

### ***Chapter 3***

## ***Dennis, College Love***

## ***October 1970-August 1978***

We were the perfect college romance because we could never have loved outside that ivory tower. Our roots grew in different soils, our dreams landed on opposing galaxies and our paths would deny so much of the other, that only in college, during the tail end of the Sixties, could we merge. I lugged my emotional history into your heart and you opened your stash of hashish, marihuana and LSD. We imbibed what was best in each other until only the dregs of ourselves remained at the bottom of our Holy Grail. When I write of you, I do not know if you were eloquent then and I did not hear you, or I manufacture your words from desire. I miss your long, violin fingers touching my back, my thighs and passing over my curves and into every inch of my belly. You were untiring, as if I were a besieged castle and the only way to release me was to caress me. Your touch was more gentle than mine, rhapsodic, broken by movements of the day with others and our long, lingering dreams at night.

Reviewing these words written years ago, I have betrayed you a second time. I glossed over the moment I lost you. It was my action that killed our love. I read these words and wonder how much truth can possibly be in them. Long ago, I would have found excuses. Now, even the excuses are not enough to allow me to forgive myself for what I did to you: the problems with birth control, the biochemical after effects of LSD, and the horrors of Vietnam with my Lottery Number of 19 and yours something like 221 or maybe even lucky 321. More than 30 years after our love, I will try to be honest. Even this is not enough to forgive me. I will need for you, someday, to find me and forgive me. If you can.

Mark switched off the overhead light and lit three candles: one beneath the red Indian blanket hanging like a mural

on the sloping wall, another by his expensive stereo system and extensive album collection, and the third on a bookcase over his bed. He also lit some wisteria incense I brought for atmosphere.

I removed my coat and sat on his bed, leaning against the wall. Psychedelic geometric day-glow posters mixed with "Yellow Submarine" movie posters and anti-war fliers. He answered a knock on the door and introduced you, Dennis, and his other friend Tom. I didn't recognize you, although you said we had met before. You quickly make yourself at home by placing Moody Blues in Search of the Lost Chord on the stereo while we nervously discuss the weather. You situate yourself at the foot of the bed while Tom curls into a beanbag, the corner acting as cave-like protection. All three of you wear glasses so I feel compelled to wear mine.

"Are glasses necessary to see on LSD?" I ask.

Everyone laughs, but I don't understand the joke.

Mark removes the Windowpane from his stash and explains its name to me, saying it originated from the clear plastic substance the LSD was dropped onto. He has already sliced it and assures me it is pure, not laced with strychnine. He gives each of us a piece. I stare at the innocent-looking stuff on my fingertip. "Why isn't it in sugar cubes?"

Mark reminds me Champaign is not Haight-Ashbury.

"But it used to be in sugar cubes, here on campus," I protest, but all three of you look blank. I explain how my dorm friends did LSD back in Æ68 and Æ69, with sugar cubes and four-way tabs.

"Put it in your mouth," Mark tells me impatiently. He has agreed to drop acid with me for the first time because I had once made love with him for the first time, but now he is angry.

"I feel I should say a prayer, as if this were my first Holy Communion," I say. You, tall and thin, sitting at the foot of the bed, do not understand, so Tom explains the Catholic ritual miracle of Transubstantiation of bread and wine changing into Jesus Christ's actual body and blood during Mass, and how Catholics eat small, thin, round wafers of Communion bread and thus Christ becomes a part of them.

Mark groans, "Oh God, a religious trip!" I look at him. "Put it in your mouth, now," he commands.

I want to ask him what he means about a religious trip, but he holds his hand to me to stem my words. He leaves the bed and turns the music louder. The Moody Blues speed through galaxies as we talk about classes, homework, the weather and politics. I wonder what happens on one's first trip through the birth canal because I see an old, white-haired man, golden-robos, with a black staff, leaning against a rush of wind and calling out directions: turn east in the morning û then his voice is muffled by a drugged birth entrance and someone is saying, "This sure is strong LSD."

Mark shakes his head. His wavy hair floats about his face as if he is in water. My eyes widen, then become wild.

Someone pats my leg, "It's okay," he says. "Smoke this," and hands me a jay. I feel like Alice in Wonderland, drinking the contents of the bottle labeled, "DRINK THIS."

"What good will smoking marihuana do? Won't it make me high?" I ask.

Everyone laughs. "Takes the edge off the speed, Anais," Mark says. We sit next to each other for a while, the he moves away. I need at least a millimeter of his bodily warmth to ground me in safety, and eventually crowd him into a corner.

"How long does it take to hit?" I ask.

"Thirty to 45 minutes," Tom answers. I look at Tom and realize his lips didn't move. I turn to you, Dennis, at the foot of the bed. You nod, so I think it was you who spoke.

"Isn't that now?" I ask and look at my watch. The black markings make no sense. The second hand, or was it some other device, races wildly in circles and then I see a sundial stand atop my watch. No one answers my question so I repeat it into the air. Mark tells me to be quiet and touches another jay to my elbow," Have some more of this."

"Smoke fire?" I ask in amazement.

"Yes," he says, his voice sharp.

"Didn't you notice it starting?" Tom asks from the corner as he huddles to ward off the snow which clings to all our clothes.

I am not fond of snow and cold, so I shift my eyes to the red-blood Indian print spread about the stereo and notice the wavy vines breathe in tune with my mind and the music. Then, ever so gently, the vines are not just breathing on the spread, but they are leaping from the walls and into 360 degrees about me. Pheasants and peacocks flutter from one branch to another. A nightingale sings and I am transported into a jasmine garden, with Middle Eastern time. Intricate, geometric blue lines in calligraphy upon the wall of blue mosques beckons. Magically, I see exotic trees and radiant flowers I cannot name but can only stare at in wonder and inhale their rich perfumes. Dusk comes to this grand palace where the desert is hot, but home.

I shake my head in awe and the vision clears: I am back in the fraternity room, all cozy and normal, with books and candles. Someone is saying, "That was very nice," but the voice issues from no human source and Mark is not next to me. He is across the room, leaning against the record

rack, staring at me. I don't know how much time elapses. He holds up his hand, American-Indian style, and points to an image he is building on the wall beside himself.

His body emerges from the side of a huge black iron steam engine, huffing and clanging its way across the just-completed traces of the First Continental Railway. I think this means he is leaving me so I protest. He shifts my gaze from his face to the countryside.

His lands are ablaze with the images of the silent Indian receiving his strength from the Great Spirit long before the white man pollutes his lands. Sun Dance follows initiation rites, birth rituals follow mating games. He twists me around his inner core, showing me our love was mutual, yet old and cannot be renewed in this life.

It is true, we had loved and our only bond has been his initiation into manhood and this LSD trip that is his return gift to me. I feel love is boundless: that it has no time, rites, ages of manifestation. That one small kernel of love can blossom into an eternity, a world of brilliant colors that are floating pass me faster and more beautiful than the 88 crayolas I played with as a child.

I look at Mark, but he refuses to share the colors. He refuses to speak, as he has often refused when we dated. Instead, he directs my attention back to his images.

His is white now, racing towards the Pacific Coast with drug dealing. The steam engine reappears, him as the engineer with a red bandana about his forehead, yanking the warning bell. Buffalo slow leave the track but the iron bulk resists my hand fluttering a white handkerchief. If I remain and he continues at that speed, I will be like Buster Keaton: plastered to those huge iron teeth. I move off the track and try hitch-hiking into his future.

The eye within sputters into an Old Faithful geyser as his train fades into the distance and I stand in the desert. I hear voices trying to locate my distress on various maps, but the feelings connect with my birth in 1950, at 87

degrees west longitude and 41 degrees north latitude and the man called Father..

I close myself off and no sound penetrates my monk-like cellar; only the Cross of Christ and my altar to God, piled high with all the hours of singing Latin at the 8:20 mass in grammar school.

"Why have you come to me with drugs?" God asks.

I look at the source of the voice and recognize God from my childhood dreams.

"I didn't think I was worthy because of all the men I've bedded," I confess.

"You know this breaks our Covenant?" God's voice sounds exactly like Charelton Heston in "The Ten Commandments." It has a strong, ringing quality, as if it were issuing from the center of my mind. I adopt my childhood persona when I often sat in his lap. He has the same throne and I assume my small, scrawny, bowlegged five-year-old self. I look around the huge hall for a chair.

"You have sinned!" God thunders, rising from His throne.

Startled, I cease dragging a wooden chair from a dark corner and look at Him. I haven't seen Him that belligerent Jehovah in so long, and remember the time times we played like that, that I laugh and his face brightens. "Just teasing to see which God you prefer," He says.

He gathers his robes and resumes sitting. He points His open palm to His side, making a golden throne almost as elaborate as His own, with intricate gold work and inlaid precious stones. This is one of our old jokes, the thrones. Sometimes He gives me a student chair, like the one I was dragging from the corner; other times, it is my grandmother's horsehair couch or plush velvet cushions or a Persian magic carpet.

I settle into the junior throne and immediately feel like

Queen Jane of England in the White Tower and myself reading her biography when I was nine years old. I read how her father allowed others to scheme to make her Queen after the death of Henry VIII, and how the Court bloodied itself and the land with legitimacy claims. Jane was a Queen for nine days before being sentenced, like her young husband, father and other conspirators, to the Tower. Queen Elizabeth, her cousin, reluctantly signs her beheading papers the following year.

Her newly-wedded husband is beheaded outside the castle's Lions Gates, a boisterous crowd at his feet, drinking the thick mead and breathing the heated swearing a bloodthirsty cheer only the English can give their drawn and quartered royalty. Jane is executed before a private group within the castle's walls. On a small hill. Minutes after her husband's death.

Jane is extremely religious. She reads her prayer book and Bible as she waits those long months in the Tower. She forgives her father before her death and imparts an impassioned plea on the hill for all those present to join her in prayer before she is beheaded on February 12, 1542. Since her death day follows my birth day, I feel linked to her.

"I like this place," I say, hearing Jane's voice within my own. "The white-washed walls and dome are elegant. You have many angels protecting us up there," I say, pointing towards the encircling dome and flutter of golden-egg yellow angles, their wings preventing demonic intrusion.

"Enough," God says. What brings you here this time? I am certain it is not death, but some event akin to it."

My memory whites out into a blinding light - so beyond words and images even, that I only catch the tail end of our exchange: God is asking me why I repeat the same problem.

"Again?" I ask and Edgar Cayce's talks of reincarnation, matches with Jane Robert's Seth books - are like English

101 compared to this graduate school enterprise.

The kaleidoscope of my lives dance before me and God. We stare into the veil as it breathes images and I see the problem repeat itself in each life. The images condense into a circle and pulls us into its center. Then only two vague shadows of a man and woman's profile, trying to talk, linger before us.

I am speechless. Words evaporate from my tongue and I look with horror mixed with saddened love.

God smiles and clears the two shadows into a plethora of moving pictures. I see Jane's father scheming for the throne, a man sentenced to Stalin's camps, another man who jilts a French woman. All this lurches into my mind with a corresponding energy infusion into my body. I clutch my stomach and worry if I am going crazy when someone's voice calls out, "It's only the LSD, you're not crazy."

Huge letters of "L", "S", and "D" float above the images which fade into a mish-mash of rainbow colors which have no name because they are only visible within variations of light-waves opened to the inner third eye. Their brilliance and novelty absorb the grays and browns of my fears.

"What else is new?" God interrupts.

I am back in the Chapel of St. John's. I touch the diamonds, rubies and emeralds on the throne's arms. "I'm to learn to love my father?" I ask in disbelief.

"Steady on!" God says, reviving Mick, my first lover. God's hand jokingly nudges mine, "Old hat," He says, pointing to his own head. "Stuff hidden beneath your own head. The lesson to learn is to forgive him for real and imagined hurts."

"I can't!"

God flashes into Jane, her noble face aged well pass 17 in

those nine regal days then months in the Tower, then her last moment in the Chapel Royal before her Council.

"Within that experience, lies your answer," God says and fades into thin air. The angels' rustling wings calm the demons' attack, but they will remain only for a short time after His departure. I call upon my Guardian Angel who carries me from the throne and flies across the dark spaces of the universe, rushing me home to Earth as I cry in his arms. My tears mingle into the memories of Bob Dylan's "Self-Portrait" two-record album.

I lean against Mark's back, holding onto his mind for dear life. To my right, on the wall beside us, our shadows appear as two on one tired, old horse, wading through the moonlight Arizona saguaro desert, tumbleweed catching my tears and rolling away with them.

I raise my head from his back, brush my nose with my hand. Someone offers me a white handkerchief and I look at the three of you staring at me.

"You sure cry a lot," someone says.

"I'm a girl. Aren't I?" and cry again for being a woman and not a man, and then I am off into an entirely different journey of images. I am surrounded by the French Revolution and earlier periods in France, including the Poison Affair. I am also a whore rescued from sin by my voluptuous body and a kind gentleman, the name Balzac engraved somewhere among these ruins.

That series of images pass quickly, like a speeded up movie without dialogue. I hear the film flutter as the story plays out and no new reel replaces it. The end of the film keeps sputtering while I wait for another set of images. Soon another projection resumes making images in 360 degrees, only this new existence is on another planet where the Blue Race trains Earth royalty for Earth incarnations. I am initiated into the Scared Tower by one

of my sisters who shows me the realms of the planet Venus.

I sense a tingling in the middle of my forehead and open both physical eyes, then close one. I attempt to perform a miracle on my first LSD trip: cure my blind eye and be whole again, with full sight. I leave my good left eye close and look into the room with my blind right eyes. I see images with it, but the images form into hallucinations more quickly and then overlap with the internal, closed-eye images and the two merge into one new set that elevates my vision into another plane of reality, but the strain to retain the new, more rarified air hurts. I hold my head and close both eyes. I ask Mark if he has his eyes open or closed as if the answer will mean something, but I don't believe his answer.

I hear my sister's voice describe the history and work of the Blue Race. I lift my head and am surprised to be in the Sacred Tower again. I look at the surrounding farmlands, notice a field blocked off with time, each square a different day, year, century, superimposed upon wheat, corn, gold and silver. A breeze blows the fields into a Van Gough painting and then I notice children and medieval-robed adults in a nearby village frolicking in a novel manner, more akin to ballet dancers than picnickers.

"This is the Power and the Glory and the Kingdom," my sister intones as pastel colors charge the electromagnetic waves into separate rainbow threads — like Beethoven manipulating a hundred different chords, like an old woman spinning her flax and drying her herbs by an open fire. She automatically caresses the round, wooden wheel, polished smooth from her fingers as her foot upon the pedal continues the rhythmic motion. I see the blue blood of my race corrupted in time and space upon Earth, our claim to rule by Divine Right our only hold over from our origins, our crown jewels of spiritual wisdom have become muddied by Earth's dense air. We have lost all our powers.

"You too shall fall from grace," my sister Initiator says.

deny her assertion and lose the vision, then her saintly blue eyes evolve into the woman within me who constantly answers my monologues with the phrase, "And she said nothing." I wander in the empty Tower and hear a voice faintly warn me, "A vision must be earned, not forced open by drugs."

I cling to that voice as the Tower's walls disintegrate and I fear I will melt and be lost in some Victoria Falls kaleidoscope of images through more blinding lights and another time tunnel.

I am at the 16th century French court, dressed in a bejeweled, low-bosomed gown of the nobles. I admire the green brocade and velvet, the white pearls strung elaborately and generously along its bodice, but it transforms into a plainer English court dress, then an American Indian buckskin. I look up to those around me to steady my pace.

The sister from the Tower stands talking with two others. I feel I am watching a scene from my own life, but theatre characters enact the drama. My sister places her hand lightly on another woman dressed in beaded buckskin while the woman in the English court dress stands aside. Faintly, in the background, I see a man in French court dress. I cannot comprehend all these historical periods simultaneously and pay attention to the conversation so I lean against wall to eavesdrop.

"Part of you knows this," my sister says, acting as director, "but part of you refuses to accept this truth."

Like a late orchestra ticket holder, I wave my hand at the group on the Globe stage, "I hate to intrude, but can you start this from the top again? I missed the truth you're discussing."

The characters on stage smile, although the Frenchman grows fainter and blurs into the 12th century Flemish

tapestry.

"It's all right," my sister says. "Earth time clouds one's visions."

"Drugs loosen the dirt from the inner eye," I challenge.

"Dreams," she admonishes and talks with the English woman.

Queen Jane bows to her teacher and rises from a deep curtsy and asks in a liquid voice, "If this be a dream, why dost thou speak of herbs from the wonderman?"

My sister directs Jane to center stage and beckons me to climb the side steps and join them. Jane holds out her small, ringed hand. It remains suspended as I ponder my right to touch such a royal hand.

I then find myself a man, bending towards her hand. As her husband's brother, I welcome her into the family with a kiss. My eyes flash about the room to smile at the bride, but I am dislocated by a great electrical storm. Mark watches me stare at you, Dennis, at the foot of the bed. Colors surround you in concentric circles. You point to my legs. I look at them and see them lengthen and flow into your colors. I unwind them and the muscles creak in protest, then return to normal legs. I turn to Mark and talk to him, but feel the heat from your eyes penetrate my spine. Mark stands from the narrow bed. "Anyone want to go to the Red Herring Coffeehouse?"

I look towards you for direction. You shake your shoulders and the colors surrounding your body and head break into black flagged musical notes that pulsate in the air. "Sure," you say and push your long, thin body from the bed while I remain seated. The three of you stand before me, giants in some foreign land.

"Are you going to stay here alone?" Mark asks as he pulls his woolen cap over his ears. Even Tom has uncurled himself from the corner, disturbing the fetal position he

has been in most of the night. Mark switches off the stereo and has his coat on. I am unable to adapt so quickly to such mundane matters a putting on my 20th century hat and coat.

"I guess it's not a good idea to be alone on your first trip," I say.

Mark looks at me. You, him and Tom find my words ridiculous for some strange reason. The three of you tower over me, waiting like the stone giant faces on Easter Island.

"Stop doing that, for Christ's sake!" Mark yells and shoves my hat and coat at me.

"Stop doing what?" I ask as I slowly push my hands through the arms of the coat which you hold open for me. I marvel at the funny round things on its front and cannot figure what they are or how to use them. Mark swears and leaves the room.

You button my coat and we follow him from the fraternity house into the cold October night. Winter-cold moist air curls around my long hair, enters my ears and wraps itself around my DNA and RNA strands. I left my hat at the house and it is too late to return for it, so I dig my hands deeper into my coat pockets.