Why had a part of me known it was over when another part desperately wanted it to work? That, I heard, is human. We often hold onto situations long after they have exhausted all reason, all

hope, and all logic. Just like I had with Dave, and now with Pintor, my two Leo loves.

Now, ten years later, I found my body was actually aging, and I've heard that's human, too. Cruel trick since my head was still twenty-eight...or twenty sometimes, some days. Oh, sure, I'd learned a few more tricks along the way. There was a bit more wisdom now than before. What really stumped me, though, was that I was still surprised that I was human! I used the phrase "I'm only human" as an excuse for mistakes, errors in judgment or unexpected emotions, not because I really believed it.

Deep inside was a yearning or a belief that I was different from all this human 'stuff'. It was quite unshakable, and just a little weird. Reviewing my life, I saw no evidence of my parents instilling an immortal complex. Their early parental tutelage of, 'you should be, do, think and act like us', didn't seem much more severe than other parent's. I began to suspect that, if I wondered about being human, then other people probably did, too. And no, I hadn't 'run amok' here. Hasn't everyone been really surprised at themselves, experienced two separate dimensions of themselves? We say things like, "if only I'd listened to myself, I wouldn't have done that", or "who said that", or "I'm not myself today." All of these sayings of ours came from *somewhere* and seemed to present a picture that there was more than one of us operating here. Things may not be as they seem. *We* may not be what we seem. If I was not myself today, who or what was I? If I should have listened to myself, who didn't? Who were all these separate selves? We couldn't all be schizophrenics, could we? There was more going on here, but I did not yet know what. I only knew that there was a huge part of me that didn't relate to being human, and another part that very obviously was.

Then there was the coming month of August. It seemed I made big changes and a lot happened to me in Augusts, and I used to think the month had a curse on it. Really. I tried to cancel the month for a long time, or at least avoid it. That was quite the trick. I would try and forget what month it was, ignore it and pretend it was a long July or September. Anything but August, as if by avoiding it I could skip whatever calamity was trying to befall me. That was back when I viewed the 'August Phenomenon' as a disaster.

My dear Idaho friend, Raymond, and my beloved Samoyed dogs, Josh and Beau, were all killed in August, as was a co-worker of mine. I'd been married in August and divorced in August, quit jobs in August, moved in August, left lovers in August and generally had an intense time with Augusts. Being a sensitive

person, I took it all as a sign. A big, glaring, neon sign which clearly spelled out 'Dump Augusts'. Now, though, I began to see it as a month of increased energy in my life, taking form in many diverse ways. If some of those were challenging, I could change my response and view it as an opportunity instead of an attack. I didn't *have* to see it as anything more than energy moving in my life. Good things had happened, too. I had come to Indonesia in August, and the end of my second year was approaching, along with the beginning of a new one, in a few short weeks, in August.

It all fell in line with yet another reality following me around the planet. The 'avoid it, dislike it, say you don't understand it and sure enough, it will find you, try you, be you or be done by or to you' phenomenon. I've spoken of it before, my 'never say never' thing, and it has held true and fast ever since I could remember.

This one was sneaky, too, as it could take years between the fateful words leaving my lips and the resulting event happening, like a strange sort of cause and effect. I remember after my divorce I found myself moving into a house that I'd wondered how *anyone* could live in such a gawd awful, ugly place. Or like when I said I couldn't understand how anybody could be idiot enough to start smoking again after they'd quit. I made it three-and-a-half years that time. Idiot, indeed. Then there was my not understanding how anyone could be so busy they'd need a maid, so of course I now understood and had one. Or how about the 'why would any sane person live in a big city', and of course I'd now lived in Jakarta which I never, ever thought I'd do. I had specifically targeted Jakarta as a hell hole to avoid. I'd killed two birds with one stone with that one. I still hadn't owned a microwave, lived on the east coast again or had a million dollars, but there were literally hundreds of other examples of this phenomenon being true in my life. Hundreds.

As you might well imagine, I watched what I said very carefully. It's almost as if my life had additional dimensions to it. Some strange, some not so strange. The 'Never say Never' phenomenon seemed to be largely educational. "You don't understand?" the universe asks. "Well then, here, let me help you!" Another, less strange, was what I called 'short term karma'. If I did anything I knew was wrong, I would almost immediately lose something. Something I liked. I remembered first noticing that in my teens. After every single juvenile indiscretion something would happen. I lost a dear possession. By the time I was twenty, I'd learned not to steal, cheat or lie. I wondered now if I really learned that these simply weren't 'right', or if I was so selfish I simply got tired of losing my treasures. Either way, I

became one of the most honest people I knew. I had noticed, though, that ‘white lies’ didn’t have the same consequences. Like here when, for safety or convenience, I told people that I was married, or that I had a boyfriend, or I lived with family and friends, or I didn’t speak the language, or I loved rice or...you get the picture. These white lies didn’t seem to get me in trouble, but at first I would sweat it out, wondering what was going to disappear. Now that I thought about it, many things had disappeared. Hmmm....

And then there was the spiritual dimension. It called me and had a deep yearning to it, and I’d been walking that tightrope for years. On one side the human, on the other the spiritual. Join a monastery or join a man. Was there any way to do both? Must I choose between the two? Lama Inga and Lama Yonten were married, as were so many spiritual couples, so it was possible. But was it for me? I’d always viewed them as two separate paths, worldly or spiritual. Perhaps combining them was appropriate now, but how do you find a spiritual lover? Since Behram, I had not met one, despite being out there trying.

My last reflection had me wondering what I could do about my ego. My Dutch friend Leo said that I sometimes didn’t listen to people fully. He said that I cut them off before they had finished speaking. His wife Charlotte pointedly said that it could be very ‘put off-ish’. Well! That wasn’t good! How did I get a handle on this ego? I considered most of my conversations mundane, and I eventually got bored with ‘chit chat’; but according to them, the bottom line was that I put people off with my behavior. I saw that my ego would step in with, “These conversations are not going anywhere anyway so why not cut to the chase?” Because it’s rude, there’s an arrogance about it, and it puts people off, that’s why. I’d hate it when they did it to me, so I resolved to stop stopping the world around me. Just let them be.

I was beginning to see patterns to it. The first was with alcohol. When I drank I became happy but pushy. Was this new? It might be. I also felt awful the next day and was cranky, moody and impatient. Second, I was beginning to wonder if I got PMS. I looked at how I’d felt the last few days with my ‘moon time’ (women’s menstrual cycle) and saw depression coupled with alcohol consumption, hitched to isolation, resulting in a mess. Whatever the cause, it was time to get a handle on myself and focus on what wasn’t working so I could change it. I could cut down the partying and alcohol which would have immediate effects. I would watch what happened to me in conversations that had me losing my patience and interest. I would simply ‘shut up’ for a while. That would give me some space to look inside and see what was really making me so irritable, as opposed to

attributing it to everyone else. It had to be something I simply didn't recognize yet, like culture stress, or the 'forty year old crisis' coming early, that had me so out of sorts. I decided I'd leave town for part of August and go to the beach where life was quieter, and I could focus more easily.

~ Chapter 46 ~

The end of August found me returning from a couple of relaxing weeks at the Gecko, and I had not written a single word or thought – nor had anything bad happened. I felt like the slow, luscious time there had changed me, relaxed me. I felt clearly the sense of homecoming, of return, yet again to a place it felt like I'd never been before. As if for the first time I opened doors and windows for the mountain air. It was peaceful. I was peaceful.

I couldn't say my thoughts those weeks had been peaceful or otherwise. More often than not, they simply were. The close proximity of Werner, Wiwid and family, who had also come, made for a comfort of friends and only occasional stress from tired children. Mostly, I focused on my batik, as was my mission, and always the sound of the ocean as I faced it daily working the wax. A pleasing break as I raised my eyes to watch its waves through the palms. I really could have stayed there longer. Not one word, as I said, was written in journals or otherwise, so tomorrow I had letters to begin and thoughts to remember.

Watching Werner & Wiwid together, their closeness always a reminder of that lack in my life, I saw; I'd hoped to meet a traveler, maybe share some closeness myself. When I arrived, though, all were young or coupled. I remember distinctly thinking, somewhat sarcastically, that someone interesting would probably show up my last, busy day. On Friday, as I was packing to leave, a man named Will checked in next to me. Was it precognition, predetermination or manifestation? Good question. He's leaving Australia, looking to 'give his hats a roll', and may come to spend some time in Bandung. Nice man; not *the* man.

Ah, I flirt, looking and looking still, but it was not unlike shooting blanks! Sometimes I would ready myself for a night of 'it' - the looking, the flirting, the fun of shooting blanks. I'd tend myself, cut my bangs, do my nails, slowly dress and go to wander the minds of men, though rarely their arms anymore.

Masks

She watched stoically
as she carefully
curled her hair.
Touches of spray and gel
ensure the look
will last the night.
Foundation, which
she hates to use
applied evenly.
Every trick she'd
ever learned
applied with care
to look like someone
different than she was.
Be someone else
if you can't be
somewhere else?
Tonight's theme
made some adjustments.
Very much,
very female,
very white.
She's about to
disappear,
or appear
as you see.
Lighting up
she relishes the difference.
There are no more changes.
Tonight, no other adjustments.
Full on ready
to be
what you think
you see.

Was it that I had finally learned how to love, that had me holding on, holding out for that truth? Could I now understand the men who loved me long beyond my caring? And what of the problems I seemed to have with men? They wanted

me, yet I frustrated them. They chased me, yet I flew away. They said I was teasing them, and I was; and they loved it. But then they said that was wrong. What on earth was wrong with that? I made no promises, offered no rewards beyond the moment of dance or fun or conversation. I was completely honest with them. Leo tried to assure me that it was not me, but the men themselves creating 'my problems'. He said that for men who've designed their nice, packaged, 'normal' lives, I created a real annoyance since I made them think; and they absolutely didn't want to do that because it was too hard and too damned uncomfortable. I could see that in them. Babette wrote and echoed Leo's counsel. She said that yes, they get annoyed and frustrated with me because I made them work and many tended to be lazy in the head. She also stressed that there was nothing 'wrong' with me. Still, I wondered.

September was towards the end of the dry season, and Bandung had the look of fall. Dry leaves fell everywhere, the hillsides taking on a brown tone so rare in all the green. Straddling the equator, Indonesia had only two seasons, wet and dry. Daylight only shifted by a half an hour through the year, always getting dark somewhere between six and seven in the evening. It was so different from North America, our seasons and our daylight savings time. Today, the clouds gave the final touch to the imagination of fall. Now we'd have rain, so desperately needed. I'd noticed Sumatra has had rain for weeks now, but it seemed too early for 'musim hujan', the rainy season, to begin here. I'd also noticed that the clouds brought heat. Made sense, but you'd think they would cut the sun a bit. It did not work that way here. Clear and cool, cloudy and hot.

I continued to teach when asked and to batik. I was given the inspiration for a 'fertility batik' that never fully dyed as I saw it in the vision, but worked nonetheless. Some friends of mine from New Zealand, Hugh and Eve, had experienced problems conceiving a child. I gave them a fertility batik, telling them to make love on it, put it under their sheets or pillows, hang it above their bed, but no matter how, they were to use it. It did not take long before they conceived, not one but twins! We joked about that batik and how it was stronger than even I had imagined.

These two were special people to me. Hugh loved to dance and was excellent at it, moving with the music as it flowed through him. Eve didn't enjoy it as much as Hugh and I, so she waved us on to dance to our hearts content. To those watching, we must have appeared as Pintor and I had, as lovers, not knowing it was lovers of music and movement within the music that moved us. Deep, sensual, sinuous and in harmony, we danced often together for the simple love of

dance. Even when Eve had to return to New Zealand to birth her babies, she gave her blessing that Hugh and I could dance. And we did. And the rumors flew. Even though everyone knew Eve gave her blessing, even though Hugh and I never treated each other with more than friendship and respect; the rumors flew. That was hard on me. Couldn't they see with more than their eyes? Didn't they remember us always dancing like this? Why would they now turn to gossip when they knew Hugh to be a devoted husband? Their gossip said I had an unnatural 'power' over men, which was certainly not true. Didn't they know that if it had been true, I would have locked myself away in fear of such power?

Apparently not. I even had an Indonesian friend accuse me of trying to take her husband away from her. I listened, most patiently, while she actually pleads her case to me, afraid she might find some truth to her fears in my eyes. When she was finished, I said, "Honey (that was her name), I have met your husband only once in my life, two years ago, and he lives on Sulawesi! How could this possibly be true? Think about it!" She said I could have called or written, but I assured her I had not. I didn't even remember what he looked like and would certainly not recognize him in a crowd. I finally (mostly) convinced her, telling her how I'd been in love with another all the time I was supposedly chasing her man, telling her how my heart had been broken and how I was just now returning to the world of men and dating. There was truth in me, and I challenged her to verify it for herself. My complete honesty mollified her, and I was sure she checked up on me as I never heard a word about it again.

An Ashram in India was looking more and more attractive all the time. Leave the gossiping behind by taking an oath of celibacy, and go hole up in a cave or temple somewhere. Yeah, right. All that would do is change the nature of the gossip. No, I had to evaluate my actions, ask myself how much I was kidding myself. I flirted with everyone, pretty much equally, because the fun was in the flirting. There was a difference in my response to men, however. If they responded with sexual teasing, I did too because it was fun. But I didn't do anything about it, or take it any more or less seriously, than if they responded in a casual manner. I just responded in kind, and with the more sensual responses I was, as I said, shooting blanks.

I was mostly celibate those days. My ego, however, did get satisfaction at being thought of as interesting, attractive and desirable. That's the play, and my only gain from the whole thing. It was a shame that with some men this was not a compliment. I came to see the stupidity in it all, though. Theirs and mine. The arrogance began to get to me and was no longer fun. I thanked the universe for

Hugh and Eve. Hugh was a safe haven I could dance with in my heart. One who would take me exactly the way I was, knowing I did not ask for more.

It Isn't Only Words

Words

I don't understand at all.

Independent...brave...tough...

...analytical...confident...

delivered as if undesirable.

Intimidating...

that's another you've used on me.

How can independent be intimidating?

Do you thrive on it yourself

or are your fears bigger than mine?

If those don't stop you, there's always confident.

I know what I choose, yet that bothers you.

And analytical seems most loathsome.

How does a delving mind scare you so,

unless you're afraid of yourself?

Attention to details said, unsaid, shown.

A deep desire to understand.

I marvel that you don't want to.

Is that why you fear me?

So you call me tough, too tough, difficult.

I don't need you because, after all,

I can masturbate, too?

I can't hold myself very well,

tho' God knows I've tried.

I've talked to myself when

you haven't been there,

cradled my heart broken by humanity...alone.

Can you tell me how does one share with oneself?

Haven't you seen my shyness,

sensed my fears?

Is that 'tough'? Are you?

You say I don't need you

who want to be needed so.

Is not 'I want you' enough honesty -

or too much freedom?

And all of this is undesirable
because I am woman.
And you who call yourself man
seem to fear the depths
as much as you fear the heights
we could reach together.
Such a crying shame,
you even fear my tears.

~ Chapter 47 ~

November found me getting a phone call from Raouf in Egypt. He was a man I met when traveling in the Middle East years ago with Cindy, and he was...remarkable. He had been part of Sadat's private guard, his father had been Egypt's Supreme Court Justice, and his family held positions in the government of the old Egyptian hierarchy before Sadat overthrew it all. Because of that, we got to meet his friends, who were princes and princesses, now dethroned, and see parts of Egypt most tourists would not have. Raouf had kept Sadat's guard badge, and if he held it up just right, covering the dates of service now long expired, it got us through many otherwise closed doors.

Raouf's best friend, Adil, who was also remarkable and bore a striking resemblance to Einstein, lived in the former American Embassy. The mansion was now a pale ghost of its glory days, but it still retained hints of splendor and majesty in the woodwork, candelabras and huge rooms. They would take us wandering the streets of Cairo at night, Adil's long trench coat flowing out behind him as they pointed out ancient sites. The areas they led us through looked as if we had stepped back thousands of years in time. Oil lamps flickered in windows of rough hewn stone homes along the deserted cobblestone streets, and I wondered if they were lit to ward away evil spirits. It was eerie and magical. We were fortunate, Cindy and I, to have had such illustrious, eccentric guides.

There was a remarkable chemistry between Raouf and I that would not leave us alone. It was insane how we could turn each other on with just a look. God help me if he touched me! It would send a current of energy running up and down my body, and I'd be aroused immediately. Damned inconvenient when the one thing we wouldn't be having was sex. He was the boyfriend of our hostess, and I was simply not going to betray her.

So we teased each other and one drunken night pushed the envelope, until I stopped it. I didn't want to treat other woman any less than I wanted them to treat me; and bedding their boyfriends definitely fell into that category. Still, Raouf escorted us through Cairo, and then arranged to join us on our trip to Luxor to visit Karnack and the Valley of the Kings. We became close. That had been years ago, and now here he was asking when I was going to visit him, saying that I was the only woman he'd ever felt this drawn to, and that I should come. I should live there and see what developed because, after all, I had made him wait for six years. Well! The minds of men!

I had to admit that I had felt 'that way' with him, too. But what was 'that way'? Totally captivated and sensuously erotic. Raouf was handsome and engaging, and he had been on my mind a lot lately, too. I had also once said I'd have to go back and experience him again, but it had always taken a back seat to the rest of my life. I really liked Raouf, and the body chemistry was incredible, amazing even, and yet there was something holding me back beyond the Middle Eastern male mind set. Still, what a man he was. He was also persistent and, yes, six years was a long time to keep calling a woman.



Raouf and 'it' would have to wait, though, because I had decided to go home (as in the States) for a visit. Just do it, check it out, go! There were no jobs to be had in Bandung at the moment, and I didn't have the energy to try any longer; so I figured why not get the hell out of Dodge. It may well prove a needed reality check since I thought I knew what I found so attractive about Asia versus the States. In Asia there was the continual changing, every day the unexpected happening, putting me in a position of changing my plans and my mind constantly. I found it to be creative and expanding (and sometimes irritating). In the States we usually planned our lives and those plans tended to proceed with very few deviations. People telephoned and made or canceled appointments, they called when late, arranged dinners and parties way in advance and things were orderly, with few deviations. Not so here. Most days seemed an adventure in how the best laid plans would unravel.

I sent my passport to the Yayasan in Jakarta, and John said no problem arranging the exit visa. I lined up my various friends and family to visit and planned ways of getting around there without a car. I decided to tell only my family and my friends in Seattle that I was coming. I would start in Seattle and ride with my friends, Peg and Scott, over to Thanksgiving in Idaho, surprising all the other

friends that would gather for the holiday there. I loved surprises, and this was just plain fun!

My last day of work before leaving started off with an old ‘tukan sampah’, or garbage man, pushing his overburdened cart of garbage up the hill as I walked out of my compound. I watched him struggling with it as I approached; and as I reached him, I helped him push it the remaining meters to the top of the hill, noticing his surprised acceptance that a white person (and a woman at that) would help push a load of garbage up a hill. Later, an angkot driver I talked with as he drove us around gave me a free ride to the school. Even later, I shared my umbrella with a beautiful young woman who wanted to buy my angkot ride home because I ‘was so kind’. I wouldn’t let her. The whole day was an example of the beauty of this country that I would be shortly leaving. So many so very poor, yet so very generous. Reality checks.

A month after Raouf’s call, I flew off to Seattle and home. It had been over two years since I’d left and a world of difference, and none at all. Seeing Peg and Scott in Seattle seemed so normal. It all seemed very acceptably normal. I, however, was not. I felt pretty strange when I arrived. Actually, that’s an understatement. The long flight had me still circling earth and feeling the earth move often with a fuzzy brain and sore eyes. I remembered that Jet lag is harder when flying against the sun, as I had just flown west to east. I wandered Seattle while I waited for Scott to get off work and in my dazed wanderings met some really interesting people. My friend Anne in Indonesia was right: people come to you, attracted by the foreignness or by God only knows what. Or sometimes I’d go to them, and they’d notice that ‘something’ and not want to let me go. I’d have to break off, sometimes after more than twenty minutes, and keep wandering. I found a few stores interested in buying Indonesian handicrafts if I started exporting, and a bunch of folks simply interested in Indonesia, as they had been there themselves or had relatives there. By the time I was back at Scott’s office, I felt like I’d explode. Way too much stimulation for comfort, despite the high level of comfort in the exchanges. Scott took me home to Peg, and their son Michael, and some much needed sleep.

My first night in Seattle was frigid, and I thought I’d freeze to death. Then Thanksgiving morning, waking early for the drive across Washington, I found the world had turned to winter snow. Reports came that ‘The Farm’ outside of Moscow, Idaho, had three feet of snow. Whoa! I was cold, cold, cold after Indonesia’s sunny warmth. The roads over the Cascades and through the high deserts heading to the Columbia River were so wide and open. Such a contrast from the close up

views in jungles. It felt expansive and empty. I found myself more stable, although each time Scott or Peg touched me, I fought back tears and a catch in my throat. I had not been wrong about how close we all were, how much we touched each other and how much I had missed and needed that contact. Another contrast to Indonesia.

Thanksgiving at The Farm was all cozy and warm inside while the snow sparkled outside. It was a delight to surprise everyone. So many friends, so many hugs, so much to be thankful for and some new 'beings' added to our circle of friends like baby Allyson! A joy and a delight. I followed The Farm with a visit to Moscow (Idaho), our Garden Lounge hangout and even more friends from different crowds and circles. From there I went north to Spokane and Post Falls. After the snow, the sky was such an intense blue that my sheer awe at its brilliance told me Indonesia did not have skies like this. Could it be the humidity there that created a hazy, lazy blue and not this electric, piercing the heart with its depth, blue? It seemed to be so.

At dinner one night the phrase, 'a search after similarities', flit through my head and seemed an apt description of what I'd been going through in Indonesia. I'd been looking for familiar people, situations and feelings in a world that wasn't the same at all. But here, even after two years away, I fit into this culture of friends easily, as if the time had not elapsed. We had found a time and a place in Moscow together, long enough to grow, lose the walls and develop relationships and intimacies that had withstood the test of time. And my tribe was scattered! We were all over the world yet we made the time to come together, to gather. As I felt into Moscow and Spokane, I didn't feel as if I'd be back there to live, but that I'd always return.

It took me a week or so to fully relax, what with all the moving around and visiting house to house. I finally settled down at Steve and Judy's house in Post Falls, Idaho, in time to help put up a Christmas tree. I missed Christmas in Asia as I loved the lights so much. There were Christians in Indonesia, but Christmas wasn't obviously celebrated like here. I helped unwrap ornaments, and watched as they put them up, relishing the simple things once again. It would be a visit of lights, skiing, hanging out and listening.

I was still doing a lot of listening as I got caught up in greater depth on the last two years of friend's lives. We had people and places in common and so much had happened! When it came to my sharing, I found myself not knowing what to say, and oddly, that people didn't seem to want to know. It was like they couldn't

relate to a lot of it because they didn't know the culture, the people or the places. I found myself wondering what to say that would convey my experiences? That there was a gentleness to the Indonesians, we smiled a lot, their curiosity bordered upon nosiness (a bit like mine), that they're giving to a point, as were we, and that the places we gave were on very different planes? Yes, I could say that. There was also adventure in every moment, and there was still wonder at all that was unknown. I shared that I'd wondered how Indonesians did it, how they happily lived such very basic lives. I saw Indonesia as stepping back in our time fifty years or more, when all was different for us, and it still didn't come close to sharing Indonesia. Oh well.

From Idaho I went to my beloved friend Cindy's house in Portland where I had time to get organized as she worked. So good, again, to watch the years between us fly away; however some of the strain we experienced in Bali was evident. Buried, not spoken of, but evident. Something important had changed, but I couldn't figure it out.

I left Cindy and headed to North Carolina and my various family members when my Mom decided to disown me. She actually disowned me! She was furious that I hadn't called her the moment my feet touched United States soil, and the fact that I had not called *anyone* did not appease her. Frankly, the thought never dawned on me. I didn't work that way, it seemed. I mean, I'd be there. We talk or we don't, and it doesn't mean anything, doesn't change the love or my feelings about someone. To her it was the biggest affront I could, obviously, have given her. My brother Eric ran interference, and I only heard snippets of what he said to her; but it was, essentially, not to ruin what time we had together. I was her first-born, after all, and nothing would change that. She listened to him and forgave me, and while I was severely reprimanded, I was no longer disowned. I took note not to repeat that scenario again.

I noticed on this trip that my parents were getting older, my siblings wiser and myself more patient. Eric said I was a lot calmer, and I felt better able to choose my battles wisely with fewer buttons being pushed. It was hard in a family that thrived on competition for 'rightness' and a whole lot of sarcasm, emotional reactions and button pushing; but I managed better than ever before. Indonesia's gentleness was working on me, and I appreciated the changes.

December 27th found me sitting in a plane on the tarmac waiting for lift off, my American adventure coming to an end and the next leg of my life beginning. Taking off, we're chasing the setting sun this time under beautiful, clear skies. It

was not easy to leave all the ones I loved, but the sure knowledge that this love would survive all, made the leaving easier. I missed these people very, very much and I loved them so! I did wonder, well, no I didn't, actually, at my need to leave. I saw that any one person's growth benefited everyone they encountered. And I had grown. I remembered a Buddhist practice, and asked that any and all merit or grace my growth and patience may have earned me, go to the benefit of all beings.

My flight, in fact the entire journey back to Jakarta, was painless. I was bumped to first class once, my connections all worked, planes were held for me; and my luggage actually made it, too. Amazing grace! I figured it was some thirty hours of flying, first across America then across the Pacific, what with layovers and all. I called my house hoping to reach my friend Muti, who was house-sitting for me, to find that Kirk was driving back to Bandung from Jakarta, and I could get a ride with him home. More blessings! We drove the back way through the tea plantations, and it was gorgeous beyond belief. I was home and it was nice to be back in the familiar, green, sweaty, hot and happy tropics. The feeling was of a lushness so vibrant it filled the air. A sense of complete aliveness as everywhere there was thriving life. It was not sterile. It was not ordered or neat or tidy. It was...Asia!

There were changes when I returned. It seemed the season for mosquitoes had arrived while I was gone, and the buggers didn't go away in the daytime. Rats! I'd have to devise screens for my windows soon. My friend Muti, from Bandung, had been house-sitting for me, and it turned out that she was robbed while I was away. She said she left the back door unlocked and someone stole all the money I had left for her to cover expenses in my absence. Because foreigners are all seen as rich, I had been careful to always lock the house and windows when I went out. My safety concerns now seemed well founded, and I had told her to hide the money, but she hadn't. She was not actually convinced she had left the door open, but was hesitant to assume the housekeeper had taken it. Not being there myself, I could do nothing but stay alert and careful.

~ Chapter 48 ~

1995 arrived quietly, along with my birthday. I spent both with friends, at home and at Werner and Wiwid's, who lived two houses down from me. Werner was German and had married Wiwid, an Indonesian, several years ago. Shortly thereafter, they had begun a family. Werner worked with ITB, a university there, and was fluent in both Indonesian and English. Wiwid was busy being the mother of two toddling boys. I was happy that their sons had not forgotten me in my

month away, as such young children could sometimes do. I was also surprised at all the rumors our wee neighborhood had running about Wiwid, what she had said and hadn't said, who she had snubbed and who had snubbed her. I wanted none of that, even if some of it was about me. I hadn't even been in the country and people were talking about me. What gives?

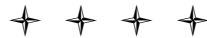
And then in February my house was robbed again. It was the same M.O. too, as with Muti. The front door was locked and the back door wasn't. The only thing disturbed was my bed, as if someone had sat on it, and the only things taken were my camera and walkman. No jewelry and no personal items were missing. I had hidden the camera and walkman very carefully under and behind an eighteen inch stack of random books and paperwork, none of which was disturbed. This was completely unrealistic, and the whole thing smacked of my housekeeper because this thief knew where they were. Any other thief would have simply dumped the papers on the floor instead of neatly putting them back, as if nothing had happened. That, and I had never, ever, left a single door unlocked. I had a long talk with my housekeeper and took my door key back. I told her I was going to think long and hard about firing her, and that I was going to talk to the head of the community (the Kepala Desa), who happened to be my next door neighbor, before deciding.

This was right before Ramadan, Islam's fasting month, when Muslims had to buy new clothes and special things for their festivities. Burglaries were always up a few hundred percent before Ramadan, and I found it so hypocritical and ironic; yet in a country of such poverty, it made sense. They were like Robin Hoods, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. It was also customary for employers to give large Ramadan bonuses to their staff, and I had to think long and hard about how much to give my housekeeper. I decided to be generous since I hadn't fired her, in hopes that she would think twice in the future about allowing, or assisting, my house to be robbed.

Not long after this an American woman named Sue moved into the house above me. She was a friendly woman, my age and it was nice to have someone living up there again. Her presence might help with the crime in our end of the neighborhood, too.

Sue invited me into the house, and I admit I was curious, after the suicide, to see how it felt. And the place felt strange. Very weird vibes, but that might have been from being empty for so long, too. She needed to cleanse it and get rid of the heaviness. She asked me to, and so I worked on it, but told her she might be best

served to have a Dukun come as this was their country and their ‘business’. I also told her she should tell everyone it was still haunted so maybe they’d leave her alone and not try and spy on her as the did with me.



Then Raouf decided to come to Indonesia instead of waiting for me to come to Egypt. He would be arriving in two weeks, and I was nervous. I told him that my moon time would start when he arrived, which was true, but sharing that with him also spoke to my nervousness. We had amazing chemistry when we were in Egypt together, but I was getting concerned about his expectations this time around. It was all new. We were different, or at least I was, and I didn’t want to feel pressure to perform. Again I asked, was this premonition or precognition? We’d see.

~ Chapter 49 ~

Raouf called mid-march, right as I was looking at his photo, wondering about him and hoping he’d call. He would fly there in four days, and I was going to Jakarta to meet him at the airport.

I’d been trying to relax and to reconcile it all. There was the issue of having any visitor after my just being gone so long in the States, on top of the excitement of it being him and being able to finally check us out again. Oh, my God. I wondered at it all. We were so very different. I entertain myself; I feel he needs to be entertained. I was very much independent, and he was very dependent - at least on others to stimulate him. These were all past remembrances, and I didn’t know if any of this had changed, however; so I just had to wait and see. Four days to prepare. Oh my.

The next day I reflected that it had been one hell of a two week period. Thinking about it, I saw the craziness had all started after Raouf announced his coming visit. I’d had gum problems, a yeast infection from antibiotics, ant infestations, flea infestations, some flying bug invasion in the guest room, I hadn’t slept well, I’d had wild dreams of theft and men; and I was seriously considering buying a prescription for Xanax. Thing was, I felt I had finally resolved his visit, and was actually looking forward to it; I just had to get rid of these insects. Everything had to go out and get sprayed. Again. Argh!

Finally, I was as ready as I could be, butterflies and all, and I headed to Jakarta to meet him at the airport. The first shocker was that he arrived in a very beautiful three piece suit. After my initial shock, I remembered that was normal for people in third world countries - except he was going on vacation for God's sake! Anyway, I got over it. He was just as energetic and charismatic as I remembered and not too worse for wear given the long travel time. Our trip to Bandung could not have been smoother. I had left at eight that morning, and we were back in Bandung by five that afternoon, which included three hour train rides both ways and transport out and back from the airport. Smooth!

The pressure was, and was not, on. I could feel immediately that he was 'head over heels', as we say. He brought me a gorgeous twenty-two carat gold car-touche necklace with his name on one side and mine on the other. He brought Chevis Regal whisky and God only knows what else besides a whole lot of hopes.

The time couldn't have been more like my last experience in this vein if it had tried. And trying it was. Interesting to watch myself move through these feelings again, so similar to Jack's visit. I saw nothing insurmountable, except my feelings. The communication problems could be cured with time. I did hate, though, asking a question and not getting an answer. Wrong. I would get an answer, just not to the question, it seemed. I remembered that many cultures didn't want to be honest for fear of hurting your feelings - even to a question like 'do you like basil.' I could not get a simple 'yes' or 'no' out of the man! I also found myself having to repeat a question two or three times before he understood what I was asking so he could even answer it at all, and he was, or had been, pretty good at English. This had been known to drive me crazy under the best of circumstances. You'd think, as an English teacher, I'd be used to it by now; but I hadn't realized I'd have to work that hard at it with him. Still, I tried. I couldn't imagine how hard he was having to work as he appeared to not be affected in the slightest, simply smiling and gazing adoringly into my eyes.

That began to wear on me because there was not so much hope, as confident expectation in those eyes. I felt like they were pounding me when, in truth, he was simply being in love or in like or in lust or in all of it. I saw this as my problem, and I was having several! I felt under no obligation to him, and realized that I would not be able to just give myself over to this knight in shining armor, as he so desired. I also decided there was no point in ruining his two weeks there, so I tried to get a grip and shake off the small stuff.

And then the gifts began. More of them. I had asked him for a couple of cards with Egyptian designs on them. He brought me about twenty large papyrus paintings. I asked for a bottle of sandalwood oil I had found on Tahir Square in Cairo, and he brought me four. He then brought me some of the pure oil, telling me that one gram of it equaled a month of his salary. It was that rare and precious. He brought a fourteen gram and an eighteen gram bottle of that. That's thirty-two months, and over two-and-a-half years of his wages! Then there was the Egyptian gown, and all this on top of the gold cartouche, his plane fare, clothes and missing work. While I was paying for his trip in Indonesia, there was no way I could ever send him home with a parting gift of this magnitude. Nor could I think of a thing that he would want, except my love, which he had as I could give, but just not in the way he wanted. I still didn't think the time we had left would change that, but hey, we would see.

He was a gem on all other fronts, only wanting to please me. Anything I wanted, he would do, just so long as I was happy. Essentially, all this was making me crazy, but then I couldn't say that. My reaction to unabashed adoration has never, ever, been good. It's like, pedestals were things to take running jumps off of, right? They weren't actually for standing on, but catching the winds and soaring away from. I was still having problems.

He was also a very thoughtful lover, possessing so much energy I thought to check his age again. At forty-seven years old, he had the energy of a twenty year old. Amazing. He was also very easy going, and we shared many likes, dislikes and tastes. He was a really amazing man, and I knew that; and yet we were only now getting to know each other in a real way. Before, I had been traveling to exotic Egypt with a remarkable tour guide, and it was all romantic and....hold it. I realized that for him it was much the same. He was now traveling in exotic Indonesia with his own tour guide, and the romance was just beginning for him.

The days played on with dinners and HHH events, all of which Raouf took in his usual, gregarious stride, making friends with everyone; and we had fun. Each day was getting easier as I tried to simply get over myself. But the guilt was getting to me, even if it was misplaced. It was clear that I was not behaving in the adoring way towards him as he was to me, and it was killing him. His dreams were crashing around his feet, and there was nothing I could do to stop it. He had come with such expectations, hopes and confidence that I felt the same way as he did. I kept reminding myself that it had been six years since we had seen each other, and I had not led him on or been untruthful with him in any way. I did want to see him, I did want to check us out again, I was attracted to him and I had

promised and implied nothing more than that. Should I have known the mind of a Middle Eastern man? Could I have predicted he'd come here believing he was in love with me, and I with him? It was a mute point because I hadn't. His depression was painful for me, and it was really, really hard to be disappointing someone so badly. I liked him so very much, but I was not, I knew, in love.

The last days of our trip would be spent in Bali, visiting with Debe who had since moved there, and hopefully having fun. We flew over and found a place to stay and began to see Kuta, the main tourist area. Raouf loved the shopping and activity of Kuta/Legian, so we stayed there instead of wandering further abroad. Suresh had come over from Jakarta with his new girlfriend, having stayed friends with Debe after their break-up, and we made a fun group for drinks, dinners and sightseeing.

Raouf's mood was rough the whole time, but he finally made an attempt to talk about it. He said he could see that my feelings were not the same for him, but he thought that perhaps that could change. He noted that I was different from what he remembered. Traveling in Egypt, I had been carefree, more easy-going and relaxed. He was concerned about the seemingly stressed out Diane in Indonesia. He explained that I could come to Egypt, live with him for a while and relax. He'd take care of business and the outside world, and I could take care of the house and the inside world. It would be lovely. We'd be together, taking care of each other, just as he dreamed we would. And the love would grow, he was sure of it.

It was about here that I snapped. To know how much he was hurting reminded me of my own. To have such deep feelings go unanswered and unfulfilled, was to leave a hurt alive for a long, long time. Do we add it to all our other hurts? Do they live together inside where their combined strength plays havoc with us? It hurt me deeply to hurt him; and in that hurt, from that hurt, came my anger. I did not want to, but knew that I must express it. It may hurt him to hear me, but it would liberate him. If I did not speak my truth, he might still hold hopes; and then he wouldn't be completely free.

So, I let him have it. Not in anger or rage but in truth. I asked him if he knew that I managed corporations, that I loved to work, to be and do and act in the world. I told him that a life like that would kill me, and that I could not do it. I told him that I was hugely independent and reminded him of how much I traveled and loved my freedom. I told him that I could no more put myself in a dependent relationship than fly to the moon, and that I could not take care of him as he

expected and wanted. I told him that while I loved him so very much, I was not in love with him and never would be.

He heard me, and I could feel his anguish and despair in the very air around us. But he heard me. He avoided my eyes as we got up to go meet Debe for a swim. I asked him if he still wanted to go, and he flipped a switch inside of himself and answered, "Yes, might as well have some fun."

At the beach, neither Debe nor I wanted to go into the ocean as the waves were treacherous that day. We both knew that Indonesia's coasts could be very dangerous, with rip tides carrying people far out to sea. Today looked like one of those days, and we had said so; so it really surprised us when Raouf got up, all determined, and plunged into the ocean. I swear, I thought he meant to kill himself, and Debe restrained me from calling him back. "Let him go; he needs this." I asked her if she knew more life saving than I did and hoped we wouldn't have to try to pull him out if trouble hit. I told her what had happened earlier as we watched his strong strokes carry him further out to sea. He swam out, paused for a moment, and then returned. He ignored us as he walked back to his towel, but there was still determination on his face. Or was it resignation?

He later told me that he had brought a one-and-a-half carat diamond ring with which to propose to me. He had swum into the ocean to give the ring to the sea. It had been meant only for me, and since he could not give it to me, no one would have it. He had gone crazy, hoping I would be his forever. It was worse than awful.

Raouf flew home from Bali, and I went back to Bandung. I reflected back over the two weeks and wondered at how I could feel guilty at breaking someone's heart. He had done this to himself, and a part of me knew it; but a part of me kept arguing that there must have been something I could have done, some way I could have fixed everything, to make it all go away or make it better. Getting mad at him, being uncompromising in showing him our differences, knowing he'd find his own anger that way and be able to let me go, was the best I could do. Still, it hurt, and I felt so very sad.

I reflected on the very Arabian male attitude of expecting women to cater to them. I suspected that it did not leave them, no matter how 'modern' they thought they were. Imagine being raised pampered, stroked, fed, dressed, catered to and obeyed *since the day you were born*. An habituation so thorough you'd never get over it. He wanted me to care for him, his body, and do small things to him, even

as he would do them for me, if only to keep me. What I saw in myself was a rebellion to it being expected, almost demanded by virtue of it being 'what was done'. It was simply what was normal and expected in his culture, whether or not I would want to actually do these things. Each was innocent enough, but the collective implication meant thinking about him constantly, how to please him, how to make him happy, with no thought to making myself happy. My happiness would be his job, as his would be mine.

I saw that I thrived on the beauty of giving freely from my heart, which could be very generous, especially when I was in love. I remembered the hugs and caresses of my friends back home and how we were very loving with each other as a natural expression of our feelings, not unspoken expectations. Raouf was a mixture of all of that, the natural expression of feelings, and the expectations.

Raouf's astrologers had told him a while back that his life would change when he was forty-seven. He wondered how and had chosen to believe the change would be me. Period. Things were changing alright, just not how he wanted. I saw that he had finally been freed of one dream so that another may start. I sensed it would for him. I just hoped it would, for his sake, start soon.

I was reminded of a poem by Anne Morrow Lindberg:

When you love someone you don't love them
all the time in exactly the same way...
it's an impossibility.
It's even a lie to pretend to.
And yet this is exactly what most of us demand.
We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life,
of love, of relationship.
We leap at the flow of the tide and resist
in terror at its ebb.
We are afraid it will never return.
We insist on permanency, or devotion, or
continuity when the only continuity
possible in life as in love is in growth,
in fluidity - in freedom, in the sense
that dancers are free, often hardly touching
when they pass, yet partners ultimately
in the same pattern.

~ Chapter 50 ~

I watched a TV movie tonight called *There are No Children Here* about black kids in the big city. At the end they had kids talking about watching someone in their family get shot. The movie trailed some young kids, their drunken father and determined mother and how their whole lives revolved around fighting the temptation to succumb to gangs, to believe in God and to do their best to try and get out of the torments.

I was sobbing by the end. A thought, like Behram's voice came to me, and it said how blessed I was to have had such a 'fortuitous rebirth'. I was born a white, middle class American. My fights tended to be cerebral. I didn't have to overcome slavery and racial prejudice in America's primarily white populace. I had education because my family had enough money that I didn't have to work instead of going to school. I didn't worry about being killed. I didn't worry about food on the table. I didn't have to defend my abilities based on the 'color' of my skin.

And I *was* fortunate. If I'd been born a 'person of color', any color other than white, I'd have had a different set of things to fight. And yet, I'd studied enough about life to know that, while racism was unconscionable, having to 'fight' in life was not necessarily a bad thing. Look at the feelings of accomplishment when we succeed in the face of insurmountable odds, when we win competitions or pass our 'tests'. What if it was a matter of degrees? I mean, every single person alive has something to fight, and some of them are not so obvious. There was fighting for survival, and there was fighting for values and ideas. And for some, there was the fight for all of it ~ food, safety, love, acceptance, equality, education and even a break in life. This was why I cried. This was not fair, and I deeply believed, that life should be fair. I wondered what my fights were.

I had fought for racial equality in the Kent State days, my first 'walk-out/sit-in' being in junior high school. As a woman, I had to fight in business for position and salary. I have had to fight a male dominated society, conservative morals and restraining values. I have had to literally fight for my life while being strangled. Twice. I fight prejudice and for the poor and the disabled. I fight bigotry. I have had to fight racism in Indonesia against the Chinese, westerners and myself. I fight ideas, and I fight for freedom. I fight with teaching, and ideas, and supporting others, and with how I live my life.

So why did the movie make me sob? I realized that I wanted every person to be safe, to have food, to have an education and to be loved. The fights for equality seemed small compared to fights for survival, but they were completely interdependent. If we ever accomplished equality, there would be less fighting for survival. We'd all be on the same ground with the same chances. Or so I hoped. Did I feel this way because I had won mine? Maybe, but I still had the battles with myself.

I cried myself out, but not to sleep; so I thought to do visit my guides in my private, internal sanctuary. When I got to my seaside cove, 'the girls' came running up, all excited to show me what they had created. They had carved out whole rooms in the rock face! Just when I still thought of it as 'my' sanctuary, something again happened that surprised me. 'Nine' had a spot facing the cove, and it seemed a cozy niche. The others had rooms arranged around the entire face of the rock on the eastern side. I did not wonder that they had always gravitated to Meredith's side of the cove. Meredith was a small, red haired European seeming woman that reminded me of Lama Inga and who was love, kindness and nurturance itself.

Karuna, my first guide, came too, but before I could begin to explore my sadness I had an odd thing happen. I'd been in the water with Kelly, and as I came out of the water there was a guy on a beach blanket on *my* beach, taking his shirt off. I immediately knew it was Pintor, although with the shirt over his head I only recognized the body.

I was shocked, horrified and concerned. How had he penetrated my sanctuary? MY sanctuary?! He was ephemeral, as if not altogether there. I could sometimes see through him, sometimes not. At first he could not see Karuna, although he watched me constantly. I asked Karuna if Pintor could see him, and Karuna said no. Perhaps out of spite I asked that Karuna show himself. The shock evidenced by the being on the towel was obvious. Then I questioned if it really was Pintor, or a part of his psyche searching for me, or part of my own psyche letting him in. I found no answer.

In all my years of using this visualization process, never, ever had this happened. The unexplained, yes. The unexpected, sure. The seeming impossible, no. I mean, this was my sanctuary, wasn't it? Didn't I get to dictate what happened here? Well, not always, and sometimes this realm and my daily life intersected.

Once I'd gone running into the ocean to swim with Kelly, only to be running back out again fast. There was a six foot shark swimming there, despite my

specifically telling them that when I came, they were to be gone. Kelly informed me that, in no uncertain terms, it was time to get over my fear of sharks and that I was safe; dolphins can kill sharks. “Yeah, right,” I thought. Kelly said it was true, that they ram the sharks with their powerful noses. I had a hard time believing that until, a week later, I was watching the Discovery Channel and a program came on about dolphins, and how they killed sharks with their noses. “Oh ye of little faith,” I had thought of myself.

Yet another time I’d been there on the beach with all my guides doing a healing on me, while my boyfriend Jack was going to sleep beside me in bed. Karuna had just begun using a blue healing light when suddenly Jack sits up in bed yelling, “What the hell! A bolt of blue lightening just came out of you and hit me! What are you doing?” I was shocked back into my body. Try explaining that one.

So, why should I be so concerned with this? It felt like an invasion, that’s why. I believed I could sense Pintor’s limits as he sat there, and they very much precluded conscious intent. So, a subconscious one? Obviously. Only whose? His or mine?

I never talked to him. Perhaps I missed some Divine opportunity, but I was too shocked, too surprised. I felt like striking out at the invasion, but if it was subconscious, then that didn’t seem fair. So I did what I thought was most practical. I left. I didn’t want to know, didn’t want to talk with him, and didn’t want any more pain. I figured if it was my subconscious, he could just sit there and heal. If it was his, he could still sit there and heal.

It never dawned on me that talking to him might have helped me resolve all I’d felt this night. Pintor was half Indonesian and half German. He lived between being snubbed in the States because he wasn’t quite white, and being snubbed in Indonesia because he was too white. He often felt he didn’t fit anywhere. He knew racism against him from two sides, whereas I’d only known it here, where I was loved and hated, never accepted and never ignored. And that wasn’t altogether true. I had been hated in the States for being white, too.

~ Chapter 51 ~

I tried to forget about the intrusion into my sanctuary. I tried not to think about Pintor at all. I had gotten over him, right? I talked with my friend Kirk, and he gave me an ultimatum. One month. He gave me one month to get it out of my system, pointing out that it was me keeping the whole thing going. I didn’t really

agree with Kirk, or that I could have anything out of my system by following his rules, but I did see the point in taking a stand. He said if I took a stand and made a decision, then the other feelings would resolve themselves over time.

So, I did. Pintor had returned from the States, and we regularly ran into each other at the Laga Pub, my Thursday play night. I asked him to avoid it for a while, and he agreed. It was that simple.

I did it! I took a stand! I chose to kick him out of my life! Me! Good for me! So, why did I feel so miserable? Debe said that was normal. OK, so focus on my life. Each time my inner thoughts turned to him, say 'no' and turn them away. Focus on the fact that I had taken a stand. Support myself in my decision. It made sense, and I resolved to try really hard. Besides, I should start dating again and focus on my work and getting a job.

I woke the next day feeling great. There was a sense of relief and no feeling of attachment. I asked myself if it really was that easy? Yes and no. It had taken me a year of suffering over my suffering to get there.

It seems the point was in never taking a stand for myself, which left me holding on, and holding on to a dream, at that. It was so much easier to let go of a dream than it was the person. I felt strong. Making the decision was hard, doing it was easy, and the payoff for me was a great one. I found the relief and freedom amazing. Life, here I come!

Off I went to Pangandarang, my retreat and haven from craziness. Wouldn't you know, I immediately met men. Men I liked. Interesting men, with a mutual attraction. The first night was Robin, an American living in Germany and traveling the world. He was way too handsome in that playboy, smooth sort of way but had a realness about him that allowed me to let him in. We talked, had dinner together, talked more; I gave him a massage and didn't sleep with him.

The next night I met Steven, an Aussie heroin addict. He had a beautiful spirit and a dark mind. He had been going through heroin withdrawals for the past five days and had come there for that purpose. He said there wasn't any heroin out in the jungle or on the beach, which was true. Again the talking, again me giving a massage, again no sex.

I began to wonder what was happening to me. Here I'd met two great guys, and I could have had really great rebound sex....and I walked away. Oh dear. Had

I ruined myself for life? In truth, I had enjoyed the unattached giving. In truth, I didn't trust them. Or was it me I didn't trust?

I went to build a sand castle, my Buddhist beach meditation practice. I felt like I could do that for a very long time, absorbing myself in the sand and water, simply being present. It's a practice of nonattachment. I built a beautiful, multi storied castle with turrets, balconies and a moat. It took me a couple of hours, and I finished right as the first wave made it high enough to wash all my prayers out to sea. My prayers where for all people to attain equality, food, shelter, safety and love. I said prayers for the benefit of all, prayers for myself and prayers for those I loved. I walked on the beach. I went back out under the full moon, alone, and could feel so much energy out there. I could feel the play between the sun and the moon. Energy! And a sky so clear from recent rains that the stars were like diamonds. Heaven.

Heading back to the restaurant, I laughed at the scene. Here I was, sitting in a coconut grove, open air, full moon in my eyes, a most excellent Italian pizza next to a very cold beer and Santana playing on the warm night wind. Did life get any better?

~ Chapter 52 ~

Back in Bandung I had to do some serious figuring. Once again, I realized, I was only doing part of my dream. Yes, I was doing batik, but I still had no information on deaf services in Bandung. I found myself yearning for direction and change. I had been developing batik clothing designs and felt I had enough. Now it was time to fine tune them and then produce them. I'd like that. I'd love to find some way that I could live both in the States and in Indonesia. Maybe producing a line of clothing would be a way.

Babette had done the ground work for me on art shows in Idaho and sent me the entry information. I decided it would be best to first test the markets in the States by doing a show and seeing how it went. I thought the one in Sun Valley, Idaho, sounded interesting. Sun Valley was a famous tourist town in southern Idaho and a mountain escape from the summer heat. That should work well as a test market as it drew people from all over the world. I had enough time to do photographs and compile the application for the jury. The other shows were further out, so I could wait on them while I waited on Sun Valley. I got it all together and mailed the application out.

Another hurdle was sewing the clothes. I had not the interest or the patience, and frankly, not enough skill to do that myself. I began to ask around, and one of my private English students found a tailor for me. Yes! She arranged a meeting, and I found him to be really reasonable. He wasn't trying to 'stick it to the bule' like so many others were. I told him it would be a few weeks, and he was fine with that. I could begin. I could begin!

Then I had a real shocker. One night I had gone to bed early because the electricity had gone out, and an hour later I was still awake when the phone rang. Werner was calling to invite me down to their house for a drink and to meet a friend of theirs, and I figured, why not? I walked in with both my hands full. Werner was leaning back in his chair as I walked up and he gave me a backward, upside down hug. I smiled at Wiwid and sat next to her. A bit later, I noticed that Wiwid was totally silent. The rest of us continued talking and when their friend left, Wiwid and I talked for a while longer, but she was still 'off'. I went home to bed, and about forty-five minutes later the phone rang. Wiwid wanted me to come down, and I had a feeling I knew what for. I barely made it in the door before the riot act started.

She had apparently been threatening to divorce Werner, and she was completely blinded by her rage. She asked me how I felt about him, and I said the same way I felt about her and the kids. She continued to rant and rave, calling me insensitive, obtuse, and uncaring of other's feelings. I simply watched her and realized I couldn't take it personally because that's about the last thing anyone could ever seriously say about me. Then she relived the day when she asked me my opinion of an outfit she was thinking of wearing; and I said that, for me, I wouldn't wear red shoes with a purple dress. Guess she took that as criticism, despite my oh so careful wording.

She then said that her housekeepers had told her about Werner coming to my house one night to watch a movie. They had figured we were having an affair, and she wanted to know if we were. That shocked me. I asked her how many times she had come to my house to watch a movie when Werner had been gone, knowing there were many. She said it didn't matter because she was a woman, and he was a man. A married man. Married men didn't hug other women. They didn't watch movies at single women's homes.

Werner was trying to be as small as he could manage in his chair, and I simply listened. At one pause I did manage to point out that cultural understanding, trying and sensitivity were all a two-way street. I said it felt like she was

demanding that Werner and I forget our cultures rather than her trying to understand them. Hugs in our culture happened between everyone. Watching a movie with someone didn't mean they were having an affair. Friends were friends, in our culture, and that was usually all. (No matter what *Dallas* or *General Hospital* said!)

Hours later, Wiwid calmed down and we talked. She said she knew she sometimes overreacted, sometimes got jealous, and sometimes had problems balancing the cultures she lived in and with. I told her I loved her and had never tried to hurt her and thanked her for caring enough to get up the courage to even talk to me. Ninety-nine percent of the Indonesians never would. She told me that Indonesians would never tell someone, even a friend, that they loved them and that I had to look in their eyes. Their eyes said everything.

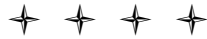
The next day I had time to think about it all and realized that what happened was a perfect example of a particular 'wrong' I see with this world. People holding on to 'human consensus', culturally biased values; rejecting or condemning (or both) all that didn't fit their picture of right, good, proper and true. The acronym for 'we are right' is W.A.R., remember? My head asked why couldn't everyone be right? Why couldn't one value be that you allowed other people to have their own? Being Javanese was her excuse for not looking at the reality that was daily before her, that we were all just friends... and we weren't all Javanese.

~ Chapter 53 ~

I committed myself to my work. Babette informed me that I had gotten into two shows in the States, one being Sun Valley; but I couldn't crank out enough pieces for both. I decided to only do the Sun Valley show. Life took on a rhythm of waking, coffee, batik all day then drawing and planning at night. I had my private students in and around all that but cut back on my substitute teaching. I loved batik and found that I could easily work from eight in the morning till eleven at night, day in and day out, and not get tired. I thought it fortunate that I simply kept heading toward my goals without the time to worry, and with the knowledge that what will be, will be. At least once I commit to a goal, and I certainly had committed to this one. Finally!

I felt that since clothing was something everyone wore, I wanted to join cultures, designs and colors in that commonality. I designed my clothing labels, naming the line 'Common Ground'. I decided if the line had a 'granola' name it wouldn't have a 'granola' look, so I did it in a grey script with a red accent line

under it on a black background. Common Ground also equaled the number eight in numerology, which was about money, power and position. Perfect, and the company did a really good job on them. I was happy. Five years of energy put toward a concept, and the time was drawing near to test the results.



I decided to rent a motorcycle to ease the strain of time the local transportation took. I loved it! I love motorcycles altogether, and this one was small enough to be maneuverable and big enough that I could strap a few things to the back of it. Then I got it up the hill to my house to find I couldn't get it into the yard because of the small ditch in front of the house. Some well placed boards fixed that, and I got a chain to lock it up so it wouldn't be stolen. Freedom!

I scheduled massages weekly from Ibu Min, a blind woman who walked the mile down the mountain from her village on a rough dirt road, by herself, straight to my door to give massages. She was an amazing little 'bird' of a woman, and I adored her. She spoke very little Indonesian but seemed to understand me, and I delighted her by saying 'ouwie' (you know, like ouch) when she pushed too hard because in Sundanese (the local dialect) that meant 'bamboo'. To her I was saying 'bamboo, bamboo!' instead of 'ouch, ouch'! It cracked her up, and she cracked me up.

Once I had found her, I told everyone I knew about how good she was. Her blindness made her hands even more sensitive to tight spots, which she always found. She began to get business, first in the neighborhood and then further abroad. Then one day she was robbed. I learned that people in her little village were jealous of the large amount of money she was making working for the westerners. In truth, I got to see egalitarianism backfire first hand. She was vastly overpaid by local standards; and that created a huge schism in her community, throwing everything out of balance in their minds. It wasn't working, but none of us would have reduced what we paid her. I finally decided to get her a very loud police whistle, which I strung on a cord that she could wear around her neck. That way she could alert everyone close if she needed help. She loved it; but she would blow that thing every time she got near my house, scaring me half to death while she cracked up, thinking it the funniest thing on earth. I loved her so much.

Days and weeks passed, and the time seemed to go by as if nothing. Time had little meaning in Indonesia, and I wondered if that was a good thing. Some days I'd feel like I was being lazy and not accomplishing enough. Other days,

most days, I felt like I had defied Indonesia's 'Law of Life Happens'. I was focused with the end in sight.

And then the miraculous happened. It was as if the Universe needed me to really take action on my dreams before it helped me further. And help me, it did. Again.

I was walking home one day and a couple of the motorcycle 'taxis' called 'ojeks' blazed by with some westerners on the back. I noticed, but didn't recognize them. A few minutes later, they came back and turned around to pull up beside me, and I met Fred and Jantine from Holland, looking for a place to live. We talked for a while, and it turned out that they were here working with the Dutch V.S.O. (Volunteer Service Organization - which was a lot like the State's Peace Corp) to assist with deaf and disabled programs in Bandung! Deaf and Disabled programs! These people were doing exactly what I had wanted to do the past three and a half years. And they just drove up to me! A chill ran through me; and I couldn't believe that, after all these years, my dream might manifest through a Dutch couple stopping to ask for help. More miracles!

They gave me their business cards, and I told them where a house I knew of was vacant, across the street from Pintor's family's home. We would talk again in a few days. Thank You! Once again the Universe had literally dumped opportunity in my lap, just as it had in Spokane. But, I wondered, what had happened to create this here, now? I realized that all I had done was commit to the dream and begun; I was in process. In both instances ~ this one and my getting to Indonesia ~ those steps had been taken before the miracles had started. That, and these dreams were dear to me. They mattered deeply. Did this unexpected help mean that God/the Universe supported my efforts? To me it did.

What did all the other miracles that seemed to happen in my life mean? Good question. Was I asking and receiving *or* determining and manifesting? Another good question. One distinction was that I hadn't actually 'asked' for my original intent to happen. I had simply decided this was what I wanted to do, and set out to do it. There was no 'wishing for' about it (though there was a lot of 'waiting for' in Spokane). I had decided it would be and had acted accordingly, and it was happening...*with assistance*. I never lost faith and, though I was detoured often, I had never wavered.

Other miracles had been 'wished for'. Was I seeing that we did, indeed, co-create life? I'd decide and do *and* ask and receive...and they both worked. Not all

of my ‘asked for’ impulses manifested, and I puzzled over why not. Some were probably at crossed purposes, like wanting someone in my life while wanting more time alone. Some I didn’t feel deeply; I wished for them but they didn’t move me enough to focus on them for long. Was the difference simply between what came from my heart versus what came from my mind? Did the key lie in how deeply I *felt* about them? I was beginning to suspect it did.

That didn’t explain the fast, impulsive wishes, though; thus my feelings of co-creating. Perhaps God or the Universe threw the dice on the wishes, and I’d get those whose magic number had come up.

With my intents, then, I was determining and manifesting. I’d be inspired, I’d set an intent, then take steps to manifest it; and the Universe helped me out with the unexpected... when? When it could? When I was open to receive? When I’d proven I was serious? When the timing was right? All of these? This I could not tell. I could not tell if I was being aided because I was on the right track, or because I’d said this was going to happen so it was. Or, again, all of it.

I could not tell, and it didn’t really matter. The point was that it was happening again. I knew, though, that the odds of my meeting these two people, who perfectly fit into my dream, on a far away mountain road in the third largest country in the world were astronomical. They were off the charts, beyond the beyond odds that I called miracles. Thank you!

We talked a few days later, and they did get the house just a few roads up the mountain from me. And they loved my ideas of teaching deaf and disabled people how to do batik, with an eye to starting their own cottage industry. In Indonesia, the batik centers were the only places batik happened, like in Yogya; and there weren’t people in our area doing it that we were aware of. That, and local teachers would want to be paid, whereas I would teach for free.

We talked about where to do it, and my house seemed the obvious location given that all my supplies were there; but there wasn’t enough room. I thought, if I could build a covered area outside, we could do it there. A roof and floor was all we’d need here in the land of warmth. Plus, my back yard was surrounded on three sides by a very high wall holding the mountain up, and creating a block behind which limited wind blew through. They said to put together a proposal, and they’d run it by their ‘people’ in Holland to see about getting a grant to pay for it.

I delightedly added this to my rather enormous list of things to do before I left for the States in a week. Then I put my nose to the grindstone and kept on keeping on. It was all I could do. What would be, would be.

Meanwhile, all of Indonesia began to take on a carnival atmosphere as they prepared for their 50th Anniversary (of independence as a country) on August 17th. Banners and lights were going up all over the place. My friends from I.P.T.N., the organization building the airplane they were to fly on the big day, said that it was still a really big 'if'. That made me sad. Indonesians had worked so hard to prove that they could accomplish something by building this plane, that I really wanted their 'From Bamboo to Boeings in 50 Yrs.' to work for them. As I would be in the States by then, I wouldn't see it; so all I could do was pray for them. I later learned that the plane did take off and circled once around the airport before landing again and was considered a huge success - despite the fact that was about all the plane did. No one lost face, no crashes, no new line of planes being manufactured, either; but what was important for them had happened.

During the week before I was to leave, I was bitten on the butt by a dog. At 7:30 in the morning, no less. And...it broke skin. Rats. The rest of the day followed suit with the motorcycle ignition going tits-up and the tailor not showing up. I couldn't get to a doctor to check out the bite but figured that, aside from rabies, I would be OK. I had a comprehensive medical kit in the house to doctor myself and bandage it with. I spent the better part of the day calling vets to see what people did in Indonesia with dog bites. Apparently, most of the time, nothing. The rest of the time, however, they simply give the bitten person the rabies shots. Ouch. Sometimes they quarantined the dog to see if it came down with rabies.

I tracked the dog's owners down and spent a lot of time trying to get them to understand the concept of rabies and that the dog would have to be quarantined for two weeks. They didn't really get it, nor would they pay for it. I went to the Kepala Desa, the head of the area and my next door neighbor, and explained my problem. I was totally willing to let the people quarantine the dog at home, as long as I was assured I'd get a straight answer when I called from the States to see if it had become sick. My neighbor said he would check on the dog for me, and I was saved from having to have the series of rabies shots.....I hoped. And if I did have to have them, at least I'd be in the States where I was more confident of the care and that the expiration date on the injections hadn't expired. My friend Kathy, a veterinarian in Moscow, gave me the details I passed to the Kepala Desa as to what to watch for in the dog. It felt like a workable solution.

The countdown continued, every day much the same until it finally began to wear on me. Every day with something messing up. Every...single...day....and too many to number yet each reminding me that I needed a break. Doing too much alone had finally left me tired and frustrated, seeing only the next day in front of me, the next chore in front of me. There were no real thoughts about the future beyond what I was doing and my chore list slowly being checked off. I figured something would happen, and I was too tired to care what. It seemed I always did the 'departure thing' just like this. Even when I planned, I was always rushing to finish things at the last minute, being a bit stressed and rushed. I mean, how did you plan for a dog biting you on the ass and losing a day?

Good things happened, too, as a sort of balance. I was constantly shown the goodness of people, like my neighbor, like my friends. And then, finally, with every single detail taken care of, I headed to Jakarta with my two loaded bags of beautiful clothes to sell. Exhausted, I figured I'd sleep on the plane and in the guest rooms of my friends. Looking at my bags, I wondered what was really in there, and a voice answered in my head, "Only what you take with you." It wasn't talking about the clothes.

~ Chapter 54 ~

The show in Sun Valley, Idaho, was totally strange. My friend Sharon had set me up with a friend of hers to stay with while there, which was great. I'd rented a car to drive down after carefully ironing everything at Babette's. I'd bought a booth to use that was a bit flimsy but would work, and I hung colorful backdrops of woven Indonesian blankets so my display looked really beautiful. All the planning I'd done had paid off. The only thing that couldn't be arranged for was the weather and the crowds, which were not large, especially for August in this famous tourist town.

I sold very few pieces despite the rave reviews I received. One problem - people in the states were larger than I remembered. I had used European clothing patterns, which shouldn't have been that far off, but they were. Many of the clothes were, by U.S. standards, a size medium or small while most of the people were large or extra large. Yikes! When had that happened?

I tried not to be discouraged. There was no way I would make back even half of my costs, but I was learning a lot. And what people saw, they liked. Then, at the end of the show, a woman from a gallery in Moscow, Idaho, came up and said that she loved my work and wanted everything I didn't sell for her gallery.

Miracle of miracles! I said yes immediately. I wouldn't have to haul all this back to Indonesia or put it in storage; and as I was going back to Moscow, I could deliver it all and help her set it up.

So, I packed up and began the long drive back through some of 'God's Country'. The Sawtooth mountain range was magnificent and aptly named, and I had to drive through a lot of it. I tried to hurry and 'rubberneck' at the same time, catching the breathtaking scenes flowing by around me. I wanted to make it to McCall the first night to stay with Steve, a former lover of mine, and soak in the hot springs around there. It would be a six (plus) hour drive through outrageous beauty.

Along the way, I spied one of those unusual fences that zigzag across the countryside and mirrored the zigzag of the Sawtooth mountain peaks behind it. It looked like a perfect photo opportunity, so I pulled over to get a shot. Leaving the car running, I walked some twenty feet to get the perfect lineup of fence and mountain. All of a sudden I heard the sound of a car on gravel, and turned to see my car had put itself into reverse and was heading towards the highway where a couple of RV's were coming. I dropped my camera and started running towards the car in my flip flops. The driver's side door was still open, so I tried to run around it and jump in as the car was slowly making its way in reverse towards the road. As I jumped in the car, my flip flop caught on the frame, and I was thrown to the ground.

It all happened in slow motion for me but couldn't have been more than a second. That still, quiet voice in my head said, "Flatten your hips or the door will drag you," and I immediately flattened my body as the car door passed over my hips and chest, and then the front tire ran over both of my legs. But the car was still moving. Without thinking, I jumped up and ran for it again, barefoot now. The car slowed a bit as it hit the edge of the pavement and righted itself to be heading straight down the road for the RV's that had now stopped to help. "Go! Move! It's coming straight at you!" I yelled. I finally managed to get around the still open driver's door and jump into the car without falling out, stopping it twenty feet before it hit the first RV.

In the rear view mirror, I glimpsed an elderly couple running towards me as I laid my head on the steering wheel and turned the car off. I became vaguely aware of my legs and marveled that they weren't broken, as the car had run over both of them. The couple reached me, and the woman had a can of Bag Balm in her hand. Bag Balm? Somehow I thought that was terribly funny, and I smiled at

them, trying hard not to laugh as images from years ago of milking my cow, Laudrienne, ran through my mind. Her husband muttered 'shock' under his breath as he helped me out of the car, and we surveyed the damage done to my legs.

Several raw, bloody places were beginning to sting and turn purple, so I sat on the hood of my car and let the woman slather Bag Balm (with its antibacterial properties, she reminded me) all over them. All in all, the damage was quite minimal. Places on my ankles were down to the bone and would leave minor scars for life. Some other places would surely bruise, but everything seemed intact.

They offered to take me to a hospital, but the closest one was three hours behind me the way I had already come. McCall was almost the same distance ahead of me, where I had my friend Steve who would take care of me. They really didn't think I should drive, and I didn't see why not, or rather, I didn't see what other choice I had. I thanked them profusely and sent them on their way. I then tested my legs and, yes, they both seemed to work. I didn't feel particularly out of sorts, so I got in and continued to head west.

About an hour later, there was the only establishment in the wilderness; and I pulled in. The owners let me use a phone to call my vet friend Kathy. I told her what had happened and asked her if she thought I should go to a hospital. She told me that if the bones were broken, I probably wouldn't be able to walk, and I would certainly be in more pain. We figured that, given the lack of bone pain, I was probably alright, but I should watch it. I got a couple of bags of ice from the restaurant and, left leg elevated and propped on the dash, I continued towards McCall.

Steve was delighted to see me, though he was concerned as I was later than I'd told him I'd be. I kept my body on my side of the car so he couldn't see my legs and asked him, "Can we still go to the hot springs, no matter what?" "Well sure", he said, and then I walked around the car. He stopped dead in his tracks, simply staring at me, and asked the most intelligent question of the day, "Are you crazy?"

I mean, I'd been run over by my own car and then driven another four hours, and in most people's book, that's crazy. To me, the fact that I had been run over by my own car and then driven four hours proved I was alright. I told him that if my body ever needed a soak, tonight was the night. I also pointed out that I could just prop my legs over the edge of the pools because there was no way they would stand hot water. That, and I desperately needed a beer.

Steve was an angel. He always had been, actually. We'd met in Moscow, Idaho, and dated for a year or so when we both worked for Stepping Stones. The fact that we couldn't live together didn't stop us from being friends, and this friend treated me oh so gently. He made a seat for me in the hot pools, leveled stones for my legs to rest out of the water on and handed me an ice cold beer. Heaven. We talked, laughed and got caught up on the years. By the time my head hit the pillow that night, I was completely out. The next morning, stiff but not as bad as I had feared, we said our goodbyes, and I headed for Moscow and the remainder of my trip.

My time was going to be spent with friends as I wasn't going to North Carolina this time. I got my clothes arranged in what turned out to be a very nice gallery and gift shop in Moscow, and then headed north to Spokane and Coeur d'Alene to see the rest of my tribe.

Oh, what a tribe we were! Again, I relished in the touch, the hugs, and the closeness, seemingly starved again from Indonesia's remoteness. Oh, Indonesians smiled all the time, but there was no touch. They smiled, but that's usually as far as it emotionally went. Here, I had my friends, and they were all happy to see me. This time I had time to see them all, even if only briefly.

We had summer dinners amid the riot of flowers at Babette's country home in the hills and Friday evening at The Garden Lounge with all the gang. I went from Moscow north to Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls and came together with everyone there. I also called Indonesia to find the dog well, no rabies, and I was spared what I imagined were painful shots.

It turned out that my friend Judy's brother's girlfriend (now that's a mouthful) was a clothing designer and did trade shows around the country. Judy hooked us up, and I sent photos of my work to her. She liked what she saw, had a couple of suggestions and offered to take my line to the L.A. Mart trade show with her! The L.A. Mart! Yes! More miracles! My line would be represented in one of the largest buying markets for stores in the country. That was, if I could figure out a way to export off of Java, which felt truly daunting. Hugging Steve and Judy goodbye, I headed to Portland to visit Cindy.

Remember Jack, the ex-lover that visited me in Indonesia? Well, he had left Indonesia with no hope of a relationship with me. After a while, he had begun to see Cindy, and some time back they had asked me if I minded them having a relationship. Absolutely not, I said, go for it. And they had. It had progressed to Jack

living with Cindy, and I came to find that all was not a bed of roses, not that it always is. Details are not important, except for one.

One night Cindy, Jack, a friend of theirs named Dave and I were all soaking in her hot tub. It was a lovely summer Portland night under the stars, as much as one could see of them in the city. Slowly Cindy and then Dave headed off to sleep, leaving Jack and I in the tub. We talked and were easy together until he got quiet, and I sensed something coming. He reflected on how fun and easy it was with he and I, while I thought to myself that was because he was involved with Cindy and thus finally 'safe' to relax around. Then the bombshell hit. He confided that he had pursued Cindy so that he could be closer to me. What! My body was no longer relaxed. It felt like trickery at a very deep level, and with my best friend, to boot.

I didn't know what to say as he rambled on about it. Finally, finding a voice, I asked him if he realized he was talking about my best friend. He said that, yes, he realized that. I asked him if he understood that he was telling me that their life together was a lie. Yes, he sort of saw that, too, worded as I had. I asked him if he expected me to keep quiet about this lie. Here he was stumped.

I believed that everything happened for a reason. I felt like Jack was telling me this because he knew, deep in his soul, that what he was doing was wrong. He had to have known that by telling me, he was outing himself, and that I could in no way remain impartial. This was my best friend we were talking about, and best friends trumped ex-lovers in my book!

Yet I was in a quandary and didn't know what to do. On the one hand, this was their business, yet Jack had just pulled me into it by telling me. On the other hand, Jack hadn't been honest with Cindy and might continue his 'lie'. Then it came to me to tell him that he had one month. He had one month to talk with Cindy about it. At the end of that month, I would honor my relationship with Cindy by telling her what he had just told me. I pointed out that it would be much easier if they had worked this out between themselves rather than her hearing about it from me. He said he understood, and we left it at that to go to bed.

I was on the last leg of my journey, having about a week left, part of which I would spend with Peg and Scott in Seattle. Cindy's friend, Dave, however, had interested me. He was a creative sort, although a bit of a dreamer. He had been 'dreaming' of someone coming to his house to paint an aboriginal painting for him. We talked of that style of pointillism painting and how I had studied it a bit,

incorporating the technique into my batiks. He asked me if I would rearrange my plans and stay longer to do a painting for him. Huh. I said I'd think about it.

I went to Seattle, but Dave's proposition kept nagging at me. I finally contacted him and said that I would come back to Portland to do the painting. We arranged that I would stay at his house, maybe as lovers and maybe not; but he would buy all the materials and they would be waiting for me when I got there.

It was fun to sink into the magic of creating, though I didn't like his house, and eventually didn't like Dave all that much either. The work took me beyond myself, having to slip into the energy of the city, the house, and the life of this person I barely knew. I spent every day channeling the work over the course of three days, creating a painting that he liked very much. In return he fed me, entertained me some, bedded me once and left me alone to work, which suited me fine. I wasn't doing this for him. I was doing this because I was called, by what I didn't know; but I felt called to do it.

In the end, I was satisfied with the work as it incorporated his city, trails of his life, his home and the Divine that resides in all things - even cities. It was what this sort of painting was supposed to be ~ a capturing of the spirit of the subject matter. The Aborigines captured the spirit and energy of their world, and it was different to capture the spirit of a life in a city, but not impossible. We both parted happy, and I returned to Seattle and my flight home. No more delays this time.

~ Chapter 55 ~

Returning via Jakarta was not ideal. I really did not like it there. Coming home to Bandung, as we entered the mountains, it was as if a cloud lifted. I so loved this place. So familiar, so Asian. The people on the streets smiling and such a contrast to America's dour city streets. I returned to my house and was surprised at my red tile floors, of all things. Muti had left notes and flowers to greet me, much as the last time I returned. Re-turned. An interesting word and I was too exhausted to contemplate it.

The next day I picked up a bone piece, almost petrified, that was lying on a shelf in the living room. As I fit it into my hand, I got a really odd tingling sensation in my palm. I put it straight down, but didn't toss it out. Lots of energy. Huh. Funny, I couldn't remember having it. Why was it there, and where had it come from? Muti? It didn't seem harmful, so I'd let it energize all it wanted. I didn't mind ancient earth energy.

I paced the house. I was a mixed bag of feelings, and I was not settled. I had done what I wanted with this show, and yet not all I wanted. One goal had been to also start a business with my art. While that may still be, I needed more heart behind it. The thought of exporting and all I needed to learn was daunting. Still, I would have to learn enough to know all the possibilities and pitfalls. It seemed another 'goal' had emerged, very much to my surprise. I found I really wanted to get married and have children. I guess it made sense, given my yearning for a soul mate here, but I had almost given up on having children, so I was really, truly surprised.

I now understood Muti, which was something I probably once said I could never do. The focus of her life was to get married and have children. I had shaken my head in disbelief at so many women whose primary focus was the same. I had tried to exorcise it from my life and be strong, able to stand on my own. Never say never. My Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, friend Jenny reminded me of the psychic who said I had the potential for children and marriage, but not until around forty, which was right around the corner. That made me hopeful, and a little confused. I mean, I wanted it, but I never seemed able to put enough thought or energy into it. Getting to Indonesia had never been far from my mind or heart, and this one couldn't seem to stay in either. This would be tricky.

I hibernated. I took time off to read, listen to the wind and feel. I couldn't get it out of my mind. Was I serious about this? I viewed my yearning inside for intimacy with some disgust. It seemed 'normal', which I got over, but it was in its manifestation that I was truly disgusted. It robbed me of a true present and occupied too much of my mind. It had me viewing every man that appeared as a potential. It had me wondering if he wanted children, if he'd call, come over, be interested or afraid. I kept coming up with a yearning to share, to give, to express and to learn. That, all in all, was OK. It was the waste of brain time that bothered me. Couldn't I just accept that I was ready and trust that someone strong enough would come along? And what of the several men that were there who would have me now, who wanted me right now? Was I being fickle, scared or discerning? I marveled at the life that had brought me such a capacity for love, and so many people to share it with, and yet I was not satisfied. I saw that I wanted someone to lean on, someone to help me, someone to hold me. It felt like all they saw was my strength and presumed I didn't need them. How very wrong that was. I wanted a balance of it all, to hold and be held.

Then I had a vision that I thought I'd dealt with six years before in Katmandu. This day I was sitting on my porch, watching the thunder roll through the hills as the clouds descended, when suddenly an image went flying by my mind. It was so very familiar, so completely 'normal' that I almost missed it. But I didn't. I reeled back the tape in my mind and gasped. There, flying by so fast, like it belonged there, was the image of me, a butcher knife in each hand, slicing my heart and guts out. Yeah, I know, 'Ick.'

It spoke to me of the level of tension I was feeling and the blame this was all hammering me with: I should be better, I should be stronger, I should be above this, I should have it all figured out and because I didn't, I should be punished. Deep inside I was torn apart with sadness at what I saw as profound failure. Sadness at Pintor, sadness at what had happened in Jakarta, sadness that my marriage had failed and sadness at my trip home. This vision was mirroring my despair loud and clear.

Catching this vision and bringing it into my conscious awareness was the first step in healing it. It was a call for me to care, to pay attention, to do something. I called Kirk but he was in Singapore. Bryan was in Australia on home leave. Sharon was gone as well. Cindy and Kathy were thousands of miles away. No one I could think of was home. So I cried and held myself.

Broken

Crawling inside,
 slamming the door
behind me for emphasis,
I take out the fragments
 and wonder aloud
at what thing known on earth
 could fix this.
Instinctively reaching out
 to find a friend
who shares my language,
 I am alone.
Nobody's home
 and I wonder aloud
at how times like this
 are my guide
 and my despair.

Always forced to make repairs
without counsel.
No helping here.
No coffee over jokes,
finding the humor.
No sharing.
So, I begin to arrange
the pieces.
Maybe a Van Gogh
'cause Klimt sure fell apart.
Escher seems
in some macabre way
appropriate.
I wonder, did he do hearts?
Valve doors
ushering in the new,
flushing away the old and used.
Hmmm, maybe a Woody Allen this time.

Hours later, totally spent, I began to get a grip. I saw a completely competent woman, one who had fulfilled every single goal she'd ever set but this one, and this one was bringing her to the brink of craziness? That was a load of foolishness, and I knew it; so I held on to that knowledge. Then it hit me that it was two days after a long Pacific flight. What? Oh my God! While I couldn't dismiss this internal warning, I now knew why it was so dramatic. Jet lag!

And then, so help me God, my TV turned itself on. All by itself. It had never, ever done that before. I had wondered if there was something running around the house, what with the bone and all; but I took this as a signal that I was done, and to simply go relax. I'd done enough for this day. Besides, all I could think of to do was to give it all up to the Universe. Again.

~ Chapter 56 ~

One day I received a letter from Debe in the mail. Huh? Why didn't she just call? I tore open the envelope and a note saying I'd enjoy this fell out. I looked inside the envelope and pulled out a news clipping from the Jakarta Post. It was an account of a burglary in Jakarta. A man named Hillman had driven a moving van into an English and Vocational College in Jakarta and taken everything in the school - computers, phone systems, electronics ~ everything! There was an

island wide search for Hillman and his truck, believing he was heading to Sumatra. Well, well, well. I had warned them, but they didn't listen and hadn't believed me. Now they knew.

I met up with Fred and Jantine, and they had good news from their VSO office. Some version of my proposal was going to happen, and we had only a few details left to work out. It was going to happen! Miracles! I was so excited; I went home and began to design the outside porch space and scout for rocks. I figured I'd have to hire people to build the porch roof, but I could make a rock floor.

Then I decided to get a roommate and so solve some of my 'doing it all alone' problems. Before the States, I had met an American guy named Jim, through some of my friends. He was really handsome, and had a beautiful girlfriend, so I figured he was safe and told him so. He came to talk about it, and we decided to give it a three month tryout. He was also a builder and offered to help build my shed roof out back. He could start immediately. All I needed was a day to clear out the second bedroom and clean it, and he could move in. This was exactly what I needed. Thank You!

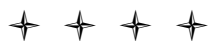
It turned out that I had become a celebrity again. I headed to the Laga Pub one night to find that I had been seen all over town having way too good of a time. Me? I'd been in the States for weeks. Someone actually came up to me and asked if I remembered him from the Enhaii Pub a few weeks ago. No, I was out of country then. He said it was weird because the woman he'd played with looked exactly like me. I figured that, from all I heard, she was having a whole lot more fun than I was. Then there were rumors about my sleeping with the Italian mafia I'd met in Pangandarang a few months back (long story and no, I didn't sleep with them). What on earth was going on, anyway? My close friends said they'd just laughed because it really was ridiculous. Yet I marveled at how so many things were being twisted and turned into quite the drama. What was up with this?

A friend said, "You've just got to laugh, darling! Find the humor!" I'd been the rampage of Bandung for so long now, and my expat women friends told me it was because Indonesian women were jealous ~ of my English, because I was single, because I got on well with everyone, because of my blond hair and, basically, everything about me. Well! Thing was, it hurt. The gossiping had hurt me, and it had hurt others. I hated my personal life being talked about that way, and it was completely foreign for me to be lied about so regularly. Maybe this was why I was so cautious about opening up sometimes.

Contrast

I am learning lessons
 reserved for the brave
 or the crazy,
and in learning
 it doesn't seem to matter which.
In a totally foreign land
 I tread the line between
 novelty and rude.
Those choices when life
 doesn't resemble
anything anyone's done before.
For them or me.
At times the contrast looms so large
 as to make us crazy.
I am loved and hated,
 honored and trashed,
 sought and avoided
and all over the same 'quality':
 honesty.
Maybe it's only me going crazy,
 but I doubt it.

And, sadly, it turned out that Jack did not heed my warning. He never spoke to Cindy because she was completely surprised when I asked her one day if they'd had a relationship talk. "About what," she asked? God! How do you tell a person that their lover said he was in relationship with them so he could be closer to you? I didn't know, so I started at the beginning with the conversation in the hot tub, simply telling her the story as it happened. She was shocked and hurt. They broke up some months after that and though it had nothing to do with me, it still hurt. I hated having to choose my best friend over another friend. But if I had not, and he had ever told her later, I would have probably lost her. I wasn't willing to risk that.



The money came through from the Dutch VSO and the porch got built. It took me a little longer to haul all the rocks for the floor. I ended up making a split bamboo fence to fully enclose the side yard, and finally, everything was done ~ and I was pleased.

I had enough portable wax stoves and cloth frames to handle six to eight students at a time, and I found some mats to put on the floor to sit on. Some of the students were severely physically disabled, others were deaf, and still others were both. They would be driven there two or three times a week for a half day of class by a government van, with an additional person to help get folks up and down out of wheelchairs.

I had gotten an Indonesian Sign Language book and was pleased that many of the signs translated the same as America's Signing Exact English (SEE) did. Since I knew both English and Indonesian, I could easily exchange SEE's sign for 'yellow' with their sign for yellow, which was 'kuning'. A part of the training would be insisting that they use this new sign language of theirs. Many of them had never learned a language beyond what they used with their families, which had been made up family by family. There was no consistency, and I was going to provide that, along with practice. I had color charts if everything fell apart, and I was great at acting out what I meant, which had saved me in many ways and places. Those that were verbal would learn, too, so as to create a solid group working together. I was ready, they were ready, and so we began.

We had so much fun. They were sweet and cheerful and willing and determined. They applied themselves diligently, and to see their faces the first time we dyed fabric, holding the results up to the sun to see the design through the wax, made it all worthwhile! In their faces was pure delight and wonder at the magic of batik.

This was my dream. Finally. This was what I had come to Indonesia over three years ago to do, and I was finding it so very rewarding. I was combining my love of batik with my love of sign language and helping people help themselves. I loved it, and they seemed to as well. The program directors were also happy, and we talked about how they could develop a cottage industry. They were learning a marketable skill in this land that created batik. The possibilities were limited only by our imaginations.

I didn't dance a jig around the yard, but I should have. Considering all that I had been through to arrive at this moment in time, it was amazing. I had a home, a place that students could come to and learn, and I had overcome vastly huge odds to get here. Even though my intent had never wavered, my drive to fulfill it had.....often. So many times I'd been sidetracked, diverted by arms and loneliness, partying, work and life.

I thought about all that had happened. I saw that without the year of teaching, I would not have learned the culture and language in such an un-pressured way. I realized that without the time in Jakarta and the school, I would not have had the money to rent a house for a couple of years, or the time and space to devote to my dream. Had I not gone for the show in the States, I wouldn't have learned that I could produce saleable clothing as art. Had I not experienced the men wanting easy sex, I would not have learned that I yearned for more than that. Had I not experienced Pintor, I would not have learned how to love and let go when it was necessary. Had I not done all of it, I would have felt myself a failure, and I wasn't. I had just succeeded, big time.

Even though the voice of failure would still arise now and then to ramble around my mind, I now had concrete proof that I could do it. I could set a seemingly impossible dream and fulfill it. If I set a clear intent, and put my foot firmly on the gas, miracles happened. Over and over again.

That's big. Huge. Yet, I didn't delve into the ramifications of all it implied for years to come. I was too busy, then, to do more than acknowledge it, and plan my next steps.

~ Chapter 57 ~

Around one in the morning, I had been in bed for an hour and couldn't sleep. I figured I'd go smoke on the front porch and think. I got up, found a cigarette (one of the clove ones they made there that I loved), and walked quietly to the front door so as not to wake up my housemate, Jim. Opening the front door I stepped outside, and for the briefest of moments hesitated. There was something, something there that I couldn't quite put my finger on. I looked down and suddenly found myself five feet away on top of a rattan chair! Right by the door was a black, red and white banded snake, coiled right by where my foot had just been.

So much for not waking up Jim. It didn't move, didn't leave, didn't do anything. I waived my hands at it. Nothing. I made noises at it. Again, nothing. It seemed happy there for the duration and quite content to block my way back into the house. I tried, as quietly as I could, to wake Jim up without waking the whole neighborhood. It wasn't easy. Jim was, apparently, a sound sleeper. I knocked on the window and banged on the wall. He eventually came, rubbing his eyes, and shooed it away. I slowly relaxed, enjoyed my clove smoke and returned to bed.

Another hour later, I still couldn't sleep, and decided to have another smoke. I got up, grabbed a cigarette and walked quietly to the front door so as not to wake up Jim....again. This time I put my hand on the door knob and froze. There was that feeling again. I very slowly looked down and there, coiled next to my foot, was the same snake...*inside* the house! I was immediately in a chair five or six feet away, and I screamed, which of course, woke Jim. Again. He came out, and this time it took a bit more work to capture the snake. He seemed fearless, that man. He got the broom, cornered the snake, put the broom on its head and picked it up! Amazing! This time he took it down the road to the creek at the bottom before letting it loose. I was impressed. How nice to have a man around the house. The next day I made a broom brush 'skirt' for the bottom of the doors to deter anything from crawling under them. No more surprises of that nature, and hopefully no other creepy crawler natures, again.

One thing that surprised me was how I could suddenly go from standing still to a chair some six feet away, with no memory of going from point 'a' to point 'b'. No memory at all. I looked at the chairs I had transported to and realized that in both instances, I'd had to get over or around another chair or coffee table to get there. I then remembered being in Arizona one time near the Mexican border, and walking to a shower facility in our campground. I was poised to take my next step when what I thought was the 'crack' in the concrete began to move. I was getting ready to step on a huge rattlesnake that was moving slowly due to the cool spring weather. All of a sudden I found myself about ten feet away looking back at the snake, with no idea how I had gotten there. Ten feet! And I knew I hadn't run through those bushes. There were no footprints at all. It's like suddenly I am in another place. Cool! I couldn't figure it out, though, even when I went back over it all in my mind. It was just blank. One moment I am here, and the next moment I am there. I had no idea what or how these jumps had happened, and I was just grateful that they had. Perhaps I had another guardian angel beyond the quiet voice in my head? Could be. Unless my quiet voice was also a Teleportation Master.

I found out later that this particular snake in Bandung was poisonous and realized I was lucky all the way around. It'd had two opportunities to bite me, and chose neither of them. Perhaps it was a signal that I should quit smoking, but I ignored that. Perhaps it was to show me I was still being watched over, and I liked that. Perhaps it was to help me understand just how great it was not to live alone. I liked that one, too, and was finding it to be true. Jim was really useful, fixing things I would have just replaced. After some time we actually began to like each

other, too, finding similarities I'd never suspected were there. Yes, I definitely appreciated having a man around the house.

~ Chapter 58 ~

One day my friend Sonja was hospitalized. Throughout all of these years, Sonja had been there for me; one of my best friends, and one I loved deeply. She was an amazing woman as I've said before, but her story went much deeper. She had been raising five kids alone for most of her marriage, which was not easy in this country, even less so than in others. Still married, her husband preferred to be at his businesses in Jakarta than in Bandung, and I gathered that was just fine with Sonja. I was never to meet the man in my four years there and only once heard of him coming through town.

Her children, most in their twenties but two still in high school, were amazing. Sonja was one of the most well read people I'd met there, and her kids reflected her influence. They were talented and talkative, inspired and inspiring. They were like a breath of fresh air in their openness, and I loved going to visit, listening while they played guitars and sang. Sonja had taught me most about Indonesia and helped my understanding, compassion and patience.

Sonja had always been small and frail, but now she was practically disappearing. She had been unwell for a long time, but now she was worse and not improving. Her symptoms were those of congestive heart failure, and she was receiving the best care available in Bandung; but she wasn't getting better. I was worried sick about her. I visited her often, brought her things like fruit and really good yogurt, and just talked. It was all I could do. Her kids were being cared for, and her husband was providing the best medical care in Bandung, so I brought good yogurt and a smile. She loved both.

Life continued, as it tends to do. I taught private students, substituted for The British Institute's English classes, taught batik and continued to do my own. I began to feel that another change was coming, and I found myself thinking of America. I still had my love affair with Indonesia going, so it surprised me how often dreams of the States crept into my mind.

Then I was robbed again. I had gone down to a hotel to swim before heading to The British Institute to teach. Catching an angkot minibus, I hopped in the front seat as it was free. We're heading into town, windows down on a beautiful day, when a motorcycle comes up alongside the van. I see the driver coming close

to my side but didn't think anything of it. Suddenly, his passenger reaches in and grabs the backpack I have on my lap! As it is flying out the window, I grab onto the straps and hold on. I was not about to lose that bag as it was a new leather one I had not had long. The motorcycle begins to pull ahead, me still holding on, and the passenger must have felt the tug because he looks back at me and gives a big pull, and I'm left holding two leather straps flapping in the wind. They had ripped right off.

I yell at the angkot driver to chase them, and he just looked at me. The whole bus full of people started yelling at him to chase them, and it finally registers on him what has happened. We take off in hot pursuit and are actually gaining on them. Then I see the motorcycle driver look back over his shoulder and spot us. He gunned his motor, jumped the median and, cutting across two lanes of oncoming traffic, dodged down a side street and disappeared. Rats! I didn't even have money now to pay for my ride, but the driver just let me go. I never dreamed of being robbed by a motorcyclist, but soon began to hear stories. The advice now was to always walk with your purse or bag on the shoulder or arm away from the street, but I figured it was just life. Were white people bigger targets? Absolutely. But in three-and-a-half years, I'd only been robbed twice in public. I lost a good bathing suit and towel in this one, as well as the bag, but thankfully not much money. I wasn't going to get all paranoid about it.

A group of four teachers and I went to Pangandarang the week before Christmas for our holiday break. We'd made reservations at the Gecko way in advance and took over an entire house that had been built by a couple from Holland. The couple had built the house to use whenever they wanted to come. Usually that was for a month or two every year, and the rest of the time Christine, the Aussie owner of The Gecko, could rent it out. All of us taking one place actually made it affordable. It was the nicest place at the Gecko; large and spacious, it had two floors, a huge wrap around covered porch on both floors and Quoi ponds in front surrounded by palm trees and facing the ocean. There was even a bathroom on the second floor's massive bedroom area. Our own fairly private heaven.

I ended up getting sicker than I could remember ever being. My fever was around a hundred and one, so I was laying low. Then the second night, lying under the mosquito netting, I could swear there were bats or beings swooping down on me, dark forms and shapes darting in and out of the exposed rafters. I tried not to wake anyone, but I must have gasped or something, because one of the teachers, Sharon, was kneeling next to me asking if I was OK. When I told her what I was seeing, she went for my thermometer; and it turned out my fever was over a

hundred and three! I was hallucinating, and that was not comforting. I mean, I was almost *never* sick. She brought me aspirin and water and asked if I wanted her to stay up with me. “No, at least one of us should get some sleep, but thanks,” I said as I lay back down.

Even stranger was that I was almost fine the next day. It was as if I’d burned through something big with that one, and it was done. I decided to take it easy, though, and spend some time in my sanctuary. I felt like I had to figure some things out, like the persistent feeling I had of running away.

I asked for help from everyone I could think of and then surrounded myself with my shielding. On going to my sanctuary and gathering ‘the girls’, my journal says: “...suddenly a Native American appeared before me and began dancing. He wasn’t very old and looked normal, in the old Wild West movie sort of ‘normal’. You know, brown skin, long brown hair with feathers tied in it, brown eyes and a leather loin cloth. He told me I still looked outside of myself, that I lacked discipline and concentration, and he pointed out that I couldn’t even stay with my luminous being very well there. He danced and incanted around me as I lay on the beach. I really had to pee, so he placed knives in a circle around my dream body as my physical body got up to pee; but coming back to my dream body was hard, until he removed the knives. When he finished the healing, I sat back with the girls against the driftwood tree that’s there on the beach.

He stood and looked down at me and a stone, or gem, appeared between us in the sand at his feet. He said it was to help me. It was luminous, opaque, almost iridescent, yet with shifting colors. My throat felt really constricted; and as I reached to pick it up, he grabbed it and my hand together, holding them against my throat. He told me I’d blocked off my stories because I thought no one wanted to hear them, but in reality it was that I still had ego invested in them, and I was not telling them right yet. My ego having me ‘back off’ at the slightest hint of disinterest in someone was not the way. I’d come far, he said, but the ego problem had shifted and hidden its true nature, and I must look for it differently. “The Trickster,” he said, and then he left, saying he’d be back. I did not ask his name.”

I thought about it and realized he was right. My trained listener was still operating, and it was true that if someone appeared disinterested in what I was saying, I’d simply shut up and walk away from them, literally or energetically. It felt to me like I was looking for basic human consideration and kindness, and I’d get irritated if I felt I was not being shown that, or I felt I was being rejected. I saw

that I had closed off so much that I'd forgotten how to open up again. "Start looking differently," he'd said.

And so I tried. I spent time talking with friends and travelers and was so nervous it surprised me, yet I kept telling myself to open to it. I found myself relaxing to a rhythm I hadn't felt in a long time; there at the beach with friends and the time to just be, without rushing anywhere. Playing in the surf, sun and sand with no agendas and nowhere to go, wore down the walls I'd built around myself by living too fast. It was all beginning to weave its magic on me, the slowness and ease seeping into my very bones. It felt like coming alive again to myself, and while I was not quite full yet, I still had time.



The five of us had a lovely Christmas dinner together at the Italian place under the stars. I'd even gotten a wish fulfilled. We'd been talking about Christmas in our countries and what we liked and missed. I'd said that I really missed the Christmas lights and the trees. Heading down the walk to our dinner, I happened to look up, and stopped dead in my tracks. There, at the end of the path, was a tall palm tree and the entire top of it was glowing with the lights of a million fire flies! It was truly amazing and perfect and the best ever Christmas gift. Thank You!

I so loved myself, this remembered me I was finding. I was finally relaxing and didn't want to leave, so I arranged to stay on after the other teachers returned. No problem, no worries, timeless stanzas on liquid tongues...takes a lot of time, you know? And during this time, I met a man named Sigi. He was from Austria, did shiatsu massage and said he was studying to be a medicine man. I didn't know what to think about that or the stories he told me about being thirty-three and having the same birth date Jesus had. All I knew was that he had beautiful, long blonde hair and piercing blue eyes that looked deep into souls. That, and that I liked him. A lot.

I made yet another extension on my stay there as a gift to myself. From my journal: *"The gift of a very real vacation. A time to do nothing beyond what the moment brings. A time to cherish some tenderness with no strings. A time of sand castles and dragons and didgeridoos. A time of spirit. A time to remember my own spirit in the mirror of Sigi. Truly, a time to cherish...and to remember that this is a gift. Each moment a very precious gift, the likes of which I cannot remember giving to myself before. Time. Nowhere to go, nowhere to be but here. Two*

weeks of time. I cannot help but see the gift of Sigi. The reminder of all I had left for a while. The reminder of all that I still am.

There is the love, the giving of selves to other selves, but also there is the showing to me of the way. The way back to myself. I do not yet know the fullness of the meaning or of this boy with a moon and a star on his head. Such eyes! Such warmth of being! A gift of love.

There have been so many times and things ~ the sunsets, making and learning to play didgeridoos, drinking coconuts, creating my ocean's art exhibit, dinners with his friend Leo, hanging out in the bamboo tower, nights in arms. It was as if the clouds of these last months lifted away from me, leaving me clear and fresh and alive. I was easy and relaxed, curious about my world again and delighted in what I found. I watched myself and I noted that as I relaxed, the people around me responded. Young and old opened to my opening. There lay one secret revealed."

Revealed, indeed. I loved this 'me' I was finding underneath the clouds of work and pressure I kept creating. I had been back from the States since mid-October, just two-and-a-half months after my huge push for the Sun Valley show in the States. In that time I had built a porch, organized and begun the batik classes, gotten a roommate, had the snakes, was robbed again, worked a lot...and so much more that it made sense I'd felt pressure. This was Asia, not New York, remember? I was remembering.

As I laid it all down, as I returned to my relaxed self and let go of all the constraints and expectations I habitually placed on life and on myself, other people around me responded. And that was amazing. I was surprised to see that the nice little galaxy I thought I inhabited alone was actually impacting other people. I mean, I knew we all reacted and interacted, but I got to see 'up close and personal' that by my being happy, I was inspiring them and prodding seeds of happiness to grow in them.

So, a living example, a reminder to me because this wasn't Sigi's focus. It was my way, a way lost, and yet not completely. Perhaps I had only put it aside for a while, misplaced in the shuffle of all the 'doing'. I had remembered now, though, and my mind could not fully close out this new understanding.

Sigi saw the world in constant images, all of which were giving him signals. In the time I knew him, it never changed. He prayed to make tea, meditated to

write letters, found meaning in the trees and how they grew and everywhere he sensed the voice of Creator speaking to him. He made his whole life sacred by seeing it that way. There was a calm about him that down the road would drive me crazy, but for now was exactly the medicine I needed. I never realized then that his period in my life was answering my desires for a spiritual lover, expressed not so many months ago. A real miracle, thank you.

I also now understood how Asians could sit for hours watching the world and doing apparently nothing! Another ‘never’, again, because I had never understood that one. Now I did. I had the calm observer delighting in everything I saw. Eventually, I had to return to Bandung. No more delays, no more extensions. Work was waiting for me.

~ Chapter 59 ~

I returned to many hours of work, and for two days I did nothing but. I felt the ‘crush’ of humanity in Bandung, as compared to the beach. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in my life was learning to take that peace and open heart into the everyday world. It was a lesson I hadn’t yet learned. I saw that I let the frustrations build; saw how I lost track of the fact that each moment was precious and an opportunity. I saw how I forgot the wonders of the moment, and how I lost myself. When that happened, self pity would take over and fear loomed instead of trust. Whenever I lost track of that trust and faith, I would lose myself.

Yet what did this self want? My birthday was coming, and I had not planned a thing. Indeed, I didn’t really want anything except for Sigi to come through town. Now that I’d seen the ‘real me’ again, the me who was open and relaxed, I wondered how much it had to do with being loved and cared for. Maybe half, though I didn’t think more. Loving and being loved can do wonders for the whole world, it seemed. That, and great sex.

I found myself experiencing feelings of closure, as if much was being finalized, and these signaled a big shift ahead. The end of my time here was coming, and I could feel it. A part of me wanted to run back to the beach, to travel again before I left Indonesia. I wanted that traveling to be with someone, and I begged the universe to please work magic for me, bring me company on those travels.

I consulted the Runes and the I Ching on my birthday in 1996 and asked for a ‘keynote’ counsel for the coming year. I received the messages to look to my shadow side and areas of stunted growth; stay calm, listen, keep devotion to cause

and pause. It was a year for endings and new beginnings, a journey and new relationships. Yes, I felt the journey. I felt it was time to leave because, as I thought of staying in Indonesia longer, it felt wrong. Though I would deeply miss everyone and everything there, it was time to move on. This year.

Sigi did come through Bandung, as did our beach friend Leo. Leo had been at my house for about a week when Sigi arrived, and my place suddenly became quite small; so Leo continued on his adventures, maybe to return sometime. I liked Leo a lot and hoped he would.

Sigi settled into this part of my life, which was far different from the beach scene. Here, I had classes to teach, people in and out, a housekeeper with a routine and a life with schedules. We remained mirrors for each other because he could see how he had just left this same sort of life in Austria. He observed a lot, learned a lot, loved a lot, and then finally told me the truth.

It turned out that he had left a woman at home that he was still involved with. What! He'd told me that he was free for our relationship, never intimating that this meant he could *make* love, just not *fall* in love. I wondered why he was telling me this now. Either he was afraid I was falling in love with him, or that he was with me, or both. How did I keep attracting 'safe men' in my life? I wasn't looking for 'safe' anymore, but there he was, and I hadn't known. Now that I did, I saw myself creating the distance needed because, for sure, I could fall in love with this man. I decided to simply rein it in and play it all out, the few weeks we had left.

Then we had our first fight. Sigi had become angry at my constant 'surveillance' and always helping him, and he didn't feel free to do things on his own. He was right. He was also smart enough to see that when he first came here he was helpless and didn't know how most things worked. He had needed a lot of help and attention, and now he didn't. I, though, had become habituated and watched out for him long after he needed me to. I could let it go, and saw it as freeing for me, too; so I embraced it fully.

Which was a good thing to do as life was just...a lot. There were lots of people, ants, bugs and dirt all over my house. It felt like differing levels of respect between Jim, Sigi and I, and my levels were different from either of theirs. I cleaned my messes, and these...men...did not. I put things back where I found them, Jim and Sigi didn't. I watched out for our supplies of water, food and coffee and they, again, didn't. I began to get tired of the coffee grounds around the toilet

bowl, stepping on cake and food bits on the floor, stepping on the ants coming in after the food on the floor, being thirsty but having no water because no one had thought to boil more to drink. The list went on. I was a roommate and a lover, not a maid or a wife! After I was tired of it for a while, I got angry. About this time, Sigi headed out to some other island, and I asked Jim to find another place to live. I was really over the messes, the people tramping through, the lack of cleanliness and bugs, dirt and, for now, men.

Yes!

Who are we fooling here?
Success, conquest, failure games.
Are we so unlike each other?
Yes!
Oh? Want the best?
Yes!
Me, too.
Oh?
Yes I do, you know.
So?
So it matters, too.
Oh?
YES!
Really?
Oh, fuck off.
Huh?
You heard me.
No!
Yes you did.
Well.....
God!
Come *on*.....
You don't get it!
Huh?
You see!
See?
You don't see.
What?
Finally, a good question.

~ Chapter 60 ~

I headed, alone, to Pangandarang. I needed time to think, to reflect and to make some decisions. Sitting in the loft of my bamboo hut, watching the ocean through the palm trees, I found a detachment and a feeling of emptiness. On the beach I made a medicine wheel of sand and shell and played my didg to the waves that came and carried those prayers out to sea. I found calm and quiet in the steady ocean roar.

I saw that I was biding my time, and I realized that time was getting short. I needed to create a direction for my life, now that my primary goal for coming here had been realized. Did I still want a husband and children? Yes, but that I put in hands wiser than mine, and life was still happening in the meantime. I mean, it seemed like I had men coming out of my ears, none of whom were available; so it did sort of beg the question whether this was really what I wanted. Wasn't I now at the beach to get away from all the men? Yes, I had put this one in hands wiser than mine.

I took a long sunset walk down the beach to think and feel into my options. I asked for guidance with all of the conflicting feelings I had around going and staying, and the ways and means to do any of it. By the time I returned for dinner, I had a plan.

I decided I'd apply for a job at The British Institute, and if I got it, I would stay. If I didn't get it, I would then make one call to Jakarta regarding work. If that failed, I would explore the batik clothing line. If that failed, I would go home to the States. I had been thinking of America with no aversion and, to my interested mind, some desire. If I ended up going that route, I decided I'd buy a van and travel around a bit, doing batik and re-experiencing my country. That slow integration sounded nice to me. It would give me a chance to explore and see how the 'American Dream' had evolved itself in my absence. And then, there was always the option of anything else that showed up that I hadn't counted on.

I had been reading about being a channel for the Universe's energy, about following the intuition inside of me. I remembered at Christmas, feeling so alive and relaxed and how people gravitated towards me and us. How much had Sigi played a role in that? Shakti Gawain says that as we open to the intuitive energy, more and more things and people happen, coming to us naturally. Ah....how to do it? Check in moment by moment. Ask, "Can I open more?" She also says to see ourselves as a channel, literally visualize ourselves channeling this energy. While

I did that in a limited fashion already, I also saw my stumbling. Oh well, pick it all up and start again...again.

Towards the end of February 1996, The British Institute told me I had not gotten the job I wanted, but that there were other possibilities they wanted to discuss with me. I didn't have feelings about it either way. It was like 'OK, a decision has been made', now on to the call to Jakarta and start packing. Either way, at this point, I was moving - to Jakarta or the States.

Before, during, in and around all of this, I had begun checking out exporting off of Java. I found an agent in Jakarta who informed me that Indonesia allocated quotas to the islands and to the types and amounts of things they exported. Java's exports were reserved for large corporations like Calvin Klein, Nike and Vanderbilt. These giants used up all of the allotted quotas Java had. He said that the only way to export a small concern like mine was to go to Bali, and he volunteered to hook me up with an agent there. I said I'd think about it.

Rats, rats and more rats! The thought of having to move to Bali horrified me. It was a lovely place to visit, for sure, but *live* there? Images of having to live in Denpasar (which I didn't like) or near Kuta, with its hordes of short term tourists, made me shudder. I had to face it; I had an attitude about Bali, or at least Bali's tourism. Was I able to put that aside for the greater goal? I decided I couldn't. I'd had enough of impermanence in Bandung, which was like a settled community compared to Bali. My heart simply couldn't face more of that right now.

I also knew that if I ever changed my mind, it would all still be there. Right now I was a little too jaded to plop myself down in the midst of that craziness as a lifestyle. Then Jim and Sharon came over for dinner one night, and Jim asked me an important question. Where in America can you have this lifestyle? Where can you make money working fifteen hours a week and have all these benefits? We could not think of any place or way, and we gave it a lot of thought. It made it worth trying to stay another year or so.....didn't it?

My best expat friends would all be leaving soon. Werner, Wiwid and Sonja would be around, as would other local friends, but here we had no 'shared language' or culture. I knew I needed a bit of that or I'd be miserable. So many varied pulls and contradictions! This was mirroring my internal state; and I hated it ~ but couldn't change it. I simply wanted it all.

Then The British Institute offered me a job teaching at Telecom as an independent contractor. I was surprised at how excited I felt. That was a good sign. Follow your feelings! I started immediately, and it meant daytime hours, which was definitely different from the usual. I met lots of new people, and it was a bit like Sumatra had been ~ fun. The first part of this course would end late April, and was likely to continue, but no guarantees. Things were moving, again, and I held on, again, for the ride.

Then I had an interesting experience. I had been doing a practice of going into my solar plexus area to see what guidance was there. (This practice came from Gawain's book *Living in the Light*.) As I sank in, there was light and a sudden feeling of the planet, and my shocked mind said, "The whole world's in there!!!" I even opened my eyes for a moment. I was so surprised. Further probes brought radiant light and energy. Through the light at one point I saw a form coming towards me. At first it looked like some old century British royalty or nobleman, but on closer scrutiny it appeared to be a hooded monk. The robes were of very plain cloth, and I couldn't see his face. He pointed away from me, as if to say 'go' or 'go through the light'. Then I probably fell asleep because memory fades. It was a remarkable experience; profound and so very real. I liked having the way shown to me, and by a monk, no less. Yet, he didn't appear to be a Buddhist monk, which I thought odd.

Sigi came through on his last pass before heading back to Austria. After a week or so, he told me that we would have to stop being lovers so that he could focus on going home to his girlfriend, Renata. That was OK until the line, "I was afraid you would yell and scream at me." I was stunned. "When have I ever 'yelled and screamed' at you?" I asked him. Never, that's when.

This was not like Sigi, and while I knew that it was not me he was really talking about, my whole being screamed inside at being judged. My ego screamed at not being known. My spirit screamed at the sadness of it all. And I wondered at how to help us all see that it's *all* about us. Everything we point at in others is a reflection of some part of ourselves. We don't have to live in the past, we don't have to project that past onto this present, and we don't have to accuse lovers of the sins of others. I felt energy draining out of me, leaving me very tired. Could this all be the 'yelling and screaming' he was talking about? Never raising my voice but energetically going nuts inside? It could be. I'd certainly gone into reaction within. The man was certainly a blessing, and sometimes a curse.

I was aware that Sigi had come into my life to show me more than my loss of ritual and consistency. He'd also come to remind me to see the coincidences in life. I had read and re-read the *Celestine Prophecy*, which spoke to this, and now I was experiencing it more deeply. Sigi always pointed out the things he saw, and sometimes I understood and saw what he meant, while other times, I rolled my eyes thinking he'd gone just a bit overboard. Perhaps he did now and then, but there was no denying he had shown me so much. So, I cut him some slack this time.

Besides, he was leaving in a few days, and I would, truly, miss him. He had been an answer to a prayer for someone in my life with a spiritual path and more going on than drinking at the Laga Pub. I was thankful and grateful for him ~ the blessing of the love, the sensitive sex, the laughter, his magical Turkish coffee creations, his didg playing and the beauty of his spirit.

~ Chapter 61 ~

No sooner was Sigi out the door than Dad and Louise called. Literally. They decided they wanted to come visit me, coming as early as the third week of April. That was a little over a month away, and they needed details to book flights.

I puzzled over the fact that their timing 'conveniently' coincided with the end of Telecom's first contract session. It would be a good time for me to bail, if that was what all these dreams I'd had about America were indicating. I remembered thinking that I wanted to travel before I left Indonesia, and that I didn't want to travel alone. While my parents weren't exactly what I had been thinking of when I'd made that wish, they weren't not, either.

I sat down with the question of 'leave or stay', and tried out my friend Sharon's method of decision making. She had me think of the positives and negatives of an idea and make a tree - positives up from the center point and negatives down from center point. You either got a tree or a whole lot of roots. You were shooting for more tree, I gathered.

Upon reflection, I saw that a part of my needs and wants could be met outside of myself, and America provided that in the form of information, friends and emotional freedom. My largest concern had always been with the routine and boredom of it all - which was entirely within my control because I could choose my job and my living place. In America, so many did jobs which provided an income and took up all their time so that they were too drained to have enough

energy for thought, spouses, children, spiritual pursuits, play, etc. Most lives were spent working to pay the bills that a materialistic 'American Dream' lifestyle created.

That was normal there. You bought land or a house, and suddenly you were tied down to a job to pay for it. Then you had kids, which kept you occupied for eighteen to twenty some years. They scared us to death with thoughts of poverty in our old age, freezing to death because our social security wasn't enough for taxes, food, medicine and electricity. So we had to keep working.

That's the trap, the 'American Dream', and our human consensus reality about what a successful life looked like. You worked all of your life to have kids and things (or both) and then spent your retirement finally enjoying yourself. Or so everyone hoped. Or so I'd been told countless times. Too many worked at jobs they didn't love to simply survive. So many worked to afford the luxuries, the 'things' that made them feel they were succeeding, that showed the world they were successful while they numbed themselves. I absolutely rebelled against it all. I would not be intimidated and threatened like that just because everyone had bought into it. I did not care about so much of it. What was most important to me was on the *inside*, not in the outer trappings. I knew I was a resourceful survivor and would be OK no matter what. I had faith.

Everything that I believed in said that I could shape my reality, that I could put into 'being' the things that I wanted. Hadn't the past four years shown me that? Conquering my fears was top of the list. That would allow me to be clear, and if I was clear, all the rest would come to me. Divine coincidences, opportunity, money, adventure, people, and the creativity I wanted as a part of daily life would come. Holding on to my desires....ah....it would all come, Diane, just let go of your program and allow your heart to guide you. It's bound to be the greatest adventure of all.

I made a decision. I decided to leave Indonesia and return to the States. I felt deep down that I had made the decision months ago, really, I just hadn't been able to admit it to myself. It was both heart wrenching and liberating, painful and exciting. My lover of leaving and new adventures called my folks and told them I'd need their extra baggage allowance to get some of my stuff home, and they were thrilled. Four years was enough to have their daughter so very far away. We agreed that they'd come to Indonesia the last week of April, and either have an open return, or at least three weeks to travel.

I consulted the Runes and the I Ching about my decision and got a really interesting response. What struck me most about it was where it said "...that we should make friends with people of our own kind." What? What was my kind? I was ready, I wanted to find them, but I realized I didn't know what they were. What, or who, were 'my own kind'?

I realized I'd had a lot of 'kinds' in my life, and I also realized that many of them had fallen by the wayside over the years. No longer did I have the getting high kinds, the drinking to get drunk kinds, the fast cars or the easy sex kinds. How long had I complained about not being understood? How long had I simply wanted people who had *any* spiritual path? Were they my kind? And what kind was that? I had no idea. I'd simply have to begin to seek them. While I didn't know how, I did know a way ~ trust my intuition and follow it.

The I Ching had also said "Our losing friends in the east and north points to a situation in which, ultimately, there will be cause for rejoicing. The good fortune resulting from peaceful persistence will be due to our accord with the terrestrial forces." I had no idea what this would mean, either, but I'd take any good fortune that came my way. It would end up being quite prophetic, actually, but that's another story!

Another thing I found myself saying one time to Sharon, "I'm going to just travel around until I find a place that either wants me, or that I want to stay in." I remember distinctly wondering what part of me that had come from, as the thought had never been in my head before. Again, the prophetic sneaking through.

~ Chapter 62 ~

As soon as I reached the decision to leave Indonesia, jobs began to come out of the woodwork. Figures! Schools that wouldn't touch me before were offering me contracts. I just about panicked and began to waffle. Had I made the right decision? Was this happening to test me, or to show me that I really could stay longer? Then I called Cindy, who said that about two months before she had screamed to the heavens, "Diane, come home!" That settled me down a bit.

Still, I had to reiterate over and over why it was a good decision. I remembered what I'd have there that I didn't have here (like bookstores), and that I could always come back. And I really could. I also needed to settle all that I had in America if I intended to live abroad any longer. I'd need to liquidate most of my things in storage and find a way to do it differently. That made me cringe, but I

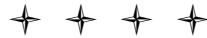
couldn't have Cindy always carrying my load, paying the random storage bill and keeping things going for me. Four years was enough, don't you think?

Somewhere around April 19th, I amazed myself at not being hysterical. I was stressed, as one might imagine; living on coffee, alcohol, no sleep and even less food while trying to do everything necessary to leave. Once again, I had managed to set up a situation where I had too much to do in a very short amount of time. Try three weeks. Hadn't I once said that one should never, *ever*, try and leave a country in less than a month? I should start listening to myself. Or was it the never say never thing, again?

I had immigration to contend with for an exit visa, private students to arrange for, I needed a yard sale in a country that didn't know about yard sales, and I had a vacation to plan for parents coming on the 23rd. Just coordinating selling furniture, and still having it there for when Dad and Louise came, was getting too much for my brain.

I picked Dad and Louise up on the 23rd as planned, bringing them home and into my 'chaos'. What a long, strange trip it had been. I actually had survived, if you can call having hives, my moon cycle twice in a month and almost getting sick 'surviving'. I kept reminding myself that I did it all to myself. It was me that had waited until the last minute to commit to leaving, me that had put off thinking about it so that I had only ten full days to get it all done. But I had gotten it all done.

I got about 500,000 rp. from the yard sale, which was amazing. Friends had snatched up the best furniture before the yard sale and, after all was said and done, I had 3,700,000 rp. Sounds impressive, right? At 2,500 rp. to the dollar, it came to \$1,480.00, but that's still amazing for Indonesia and its first yard sale! It was so funny to be haggling with people over prices, just like they did in the markets and bazaars throughout the country. At the very end, a group of women came back, and I could tell they were here for some serious bargaining. It was the end of the day, and I was so tired I wanted to just give it to them for free; but that would have ruined it for them. Why rob them of the stories they would be able to tell their friends and families about bargaining the 'bule' down to such a ridiculously low price? So we hunkered down and went at it. Several of my expat friends even stuck around to watch as no one had ever seen the likes of this before. It really was quite the scene with these village Ibu's and I haggling back and forth. I had a really good time and then, finally, it was done.



Sonja was the one person I would miss more than all of the others in this country, and she was still not well. I had told her about my parents coming, and she knew that they were Christians, too, which delighted her. They were equally excited to meet Sonja. Despite my meager cash holdings, I offered Sonja the parting gift of a vacation with us in Pangandarang. She didn't go the three rounds of saying no, thankfully. I think she saw the look in my eyes of the pain of leaving and the love of some quality time together, so she said she would be honored.

We left on Thursday for Pangandarang and made it without incident. Sonja was tired; and I got us separate rooms, so she could rest when she needed to. She was so frail; it was heartbreaking. After a day of traveling, we all settled down for the gentle rhythm of the beach. I made my 'pamaran laut', the ocean's art exhibit, on the steps to my room. We walked the beach, napped or visited in the heat of the day, ate dinner under the stars at night. It was a quiet and gentle time, and Sonja looked so much better for it. The five days passed too quickly, and suddenly I was saying goodbye to all my friends in Pangandarang, telling them I would be back one day and that I loved them.

We returned to Bandung to find that Immigration had released my passport, and I was a free woman. We did the final packing, cleaning, parties, guests and goodbyes and then headed to Bali. I'd arranged for us to take the bus over, and it was one of those get on in the afternoon and arrive the next day busses. We had deluxe tickets, which meant really nice sleeper seats, movies and snacks. Dad and Louise got to see a lot of Indonesia from that bus and none of us regretted it.

Then problems began to crop up, perhaps because we were finally traveling as opposed to going from my house to the beach and back along a known course. I hadn't realized how old Dad really was (69) or how hard traveling would be on him, though he rarely missed a beat. He had lost a lot of hearing, and he'd had one mild stroke, which Louise said had made him more uncertain, slower, more cautious and more 'security' minded. I realized the loss of hearing meant that he missed at least half of the conversations and so would be surprised by things later, which he did not like. He felt that I was inconsistent, but he often missed what led up to changing our course when 'life happened'.

The other thing that started up was the age old issue with his sarcasm and belittling comments. He told me more than once that there was nothing in this country for him and nothing he wanted to see. He said it all looked much the same

to him, and I learned he had not read a thing about Indonesia before coming. I felt like he had placed the burden on me to be and do it all. Thankfully, Louise had ideas, and God bless that woman. She was a paragon of patience.

After a couple days in Kuta, we headed to Ubud, which is a wonderful town in the mountains. I gave Dad and Louise maps and had them begin to do more on their own, so I could have a break. Ubud is Bali's cultural center of arts, dance, music and crafts. There was always something to do or see in Ubud. They did tours and dances together, and we took in the Kecak Dance, also known as the Monkey Dance. This one included the fire dance, and I was thrilled to have finally seen it. It was like a sea of waving arms, eyes and sound that were mesmerizing me into imagining a jungle full of monkeys, all chattering at the same time.

Watching the Dukun walk on fire, I wondered at how he could move so slowly and not appear to feel it. After the performance, I went up to where he was sitting on the ground, legs splayed out in front of him, and checked his feet. No burns or blisters anywhere, and I doubted that his rather impressive calluses would have stopped the fire alone. I mean, the man had danced in it! I looked into his face and wondered at the blank stare gazing back. Adrenaline shock? It was like he was in a trance and had not yet returned to this world. I left him alone to do that.

Since Dad and Louise didn't care where we went, I decided we'd go to places I'd always wanted to visit. One of those was the island of Flores with its renowned weavers. Ever since we arrived on Bali, I'd been trying to confirm seats on a flight there, with no success. One night we met an American woman name Pamela who was from Taos, New Mexico. She had been traveling alone and seemed to be tired of that. Upon hearing our plans, she asked if she could tag along, and we said yes, of course. The next day I called on the flights, and not only confirmed ours but booked one for Pamela, too. It was as if the Universe had been waiting for her to show up before giving us seats and the go ahead to fly. Now, why was that? I wondered, then let it go. If I'd learned anything from living there, it was that life would reveal itself in its own time, not mine.

The flight into Flores was definitely an adventure. Both Dad and Louise were pilots and really loved getting into this small plane whose seats were metal folding chairs bolted to the floor. You can figure, then, that there were no seat belts. I just rolled my eyes and prayed, as I knew Dad and Louise were already doing for us all. It was the landing that got a bit scary. Here we were coming in too high, which even I knew (and Louise's gasp confirmed), when a gust of wind

practically blows us off the runway. One minute the runway is there below us, and the next it isn't, and the next it is again. Somehow the pilots got the wheels down; and then both stood on the brakes and flaps to get us slowed down before the runway ended completely, and we headed into the hills. Amazing.

Pamela decided to wait for us inland, and I took Dad and Louise by minibus straight to Labuhan Bajo, on the far northwest side of the island. From there we took a boat to Waecicu Beach Hotel, which was situated on a beautiful and remote piece of ocean reached only by boat. It was glorious. Our bamboo huts were right on the ocean and protected by a score of islands dotting the horizon out our front doors. It was rustic and beautiful and all of three dollars a night, including three meals a day. We'd get up from a nap, walk out the door, dive into the ocean and be snorkeling in crystal blue, white sand waters. So very nice to just chill and recover from the journey.

The following day we headed out by boat to Komodo Island to see the famous Komodo Dragons that live there and nowhere else in the world. Komodo Dragons are a monitor lizard with tapered heads, visible ear openings, long necks, massive bodies, powerful legs and a long, thick (and even more powerful) tail. They reach an adult length between nine and twelve feet and can be quite dangerous if backed into a corner. (Ya think?) They eat wild pigs and deer that live on the island, and in the past the occasional goat, fish and child has disappeared from open family compounds. What spooked me about them was that the small ones could climb trees. Trees! They spend the first part of their lives living in trees for safety because adults will eat their own. Komodos share with goats the tendency to eat any and everything, but they especially liked rotting things.

It took a few lovely hours to get to Komodo through island studded waters and was relaxing, if a bit long. Once on Komodo, we hired the required guide to take us around. There weren't many tourists this time of year, and at first only one other couple. I immediately didn't like the island. It had been suffering from drought and was a dry, non-tropical island, which happened in Indonesia. It felt parched and dusty to me. As we followed the guide on well worn trails through the forest, we were asked to keep conversation down. Not so much for the dragons, because they were practically deaf, but because chatting would lessen our attentiveness. We wanted to see some of these creatures yet not have any surprises, like stumbling upon one we hadn't heard over our own chatter.

Eventually, we came to a staging area where I gathered they must have done the old 'lure them in with goats' years ago. My mind conjured up grizzly visions

when I'd learned about this. Groups would arrive on the island and buy a goat that they would tie up to lure the Dragons in while tourists watched them feed. Ick. Thankfully, that had stopped since the Dragons were now so habituated they hung out there anyway. No more need for goats, and there were seven or eight Komodo Dragons hanging around the area in the sun. When I first saw them, I figured only in Indonesia would they actually let people walk around, completely unarmed, with something this size also walking around, fully armed. No fences, no gates, no way to protect yourself except to climb a tree if one came at you. I imagined they could rise up on their hind legs and even chase you most of the way up a tree, too.

They were huge! They were like long Dragon tanks with legs. And they were fast. On the way in we had surprised a small one, say six foot long, that took off into the underbrush much faster than I had imagined possible for so large a being. So imagine my shock as our guide tried to sneak up on a big one to poke it with a stick. He wanted it to move and entertain us, not bask in the sun all morning long. I'm watching the guide; and when I realized what he was doing, I also realized that my dear sixty-nine year old Dad couldn't run very fast, and the wee chicken wire fence next to us wouldn't even stop me if I wanted to run through it.

The guide was nuts, I decided. A sort of craziness and cockiness bred from over familiarity. The Dragon must have decided the same thing because it suddenly whipped around so fast the guide was caught off guard, barely missing the tail that was aimed at slicing off his kneecaps. He turned a few lighter shades of brown, and the Dragon resumed its sunbathing. I could just hear it chuckling "Heh, heh, heh....that'll teach him."

We only had three to four hours to be on the island and had not been allowed to bring any food into the woods with us; so after watching the sunbathing Dragons a while longer, we continued the tour back to the docks and our lunches. Once there, we discovered a whole group of eleven tourists had been stranded because their boat had broken down. It was discussed with our captain that we could drop them at a midway island and only lose an hour ourselves, so we came to the rescue.

Going home that evening was one of the most magical voyages of my life. The light was practically alive; and when the stars came out, they shone so bright it was startling. Then Venus slowly set on the horizon like a small, orange sun reflecting across the ocean as if to touch the Southern Cross rising on the opposite horizon. I had hoped to see the Southern Cross all my life, and thanks to Louise and her astronomy skills, there it was. We dropped our tourists off at their island and headed home, tired and happy and full from this day of 'firsts'.

After another day relaxing, we headed into the interior mountains of Flores via another flight. Just making it there was an event. I had stressed the importance of our departure time to the hotel people and, of course, it didn't happen. The boat broke down, another came, and we had to be canoed out to the bigger boat. I remember looking back while Dad and Louise's canoe was being brought across by a guy using flip-flops for paddles. *Flip-flops!* Then, once we were on the plane, the pilots were staring at their instrument panel and tapping the dials to see if they were broken, or only stuck, or maybe giving an accurate reading. One guy went out, fiddled with the propeller and engine then came back in, and we took off. Scary. The landing was another rough one, but I only got nervous when I saw us heading to the runway nose down. I am certain Dad and Louise prayed enough for everyone.

Everything was going along fairly well, until it wasn't. I got us a hotel, got everyone settled and then got us into town to do some exploring. Louise and I found a shop with some ikat weavers, which was the other reason we had come to this island - for me to buy weavings. Ikat means 'to tie or bind' and these weavings are unique in that the patterns are created by painstakingly hand dying the patterns on the threads *before* they are woven. Patterns and designs depend on the village and the sex of the wearer, but I wasn't too picky about it since I'd be using them as decoration, not clothing.

Louise and I were chatting with the shop owner, asking questions and checking out the weavings. We were in there no more than a half an hour while Dad waited outside. We walked out, collected Dad, walked to the street, and I asked where they wanted to go next. Out of the blue Dad exploded with, "Shut up! Just shut up you little shit!" and then gives in to a two minute rage. At me. He won't say why, just that he's being misunderstood.

I was furious. "Fine. Find your own way home," I said and walked away across the street. I didn't tell them, but I had gone to ask some people which mini bus would get us back to our hotel. I then ducked into a shop where I could be hidden and still keep an eye on them. When I felt he had paced long enough, I went back. When I got back to them, though, he sounded off again, and stomped off up the street. Huh? When Louise and I caught up with him, we just pretended nothing had happened and that he hadn't just lost his mind a couple of times. We then went walking around town together.

When we finally got back to the hotel, however, I was still steaming. It wasn't so much that he had provided entertainment for an entire town center. I was certain they had never seen the likes of that before, in this country of saving face and never, ever showing anger. What was getting me was that this was the third day in a row that he had blown up at me with no known or apparent provocation, and I was tired of it. I'd had enough. I told him we had to talk, and we even taped it on the tape recorder Louise had brought. I told him that all I had asked of him for some twenty-eight years was that he speak civilly to me, which meant no sarcasm and no name calling. I told him he treated dogs better than he had treated me and that I would not tolerate it again. I said that I expected him to act like an adult, and if there was something he wanted to do, to be an adult and ask for it. No more tantrums because we couldn't read his mind. It was to stop, or he could find his own way home.

At one point he said he'd probably still say 'OK you little shit', and I told him that kind of approach would close off all further communication. He had a college degree; he could do better than that. He agreed to try, and we all went to dinner...but I was spent. I'm sure they were exhausted, too.

The whole thing was really scary for me on many levels, not the least of which was the fear that I could ever become like him. I wondered if I would become angry, too, if I lost my hearing or my memory or my independence. I just prayed that I aged with grace and style instead of resentment and anger.

And after our talk, Dad was an angel. Talk about scary. It reminded me of when I was married, and I spanked one of Dave's daughters. She settled right down and behaved herself for the rest of the week, as if she had just been testing me and now could relax. I was so tired at this point, though, I figured 'whatever works'.

We continued around Flores, stopping for a few days, then a travel day, then stopping for a few days. Pamela caught up with us, and we met a British couple, Claire and William, that we really liked. We all enjoyed sunset dinners together after days spent wandering or reading. Dad had a long talk with William one afternoon, which William shared with me later.

It turned out that Dad had been struggling with control and the realization that he had to give it all up to me, and he hated that. He'd always been the 'head of the family' and the decision maker, and now his daughter had that role. In Indonesia, he didn't speak the language, didn't know the customs, had no idea how to

get himself around, and all of that scared him. While he thought I was doing a great job, he was having trouble relaxing because it was all so very strange and different for him. He was trying, but it was hard. His hearing difficulties made it even worse because he missed so much that was said. I thanked William for sharing this with me and, while I wished Dad could have said it himself, at least now I had some insight into what had been going on. I could help him more and not take it for granted that he had understood something or that he was OK. Dad had said that I'd had moments of inconsistency and after some thought on it I realized that it was OK. I was reacting to an ever changing world that had me changing as a consequence. I think the hardest thing for him was that I didn't verbalize all the thought processes as they were changing, and I resolved to try to. I realized, through this, that I didn't do the 'chit-chat' thing anymore.

Perhaps because I'd become a loner, I frequently found all the words most people used to be bothersome. It felt like talking just to create a...what? I didn't know. There didn't seem to be a 'wait and see' attitude, although Dad had certainly been trying. It was like thoughts came into people's minds, and they spoke them, no matter what. It was the obvious ones that seemed most odd to me. "It's beautiful," wasn't so bad. It was the elaborations like, "Look at the colors: the reds are great, the browns so gorgeous, the blues amazing," that began to get to me. I found all the talking was breaking my connection with the beauty. They wanted me to focus on them, by way of listening to them, when my focus was on appreciating the beauty - not their views on it. I saw that most people called this 'sharing', while I was currently calling it annoying. A part of it was the generational differences between Dad, Louise and I, while the other part was that we'd now been together for weeks, and my loner was feeling crowded.

I understood that I had chosen to walk away from many 'normal' paths and customs, like polite chit-chat. I found that hard to even say because I considered myself so very normal at the same time. People told me I was not (normal), and in so doing they showed me a reflection of what they considered 'normal' to be. I was saddened by the views they shared. Many said that my listening, honesty, directness and compassion were not normal. Hearing this, I wondered what sort of world we had created. But then, I knew the answer to that one. They lived in this world, this consensus reality, the one(s) I had flown away from and would again. Oh where, oh where were 'people of my own kind'?

Crazy

So you think I'm crazy?
I walked away,
 you say,
 from it all?
I left, I ran, I flew
 you always knew
 I was odd?

Hmmm...
Seems a game of playing your projections
 against a reality you don't
 clearly see - *your own*,
because I think you see mine
 somewhat better.
She speaks her mind
 but she thinks too much;
she cares about people
 but isn't discriminating;
she's always busy
 but what weird endeavors;
she travels a lot
 but that's dangerous alone;
she doesn't mind solitude
 but she doesn't get out enough;
she's independent
 but she acts like she doesn't need us;
she listens
 but doesn't take our advice.
You're right on one thing....I flew.

Our time was coming to an end; and as we flew back to Bali, I began to think ahead to Jakarta, Bandung and then Portland. I hadn't thought of America the whole time I'd been getting us in, through and out of the islands. I still had my dream, to drive around a bit, look and see America again. I knew I could get distracted with friends really quickly and easily, and I needed to get on the road as soon as I could once I got there. Pamela insisted that I come to visit her in Taos, if I came through New Mexico. Taos was a place I'd said never about once, so that was a thought. I had been rereading Shakti Gawain's *Living in the Light* and

wanted my intuition to play center stage in the months to come. That and trust. My finances were so slim, I had to trust. I also wanted openness to be a central theme. More and more opening.

After a few days on Bali, we made the last leg to Jakarta, where Dad and Louise picked up my extra bags to take back and store for me. Then they began their long flight home. When all was said and done, they had been there for a month; and it was a miracle it had gone as well as it had. We'd had fun, we'd had fights, we'd had laughter and tears; and I think we were all ready to move on. I was really happy they had come, that my wish for travel companions had been answered, and that we loved each other so very much.

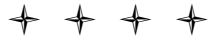
~ Chapter 63 ~

I visited friends in Jakarta, saying goodbye to Suresh and others before heading to Bandung and the last leg of this Indonesian adventure. I got to Bandung to find that my house had been robbed again while I was away. All that had been in the house were my two bags of things I really valued that were going home with me. I found it interesting how they had been opened and what had been taken.

It was as if the thief knew what was in which bags, and for the first time ever I had sacred objects and crystals taken. I began to suspect that a young man named Dadung, who I had been dating for the month before Dad and Louise came, might have been the thief. He was totally taken with my crystals and amulets. He had once commented on the only piece of clothing that was stolen (a black silk shirt), and he had helped me pack everything. He knew that one box held only a musical instrument and some clothes, and I found it interesting that this box had not been opened beyond one corner.

All of the jewelry Raouf had given me, all of my crystals and charms, the amulet Behram had placed around my neck that day in India ~ all gone. It wrenched my heart terribly to lose those things. The thief had broken in a back window and had somehow known there were bags in the house, hidden out of view in a back room. No, it must have been someone that knew me, and I was to stay angry about this one for many years to come.

So, goodbye Indonesia. Too bad that this was my parting gift from you, but so it was. A lesson in attachment and not accumulating 'stuff', and I felt like divesting myself of the rest of it, though I knew the feeling would pass.



Finding out that Sonja was back in the hospital really threw me. She had been in there for two weeks when I walked in, and she reached out, hugged me long and sort of went “Ahhh.....” I had brought her yogurt and watched to make sure she ate all of it, which she did almost as if she were starving. I told her I’d bring her more. By the next day, they said she could go home, but I could hardly believe she had recovered so quickly. She said I had been the medicine she needed.

While I sat with her, we had a quiet, eyes closed, few minutes together; and I focused a huge amount of healing energy on and in her. Maybe that was what had shifted her and not the yogurt. In either event, the yogurt was held down; and she was eating by the next morning and sent home later that afternoon. She was the hardest person to leave in Indonesia, and I cried all the way home. It felt like I’d never see her again.

I did not cry leaving Kirk and the crew, though I did at leaving Wiwid. It was odd, or normal, actually. By the time I finally go, I’m committed to my new direction with a sort of resolve. I felt no real pangs at leaving Indonesia. I believed I would be back again. I was leaving in my usual style of all in a hurry, some loose ends needing tying and moving too fast for much thought. My lover of leaving caught the train to Jakarta and focused on the next step: rediscovering America, finding people of my own kind and finally discovering what that actually meant.

~ Epilogue ~

So many on spiritual paths look to teachers and think, “If only I was more like them I’d be better, this work would be easier and I’d be further along by now.” The thing about teachers and guides is that we don’t encounter them until *after* they’ve done the work, made most of the mistakes and course adjustments that got them to where they are. We rarely hear the process they went through because, by then, they’re teaching us what insights they’ve learned and how great it is to attain them. If they’re good, they are also teaching how to actually get there ourselves, including the practical steps to do it.

This story (and those to come) is about the process, about the mistakes, detours and course adjustments made on my life’s journey towards ‘The Truth’. One thing I did discover was that ‘The Truth’ is so vast it cannot be contained within

any one tradition unless that tradition accepts no limitations. What I was shown were spirals.

Imagine you take a length of string and begin wrapping it around a stick. You hold the stick and look at the string as it spirals up and around it. At some point you can't see the string at the back of the stick unless you turn the stick and look at it from a different direction. If you hold the stick up to your eye like a telescope, you can't see beyond the first spirals of the string. You can't see much of the string at all. This is how limited our view of reality and the truth is. The string keeps going, but we can't see it all unless we change our perspective and learn more about it. As we gain more insight and a broader perspective, things change. What may be true on one level of the spiral was not imaginable on the levels below it, or even a consideration at the levels above it. There are levels we get to where some considerations no longer have relevance at all.

It's like with the Earth being round. Before Columbus' time, the world was flat and that was that. Everyone knew it. They could no more conceive of it being round than flying to the moon. And look at what we know as 'true' today. Even that changes yearly with advances in science and technology. You simply cannot limit The Truth! It is vast and, from our very limited perspective, ever changing. It cannot be contained by any one segment of 'human consensus reality' because we don't know what we don't know.

Yet, there are a lot of explorers out there who have been farther along the spiral than you or I or some of them. I imagine it as spiritual leap frog. People learning and combining knowledge to take The Truth into ever more refined teachings and directions. And, there are many. That's why, when you find something that resonates within your heart (and not your head) as a 'Truth' ~ follow it. Study and learn about it, but don't hold it up as the *absolute* Truth because that would be foolishness. The world is not flat. Keep options for expansion open for yourself. As long as you accept that there are options for expansion, you won't focus *only* on what one tradition has taught, and you won't miss the amazing teachings coming from later ages, peoples and times like these. Brilliant people connected to the Divine didn't stop when our most sacred texts were written. They have been with us through the ages, trying to help us to see and grow.

Also, you don't have to give anything up, or make any compromises to expand and deepen your understanding. Really. That was my biggest fear in the beginning, and I found it to be completely untrue. I didn't have to give up a single thing, or change any of my most fundamental beliefs, in order to expand my

consciousness. The things that dropped by the wayside did it of their own accord because I ‘gave up’ nothing. I simply grew. Just open your hearts and minds and become a student again, a student of life and of yourself.

Faith the size of a mustard seed. Have you seen one of those? They’re like the period at the end of a sentence. Small, very small. It has been said that much faith can move mountains. Today, I know this has multiple meanings. I mean, if the guy that said this could walk on water and feed multitudes from a few fish and loaves of bread, then moving a mountain isn’t such a leap, now is it? But few of us have, apparently, that much faith, and those that do probably like the mountains exactly where they are. The thing is, Jesus also said that everything He could do, we could do, *and more*. Mustard seeds. Simply that much faith. My story is, for me, about having the faith that moves mountains ~ mountains of fear, uncertainty, disbelief, fear of the unknown, fear of failure and fear of success. These have been my mountains.

We’ve all heard stories of saints, monks and regular people doing the remarkable. All is not as it seems. Like walking on fire. Remember the Dukun on Bali whose feet I checked out? I remained curious about that one for a long time and finally had the opportunity to firewalk myself. We’ve been trained all our lives that fire burns so don’t touch, don’t get too near. So what is all that past training to *do* when we walk on fire? My experience was that it had given up and run away for a bit, leaving me blissfully quiet as the ‘knowing’ opened, and I walked, completely unharmed, over eleven hundred degree coals. Moving mountains. I then got to watch how my mind immediately dismissed it and cut it all down. The fire wasn’t that hot, it’s not that big a deal, everyone can do this, etc. It *was* that big a deal and it, too, was an exercise in watching the mind; our ideas of what’s true and our conditioning as to what’s *impossible*.

If we’re quick, and don’t listen when the mind comes back later and tries to argue with the experience, we find that the mind begins to give up and loosen its control in other areas as well. I found that my mind began to accept, in the face of experience, that everything we’ve been told is not necessarily The Truth. All is certainly not as it seems; and if we can get that, if we can know it experientially, we can step outside of self-limiting beliefs and do the remarkable. If we do not blindly accept the (well intentioned) counsel of our friends, families and traditions, we open doors of perception and opportunity we previously couldn’t see. Behram often said to me, “The journey is not in gaining new vistas, but in having new eyes.” Many have tried to get this through to us. The question is, “When will we listen?”

David Wilcox wrote in a song: “When you lay your dreams to rest, you can get what’s second best, but it’s hard to get enough.” I’m sure you can feel the truth of that. If we are not following our hearts, following the dreams our hearts implore us to pursue, it is hard to get enough. Perhaps, like me, you have an impossible dream. You put it off because you don’t know how to do anything else. You wait, but the dream doesn’t go away. You ‘make do’ with what is in your life while fear of the unknown chains you to the status quo. After all, it isn’t so bad, is it? If you are like most humans, it isn’t enough; it isn’t full, and it isn’t fully satisfying. All you have to do to head towards your dream is to make the decision that you really want it. You look your fears fully in the face and say, “OK, I see you, but I’m going to do it anyway.” You pull Intent out of the garage, dust her off, fill her up, turn her on and put your foot on the gas. Take action, and see what happens. I put a sign up in an Asian market, and look where it got me.

My adventure didn’t stop with this story, nor did my search for ‘The Truth’. It continued and continues. My original intent with this book, after all, was to simply make the voice in my head whispering ‘write me’ stop. Period. I had succeeded, for a whole two weeks, before the next voice rose up and said, “Good job. Now publish me.” What! Well...I ignored that for a few years, too, but here it is.

I can’t count how many people have told me how hard it is to get published. *Everyone* has. Am I listening to them? Nope. Am I going to ignore this voice for another eleven years? I hope not that long. I know what it feels like now to be called to do something, and I’m going to do it. I put my foot on the gas and began editing, admittedly wondering why this was happening to me, but figuring I’d find out sooner or later. And yes, it is later than I thought because I detoured and wrote another book of Toltec Wisdom, ‘How to Potty Train Your Brain’, that was published in 2013. For you reading either book, know that I added another ‘THANK YOU’ and more miracles to my list of many. See? This process works.

In fairness now, the question remains, why did it take me so darned long? Why did it take me almost twelve years to finally follow the call of my spirit and write this? I’m a slow learner? Well, that might be true. I had also been busy devoting the years after my return from Indonesia to fully exploring my spiritual path. I found ‘people of my own kind’ first in an ecumenical spiritual retreat center called the Lama Foundation north of Taos, New Mexico, that honors all faiths as moving ‘Towards the One’. I spent four years at Lama and afterwards, I moved into Taos and immersed myself in the teachings of the Toltecs. Toltec means ‘Artist of the Spirit’ or ‘men and women of knowledge’ and it is an approach to life,

rather than a religion. It is in this tradition that I finally, after over thirty years of searching, found my spiritual ‘home’. It is a tradition that bars nothing, includes everything, and who’s basic premise is ‘look inside and see for yourself’ (because that’s where the answers are). I’d add to that ‘Question Everything’.

For each of us to take a stand for ourselves, to go for our dreams and not settle for the ‘status quo’ would be remarkable. And that is exactly what these times are asking of us. Look around, make changes, follow your heart and enrich your life. Find others who are looking and changing, too, for as this story shows, it can be lonely out there. But there are people in every tradition and in every modality moving ahead, moving beyond self-limiting beliefs. Go out and find them. Listen to the leading teachers, read their books, attend workshops, get yourself off the couch and doing something. *Anything!* Put your foot on the gas. The car named Intent won’t move without it.

“For those who believe, no proof is necessary. For those who don’t believe, no proof is possible.” Stuart Chase

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