

CHAPTER ONE

Awareness Dawns

April 9, 1989

“She gave me life. I gave her death. With her death, she gave me back my life. In learning how to live again after her death, I realized she had given me something else . . . courage.”

From a letter to Kimberly

April 10, 1991

I was dying while I was living, living while I was dying. I was afraid I wouldn't die and I was afraid I would. I died in a plane crash. I fell from a mountain cliff. I felt the sudden rush of fear that announced the profound terror of death. I felt the fear that short circuits a nervous system: the fear that crawls through your mind and body and either renders you powerless or makes you super human. Contemplating suicide calmed my mind and terrorized my body. Contemplating living calmed my body and terrorized my mind. In the contemplating, I had visions and I heard things. My ego disappeared leaving me alone and floating in the void. I experienced a nothingness that was profound. The nothingness was something and soon it, too, disappeared into the void

May 30, 1991

Eighty-one days since I left Denver and Patricia has moved in downstairs: my downstairs, my space, my home. The space I completely renovated after my mother's death. You will live upstairs and I will live downstairs, I told you, and this time . . .

this time it will work. It worked for the summer only. Then it started all over again: the affairs, my depression and withdrawal, your aggression and withdrawal, your endless phone conversations with clients. I knew you were sleeping with some of them, but I did not want to know, so I didn't think about it.

Eighty-one days since I left Denver, and I am lonely and sore. I have adjusted to the ten years being over. I have not adjusted to someone else living in my space. But what did I expect from the woman who was having an affair as my mother lay dying? She came for the holidays and three months later she was dying and you were sleeping with another woman. You told me you needed to get your needs met as I was spending all my time with my mother.

Eighty-one days since I left Denver and I have been trying to leave Denver and you since 1982. In the ten years we have known one another, we only managed to live together three of those years. In those ten years, I had two affairs and you had two affairs. We had our work and we had the kids. I did not love you any more than you loved me; but for some reason I wanted us to be lovers. We should never have been lovers. It was a ten-year mistake.

Eighty-one days since I left Denver and it is eighty-one days that I have wanted to contact Kimberly. I fell in love with her in 1984. I have been in love with her since. She was never one of my "affairs", she was who I should have been with, not you. You never knew I loved her, you never knew I spent time with her. She was the only part of our ten years together that I did not let you bastardize by knowing.

Eighty-one days since I left Denver, and tonight I called Kimberly. She was asleep, as usual. I have never called her that she has not been asleep. She was in a coma the first half of the conversation. The second half of the conversation was spent saying what we said in the first half. It was a delight. And all this coming from the woman who said she never sleeps . . . ever. We flirted for years, worked together, met while we were out of town on business. She was involved; I was involved. I told her I would write.

Eighty-one days since I left Denver and I have finally extricated myself from you. My love for Kimberly is making itself felt in an honorable, unobstructed, and vigorous way. I am ready to be in love with the only woman I have ever loved. I have wanted her forever and now the pathway is finally cleared for our relationship to dawn.

Eighty-one days

June 6, 1991

I met Celia in October of 1981 through mutual friends. I moved to Denver in the spring of 1980 to work at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Prior to moving to Colorado, I had lived in New Mexico where I was a professor at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. I had wanted to move back to Colorado and I was able to do so in 1980 when I accepted a teaching position at the University of Colorado.

I am a "Native". A popular term used during the eighties to put everyone down who was not from Colorado originally. I was born in Trinidad, a small southern Colorado town. I am the oldest daughter, of the oldest daughter, of the oldest daughter of an Austrian gentleman that escaped from Europe, did not pass go at Ellis Island, and did not collect two-hundred dollars. But, instead, hightailed it to Colorado, arriving with as much gold as he could hide in the seams of his clothing; and as much money as his father had given him; buying as much ranch land as he could get his hands on, getting married, having my grandmother, and the rest of his children.

My friends always spoke highly of their ancestors, all thinking their ancestry made them potential DAR members. I knew better about my family: they were gamblers and rabble-rousers. All that gold came from somewhere and it had not all come legally.

My great-grandfather wrangled the ranch, the ten saloons, the general store, and he became a respectable businessman. I was born in 1947 and by then we were not only very respectable, but also very prosperous. We were considered one of the founding families of Colorado. A little gold goes a long way.

As a child I would stay awake at night to hear the stories told around the kitchen table. The more wine that was imbibed, the more loose lipped everyone became. Each story was accompanied by much laughter and bantering. I heard stories of bootlegging gin during prohibition, Al Capone's "speakeasy" in Trinidad, and about fights and killings at the saloons. All these stories were to be hush-hush, of course. Nothing of this nature was ever mentioned in the light of day.

My mother told of drinking so much illegal gin in her youth that she had a permanent dent in her nose from the edge of the "Wesson" jar. Along with the gin drinking went the trips by horseback across the mountain to the dances. After the dances she and her sister would tie themselves to their horses, fall asleep, and then wake up safe and sound in the barn the next morning.

The very best story that I ever heard my mother tell was about the time that she out-ran the Colorado State Patrol, between Las Animas and Aguilar. She had gone to Las Animas to buy baby chickens for her mother, who was living in Aguilar, at the time. She was on her way back from Las Animas, speeding along as usual, when a cop started to chase her. Looking in her rear view mirror she spotted him and she began yelling, cursing, and being very angry. In her physical frenzy, she knocked over the chicks and they came exploding out of the box. She out-ran the cop, while the chicks screeched, flew, shit, sat on her head, and scurried about the car. When she got to Aguilar, she and the inside of the car looked like a battle zone . . . but she did not get that speeding ticket.

Yes, my family was one of the oldest, most respectable families in Colorado. Well, maybe one of the oldest, but like hell they were one of the most respectable! I was glad to be back in Colorado.

The initial draw with Celia was that she was also a "Native", and also a member of a "founding" family. She was born in western Colorado to French apple farmers. We joked about farmers versus ranchers and the natives versus all the damn Texans trying to move into the state.

By the end of the first year, I knew I had made a mistake: she had started an affair with a colleague, and the endless power struggles between us began. She isolated me, telling others lies about me, giving the impression to others that I was crazy. She is a respected psychiatrist in the Denver community, so she was believed. She was so convincing that she convinced me that I was nuts!

Finally, thinking enough was enough, I moved out. Over the ten years we were together, I moved in and out three times. I suppose I needed to go back and take numerous looks.

Through it all I was somehow able to keep going at the University of Colorado, and to also keep my consulting business going. Work was my savior and I hung onto it with talons. I was miserable, insecure, lost, lonely, and suffering.

I met Kimberly in November of 1984. We had one sexual encounter in 1985.

I fell in love with her the first time I saw her. I stayed in love with her. I had not fallen in love with the self that was me in her, which is what people do when they say they fall in love at first sight. I fell in love with who she really was.

I left Celia the last time March 11, 1991, taking a sabbatical from the University of Colorado and moving to California to teach at Stanford. Leaving Colorado I was also leaving Kimberly, but the distance could not dim what I felt.

My awareness about myself and what I wanted for my life had taken ten years to dawn, and in the dawning it had become a full golden disc above my horizon