

CHAPTER ONE

The Journey

February 1, 1994

“If one casts less of a shadow, perhaps one’s dark side is lessened, and the light will reflect upon nothing.”

“Notebooks” Mary Bernard

February 2, 1994

“There was once a stream that flowed through many lands until it came to a desert. It could go no further. There was no way for it to cross the desert. Its waters just disappeared into the sand. Yet the stream felt in the depths of its’ being that it was to cross the desert. Faced with what seemed an impossible situation the stream was on the point of despair, when a still, small voice whispered in its’ ear. ‘In your present form you will never cross the desert. But although to you it seems an impassible barrier, the wind crosses the desert, and so can you. If you surrender into the arms of the wind, and lose yourself within it, you will be lifted over the sands. Then you will fall as rain, and become a stream again.’ But the stream did not like this idea. It had never lost its’ own identity before. And once this was lost, could it ever be found again? Would the stream not simply disappear forever? Again the voice spoke to the stream, ‘I know that you have doubts, but do you have any alternative? If you remain in your present form you can go no further. You may think of yourself as a stream, but that is not your true essence. If you surrender to the wind your essence will not be lost.’ These words

echoed within the stream, and awoke distant memories that long, long ago, some essential part of itself had been borne in the arms of the wind. With this memory came the realization that to surrender to the wind was the only thing to do. Its' true self would not be lost. It could never be lost. And so the stream surrendered into the welcoming arms of the wind, which lovingly absorbed it, and carried it over the desert and far away, until it reached some distant mountains, where it fell as rain. And because it had had its' doubts, the stream was able to remember this whole experience, and in doing so it realized its' true identity."

Sufi teaching story

February 3, 1994

"One does not need more defenses, more protection, a thicker hide. One does not need to fight evil. One does not need to swim with sharks—one simply can climb out of the water."

From a letter from Melissa

February 6, 1994

I had wanted to go to her. I had tried to go to her. I had traveled as far as London, but I was not able to see her.

I had become very ill while on the QEII and upon arrival in Southampton was taken to London and hospitalized, and then flown back to the United States and hospitalized at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

I realized then that I more than likely would never see her.

"Oh, my God, oh my God why has thou forsaken me"

February 14, 1994

I am at my grandmother's house in Aguilar, Colorado.

She died in 1959 and left the house to my mother and with my mother's death in 1989 it became mine. The neighbors had watched over it these many years and I had paid them a small sum to do so.

It had recently been painted. The old driveway had been taken out and grass put in where the concrete once was. It was a tiny place with one bedroom and one bath, a small living room, a large kitchen with a walk-in pantry, and a fruit cellar.

It had an enclosed back porch with benches along the walls where one could take off one's muddy boots and wet clothes and when my family came down from the mountains from the ranch into town after herding cattle and horses all day that is what they did. They came in the back door and sat on the benches and took off their muddy boots and wet clothes and laughed and joked. I had helped pull off many a wet, muddy boot in my childhood.

The little house had an open front porch that looked out on the four large pine trees in the front. The front fence had sweet peas growing on it during the summer months, and around back was a vegetable garden. Sitting on the front porch one could see the houses across the street, the old highway to Trinidad, and St. Anthony's Catholic Church.

As a child, my grandmother and I sat out on the front porch every afternoon and watched the highway for interesting cars. She sneaking a smoke and a drink of wine, as we sat, and me sneaking both from her.

Smoking and drinking we passed our summer afternoons. We both hated when my mother finally showed up from either spending the day at the horse races in Raton or from being in Trinidad visiting friends.

When we would see her car on the highway we would run into the kitchen and quickly wash the glass, hide the bottle, and run to the bathroom and flush the cigarette butts and gargle with mouthwash and smile at one another. My mother was never the wiser, if she was she did not let on.

And my grandmother did not seem to mind that I loved to have a puff of her cigarette and a sip of her wine. She treated me like a grown-up woman and I loved her for it. But she never, never would let me have coffee because it would stunt my growth

I was out on the porch this afternoon sitting in the warm sun. Colorado weather was mysterious in this way. One could sun one's self in February and then in March one could never go outside because of the blizzard conditions.

I had been trying to occupy myself all day and finally I found myself lonely and feverish and unable to get comfortable anywhere in the house so I went out onto the porch and thought of my grandmother while sitting in her chair.

The highway to Trinidad did not carry any interesting traffic anymore since the freeway had been built. The neighbors that had lived across the street were now dead.

I did not smoke, and only had the occasional drink, so I sat and sunned. Wrapped up in the heavy quilt I could still feel the coolness of the day, still feverish I wondered if I should be outside at all. I continued to sit outside because it did not feel so lonely out there.

My trip to London had been a nightmare. I had begun to run fevers the second day out, but I ignored them. By the time, the QEII reached Southampton I was so weak from the fevers I was unable to disembark. An ambulance was called and I was taken to a London hospital and it was determined that my condition was so serious and possibly infectious that I was returned to the United States via aircraft that same evening.

I was flown into Boston Logan airport and taken to Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Tests were run and it was determined that I have AIDS, upon hearing that information I entered into depression and denial, and I also began to ponder the inevitable question . . . where had I contracted the dreaded virus?

With bad news in hand, I decided to return to the only residence I had left and wait it out there until I could "understand" what next.

But, the news about my health was not what was devastating me the most. What was getting to me in the worst way was that I had finally gotten to London and was one hour away from seeing Mrs. Kramer and I was unable to do so.

I had wanted to see her since I had read her book in 1989. After the betrayal by Michelle Fox and the fiasco at St. Francis in San Francisco, and the loss of White Thorn to a fire and my son to my gayness, I had decided to sell most of what I owned and go to her in London.

Mrs. Kramer is a Sufi master and I had hoped that she was to be my master. But, as these things often go, I was prevented from seeing her.

She was not my master, and I needed to quickly get used to the idea that there was never going to be an “in my face” master in this lifetime for me. I must finally accept that I was being taught in my dreams and in my life, both intuitively and subconsciously by someone, or something from somewhere, who or what or from where, I did not know.

It seemed that for me the master would forever remain “faceless and nameless”. An unusual condition to be sure, but not unheard of in the world of the Sufi.

I had made my journey. I had been carried by the wind, but I was not to fall as rain in London, perhaps I was to fall as rain in Colorado. I just did not know.

I also knew that I knew nothing and had no answers about anything, both a good sign. Perhaps my great loss of not seeing her had caused my little self to finally go.

So I sat feverish, knowing I was going to die. Absolutely sure I would die within the year, and yet, experiencing a profound peacefulness, sitting that afternoon in the bright sunshine on my grandmother’s porch in Aguilar, Colorado.