

HARVEST OF GEMS



BY MICHAEL ARTHUR
FINBERG

1 pages into the journey

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C H I C A G O

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MICHAEL ARTHUR FINBERG

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>chapter</i>	<i>location</i>	<i>page</i>
1	Berlin	7
2	Prague	15
3	Auschwitz	35
4	Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest	43
5	Sofia	51
6	Greece	61
7	Israel	69
8	Jordan	81
9	New Delhi	87
10	North Bengal	93
11	Bodgaya	101
12	Calcutta	115
13	Veranasi	127
14	Sikkim	137
15	Kathmandu	147
16	Swyambu	161
17	LA	195

CHAPTER 1

BERLIN

The flight to Amsterdam was long and

I just couldn't sleep. I mean I was too excited and freaked out. Doing pujas in the toilet was no fun; airplane toilets are lonely and brutal, and God-awful cold. Amsterdam airport was no better. I was in shock, I really was! I was no longer in California dealing with the complicated complexities of my family. No. Now I was in Europe dealing with the complicated complexities of the planet. I bought a ticket for Berlin and stored my heavy bags at the Central train station, which was filled with millions of weirdoes. It didn't even feel like Europe. There were black faces protecting the toilets. There were Arabs selling falafel, and there were Chinese selling tickets for boat trips along dirty canals. I saw Dutch policemen rousing some Bulgarians sleeping on the floor. It was all one colorful armpit. I had eight hours to kill in this crazy place. I was sleep-walking and almost got run over by a bus. This was my little Dutch dream and it was an expensive one. American dollars were almost worthless. They barely bought you anything unless you had wheel-barrels of the stuff.

The red-light district was a tacky bore. It was all just THFUMP like a sound in a dry tank. Everybody just stood around confused and dilapidated where the old was mixed in with the new in a strange and

utterly miraculous way. It was sensual overload. It was heaven. It was my new life in Eurasia. It had just begun. A young Dutch widow shared a drink with me by the main canal. Her blouse was a see-through and she wore nothing underneath it. "Oh, Dutchmen are such perverts," she emphatically stated. "That's why I married an American man. I would never live in Holland now. It's too cramped and too expensive. All these foreigners are sucking on the welfare system here. Taxes are too high." I was falling asleep. "Oh, where is my sister?" the Dutch widow exclaimed. "Her daughter is so beautiful, you know she married an Indonesian." I looked up at the sky and didn't know what to say. Seeing that I didn't know much about myself. This was the new Europe after the FALL of the WALL. I was observing and feeling it ALL without an agenda.

The night train to Berlin left exactly on time. I could hear the grinding wheels heave forward in the dark and cold mysterious night. Loud and isolated booms announced, in German, the lonely and temporary stops along the way. Most of the stations were completely deserted. I shared my sleeper compartment with a young German looking for work in Berlin and a young Swedish kid going to work in Yugoslavia. Both thought I was an Italian and were surprised when I told them I was an American. My dark complexion liked playing games with the world. Was I Mexican, or really Russian? Was I a Jew or some lost Arab? The German was amused that I was Buddhist. He helped me locate the dream address of the Grand Wizard's center on an old and used map of Berlin. It still had the old borders marking it like a nasty coffee stain. The Swedish kid gave me a Serbian dinar note worth one million cigarette butts. "Ech!" The German screamed. "It's gangster money." I did my first puja somewhere east of Hanover.

Berlin was awesome the next morning. It was hectic and deep. The old and crumbling facades of Potsdam signaled our imminent arrival. THE WALL WAS GONE. A surge and a swirl of newly released energies announced THE OPENING OF THE VORTEX. The Russians and Americans were going home. They could no longer keep the damn thing shut. Moscow and Washington were broke and Europe now had to take care of its own dirty laundry. It was a wonderful time to be young and insane. It really was.

BERLIN FROM OUTER SPACE:

These strange Earth creatures seem to eat up a lot of energy as they move towards higher complexity. They have no choice, in order to stay alive they must continue existing FAR FROM EQUILIBRIUM. This is an inherently unstable process. To stay ahead of this complexity these Earth creatures seem to have discovered a crude way of hyper-organizing. They do it mostly with symbols. Unfortunately, the rate of energy dissipation is now accelerating and the different complexities being produced seem to be leading towards new kinds of stress. There is a spectrum of instability, and processing high-grade energy demands greater and greater hyper-organization. More simulation and less useless tasking is required inside and out of the complex and perturbing organism. Instability needs to be “monitored and managed” more and more. INSTABILITY. What a beautiful word. We will send our next report at the appropriate time.

THE FACTS ON THE GROUND IN BERLIN:

Germans can be the kindest people in the world, or maybe it's just Berliners. I sweated and heaved my large and monstrous bags along Bundesallee and was constantly helped across streets and up death-defying stairs. I got lost and a young mother put my hideous baggage on her bike and her little blonde tyke on top of the handlebars and expertly steered the mess towards her apartment. “Please, wait here and I shall get my car,” she shyly said and in a completely unrehearsed tone.

THE SUN AS SEEN FROM BERLIN:

A seemingly undemanding orb this giant light bulb. But in fact quite a moody and whimsical puppeteer with many strings. Its mysterious solar wind spills its magic breath around us. Flares and sunspots are peaking and falling, giving Berliners the gift of decent temperatures before a new Ice Age scrambles down into the ravine like Zorro in a cheap western B movie.

“Hello, ah wie gehts, you must be Bruno?” I timidly smiled. The tall and chunky German wore nothing but a bathrobe and a large pair of glasses. He also spoke little English. “Ya, Ya, Ich bin Bruno. Sie sind Amerikaner?” He gulped. I pointed to my bags. “I wrote you a letter last week. Did you get it?” Bruno just stared at me in delinquent abandon for what seemed an eternity. This was my first con. It had to be good.

“I’m a friend of Jenson’s in San Francisco.” I collapsed onto the floor. I hadn’t seen Jenson in years. He was the guy who had given me the little Mahakala flash before I got the real thing from the Arizona monk’s teacher. Both of them hated Jenson and even more so his eccentric mentor, the Grand Wizard. Bruno broke into a wide grin. “ Ya, ya Jenson” A magic light had gone on. Soon we were feasting on poached eggs and gourmet marmalade. I was escorted to my private room and shown the bathroom. It wasn’t such a bad place after all. The center was housed in a huge apartment owned by some hideously rich and absent owners. Bruno was just a house-sitter.

Bruno introduced me to Inge. She was this tall and thin German beauty with an impish grin and boyish feel. Inge could easily have been a man in another life. But now she was a typically passive German wife with two special little tots. I found myself in the middle of Kreuzberg, the old new front line of Berlin. The punks were being booted out by the speculators. The wall was gone and Kreuzberg was hot real-estate. Inge’s husband was over-educated and unemployed ó but my hosts got by on the generous German welfare system whose fascinating intestines out-rivaled what I was used to back home. Inge didn’t like the Grand Wizard’s whoring around, but kept quiet. Her husband helped run the center and it was a matter of family pride to have this dubious honor. Indeed, the center reeked with subtle signals of dissonance. The energy felt diluted and scattered; the good German organization hid chaos underneath. The big split over the young kid in Tibet was exposing demagoguery, and even sexual manipulation, when the crazy Danish Guy rolled into town. the wizard denounced the young kid in Tibet as a phony and tool of the ugly Red Chinese hordes. I just looked at all the luscious Teutonic looking babes in the audience. Most of them loved the wizard. Spiritual practice seemed lax here; and sexual hormones were raging inside the crowd. Oddly enough, The Grand Wizard agreed with my young Lama friend. The tulku system was falling apart at the seams, SCIENTIFIC METHODS were needed to verify the new kids. A cult-like odor pervaded the room. It was an odd scene. One particular gorgeous German brunette with high cheek bones and a regal chin kept looking my way. Most young Germans speak good English and she was no exception. “How long will you be in Berlin?” she smiled in anticipation. “Just a few days,” I sadly muttered. “Oh, I see,” the brunette qui-

etly chirped in disappointment. "Isn't he wonderful?" she prodded. "The best," I smiled. "Are you from the other side?" She continued prodding. "What other side?" I absent-mindedly asked. "The other side you know." Her deep blue eyes penetrating me like a marvelous convenience. "Yes, I support the little guy in Tibet." I matter-of-factly remarked. "Why are you staying only a few days?" the brunette hopefully inquired. I wasn't sure about my answer. I was beginning to like Berlin. It was a snazzy and sexy place with much to offer any kind of taste. I reminded myself that I was on a tight schedule and needed to discipline myself. "I have some business in Prague," I said in dead seriousness. "Prague?" the brunette intoned with a quizzical look. "What are you doing there?" I looked out the window and softly said: "I don't know."

Berlin. What can I say? It's a great walking town. A great place to U-bahn around and not get caught by the ticket hounds. The "liberated" eastern sector looked terribly drab. Most of the inhabitants looked shocked and sullen. I could see remodeling eating away at the ugly edges of the old border. Bullet holes from the Second World War still serenaded much of east Berlin's old town center. Alexander Platz was filled with begging waifs and underage blue-eyed prostitutes. I sweated and heaved my way through Unter den Linden and reached the Brandenburg Gate on a cloudy over-cast day. Turks and Russians were hawking stolen Soviet army gear mostly for idiots like myself. But I bought nothing.

EYES ⊕ PLY:

Berlin's no-man's land is in a bardo phase. It has all been sold now to private interests, but while time remains German history can still be experienced in this weird space. You can explore the old SS torture chambers; and Hitler's bunker makes for quite an inconspicuous site. All of this is underground, deep in the bowels of the city. But the demons and ghosts still abound. The Second Wave went hyper-vertical in Germany and this ugly flux vomited wrathful blood. The Russians have left behind this heavy mound of ghost marble in Treptower park. Now German women are the best-looking women in the world and YOU CAN QUOTE ME. DESTROY AFTER READING.

BERLIN FROM INNER SPACE:

Inge had two daughters, Tina and Gisela. Both were terribly cute, but it was Tina who caught my heart. We recognized each other instantly. Though only six years in age, Tina would take my hand and hold it like an experienced lover. It was highly possible that she could have been my Druid teacher in the not so distant past, while Inge was definitely my elder brother. Berlin lost out in the Olympic sweepstakes, but a lot of Berliners including Inge were ecstatically happy. No “Ich bin dafur” here.

BERLIN FROM THE OUTSIDE:

Yes, German women are stunning and a great place to look at them is on the U-bahn karmic subway. The way I look at it, each individual ride is a lifetime. You get off and you die. The people you see on that ride you will never see again and this is a terribly good exercise in detachment. I returned to Hitler’s bunker and did a puja. It was my offering to Germany. Berlin was in a strange funk. A long night had now come to an end. Morning had finally come. The Germans were scared of the future, but glad the past was finished. In delirium, Berlin negotiated its way forward. These thoughts plagued me now as I struggled with a cold and with jet-lag. Tina took to calling me “the sleeper,” so I began doing the Blue Medicine Buddha puja. I was spacing out badly from all the complexity. Brown and red ruins were on this fading display in the center of town. These ruins were silent reminders of sinister black solutions to white stress.

BERLIN FROM OUTER SPACE:

An intense pressure is building up again. Our computers have scanned the recent charts and hint at complexity stress. A kind of space-out of the mind due to intense psychic overload. Our print-out warns of a long cycle. In these huge blasts from the past the nineties are resembling the unutterable thirties. The usual response to overload or white stress is clamp-down or black stress. Out of the last vortex Brown and Red demons popped out. So authoritarian and homicidal minds could lead the way again here. We will monitor carefully this grave situation and report any “new demons” popping out on this grim vortex watch in Eurasia. Vortex Number Two of planet Earth is now open after forty years of artificial closure. Further reports will be pending.

THE FACTS ON THE GROUND IN BERLIN:

Inge was sad to see me go. Her husband was pissed off. “What do you want to do in Prague?” he asked. “I have to deliver some peanut-butter to some friends,” I answered. “It’s terribly important.” Inge’s husband took off and I hailed a taxi. Inge hugged me with stiff and awkward affection. The big gray hulk of Berlin lay before me. Red bricks, sooty steel, and unhappy demons. I bought my ticket to Prague and tripped on the fast-moving escalator as young toughs boomed by, singing something sinister with ignorant conviction.

CHAPTER 2

PRAGUE

The train had Russian markings.

My companion was a scared former East German kid dressed uncomfortably and staring at the pages of a cheap paperback. My companion did not utter a single word and skipped out near Dresden. An ugly town even at night. The Czech border appeared suddenly and the uniforms changed. The ugly industrial blight did not however. “The Czech Republic,” I murmured to myself. “Sounds like some kind of breakfast cereal.” It was dark and lonely outside the moving window. I wasn’t sure what to expect in Prague. All I knew for sure was that it was IMPORTANT. The train dumped me off at Holešovice station, a miserable dump by any measurable standard. Freshly washed, permanently dirty floors greeted me and I refused all taxi offers. I was determined not to get ripped off this early on my trip. I waited for the subway to open and eventually it did. Bleary-eyed, I trudged onward, the home-stretch was near. In this early morning bardo, I found my little angel.

When German Yuppies die they go to Potsdam, but where do Czech yuppies go? Prague was beautiful, but also filthy for most kinds of yup-

pies. The smell of burning rubber attacked my nostrils in the early and dank hours of the morning. I was lost Apple's confusing instructions had screwed me up. I left my luggage at a hotel and wandered through the Karlin section of Prague. I kept a journal of each day in my mind:

DAY ONE:

I found her at last. Summer is a perfect goddess. Perfect features and perfect skin. An exotic mix of Swedish and French. Summer's boyfriend, who helped me haul my luggage up the stairs, seemed like a basket-case. But Summer, oh, she cares about everything in principle; she belongs to the world and there is nothing she can do about it. The karma is very heavy between us. We were like magnets zeroing in on one another. I set up my altar and fell asleep after puja. When I awoke, I found myself alone with Summer.

Summer had put a white shirt over her black bra and stood next to the window smoking a cigarette. She looked very thin and sick. Summer's skin was ivory pale. She was also nervous. "What do you think about the Czechs?" I asked, sitting on the floor. "Oh, one third are saints, one third are OK, and the rest are utterly hopeless," she uttered with an air of insecure authority. I can't recall the rest of the conversation in detail, other than this little angel lived wildly and had multiple health problems. A miscarriage and an eleventh-hour abortion had hurt her more than she cared to admit. Asthma as a child, heart and circulatory problems, and fibroids in her reproductive plumbing tested my attraction to her for only a few seconds. I was not slobbering and drooling, however. There was something holy here. Our bond was ancient. We felt comfortable as we slowly began to recognize each other for the first time in these particular bodies.

Summer's frame was long and sleek, the word athletic came to mind, but also the word dancer could have applied. I examined her long and tapering fingers. Summer's arms were long as well. Her breasts were small. Her feet dainty and erotic. I kept getting this image of a benign spider. Summer had protruding collar bones that screamed to be steered like handle-bars on a bicycle. I then asked her if her red hair, which hung slightly above her shoulders was her natural hair. "No, I dye it," she confessed with a little guilt. Summer wore contacts, which concealed her bookish nature and exposed her pale and translucent blue eyes. If looks could kill, Summer would be in the slammer for life.

Summer was only eighteen, but seemed emotionally advanced for her tender years. She came from a broken home. She was a complete creature of the Third Wave. Summer had basically only herself. Somehow, around the fourth grade, she had dropped out of school and been tutored at home like a spoiled princess. There was also a certain savoir faire to my little angel. She had a ready knowledge of what to say and how to say it. Summer had also studied acting at a very young age. This could have had something to do with it. Modeling seemed to bore her, though.

“Would you like to go out later?” she inquired. I decided not to care. What was important now was to be with her every possible second. The signal from San Francisco she had sent had brought me to Prague; finally I had carefully and slowly pulled it like a thread. It was time to explore our past. I also sensed danger, but not to myself.

DAY TWO:

Prague is beautiful, but stagnant. It's denser and more compact than Berlin. It's in the middle of a European cauldron. Summer had come back to heal, and possibly to die in her old ancestral home. For she was a sorceress who understood alchemy and was not afraid of it. Summer's boyfriend was a crazed concubine. Somewhere in the past, someone had taken everything away from him; he was browbeaten and angry. He was out to get back everything he had lost; and there was no end to this loss; and I knew this would drag on forever. Summer knew this and tolerated it. She also knew she deserved more than this, but was too sick to live alone. Summer had dragged this poor man-child all the way from San Francisco. They were officially a couple, but Summer was biding her time now, waiting for her salvation in a patient and disciplined manner.

It was during this time that I started shooting off rolls of film with my cheap and collapsing Olympus camera. Summer's photogenic pull was irresistible. These photo sessions were our first puja. Summer was well-sculpted by nature. Our new alignment had now started to move. Every act was an act of love. Prague's timeless cobblestone alleys were our private garden path. The countless spires and steeples hung like backdrops to an unknown play. Summer and I posed for a photo on the Charles Bridge. I felt as if we were already married.

DAY THREE:

Prague from outer space:

There are six vortices of psychic energy around the world. They are found only at geographical crossroads. It is here that cultural and psychic whirling masses form a vacuum whose center captures anything caught in its motion, stressfully sucking it in and generating new forms of instability. These Earth creatures still have little understanding of these dangerous and dynamic forms. It is these forms that create WHITE STRESS and its typical BLACK STRESS response. Two strange Earth creatures are falling in love, but they are not typical BLACK HAT types. The computer has printed out a WHITE HAT profile for both of them and is having trouble calculating their karma. It is a deep one. And it is now ripening with unforeseeable consequences. The race of WHITE HATS are an endangered species. The BLACK HATS rule the world. Damping complexity is easier than embracing it. There is less danger of identity loss, but the cost is a destruction of the vortex variety so needed for creation. A crucial redundancy is lost. We will continue to send further reports when needed.

THE FACTS ON THE GROUND IN PRAGUE:

Summer introduced me to a Czech girl she had met in San Francisco. This girl had blue eyes and red cheeks and big protruding teeth. I found this little cherub a convenient symbol of the current Czech confusion. The Commies are gone now, but tough economics have hit the Czechs HARD. The Slovaks are gone and are now considered foreigners. The Germans are taking over and the new freedoms are producing a hangover. "There is all this economic news on the television which I don't understand," the Czech girl complained. Summer was not even looking at her. She was looking at me with a mixture of amusement, curiosity, and calculated attraction. "Are you Jewish?" the Czech girl asked. "Yes," I answered with slight interest. "May I come back and talk to you again?" she persisted. "We can make an appointment," I reassured her. Summer sat cross-legged on her bed barefoot. She was always barefoot. This endeared her to me. I loved her so much and she understood this.

"I didn't want to come here. This was her idea." the boyfriend bitterly whined. "She's nothing but an egotist. She's spoiled rotten. Her mother sends her money every month. I want to go to Italy and just leave her here. But I told her she can't have sex with anyone." The

boyfriend's chatter reminded me of radio static, a kind of background noise and radiation, inevitable in its sheer presence, yet ignorable, almost forgettable. It wasn't even a struggle. It was too lop-sided. The boyfriend knew he was beaten. His heavy emotional armor hid a deep despair. I understood him and felt sorry for him; but I was on a mission and could not be distracted for too long. Prague looked sinister in the late evening. We both got off the tram and walked around aimlessly. Young couples reeled and gabbled out of the new MacDonald's.

DAY FOUR:

"Oh, you know, I can have any man, I want. He doesn't really know why I want him," Summer stated with a queer smile. She took a long drag from her cigarette. Summer was wearing her trademark blue jeans and green turtleneck sweater. She was barefoot as usual and squeezing her toes on the faded carpet. "He's very insecure, you know " Summer added, almost as an afterthought.

PRAGUE FROM INNER SPACE:

These beings are old souls. Both have known each other for countless lives. They have not always been human. The female angel is dying. Her illness is deep. It is in her subtle body and time is running out. The male angel can save her, but he lacks sufficient experience, even though he has the necessary knowledge. Their higher centers are blending well. They are both natural Tantrics and deserve each other. We will send blessings.

PRAGUE FROM THE OUTSIDE:

I walked alone in dirty Prague. The Czechs looked tired. They never seemed to have been masters of their own fate. First the Germans and then the Russians, and now the Germans once again, have come and gone, plundering the Czechs. It's a tough karma. Who will be next? The acrid smell of burning rubber is never far away in Prague. The American embassy is popular. Russians are not. I haggled with the Indians for a visa all day and they are not only greedy and inefficient, but also terribly sadistic people. It could take awhile to procure that coveted stamp. Fuck them!

The Czech girl came back with her sister. Both wanted to know if

the Jews considered Jesus the Messiah. I told them with considerable embarrassment that he wasn't. The Czech girl and her sister had found religion. Both were into Jesus. The boyfriend stalked out and left me alone to handle this mess. Both girls were rather friendly, but considered Buddhism potential devil worship. I talked about the Mind Ocean and the elder sister was intrigued. She seemed to be the thinker of the family and had pulled them all in the direction of Christ.

The girls left and I found myself alone with Summer. I rubbed her bony feet. She liked it. Summer was fascinated by her body and enjoyed it whenever people fondled her body parts, gently and with sensitivity. Her free foot clawed my knee; Summer smiled. She recounted how the nurses massaged her butt before poking in the blunt needles of some syringe. Summer needed the vitamin shots. She was that weak. I checked out her tongue. It had no teeth marks. Summer chewed her food slowly. A phenomena quite rare in America. Summer also wrote long and beautiful letters. Was she really eighteen?

We gazed into each other's eyes. All kinds of karmic forms from our mutual past appeared and dissolved before us. I was now searching for the sorceress. I saw torture and abuse. I sensed indiscriminate teachers. Our old and powerful karma was finally waking up from a long sleep. "I'm very fertile, you know," Summer declared. "I got pregnant on the pill and with a diaphragm," I stared at her oval face and her elf-like ears. I saw an image of the earth. Summer's lips were full and meaty. Her nose was highly masculine. It was round and putty-like in appearance with slightly upturned nostrils. Indeed, it was her nose more than anything else that made Summer's face truly unique. It was her bulldog nose that gave her away. That and her second hairline. Summer was a witch. She was also a high priestess. And like myself she was now a fallen angel.

DAY FIVE:

It was the full moon. I struggled with my Berlin flu. Summer had to call her Mom. Money was running out. I called Poland. The boyfriend vanished. Summer and I were left alone once more. I did the Mahakala puja while Summer sat quietly nearby. I could see images of black magic misfiring in Summer's past. She had been wild, transient, and ambitious. I could see Summer's long and gangling frame from the corner of my eye. Her strong neck and broad shoulders attested to the fact that

she was a fierce swimmer. So fierce she had broken her fingers after colliding with the tiled walls of the pool. Summer's fingers were healed now. She was a loner like me and was proud of it. I loved her so much; and she knew this. Ours was an old love that never seemed to fall on barren soil. We were very proud of this.

I turned around and Summer walked over. She slowly sat down next to me. Her beautiful toes curled and dug deeply into her legs. They were also now completely healed. Summer was an enthusiastic horse-rider and countless times had had her toes broken by horses' hooves. I gave a throaty sigh and we embraced. I touched Summer's forehead with my own and the mixing of the subtle energies began. It was time to prepare my little angel for surgery. I asked the protectors for help. I could not do this alone. I was taking huge risks and was now responsible for the two of us. Summer gulped me up. I drew a deep and secret breath. Our minds and bodies were now fusing. Our separateness had to temporarily die, in order for us to heal. A motorcycle rattled off, suddenly, in the distance, almost like a strange herald. A secret and celestial wedding was now in progress. "Oh such joy," Summer gasped.

DAY SIX:

Summer and her boyfriend shared their apartment with a tall and snide Irishman who bounced around and hustled for a living in an advertising firm. The Irishman was named Minnie and his room was usually deserted. It was a Saturday and a proper day for delinquent abandon. Summer, her boyfriend, and I took off for the Stare Mesto with Minnie. The Stare Mesto is Prague's old quarter. Everything in Prague reeks of oldness. In fact, the city is one giant and musty attic, seemingly passed by and left to squirm in dreadful isolation. Summer seemed to love it. There was a subtle fatalism in her innermost being, that acted as an anchor and a rudder for Summer, and all those around her. Unlike her boyfriend, however, Summer NEVER played the victim. What she preferred was this sweet loneliness that warmed and nurtured her at every moment.

At the boyfriend's suggestion, we visited the Globe, a hangout for American expatriates exploring with fear the very absurd notion that they actually could be writers. I was bored by it all and asked Minnie about his life in Dublin. "Well, ya see man. I had these friends and we got together in gangs, ya know, just to have a little foon and piss

around.” Minnie was stirring his cup and enjoying himself. “And, ya see man, there was dis friend of mine, who we like to make foon of.” Minnie paused for a moment. A nervous look engulfed him. “Are you all right?” I asked. “I’m fine, man ... it’s just that I’m a little scared right now,” he declared. “About what?” I further probed. “Well, ya see man, my friend was read’n oop on Freud and told me I was possibly a homosexual.” I smiled. “Do you really think you’re a homosexual?” There was a silence. “Well, I’m just not sure, man.” Minnie moaned worriedly. Summer watched the exchange with deep absorption. “It seems to me like your friend was getting back at you.” Minnie looked stunned and began to cry. Heat poured down his hands. “Hey, man I dunno what’s happening ... I feel so” he stuttered hurriedly. “Free?” I asked. “Yeah, man,” Minnie croaked. Summer laughed. So did I. The Guides had come through, yet again. Summer’s boyfriend was nowhere to be seen.

Back at the apartment Jonathan and Summer attended the Mahakala puja. Minnie began drinking from the water bowl, unexpectedly turning the puja into a strange Eucharist. Summer sat motionlessly nearby. After Minnie left, Summer put on her white T-shirt and shorts and jumped into bed; but she was restless and we both knew that our energies wanted to fuse and start moving. It was time now for the next phase. I took Summer into the bathroom and drew the secret breath slowly up my spine, and then forcefully blew it into Summer’s mouth. This was the point of NO RETURN. Our lungs were furiously mixing our subtle energies now. I was drawing the vital force from the cosmos and repairing Summer’s etheric body, while sucking in her poisons and spitting them out into infinity. Summer was almost over-powered by the sheer force of the new air inside her and gasped wildly. She clung to me tightly like a small child. “More, please,” she begged, “more.”

DAY SEVEN:

It had been a stunning night. Even Summer’s boyfriend had noticed the change. We had turned on the karmic TV and gone to our past life in India. Summer, her boyfriend, and I walked out into the cold and dark Prague evening. Summer had constant circulatory problems and her hands and feet would often turn ice cold. Her boyfriend had seen this all before and walked hurriedly with a smug and confused air of

indifference. I rubbed Summer's polar bony fingers in public. My affection could no longer be hidden. Summer's boyfriend looked the other way. It was becoming a dreadful pain to deal with him. He was a nuisance and a pest. My passion for Summer kept mysteriously dissolving. Like smoke escaping from a fire. Both Summer and I lived in our minds. We enjoyed our brain orgasms and constantly offered up our affection to the Universe. I pushed the button on my camera and discovered it was stuck. My old recording tool had died. It had captured Jim, the Old Guy, and countless Lamas and nameless beings. It had even captured Summer. But now I was in mourning.

We attended a nauseating talent show at a local American hangout beneath a vegetarian restaurant. Summer openly held her arms around me; and nuzzled her forehead against mine. It was finally at this moment that I experienced Summer's latent powers. I SAW NOTHING but white flashes and almost blacked out. The sorceress was finally claiming me. Summer's boyfriend tried to grab some attention by breathing hard and deeply, but only managed to get sick and start coughing into his nicotine-laced lungs, choking madly in a funny and delirious way. "EE-YAH, EE-YAH! EE-YAH!" He was bellowing. It was all a very serious, yet silly sideshow. I was at a loss for words as I held Summer's hand outside the restaurant. "Oh, you know, they're all bisexual and I rarely come here," Summer started to confess. Was my little angel saying a prayer?

DAY EIGHT:

I dreamed a bug dream. Strange colored forms were hatching eggs under my skin. Summer was asleep on the other bed. She rarely got up before ten. The Indians were still fucking with me and I was getting pissed off. They wanted money for a telex to Washington. They wanted money for a visa. They said it would take a week. They said they weren't sure their embassy in Washington would OK a visa. In short, the Indians were behaving like their typical asinine selves. The mind swarms with gracious welcoming speeches ó but the Indians just want MONEY.

In Moscow, "The White House" was being bombed. Central Europe was nervous and quaking from this undiscountable fact. I walked the town of Prague alone. I desperately wanted to get away from Summer's boyfriend. His vibes were bad and he was trashing Summer daily

behind her back. Ugly and uncomfortable thoughts stalked me as I wandered into the Jewish quarter of Prague. The Josefov reeked with dense and suffocating energy. I was coming home to my roots and I was yearning to talk, to be interrogated, to be politely asked about all the dead people in the cemetery. I missed an appointment with Summer's boyfriend on purpose and shuttled back to the apartment in an anxious and confused mood. Summer opened the door and was surprised to see me. She was alone and yet happy to be in my presence. There was a knowing look in Summer's face that said: I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL. We sat down and stared at one another. Summer had dark half-circles under her eyes; they made her look modest and wise. Summer wore no jewelry of any kind on her bare thin arms. She wore no watch. Nail polish was alien to her. The only concession to fashion she made was facial make-up when going out and occasional earrings. Summer took multiple baths daily to help ease her poor circulation.

"I'm confused," I moaned. "I can't live this double life." Summer said nothing. She simply gazed right into my eyes with an amused and expectant look. "I can't stand your smoking," I continued in a belabored tone. Summer remained silent. She was waiting for something. I don't remember exactly how it happened, but somehow Summer found her way into my arms. We puffed holy breath into one another and slowly smacked each other on the lips. Summer's icy blue eyes were drilling deep into my brain. Summer always got what she wanted and then SOME.

"Let's go out," Summer said as she laced up her tall brown boots. "Let's just walk around," she added. I meekly obeyed. Who could resist this angel? Prague was untypically dark and cold on this particular night. Summer and I embraced each other as we walked to ward off the cold and to signal a new phase in our relationship. Old, old energies were coming up. We found a park bench and started our chatter puja. "I saw a blue-man in a dream just before you came," Summer announced. "I was waiting for you." I wanted to keep quiet. Summer's energy was so addictive. "Do you know that you're sick?" I worriedly asked. "Yes, I know this," Summer barked. "The doctors say I have a very good womb. They poked around in there and were pretty fascinated." She began leaning against me with all her weight; her head shot up into the sky with deep and secure satisfaction. I kissed Summer's hand. Her eyes were shut, but she smiled. Summer looked

like a goddess in her dark green overcoat. Her head was wrapped in a scarf concealing all but a trickle of her red and thin young hair. I kissed her on the lips. "Don't, are you sure we should do this?" Summer hesitantly asked. "I want the experience," I confirmed. Summer's mouth pounced suddenly onto mine. Her entire body heaved in my direction. Summer had now made another partial surrender. We went out for Chinese and talked late into the night.

DAY NINE:

The Indians continued to play around. I took Summer to see the Josefov. We savored the intense energies of the Jewish black and white magicians. Summer peered into the cold rooms and heaved silently. She understood the energies, but felt they were unfamiliar. "They're unhealthy, I don't like them." She proclaimed. Sadness and fear clung to the old ghetto as Summer hunched her muscular neck. This was not her place. We both knew this. I sketched the tombstones onto paper with pastel butts and ripped up my work into shreds as an offering to the hungry locals. Summer sat nearby watching it all intently, but with an air of detachment. We looked at the hawkers milking the old Jewish past for all it was worth. And then we left.

Summer took my hand and said: "Let's go to the Hrad." The Hrad, the seat of Czech government and the possible inspiration for Kafka's castle. Havel was now enthroned and the Golem was on vacation. It was in front of St. Vitus cathedral that I almost collapsed. Summer touched my forehead with her own in an almost wild impulse and our energies began to fuse like an angry electric shock. I felt boundary loss as the Hrad's spirits laughed at me and my dilemma. I was finally discovering SUMMER. We sat down and started to neck. I kissed Summer's shoulder and licked her long and sturdy neck. Summer swooned and shut her eyes. "No, don't," she pushed away. "Not right now. I want to, but not right now." I stopped in disappointment. "I don't want to get confused," she firmly said, "and I don't want you to get confused." Her long bony and beautiful hands clasped my face. "Let's go home." The freeze had begun.

DAY TEN:

EARTH FROM OUTER SPACE INSIDE A DREAM:

The earth will cease to exist when the sun swells out in its dying phase and vaporizes this insignificant planet (we guess) about four or five billion years from now, long before the Universe ends (or begins again) Our little planet is turning jewel-like and vulnerable in its transparent skin. It is releasing tiny seeds into its own near space as a huddled figure with thumb stuck out flutters and flirts somewhere near Alabama.

I bought a new Olympus camera and contacted the Jordanians in Vienna. They said a visa could be had within twenty-four hours and it would cost nothing. The Indians were still stalling. How I despised them! I stayed away from Summer all day. A strange distance was growing and I was at a complete loss. Time was running out in Prague. I had to keep to my schedule. The Poles were waiting and my mission in Karlin was unfinished. I wondered aloud if Summer was a tulku. I walked around the Stare Mesto gulping in Czech misery. Bohemia had been a battle-ground for Germans and Czechs, Protestants and Catholics with “the poor Jews” caught in the middle. I felt DISSONANCE. The white Stress was seeping in from Berlin. The violent energies were moving again. Where would the black demons slither out from this time? I felt CONFUSION. My mind and body ached with pains of withdrawal. Summer’s energy was in me now. I had to release her poison and retain her nectar. Summer’s boyfriend was manipulating the pause and creating a most terrible misunderstanding. We were rapidly sinking into a tension spiral. I felt exhausted and miserable.

DAY ELEVEN:

I dreamed of an intruder breaking into a hotel and woke up in a cold sweat. The second day of COLD WAR sputtered on endlessly. I was beginning to have an aversion for Summer. I went to visit Kafka’s grave, but got to the cemetery too late. I had to content myself with a peek from a distance through some iron railings. I asked Summer if she wanted to go out of Prague for a day. A castle called Konopiste seemed inviting. Summer refused and retreated in confusion. I disappeared into the night. The space had now become too small for the energies being released. A perturbation was needed to get Summer moving.

DAY TWELVE: TWO IN THE MORNING:

Summer's boyfriend started coughing in his sleep. Soon he was up; and started dragging Summer into the bathroom for one of their "night sessions." I asked Summer what was the matter. She seized the moment and jumped onto my bed. Her bare feet clung to the bedsheets as she squatted almost on top of me, taking my hand and grinning a wide Cheshire Cat smile. "Oh, it's just him you know. His father issues are coming up." Summer was wearing a white silk bathrobe underneath her partially bare bony chest. Her long white silk pants rested on my lap. Summer's face was covered in darkness, a faint light from the street silhouetted her beautifully sculpted face. It was a strange face. One that could look long and thin or round and compact, depending on the angle of vision. "Go talk to him and come back when you're done. Tell him to stay in the bathroom. It's important." I ordered. Summer scampered off and eventually came back after what seemed like eons.

"What's the matter with you?" I barked. "My asking you to go to Konopiste was not an invitation, it was a summons. Do you really think we can go back to business as usual after what we've been doing?" I was impatient and exhausted. "Yes, yes," chirped Summer. "We can never go back, we can never go back, I'll gladly go to Konopiste with you tomorrow." The fault-lines were shifting and groaning again for the final push. "Why did you refuse to go earlier?" I impatiently asked. Summer's face clouded up into a pressured haze. She weighed her thoughts carefully. "I don't know, I got confused. I thought I was being snubbed." I began to address my little angel quietly, but firmly. "You sometimes annoy me, no you annoy me a lot, but I care so much about you, I look the other way." I barely finished my sentence, before Summer blurted out: "I FEEL THE SAME ABOUT YOU!" She clutched my arm tightly. I cleared my throat. "Tomorrow, you will be initiated into the secret breath. Our time is coming to an end here. Give me tomorrow," I paused. "I promise you that we will meet again. It kills me to leave you." Summer adjusted her legs and drew me closer. "Let's do the breath now," I commanded. Summer drew even closer and sat cross-legged across me. I blew into her mouth and she began to gasp and heave violently, losing her balance and flipping backward. I grabbed her arms as she landed on her back, her head almost touching the floor. Summer's eyes were closed and her mouth gapped wide open

exhibiting her flawless white teeth. “Are you all right?” I anxiously asked. “What are you experiencing?” Summer opened her eyes and said one word: “TIMELESSNESS!”

The Indians finally surrendered. I got the visa. Summer waited in the lobby of the embassy as I haggled with the Indians for one last hour. The protectors of the inner mandala had opened the doors at last. I was going to India! Summer and I took a train to Benesov from the main station, Hlavni Nadrazi. We walked a mile through the forest to get to Konopiste. It was early autumn and a riot of oranges and yellows greeted us. The trees were shedding their coats. It was an awesome sight and a spectacular day for PUJA. There was power in the air, there was beauty, and there was joy. Summer and I were free at last. It was time to explore a little selfless love; while living in a very stressed out world. There really was no time to lose.

Summer was dressed in her usual green overcoat. She wore green pants and was booted and scarved. Summer looked like the queen of the forest. Her every movement bore an unqualified and instant mark of gracefulness. Summer’s heart began to race. “What’s wrong?” I asked. “Oh, don’t you know?” she impatiently retorted. “I have a heart problem. The muscles of my rib block my heart. I have to snap my ribs twice a day to stay alive. The doctors can’t help me.”

Konopiste castle had some strange karma. It had been the happy hunting ground of the guy who got blown away at Sarajevo. The guy whose death touched off World War I. Hundreds of animal heads were on display inside the castle. We arrived late and couldn’t get in because of the haggling with the Indians. We didn’t mind though, it was a great day for pictures. It really was. WE watched a lone peacock strut by. I was exhausted. I lay my head on Summer’s lap and she stroked my sweaty hair. We were almost saying good-bye in case the day ended in disaster. It didn’t. Summer passed with flying colors. Without permission from my teacher, I initiated her into the secret breath. I asked the guides for protection and they delivered. The most dangerous of the choking sludge clogging Summer’s subtle centers was released and transformed. After the surgery, we lay on a blanket in the rapidly darkening forest. “You’re very special, my dear,” Summer cooed. “You give me such immense joy.” I was falling asleep from fatigue.

DAY THIRTEEN:

The energy has drastically shifted with Konopiste. It was the turning point for Summer and I. We were now spiritual lovers. Hints of marriage floated subtly in the air. "I believe so!" Summer bleated to something I had said in the train on the way back. I no longer remembered my end of the conversation, but Summer's bleat was unforgettable. Her cold calculating blue eyes stared out into space; and glittered like lost jewels in the pale light of the train compartment. Summer's angel ivory skin seemed to radiate. The promise of life was hers for the asking. She had plans. I could feel them bubbling up in her head. Summer's kisses were tender. She hated conflict and enjoyed our easy give and take.

It was a new day. Summer slept in and I took off with her boyfriend to look for a luggage rack. None could be found in all of Prague. So I bought a baby carriage. I ate a late lunch with Summer's boyfriend, the odd-man out throughout the whole drama, and learned that he had a completely FUCKED-UP childhood. He didn't trust life; and he had "Heart disease." His emotional armor was so thick that Summer's spell couldn't weave its way into him. All his energy was spent resisting her. Surrender was an alien concept to this angry survivor. This lower-chakra lover. I hated him. His higher centers were completely blocked. This asshole lived off all kinds of paranoid fantasies. He munched off Summer like a puppy chewing on a stale biscuit. He was convinced I was planning to gouge his eyes out while he was sleeping. "Yes, yes, yes," I said, paying no attention to him. I was worried about Summer. I was leaving her and I knew this would be hard on her, on me. How could we dampen the pain of attachment? The clatter of plates on the table banged me to distraction. The Czech waitress smiled at me. She had a gold tooth.

I returned to the apartment and Summer ordered her boyfriend to leave. It was time to do one last puja. I covered Summer with a blanket and told her to breathe gently. I stroked her perfumed hair and played a classical Indian raga tape. Summer burst into tears. "It's alright," she said. "I was in India long ago and it was all taken away from me. I'm letting go now." We honored Mahakala with wine and thanked him for his assistance. Summer was now coming back to her Tantric roots. She blew the secret breath into me for the first time. We turned on the

karmic TV and watched our former marriages in Germany and Poland in living color. The secret breath was now opening up our subtle memory banks. As well as unplugging our clogged and swollen subtle channels. Summer took off her green sweater and I saw that she wore a black leotard under her jeans. I took off my shirt. It was getting hot and steamy in the room. Summer got into the Yabyum position with me. It was all coming back furiously to her. Summer was in her old element. We were joining our subtle circuits and circulating our energies. Our two minds were fusing into a single thought and creating a powerful force. A force that needed careful harnessing. Summer affectionately kissed my hand and looked into my eyes. Our auric egg was pulsing and throbbing with new vibrations. Summer was excited. Our hearts were melting and expanding like a slow fugue. The apartment had turned into a temple. All our words were now prayers. Summer's terribly abused womb was now being reconsecrated. She felt like a goddess. Her menstrual flow was a holy river. The tender nipples of her still young and growing breasts nourished the world. This was the TANTRIC VISION. A vision forgotten by the west. Summer was now free and she was a sacred consort. Could anyone possibly understand this?

I sucked Summer's finger and pointed it towards a map. I told her to close her eyes and follow the energies. We traced our karma throughout the world on my atlas. We dived into India. We traveled to Jordan. We relaxed in Poland. Summer pursed her lips in satisfaction. We kissed deeply in a muted celebration. Summer would not, could not stop now. Her long and velvet arms clutched me tightly. Summer enjoyed and worshipped physical pressure. I noticed that her tall and lanky legs had coiled around my waist and had been securely locked by her claw-like bare feet. Summer would not be denied. "I'm double-jointed you know," she declared with confidence. "I can twist into all kinds of things." Summer was triumphant. Her cat, Ophelia, was cowering in one of the corners of the room. I could see cat food strewn all over the carpet.

DAY FOURTEEN:

Summer was excited as she got dressed for our final day together. I had bought a train ticket to Krakow and was leaving late in the evening. We took off for the Hrad again. Summer had insisted on this. She radiated and her happiness was addictive. Summer knew what she wanted now. She wanted me, and only me, and promised to quit smoking. We sat on some steps leading up to the Hrad and gently embraced. I gave Summer a mala, a kind of Tibetan rosary. "This will be our signaling device. Do the mantra every day for ten rounds." Summer was ecstatic. "Oh, such joy!" I also gave Summer a picture of the Tibetan heavy Summer had taken a liking to, the one at the front of my altar. Indeed, he had been watching over us all along.

Summer was wearing earrings in honor of our last day. She also wore brown designer slacks with a matching tan vest. Her shirt underneath was orange and her bare white shoulders were slightly exposed. I was going out in style with an actress. Summer clutched her black purse as I took some last photos of her next to the Valtava river. She was a natural poser. It was an ingrained instinct Summer had cultivated somewhere. The autumn sun warmed our backs as we sat down on a bench near the Hrad. Summer's arms were wrapped around me. "It's so much like a drug, this thing, this passion." she warned. "I've been looking for a spiritual man for quite some time," Summer further declared. "You don't mind that I'm eighteen?" she cautiously probed. "No!" I decisively exclaimed, hoping to quell her doubts. "You know, Jim Morrison was such a lousy poet," Summer muttered. "I mean he didn't know anything about love." I sat quietly, fully content with the moment. The tourist hordes trampled past us. "More peacocks," Summer announced, alluding to our voyeur friend from Konopiste. "Look at them. They're afraid something terrible might happen." What terrible thing could possibly happen on a day like this? I wondered to myself.

Day turned into night, Summer and I had inspected the underground crypts inside St. Vitus cathedral. The rooms were dank and musty. This was our dense little home. Havel was nowhere to be seen. He was probably too busy cleaning up all the psychic sludge left by the Commies and the Nazis "You know, it's like Prague's got some kind of mono," Summer quietly revealed. "It's gonna take awhile for this place to heal." She was right. The Brown and Red demons had copulated and

violated this beautiful and stagnant city. The vortex was now open again, and Summer and I were like orphans in the storm. We embraced and kissed quietly on Kampa island. Summer had let go of all her inhibitions. Her tight embrace signaled to me her anxiety and excitement. Our union was forever. We both knew this now. The separation that was upon us was just that, a physical separation. Our hearts and minds would always be together regardless of space and time. We had been tested in Prague and more tests were coming. This was what marriage was all about. Summer and I were pioneering something very old, and something very new. "Never forget me," Summer quietly whispered into my freezing ear. The loud din of traffic distracted me and enveloped us. This was IT. The mysterious IT of saints and mystics. Our tongues caressed softly and quietly in the dark. Summer was in love. This extraordinary little angel who had mastered Japanese and German at an early age and was now plowing through Finnegans Wake was now most certainly in love.

We returned to the apartment. I was rubbing Summer's ice cold feet, when her boyfriend barged back in. I packed and left for the train station. I was catching the vortex train to Poland and beyond. I was on a mission. I nestled back into my seat inside the pitch darkness. I could see in my mind's eye Summer kissing me one last time at the door of her apartment. The one she paid the rent for. Her boyfriend was broke. The train groaned and heaved its way towards a seemingly and completely unknown destination. That's when I felt her. Summer was saying one last good-bye. Her face appeared suddenly in the compartment. It smiled and grew larger and larger. Yeah, Summer had her ways and she was determined to show them to me. I felt a gentle warmth filling me and the entire train compartment. Summer's boyfriend had taken me to the train station and declared: "If she has sex with anyone, I'LL LEAVE HER!" I pressed my face against the cold glass of the train window and began to cry.

CHAPTER 3

AUSCHWITZ

I hopped off the train at Ostrava, a dismal and ugly border town. I spent the rest of the night listening to wretched drunks puke and yell in the passenger waiting room. I made repeated dashes into the filthy toilets. I stared at a faded picture of Havel resting on a flea-bitten wall. The Velvet Revolution seemed like a distant fantasy to me now. I had watched it unfold on CNN in San Diego, four years earlier, as my father disintegrated in San Diego, after I had lost all my money. Summer was only fourteen at the time. I wondered if she had even bothered to watch all this exhilarating craziness on the tube. My mind was on dull overload.

“Proseem!” shouted the old lady at the counter. The food was awful. “Diki,” I muttered. I hated Ostrava. The train for Katowice lumbered in late in the afternoon. The minute we crossed the Polish border, the energy changed dramatically. Poland was another Universe. The sleepy garbanzo-bean looking Czechs were now replaced by creatures bursting with life and energy. The Poles knew what life was about. The Poles projected real confidence and strength. Their square jagged faces were

meaty faces of survivors. Mother Poland herself was a maelstrom survivor. Beautiful autumn colors filtered into my train compartment from the outside. I could see farmers harvesting their crops. A tough, but friendly Polish businessman gave me directions on how to transfer to Krakow. "We may be heading for trouble," my beefy friend sighed. "The last Russian troops will be out of Germany by late next summer, then the next war will start." These were my first memories of Poland.

In Krakow, it took what seemed like hours to make a connection with Jerzy, my Polish contact, on the creaking Polish telephone lines. The loud din of the train mobs made it hard to hear him, but Jerzy eventually showed up in a dinky matchbox car. We loaded up all my tedious cargo and took off to his apartment. It was the beginning of a new adventure.

Jerzy had not really been expecting me. He was building a little retreat center for himself. Jerzy was muscular and compact in his appearance. I liked the vibes of his place immediately. Jerzy was a serious practitioner. He translated spiritual books into Polish and made his living in Norway. Polish money was worthless and inflation made it more worthless day by day. I had found a cozy new refuge for a few days. I went to bed with thoughts of Summer on my mind. I felt very close to her. A strange joker energy filled the air. Jerzy's protectors had accepted my offerings; and I was buzzing with wild and sweaty thoughts. Poland was gonna be all right.

Krakow was bustling and beautiful. It beat out Berlin and Prague in my book; and I walked around enjoying the friendly crowds and vibrant air. I could feel an ancient resonance here. Krakow had like Prague, its own Hrad, its own Stare Mesto, and of course its own Josefov. The Poles also seemed to be far ahead of their Czech and former East German neighbors in the dirty race for entrepreneurial savviness. New little businesses were mushrooming up in all kinds of strange little corners and the Poles instinctively knew that SERVICE was important. The Red Stress was fading, even with the new old Commies back in power.

The large football-sized town square of Krakow was where all the action was. The Rynek hummed with life at all hours of the day and no cars disturbed the holy scene. Old churches and fountains made an excellent backdrop for guitar-toting poets and barefoot Polish girls. The old Alma Mater of Copernicus was close by. I rushed to pay homage to the man who put the sun at the center of our solar system. It was bril-

liant insights like these that transformed our weird and narrow human horizons. The Polish astronomer's statue was hidden in a corner somewhere, somewhat lost in all the jazzy hubbub. I found it and stared at it for quite awhile.

Back at Jerzy's a tarot spread confirmed that my long-term relationship with Summer was OK and secure, but that the short-run, whatever that could possibly be, was filled with obstacles. I sighed and accepted this sad and exciting state of affairs. I was on the road now and going progressively eastward. Summer was now my little wish-fulfilling gem and like all good-luck tokens had to be kept very close to one's heart.

Jerzy asked me whose side I was on in the brat war. I told him I supported the kid in Tibet. So did he. We were both relieved about this. Half the Krakow sangah had abandoned the Grand Wizard and Jerzy was at the head of the line. Jerzy was also itching to start his retreat and dumped me on the other camp's doorstep. I wasn't bullish about this new development. The new place I found myself in was dirty and overcrowded. The air also felt somewhat confusing. Jerzy was extremely embarrassed and quickly vanished into the night. My new hosts found me a place on the floor of "The Guest-room" and I quickly surrendered to the guides somewhere inside my dreams. Poland was full of surprises.

The Jewish quarter in Krakow had an air of a lost world. Like Prague it was haunted by ghosts, but they were sweeter and warmer. I could feel my grandmother here. The grave of the great Zaddik, Rabbi Rhemu called out to me. An old Polish Jew begging for dollars skillfully guided me to the great saint's "final" resting place. I placed rocks on it for Summer and myself, for my family and for all sentient beings under stress. I knew my offerings were instantly accepted. Jewish bodhisattvavs had love for all Goys. I felt great light and protection. The black demons had failed to destroy IT. Poland had survived, despite the hideous black stress, and was now the spiritual center of Europe. I was amazed at the friendliness of the Poles. I found a helping hand wherever I went. The karma was good.

I took a bus outside the city to a Camaldolese monastery. The autumn gave the day a terrific sound and light show: wind and leaves danced furiously in front of a rainbow just for me. I was in a strange kind of heaven here. I visited the crypts. I got into an argument with a monk in Spanish. "You empty the pail to receive God," Brother Benito exclaimed. "No! You empty the pail and then throw it away." I coun-

tered. This tennis match lasted an hour and I was rewarded with a dinner of red cabbage mixed with potatoes and a ride back into town. Krakow was wet with rain, but nothing seemed to matter. I WAS HOME! I was feeling Summer's heart and the world's. I had rejected a material paradise and sent blessings, even to the brown and red demons that had tormented this magical and friendly land. Krakow was suffused with an unnatural glow that was like gold. The karmic bouncing was no longer unpleasant. I was on a graceful and billowy trip as if over a blue sea, and there were no doubts in my mind at the moment.

It was time to go to Auschwitz. I boarded a bus and gazed at the onion domes and horse carts on the road. Birch trees and autumn colored leaves flashed by my window. If this was the road to hell it was well camouflaged. I got off with a drunk twenty-something a mile from "The Museum" as the locals called it. My companion was a young and confused mongrel like myself: half of this, and half of that. German and Portuguese in this case; and sadly rejected by both cultures. I told Marush to leave his beer bottle outside the gate. He meekly complied.

The entrance to "Little Auschwitz" had the famous ARBEIT MACHT FREI letters hovering below the clouds like a sad and lonely riff. Once past this, Marush and I followed a dirt path that led directly to the prisoner's barracks and some pretty revolting exhibits. Stacks of hair, eye glasses, and suitcases greeted us and made us flinch. Small piles of Zyklon-B gas cans stood as mute testimony to GROSS and HEAVY BLACK STRESS. There was even a small-scale model of how people were processed through the gas chamber assembly-line. All this frightened Marush and he was anxious to leave. I decided to do a puja with Marush at the memorial wall where countless prisoners had been shot. I could feel a heavy pressure in the evening air, but the space began to expand as I chanted through the Tibetan texts, the blessings of the compassionate guides. I soon started feeling release and so did Marush. The locals were begging for blessings. The stress had been enormous here. Transforming this shock and evil into bliss and release was a momentous task and I could feel the protectors and guides helping out. Words were useless here.

THE MOON AS SEEN FROM AUSCHWITZ:

The seas on the moon are like stone and there is either a killing brightness or complete darkness ó there are no gentle transitions on this dead planet. Everywhere the surface shows the effects of intense pound-

ing. There is no atmosphere whatever. There is no life.

ΔUSCHWITZ AS SEEN FROM THE MOON:

There seems to be a haunting bottomless quality, hinting of possible enlightenment, down there, on that little plot of land. THEY ARE MINING LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS.

THE FACTS ON THE GROUND AT ΔUSCHWITZ:

Marush wanted to go back to Krakow so I escorted him to the train station. I then had to find my way back to “The Museum” in the dark. The bus dropped me at the back of the camp and I got lost. The energies felt sinister and evil. I began walking away from the camp into a poorly lit road leading out into the dark and unfriendly fields. A cursing drunk stalked me and a dense and terrifying panic soon engulfed me. I was doing wrathful puja almost by accident. The drunk was my assistant. I eventually stumbled into the camp after retracing my steps from where the bus had left me. I suddenly found myself next to the crematorium and gas chamber. It was pitch black except for a few lonely lamps that silhouetted the watch-towers and barbed wire. I could hear the locals wailing and the protectors were very aggressive. I slowly walked and recited some mantram. I was now unwittingly doing advanced Tantra in Hitler’s cemetery of cemeteries. I was plowing inside BLACK and discovering more BLACK. I walked out front, finally and trudged out to a deserted highway. All puja was instant and automatic in this challenge zone. The Nakpa who had died recently and had helped Summer and me at Konopiste was helping out here too. There was a deep connection here between all three of us. Summer and I made our offerings to the Czechs with the Nakpa’s approval. Now I was making my offering to the Poles here, at Auschwitz with his blessings once again.

I ultimately found the “INFORMATION CENTER” and booked myself a room for the night. A priest took a liking to me and started quizzing me about “my pilgrimage.” Father Pytor was a devout Catholic, but demanded the need for proof on the spiritual path. “I need to hear myself think,” he aggressively announced. “God allows me this space in my mind,” he added. Yet, how could any observation of God be real if the observer himself was an illusion? I wondered quietly to myself. (Jarek had also jammed on this quite heavily.) Father Pytor

sensed that my seeking was genuine and the next morning drove me to “Big Auschwitz” about a mile and a half from the “Information Center.” He dropped me off at “The Gate of Death.” Father Pytor pointed his finger towards the gate. “There! Over there, you’ll find God!” His car sped off, leaving a cloud of dust to linger as an additional reminder of my predicament. I now had to face some nasty demons and my only real weapon against them was compassion. Did I have enough of it?

I was in Birkenau. It was almost beyond description. It was at least three times larger than “Little Auschwitz.” The rail tracks went right through the gate. The trains deposited the victims right in front of the gas chambers and ovens. It was a HIGHLY ORGANIZED AND INDUSTRIAL PROCESS. Humans were the input and fertilizer was the output. It was a sick Second Wave process. There seemed to be no moral constraints. I climbed the tower and gazed at the vast death factory in front of me. Despite all this, I knew I was standing on sacred ground. This vast killing machine had transformed the landscape and made it holy. This was the epicenter of BLACK STRESS.

I did my first daylight puja near some demolished barracks. The Nazis had tried to burn as many of them as possible before fleeing the advancing Russians. The huge camp complex was large and seemed to expand forever in all directions. The day was overcast and the camp seemed almost deserted. Mocking birds sat on the barbed wire fences, chirping away, oblivious to the deeper meaning behind the fiendish light surrounding the camp. The spirits were lispig, writhing, flopping and moaning. They howled and fell back in despair. They hovered everywhere. They hovered near the huge and ruined gas chambers and crematorium. The spirits knew that there had been fire above and gas below. Moloch lived here and he had devoured his children all day. I saw ash pits and shit tanks, confiscation rooms and killing fields. I did another puja near a pond filled with ashes. I could see white crosses and white Magen Davids strewn out all over the place. As I was finishing my puja, the sun came out and broke through the dark overcast skies. The guides had answered. Many spirits were being released. I was tapping light in the darkness.

I hitched a ride back to “Little Auschwitz.” I prayed to the great death machine. I visited the crematorium and gas chamber. It felt DENSE. This was the epicenter of the epicenter. It was all CONCEN-

TRATED DEATH. One could barely breathe. It was suffocating. I did puja to release from this squeeze. This death-like density seemed to resemble holy density. It was a bit uncooked and unrefined, but it was the raw manure of bliss. All the ingredients were there. All that was needed was a little holy compression. There was a surplus of fear here and a shortage of blessing. It could all be eventually transformed ó of this I was certain.

I could see signs everywhere of the Jews reclaiming their holy ground. Candles and all kinds of small and large memorials dotted the landscape. MY SORROW IS CONTINUALLY BEFORE ME. This was the big message. I listened to klezmar music on my Walkman. It sounded intense and surreal. I felt like dancing and it didn't feel wrong. I was now comfortable. The night was descending, but the shock was now gone. All the pujas went well. I was completely alone, but felt no fear. It was routine now and it felt like bliss. I could hear the heavens of relief from all the sentient realms in this holy and dense spot of Earth. The Guides were answering all my calls for release. Their compassion was unconditional. My panic was gone. I passed the gas chambers and crematorium and felt FULL.

I got back to Krakow late in the evening humming the bars of the Polish anthem in fabulous triumph. I had survived Auschwitz and it was now time to pack up and move on to Vienna. Jerzy came over to say good-bye and told me stories about the Grand Wizard's escapades. I got two Polish guys all excited about a nutty export-import scheme involving strange wire trinkets. A guy called Lech helped me get on the train. Lech had been a philosophy major and understood that it was important to explore the mind that jumps between systems rather than the systems themselves. All systems were products of the mind, so it made sense to start at the source. Darkness was descending on Krakow and the city's numberless buildings were just beginning to sparkle on their lights. I staggered off the tram with Lech and we sniffed and stretched for a moment. It was time to board the vortex train and ride off into the secret night. Lech waved good-bye and turned into a blur as the train picked up speed.

CHAPTER 4

VIENNA, BRATISLAVA, BUDAPEST

Vienna. I almost lost my passport here. The Polish conductor found it in my compartment and I was saved a heart seizure. The old Hapsburg capital was fuck'n expensive. I got the privilege of sleeping on the floor of the shrine-room with no access to a shower at one of the Grand Wizard's hangouts. The fact that it was all nothing wasn't his fault. It's just that the Austrians, especially the Viennese have got to be the biggest cheapskates on the planet. There was an empty and unfriendly feeling to it all. Vienna had no soul. It was a super-efficient corporate diplomatic transportation hub, but it reminded me of a huge head without a body. The old empire was gone. Vienna was now a city-state, a weird and huge museum. The Hapsburgs, Mozart, Hayden, Beethoven, Schubert, Mahler, Freud, and Hitler had all left their mark in this super-heated hotel of strange inclinations. It was here that I got the crazy idea to actually try to get to Bulgaria through what was left of

Yugoslavia. It was cheap and fast. Going through Rumania would take forever. The American embassy told me to keep away from the dirty Serbs. I went to their embassy anyway. It was a mob scene. But I got a transit visa within twenty-four hours. The Serbs looked at me as some strange curiosity. I also struck a homer with the Jordanians. They painlessly gave me a visa too. The whole nightmare with the Indians in Prague seemed like a bad joke.

I played cat and mouse with the Viennese subway dogs. I got caught once, but they let me go. Rain and dark skies clouded all my days. I visited Freud's house. It was a rip-off. But I paid the six bucks. "You Americans are very strange," said the young curator. "If it costs too much, you won't pay, even if you came a long way to see something." I was amused. "Well, for Freud, I'll do it, but don't test my patience," I retorted in a mock huff. I was allowed to photograph anything I wanted. Freud's house was filled with gloomy despair. Freud seemed to be indifferent to life in his final years. He was waiting for death to take him. The old guy knew that his old world was on the brink of extinction. Freud had focused only on the sex chakra and couldn't go beyond that. Freud understood BLACK STRESS and buried his head in the sand. Jung split with him and went for the higher crown chakra. Both of these cats lost their nerve. Ah, there was no heart in this town. There was just a lot of mindstuff hiding a lot of fear. I felt Summer every day and this made me warm. I sent her some postcards to let her know she wasn't forgotten.

Vienna. A city of anal-retentive merchants. A hollow feeling dogged me in this greedy town. Everything was expensive and people were polite, too polite. Stupid foreigners were an inconvenience in this city of commercial robots. Vienna was an impressive consumption machine with matching propaganda. My favorite grocery store was called CONSUM with an infinity sign. What would old Franz Yosef think about all this manic abuse? I visited his royal doghouse. The old fart had impeccable timing. He died just as the Second Wave was pushing at the gates of his crumbling world. The vortex was on the verge of exploding and the old heavy and subtle black stress of his kingdom could not contain it. It was BEE BOP, BEE BOP, WHITE STRESS!

I visited the house of Vienna's prince of WHITE STRESS. It was pretty cool too. The Saraswati puja was a hit with Mozart and the locals. We rocked all night. I felt a blissful rush up the spine. It was

my offering to Austria. The curators were mystified at the sight of this weirdo sitting in a lotus position mumbling away nonsense while his eyes were closed. Wild complexities were envisioned on this improvised hitchhike.

ASTEROIDS AS SEEN FROM VIENNA:

About two thousand of these minor planetary critters have been spotted with vague clues of another two thousand more. These vermin of the skies like to streak through time exposures while picking at their food. These strange creatures are not shattered planets, but rather still-born ones. The conditions for miscarriage in our solar system are always strong. Most asteroids orbit between Mars and Jupiter, but some are perturbed into eccentric orbits that intersect Earth. Of these, a tiny sprite named Eros could well contribute to the lonely scenery on Earth just beneath the clouds. Eros, measuring about 7 by 19 by 30 kilometers, would be incredibly destructive over a considerable area and might well cause major changes. If Eros decides to head our way, we will have about six months to get ready.

VIENNA AS SEEN FROM EROS:

A little young Slovak woman has just come back from Tibet with news that the kid there might just be the ONE. Yeah, she's a close friend of the Grand Wizard and she seems a little sexually confused. She has now befriended the strange American sleeping on the shrine-room floor and sparked in him this insane idea of visiting the kid with a Chinese visa that must be then bought, stolen, or borrowed just outside Kathmandu. The young little Slovak has taken a liking to a photograph of the Nakpa which in due course will be surrendered to her. The American will receive an unexpected kiss on the mouth. An incredible simper on his face will coyly wait for the right moment to board the vortex train.

I boarded the train and arrived in Bratislava, the capital of the newly independent kingdom of Slovakia, within the short space of an hour. The day was wet and overcast. Dinky little Bratislava! A cute little town with a cute little Hrad, and a cute little Stare Mesto, and very friendly people. The Slovaks were moving fast in the great race to prop up smart little stores in the Brave New Eastern Europe. The Slovak babes were great to look at and the Slovaks, in general, seemed to exude more con-

fidence than their ex-brother Czechs. I felt no hard feelings for the split. Some nice girls told the stranger that the economy was worse now and that the Prime Minister was a jerk. I saw a mother goddess statue and lovely crown jewels seemingly from an evil dream on display at the Hrad. Little Bratislava was still not really ready for tourists. “Oh, they’re still cleaning up the place,” said one of the girls. “This town used to look like it still hadn’t been renovated since the last war.” I smiled and fell through a hole in the old quarter. The wooden scaffolds were hard to see in the dark. It was quite a fandango finding cheap lodgings for the night.

Bratislava had been nothing but a quick afterthought. It was raining and I had no map of the city. The learning curve to get around was tough. Nothing prepared me for Devin, a ruined castle on top of a sorcerer’s mountain. It was a power-spot, a tiny vortex where two mighty rivers converged. It had been the old border during the bad old days, but now it was a mere fading memory. Devin was shrouded in mist the day of my visit. An air of magical mystery cloaked the Slovak landscape. Many had fought and died for this hill. I did my puja for Slovakia here. The spirits writhed and shook around like lanky and lonely clowns in their mad-rush to gulp up the blessings. I could feel Summer grinning a long hat-brim smile. This was HER PLACE. Our karma was heavy here. I looked down a grotesquely deep well. I dropped a pebble and waited for the sound of its splash. It took awhile! I wondered aloud how deep one had to go inside before seeing one’s folly. One’s ignorance. Before hearing the clang of liberation. How far did one have to fall before finally surrendering to the higher wisdom found in some mysterious pocket of the Universe. I made a vow to bring Summer here. It felt right.

I bumped into a Slovak professor of American literature who was intrigued by my writing. We lost each other and never exchanged addresses. I was in a hurry to get on the vortex train. A young Slovak who helped me with my load and even paid an extra fee demanded by the conductor got an instant dharma talk as our train hurled its way to Budapest. Devin lingered in my mind. I listened to Pink Floyd’s “Dark Side of the Moon” on my Walkman. Yes, the guides had taken me to the right place.

COMETS AS SEEN FROM DEVIN:

Comets are relics of solar history. They left our region billions of

years ago and have been in cold storage ever since. When a comet returns, it comes from the past, a fragment of primeval stuff. The appearance of comets has caused great turmoil and alarm among the inhabitants of this planet. There is some hilarious irony here as the inhabitants of this strange and lonely planet share much more with comets, chemically speaking, than with the earth itself. Most living things are made up mostly of hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen, the stuff of comets. Like sassy children who throw stones over a rickety fence, comets project a vision. Only damn fools pay no attention to this vision. It's the big Bop!

THE VISION:

Budapest. A city of hustlers and manic consumption. I arrived late at night and my host didn't even bother to pick me up at the train station. I had to haggle and curse with demon taxi drivers demanding big bucks and sniffing for dollars. Hungarian money was huge and rainbow-colored, hiding its basic worthlessness. "Change money! Change money!" my cabby hissed into my ear, as he dumped me in front of Bela's apartment. Bela was a big fan of the Grand Wizard and he cautiously toed the party line. His practice seemed lax and he wasn't particularly generous with food or anything else. "Dead Can Dance" played on his stereo twenty-four hours a day as he huffed and puffed in his bedroom with a new woman every night. A picture of the little kid's previous incarnation caught fire in my room during a puja, warning me about the nature of the Hungarian mind.

The Hungarian sangah was into sex, booze, and tobacco. I noticed Bela was the elder statesman of the lot. Most of the Hungarian kids were twenty-somethings with embarrassing names like Attila. There was one interesting couple who were serious practitioners, but were uncomfortably caught up in the Grand Wizard's orbit. The male had top-notch motivation, but was convinced the kid in Tibet was a fraud. Compassion needs wisdom, I always say and if you tell a fool he's acting like a fool, than that's showing real care and concern. I told my new friend to keep an open mind. His girlfriend was a little pissed off, but I didn't really mind. Ah, yes! The Hungarians, the true Eurasians! The women look gorgeous, white and European-looking with slanted Asian features. The Hungarian tongue is terribly pleasing to the ear. It sounds

like some kind of Mongolian-Turkish babble with Italian intonation. Like little birds singing in the early hours of the morning.

There seemed to be a connection between Summer and the kid in Tibet. I saw this clearly in the pujas. Summer already had a connection with the nakpa and the Tibetan heavy she saw on my altar. This heavy dude's latest incarnation was now three years old and waiting for me in India. There was no conflict about who this KID was. I had a strange dream about seeing a fish with sharp teeth who could talk. He needed plenty of water to swim in. This fish made for quite a nice pet. I started developing my film. Summer was a winner in most of my snaps. I began creating little albums and treated them like prayer-books. They had a lot of energy. It was important to tap it.

I visited the BUDDHA part of the city. Endless tunnels honey-combed the insides of BUDDHA mountain. A pushy and sassy Hungarian chick guided me through the maze and offered instant commentary. It was a gory introduction to Hungary's past. It was a pocket snapshot of the hell realms. Wax figures twisting in fiendish torture chambers competed with hacked-up bodies piled up in neat little mounds. The Christians had sent the pagans packing. There was even a wax figure of a Hungarian macho-man named Miklosh. He was known to all Hungarian kids and Bela seemed to find pleasure in emulating him. Bela's life-style was wearing thin with me. I felt a growing dissonance with his antics. Bela was pissing away his sexual energy after each prostration boost. He wanted to have his cake and eat it too. This was possible, if you had the right training, but Bela wasn't aware of this. Also loyalty to a consort was pretty important and I had long lost count of Bela's conquests. Bela was turning his practice into a boring bedroom farce.

Hungary was a spiritual desert. It was suffering from economic WHITE STRESS. It was the first Eastern European country out of the Commie bardo. It was rejoining the west with a vengeance. German and Austrian companies were taking over the landscape at a frightening pace. Hungarians were fashion conscious. It was cool to be cool in Budapest. I was missing Summer terribly. I felt a strange rumbling underneath Budapest's racy and gaudy surface. It felt like an engine over-heating. It didn't feel comfortable. Hungary was impatient and on high flame. The paprika mind was heading for a burn-out. Hungry ghosts stalked the smoggy feverish streets. Life was intense and crazy in

Budapest. Almost by accident, I found a temporary antidote for this manic ambiance. The Turkish baths. For pennies you could soak to your heart's content and then snore away on specially prepared little couches. I was in a steamy heaven! I was celebrating my success at the Chinese embassy. I now had my visa. The greedy Chinese wanted DOLLARS.

VENUS AS SEEN FROM BUDAPEST:

Venus invites Earth creatures to brood. She is our sister, yet so alien and with a heavy atmosphere. The crushing air of Venus has no oxygen, yet is laced with a corrosive acid-like rain. The acid clouds drive around the planet once every four days. Venus is a killer planet. Its temperature is hotter than a cleaning oven. Its surface is baby-smooth with no mountains for they would crumble like sand castles in this hot corrosive atmosphere. Life of any sort is unimaginable. Like a broken stick, a floppy doll, a bag of bones, a maniac was heard screaming next to the hash joint.

AT THE HASH JOINT:

I bused over to Rekozeturi cemetery to make an offering to Hungary. 1956, a misunderstood year in Hungary. The martyrs' graves were all bundled up in a back lot far away from the entrance. The Commies had hidden the bodies in unmarked graves. Now all the heroes had special red, green, and white ribbons celebrating their intense earthly desires. Confused and ignorant kids were brought in by the busload. Bored guards shooed me away. This was only for Hungarians. It was a sad and private party. Imre Nagy got a candle. I sent blessings to Summer and all the martyrs.

I wanted to see the old Budapest synagogue. It made me sad to see the old cryptic displays of a faded Jewish aristocracy. A copy of the final solution screamed at me through a glass wall. The Black Demons had even targeted Jews in Greenland! Theodore Herzl's house was nearby. The postcards were expensive. I wanted to stay an extra day, but Bela was an inflexible ass. He took me to Kaleti station where I boarded my train to Sofia. The consumerist disconnection of Hungary was about to be replaced by the intense war connection of Yugoslavia. I was going to the hell realms. The train started to move.

CHAPTER 5

SOFIA

I clutched my Summer books

and puja texts as the train roared past the yellow Hungarian plains towards the border with Serbia. Throughout the entire train odyssey in Europe, passport inspectors from each country joined their fellow brothers on the opposite side of the border, often many kilometers inside, in an atmosphere of familiar and clubby camaraderie. Not here. The Hungarians stamped my passport with a frown and hopped off the train before it reached the border. I was alone. The passenger cars were almost empty. The train conductor was a Czech, but all the passengers seemed to be Serbs. Few people seemed to be interested in going to Serbia even in transit.

MARS AS SEEN FROM SOMEWHERE IN
SERBIA:

There is no rain on Mars. The air is thin and dry. Signs of an extensive drainage system have been sighted and there are large deposits of water ice and wind-blown dust. Most of this stuff was carried by something from somewhere. These mysteries have not been solved. The white line in the middle of the highway unrolled and hugged the left front tire as if glued to the road.

WHAT WAS ON THE ROAD:

The Serbs were dressed in camouflage uniforms. They saw my visa, stamped it and left. This was in Subotica. Somewhere past Novi Sad the shooting started. From my window everything Serbian looked drab and unappealing. Soldiers entered the train and knocked on my door. At gunpoint they demanded to see my passport and ordered me to unlock my bags. The Serbs were curious about everything: my snaps of Poland, my dictionary, but when they found a picture of the Buddha, the Serb faces crinkled into confusion. I could hear echoes of “WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS SHIT?” reverberating in the repressed and empty minds of my new Serb friends. After a long pause of endless silence, the soldiers politely excused themselves. They failed to find my typewriter and even smiled at me as they ushered themselves out. Had I witnessed a miracle? I wasn't sure. I now started to barricade the door to prevent further inconvenient intrusions.

All night tired and anxious mobs besieged the train doors at every station. There were dark and sinister energies everywhere. Belgrade looked dilapidated and grungy. The economic squeeze was definitely turning Serbia into a drab place. A young soldier tried to get into my compartment, but all the lights were out and the doors were locked. I did my pujas in the dark. BLACK STRESS was thick and heavy in the air. Blessings were needed in this tense and unfriendly place. The conductor finally let some worn-out Serbs into my private bomb-shelter.

When the morning arrived the harsh and rugged Serbian mountains looked intense and beautiful through the window of my compartment. The Serbs spoke no English and were chain-smoking nervously. They almost seemed embarrassed to be alive at all. My train-mates were polite and looked at me from the corners of their eyes with intense and exhausted curiosity. The train stopped for three hours at the Bulgarian border where I found the security quite lax. The Bulgarians casually boarded the train and didn't even wear uniforms. The train was packed

with Serbs desperately trying to get out of Serbia or those making quick mad-dash smuggling runs as an extra source of profitable income; people littered and slept on the floors of the cars. It was all one big saga of mist-like misery. The Serbs didn't even bother to stamp me out. Nobody cared anymore. We were all leaving the war zone. Everyone sighed with relief as the train crossed into Bulgaria.

Bulgaria. Dusty yellow fields and dull brown mountains gave the landscape a haunting and beautiful look. Gray haze added mystery to the strange and unfamiliar land. I was in the Balkans another Universe. Criminals and con-men were crawling everywhere around the train-station. I felt disoriented and afraid. This new home seemed to have unstable energies. My new host was named Andre, a chubby and bubbly mathematician turned spiritual net-worker. Andre was an iconoclast Universalist whose intellectual interests covered a wide range of areas. The Grand Wizard was just a casual contact. Andre was not even a Buddhist. I realized immediately that I had found a lost brother and was going to have an interesting time in this weird place.

Sofia was all sunshine and bustle. I no longer felt I was in Central Europe. It felt more like the Middle East. Like feeling lost in some spy movie. Like being in a dream. I struggled to understand my new surroundings and to keep up with Andre's rapid-fire intellectual chatter. "You must understand, Michael, that the Balkans are quite dangerous. You must be on guard at all times," Andre warned. Sofia oozed with intrigue. Andre and I climbed up the stairs to his tiny apartment, but we didn't stay in Sofia for long. It was the weekend and Andre wanted to go visit his children in Dospej, a tiny hamlet, out in the countryside.

We got to Dospej late in the evening. Andre introduced me to his wife and family. They were thrilled to have an American as a guest. Andre's kids were cute and intelligent. I felt great kindness everywhere despite the primitive rural conditions. There was no toilet inside the house and the rooms were terribly chilly, but I was content. The powerful Rila mountain range was behind me. There was powerful energy everywhere. The full moon beamed down on me, and my pujas buzzed in this quick and electric atmosphere.

I followed Andre out into the Dospej countryside the next morning. It was his turn to shepherd the entire village's goats. The shepherd fields were awesome. Andre and I walked through a dry and hazy

wasteland right out of King Lear. The air was cold and winds were strong in this harsh and beautiful landscape. There was a deep resonance here. I felt transported back into the past. I could hear a twinkle of sheep bells in the distance. This was also IT. The IT of deep existence. The IT of the saints and masters.

Andre was on a quest. He was looking for the big spiritual picture, looking for the hidden order. Andre wanted to turn Bulgaria into a spiritual laboratory. Andre felt that the Grand Wizard was rejecting the very tradition that had given him his spiritual training. In the history of religion this was not something new. There was a contradiction here. The Grand Wizard was seeking legitimacy and since he was rejecting the lineage of his teachers he had no choice but to side with the rebel regent who had rejected the little boy in Tibet. It was a kind of Vatican war.

Andre had been involved with the Moonies and had been hosted in Korea with full honors. To him Christ's second coming was a symbolic triumph of spiritual values over material ones. Andre understood what I was doing. My mandala was greater than its parts. The unique visual arrangement of my photographs transformed and elevated the viewer. It integrated psychic energy and made it useable for spiritual purposes. There were no brats in Bulgaria. People appreciated me here.

Andre's neighbor was a strange French guy who had once been a race-car driver. Now he was a rustic poet with a wife and a very cute little daughter. The French guy had gotten into some crash and been in a coma for months. During this coma some kind of saint with a long beard had entered the French guy's head and saved him. The French guy woke up and followed the saint to Bulgaria. The saint indeed was Bulgarian. He had also been dead for a long time, but that didn't seem to matter. The French guy gave me his picture, and I gave him, and his wife, a photo of Summer and myself. They really dug her. So did the Bulgarians. Summer was an icon now and she gave me a lot of strength.

I left Dospej and took a four-hour bus ride through bewitching countryside. I could see Mahakala's mouth devouring all. It was great. My next stop was Rila monastery. It was a nasty and oppressive place. It was also huge. The locals here demanded tribute and lots of it. I felt disconnected and homesick. I missed Summer terribly and felt seemingly lost without her. I found a black puppy and felt overwhelmed by a deep and powerful sadness. It consumed me and I felt helpless and afraid. It was time to surrender to higher forces. Rila was a dense and massive place.

I hitched a ride back with an Australian engineer who revealed Bulgaria's dark under-belly to me. "Oh, this place is run by the Mafia. It's totally corrupt and lawless. Everybody's on the take here. It stinks," my new friend warned. "I've had my car stolen twice and my house has been broken into three times. I'm only here cuz my girlfriend's here. You can't trust anybody here, mate. The Mafia, the police, the government, they're all in this together." A gruesome feeling started to take hold of me. A police car stopped us. The police wanted to see the Aussie's papers. They were looking for any excuse to get a little extra money. Bulgaria was turning into a blur. We stopped at the only Shell station in Bulgaria. The Aussie had helped in its creation. There was an oasis of luxury and efficiency, but the government was blocking permits for more of them. Yeah, Bulgaria was a dope addict rolling under the stars.

The Aussie dropped me off near an underground cafe, where I hooked up with Andre again. He introduced me to the local Buddhist club that met once a week there. There were some Zen people, a few Tibetans, and Andre was the only "Theravadan" in the group. A crazy lady reporter called Zori crashed the party with a photographer and interviewed me for the daily she worked at. It was a trashy tabloid which harnessed her manic-depressive energy rather efficiently. Zori had a dragon protector which visited her in her dreams often and had sex with her. She was a woman looking for peace inside a tornado mind.

I could sense doubt and fear in every Bulgarian. Andre took me back to his apartment and introduced me to his neighbor, Elka, a retired science editor. This old crone was into Zen and was pretty attuned and grounded. I was now her guest. Elka had a mischievous basset-hound named Milan, who demanded constant attention and howled murderously when there wasn't enough of it. Elka desperately wanted OUT of Bulgaria. "Eet eez getting very dangerous heere there are many cree mee nels," she lamented.

Bulgaria was in chaos. The Commies were back. They had looted the country and privatized the booty. Now they were back in power as Capitalists! The police state was no more, and in this vacuum the Commies had to compete with new rivals. Gangsters and Yuppies, and an Opposition funded by the Commies; all kinds of petty street criminals surged and swirled through the subterranean landscape of Sofia. It was an Alice in Wonderland atmosphere. Dimitrov's forlorn mausoleum was defaced with graffiti. I walked with Andre through the Oz-like yel-

low brick streets of Sofia and was confronted by a maze-like psychology. It was Kafka magnified. Bulgaria was the victim of countless lies and endless confusion. A heavy and subtle BLACK STRESS was colliding with a new and not-so-subtle WHITE STRESS. The Commies had burned down their own headquarters in order to tar an opposition which they subsidized. Important police and treasury files had vanished during the fire. The Soviet war memorial was a hoax. A monument commemorating a non-event. It was now splashed with bright colors. Layers of smoke confused even the confusers. Bulgaria was in a state of disorder and bewilderment. A monstrous and indiscriminate mixing of elements plagued the land. It was tough to distinguish individual elements from each other or from the whole. The average Bulgarian was living under a fog of lies and half-truths. Bulgaria screamed to be healed.

The madness ultimately caught up with me. My wallet was stolen on the tram. Unseen hands quickly made me start hating and fearing Bulgaria. "Thereez a dangerous virus on the loose," Elka warned. "EET EEZ GETTING WOORSE." Elka's old Bulgaria was gone. The old totalitarian moorings were now replaced with a dangerous free-for-all. I felt angry and violated. The locals forced offerings in this crazy place. Elka apologized for the sad state of affairs. But all was not black. Fuji film was cheap to develop in Sofia and I developed all my film. I now had more components for my mandala. Summer's photos were impressive as always. I felt dazed and in love with her, and with all the beings I was meeting.

Andre next took me to a pizza place where I was hosted for dinner and had my spiritual saga translated to a spell-bound crowd. Bulgaria was hungry for ANYTHING spiritual. I was becoming a celebrity in a spiritual wasteland. I wrote in my diary furiously to heal myself and release blocked energies. Summer's photos were turning into psychic medicine. Our bond was being boosted even in separation. I had to get over my fear. I was getting my kicks in the vortex. And that was it. There was a strange hidden order in Sofia that nobody understood. The new complexity was novel and the accelerated pace was overwhelming. Nobody really knew the NEW RULES of the game. All was a hazy mist and everyone including me was flying blind. Surface visibility was poor.

Andre also introduced me to Beni. She was a warm and irreverent translator of Vajrayana works. The only one in Bulgaria for that matter

Beni interviewed me for a local Buddhist magazine, also the only one in Bulgaria. Her boss wanted to know more about the Old Guy in Stockton. Our interview became our puja. Great spiritual truths came out of my mouth as I felt the Old Guy helping me out. Beni loved Summer's photos and felt Summer had a clarity much like the little kid who was waiting for me in India. Our interview ended just as the tape ran out in Beni's recorder; and we both started laughing hysterically. Andre eventually returned and we all got into a taxi. The police stopped us and got their nightly bribe. The cabby said it was all business as usual. I felt radiant and healed.

On my last day in Sofia, Andre gave me a spiritual tour of the city. We visited the giant cathedral hulk of St. Sofia and stepped inside a mosque. The local Rabbi greeted me at the synagogue, a huge oriental-looking building which, like the synagogue in Budapest, was under heavy renovation. Andre whispered into my ear that he knew the Rabbi well. The Rabbi had been on the KGB's payroll. Andre knew everyone in Bulgaria, for he was the spiritual prince of Sofia. Andre wanted to come to America, but was weighed down by family obligations. He was also broke. I gave away my spiritual books and deity photographs to all who hungered for them. Sofia had been an event like Berlin, Prague, and Krakow. It wasn't a boring place! It was crazy and spell-binding. A lot of stuff was tossing in the froth.

MERCURY AS SEEN FROM SOFIA:

Mercury has had no atmosphere for over a billion years and is heavily cratered with shallow scalloped cliffs that stretch for hundreds of miles. These vast wrinkles cover a planetary surface whose crust shrunk around a heavy core as it cooled and contracted in a most forbidding way. A curious feature of this planet is that for eight days, the sun appears to stop in the sky at noontime and move backwards before resuming its low passage later in the evening. Mercury is a sad and dry land bouncing over many a city's limits.

DOWN IN THE SAD AND DRY LAND:

I was tired, but happy as Andre escorted me to the train station. "EET SEEMS TO ME" Andre started every sentence he uttered with this amusing mantra, "That we are living in very interesting times. It is the time of the TORNADO." And indeed it was so. Bulgaria's hidden order was not yet unveiled. Perhaps, it never would be, but what I saw became yet another component for my mandala. It was all utter madness, all utter wonder. Andre waved good-bye to me as the train began to heave and move slowly; its groans masked my sadness. I felt I was leaving a part of myself behind. And in truth, I was.

CHAPTER

6

GREECE

The train rolled into Greece

around noon. I was ecstatic to get out of Bulgaria. I hooked up with a French-Canadian kid who had just gotten out of Rumania. Life seemed pretty harsh over there. Even worse than what I had found in Bulgaria. The poor kid had been robbed at the border by customs officials. It all sounded like one big lousy unwanted hassle. This was the Balkans. I had to constantly remind myself of this.

The long European marathon was coming to an end. I was completing the Amsterdam to Athens train circuit. My hosts in Athens had pretty much booted out most of the Grand Wizard's followers and I was impressed by how dedicated the Greeks were to their practice. They reminded me of the Poles. They were independent thinkers and very vocal about it. A saucy Greek lady by the name of Electra helped me around the town but, for a price. She was convinced I was psychic and

demanded constant insights and revelations. Electra was caught up in a lot of desire and obligation knots.

Electra was leaving her husband and seducing a young Lama, while also shooing away another young man she had once deeply loved. It was a mess and there wasn't anything simple about it. Electra showed me some haunting photos of her dead parents. They were a tragic couple who had loved one another deeply. I could see this clearly. Their age difference had been wide and I started to get this creepy feeling. It didn't help that Electra was strongly attracted to me. She was curious about Summer and demanded to see her photographs. "Oh, she's so white and frail," Electra shouted, almost as if threatened. "Oh, she's so interested in you! I can see this and you seem to be interested in her." Electra was examining a photo of Summer and me standing near the Hrad, our last photo as a matter of fact. "Why are you interested in this holy vampire?" Electra teased. I was shocked by Electra's remark. I said nothing. "Oh, don't worry, you'll meet again," Electra reassured me in a soothing tone. "She loves you, I can see this, and you love her." Electra sighed with envy. I felt sad and wanted to comfort her, but didn't know how.

There was another interesting woman at the center. She was a lay Lama of Greek-Italian origin who had completed a three-year retreat and had lived in Germany for many years. Her name was Marlina and she had quite a sense of humor. "Oh, you know those Germans get them excited about something and they go crazy. Hitler was a demon and he had witch-doctors as assistants. You know those Bonpos and all these new Nazis coming back in new bodies. You know, all those young and stupid kids. They're just the old ones coming back in new bodies. Everybody wants to get out of Germany now." Marlina started laughing. She was very attractive in her own way, with her dark hair, white skin and buxom features. Marlina was also a former pop singer who had cut a few records, but was now broke.

Greece, what an expensive tourist trap it was. Electra left me in front of the Acropolis. The teeming tourist hordes turned the sacred place into a zoo. I gazed down at the smog-filled streets of Athens. It was breathtaking. The poor Greeks, they were well-educated hustlers caught between two dangerous vortices. I was about to leave one and enter the other. Pujas were essential to calm this madness, but I myself was going

mad now. I got lost in the labyrinthine streets of Athens. I had no money and no food, and no map. I had left everything at the center. I started losing my temper and began shouting in the streets. I was suffering from terrible WHITE STRESS. Summer's energy started coming up. It always did when I was in trouble. I felt desperately that I needed to make a commitment to her and to let her know it. I had kissed Summer good-bye only a month ago, but it seemed like a billion years had raced by. It was time to make more offerings. The Balkans was suffering from a moral and spiritual breakdown.

I took a bus to Sunion to give offerings at the collapsed temple of Poseidon. The nagas, the local water spirits, did not resist me. Summer's energy was particularly strong here. Alignment and release was a perpetual process here and everywhere. Constant purification was needed to transcend all this. It was unavoidable. The non-stop stress of constant pilgrimage was accelerating this process. It was important to make offerings on a regular basis and to recite long-life prayers so that the heavies would keep coming back to us in forms that we could recognize. Like in human bodies. I needed to take a rest. The Greeks were getting on my nerves. Most of them were crooks, and I was too exhausted and worn out to resist them.

Back at the center, I met a young and terribly handsome Greek botanist who was trying to learn Tibetan. This handsome young man saw a deep unity between the mind and the body it was attached to. He had studied Ayurveda and ancient Greek medicine. Now I was getting a refresher course on what really mattered as far as genuine healing was concerned. Every individual constitution was based on a unique mix of humors. Life-style, environment, and diet were pretty critical. In addressing individual balance, preparation of herbs was also important. The ancient Greeks had dream temples and highly trained priests, who were masters at interpreting dreams and giving meditation instructions to their spiritual patients. The ancient tradition was now lost. The Greek mysteries were orally transmitted and highly secret. Nothing was written down. The preparation of herbal mixes was a lost art. "Hypocrites talked only about ethics and medical theory," the young botanist lamented. I felt sad. Holistic medicine had been big in the old days. The Second Wave had destroyed this interest like a huge truck tire trampling on a fragile and perishable flower. "It is all gone only scraps remain," further volunteered the young botanist. Yet from my

own experience I knew there was more to all this. How the earth and plants affected the bodymind was important. But, how mind affected itself and other minds, was really where it was at, as far as I was concerned. The young botanist was not really ready for this. You needed a spiritual practice. To the Tibetans and ancient Greeks medicine and religion were one. The gods represented cosmic energies and the mind pujas brought them out. It was all just mind energies aligning and releasing in a complex dance based on simple laws. So simple that they were difficult to master. I decided to take yet another tedious bus expedition, this time to Delphi.

I arrived in Delphi late at night and jumped over the shuttered gates to get a closer look at the ruins and do puja without fear of being disturbed by the tourist hordes and their secret eruptions. It was POWERFUL. The locals responded and Summer's energy surged here. The stars were out in force. Goat bells twinkled in the distance. I knew this was SACRED GROUND. It was the home of Apollo. It was the home of the goddess. The energies were overwhelming and I felt squeezed like a lemon. Electra's comment about Summer being a holy vampire haunted my every thought. Was Summer really a vampire? And was this vampire turning into a glorious angel? I pressed my body to the sacred ground and surrendered. After awhile, I got up and jumped back out of the temple enclosure. A young security guard on a motor bike caught me and threatened to take me to the police, but he let me go when he saw I was just some meditation weirdo. The lesson in all this was to respect the local protectors! This was important. It really was. I went to sleep. It had been a good night.

Delphi in the morning was magnificent. I gave multiple offerings and asked for guidance from the locals about what to do about Summer. The locals screamed their support. The clouds and sun fought for control of the sky all day. The energies seemed sinister and provocative. The Greeks were burning weeds near the temple of Athena. The acrid smoke howled at the trees and mountains. I visited the stadium and theater. Sad and nostalgic memories of Jim flooded my mind. I was lost in delusion. I dreamed about taking Summer to India. I was lost in confusion. I looked down at the glorious valley supporting the temple complex and I shuddered. I knew overwhelmingly that the gods were making some kind of momentous decision. A big sacrifice was coming.

This was the price of this NEW ALIGNMENT. There would be no arguing about it and no bargaining. This was IT too. The IT that had so many faces.

Back at the center, I was finding it hard to get a ride to Piraeus. Money was going fast in the Greek vortex. I yanked and slapped at myself for coming to this aggravating land. Electra had flaked out and gone North. I called the saintly and fun-loving Marlina but I just struck out here too. "I don't know why Electra is being such a shit," I groaned to Marlina on the phone. "Oh, she's just jealous. All Greek women are crazy. She hates it that your friend is so much younger and so much more beautiful. It also drives her wild how deeply and selflessly you love her. THAT REALLY GETS HER!" laughed Marlina. "Look at me, I'm married and my husband is on retreat a lot. There were times when I couldn't bear the thought of him being away from me for even ONE SECOND. Now I'm getting used to it. OUCH!" I could hear Mary Angela yelling at her brat not to pull her hair. I was touched and amused. "I'll tell Mikis to help you find a taxi." Mary Angela hung up.

Mikis was this runt-looking little guy with a wheezy laugh who was on bad terms with both warring camps. He seemed to be an indecisive straddler who liked people too much. This little guy had a heart of gold and often bought me food even though he was unemployed and running out of money. Mikis eased my passage to Piraeus with his nervous humor and steady hand. The baby buggy with all my luggage was now starting to collapse.

I was finally leaving Europe. I said good-bye to Mikis and boarded my ship to Israel. I was escorted to my cabin and I quickly set up an altar. I asked for protection and blessings from the nagas and gurus. I asked this for Summer as well. A beautiful Israeli security guard scrutinized my passport. "Why do you have a Jordanian visa?" she barked. "I've got a flight to India from Amman," I replied in HEBREW. The gorgeous blonde was startled. "Aren't you afraid to go there?" "No," I said. I was firm. "Have a nice trip," she said looking at me with longing and gentle curiosity.

I lay down in my cabin and waited for the boat to set sail. I could feel the waves gently hitting and slapping the ship's belly. I closed my eyes and dreamed about Delphi.

JUPITER AS SEEN FROM DELPHI:

Jupiter is a planet for abstract artists: nothing but plumes, streaks, swirls, bands, loops, spots, and patches, running from white through all browns to bright orange, all in perpetual tumult. Earth aside, it's the liveliest place in the solar system. Jupiter is bulky, frothy, and changeable. If Earth fell into Jupiter's red spot it would look like a baseball vanishing into a wishing well. Some could argue that Jupiter is not even a planet, but a star. Jupiter is complex enough to merit this distinction. Jupiter is a mini solar system in its own right with dozens of moons to entertain it. Jupiter generates twice as much energy than it receives from the sun. Jupiter is a near-miss, no more phrases, just cries, cries and down to BEEP! and up to "EEEEEE" and down to clinkers and over sideways, echoing horizontal sounds.

THE HORIZONTAL SOUND:

The boat finally set sail. Sea-sickness and an unknown dread plagued me. I sat on my glasses and broke an arm. I did a quick repair job with masking tape, but it didn't look very good. I sensed Summer was in trouble, and I had a nightmare. I could see Summer, but couldn't help her, nor could I talk to her. I was paralyzed. Worry and fatigue weighed me down. I was on a dangerous passage back to my past. I was going through this water bardo. I climbed up on deck and was temporarily healed by the intense blue surf. My money was getting tighter and tighter. I could see on the cable TV screen that Europe was getting colder and colder. I thought about Summer and imagined her freezing in the cold Czech winter. I felt her cold hands and feet. It felt horrible. Here I was enjoying warm and glorious weather. The Mediterranean was peaceful and inviting. Islands dotted its landscape like friendly sentries.

I got off at Rhodes for a few minutes to use up the last minute of my Greek telephone card. I rustled Maxim out of bed. He sounded depressed and exhausted. "Howya do'n?" I excitedly asked. I heard nothing but mumbles. "Didya get my letters?" More mumbles. "Whaddya think about Summer?" I eagerly inquired. "I think she's ten-

der,” Maxim commented, but in a strange kind of alien tone. “I’m gonna need more money,” I warned. “MIKE!” Maxim screamed. The phone went dead. I ran back to the ship. This was it! A new continent was waiting for me. EUR was finished and ASIA was looming. The boat stopped off at Cyprus and then arrived at Haifa in the morning.

CHAPTER

7

ISRAEL

I was now in the second vortex.

I was in YEES-RAH-EL! The land of my turbulent adolescence. A place I loved and hated intensely. My first day in Israel began badly. It was a day of wrathful purification. I broke a fingernail on the boat as I packed and began to scatter emotionally. After leaving passport control, the baby carriage finally broke down and died. I was stranded in the streets of Haifa with no Israeli money and an accelerating feeling of despair. A car salesman took pity on me and drove me to the bus station. I was thinking of visiting Safed first, but decided instead to GO STRAIGHT to Jerusalem.

In the chaos of arrival, I lost my precious address book and started to cry. The confusion of my emotions overwhelmed me. The bus ride to Jerusalem seemed like a dream. Israel was unrecognizable. The heavy modernization blighted the land; and it was more hideous because the country was so small. Israel was plunging into the Third Wave. But I

had little time to worry about this. I was paralyzed by my emotions. I was going to see Dad after almost four years of bitter family feuding. My father's legacy still burned me. After what seemed weeks, my step-uncle Sasson showed up to retrieve me. He threw the broken corpse of the baby carriage onto the sidewalk and loaded my bags into his tiny van.

I was amazed by the cultural and racial variety hopping and seething in Jerusalem. People were helpful and rude at the same time. The Israelis never changed! My step-uncle had a plumbing job to finish and left me to simmer in the van. I was falling apart. My nose started to bleed and I wept. I felt lost and totally alone. Summer seemed so far away in this alien land. I was truly on my own. There would be no support for a Buddhist here, in the Holy Land. Muslims and Jews were still cursing at each other. They had NO TIME for me. My step-uncle introduced me to his family. I remembered his wife, but not his three kids who were polite to a fault, on my first day in Jerusalem. Then the phone suddenly rang; it was my stepmother! We both cried on the phone. My stepmother told me to relax. She urged me not to hate my Dad. I felt strange, feverish, and exotic. Things no longer felt so sinister and doomed. My stepmother had a special telepathy when it came to the family and Israel. I was sure of this now.

My step-uncle took me to Motza, a sleepy hamlet, outside of Jerusalem, along the Tel-Aviv-Jerusalem highway. It was here that I took refuge among the vineyards and plum trees. My stepmother's family had all lived in a small but comfortable house here. Now it was abandoned and condemned. I found shelter in a collapsing prefabricated hole, down below the main building. The place was filled with troubled ghosts and strong emotions. I cried all night and was able to construct a short mailing list from letters and jottings on legal pads. Summer's address was safe and I was ecstatic. The day had ended better than it had started. That's how purification works, folks.

The next day I did a Dur, a kind of fire puja. I burned a photo of Summer that looked particularly egotistical, in order to purify karma that was an obstacle to her and to us. As the photo burned, a raindrop fell on her third-eye. I found this to be truly auspicious. The photo sizzled and bulged into a bubble until it exploded with a loud pop. I felt greatly relieved. But there were more surprises. I found Dad's old warehouse and discovered my past in it. Old models, magazines, newspa-

pers, and notebooks had survived years of hideous neglect. I found a stuffed kangaroo my Mom had made for me. It was damp and covered with mildew and it stunk really bad, but I decided to keep it and take it to India with me. I started sorting all this stuff out. Motza was deserted. From my vantage point I could see the cemetery my father was buried in. The Jerusalem landscape looked blighted and forlorn. The developers had wrecked this sacred land with all kinds of ugly jabbering eyesore constructions. It was a Southern California kind of disaster. The highway was congested at ALL TIMES. The smog was bad too. Israel had become TOO successful. I was too confused to do much about it.

I took a bus into town and walked down Jaffa St., all the way to the Old City. I could see the Palestinian flags fluttering in the wind. It was an amazing sight. The Israelis had finally started to come to terms with their conscience. The Palestinians were stoking up their pride, but tension still lay beneath the surface. Rainbow graffiti sprayed on the walls competed with the wailing minarets. The techno-capitalist ambiance of New Jerusalem didn't seem to fit here and I was glad. The Old City still had a human face. I felt very much at home and struck up friendly conversations with the local Arabs. Indeed, I was convinced that I had been an Arab in a former life. The vibrations floating out of this cauldron were familiar. I felt a goodness of heart here. I had no illusions about Arab craziness. I had seen it before, throwing up its cloud of dust and hazy steam, but everything felt right at the moment.

I walked to my father's cemetery and became completely lost in the dark chilly night. I sat down and imagined where his grave might be and started the puja. I cried for an hour. I was working hard to heal a wound that had long been festering. It was time not only to forgive Dad, but to forgive myself. The more this painful bruise was released, the easier it was to forgive. I felt Summer had to forgive her own dad in order to heal too. I could see her pursing her lips. Summer always did this to signal mischievous satisfaction or deep annoyance. In regards to her dad it was always the latter. Summer and her dad did not get along. I felt a deep connection here. I was sure now that self-love was the best kind of protection. It was the foundation for loving others. Forgiveness came naturally after that. This sounded simple in theory, but it was very tough in practice. I wiped my eyes and stared into the pitch inky darkness. The freezing autumn cold made my body shiver. This was also IT.

I was doing IT with my Dad. I could almost hear his voice.

Every day seemed to last a lifetime in Israel. I did a tarot spread and discovered Summer's mom was going through a lot of changes. It was also putting a strain on Summer. They had a weird relationship I didn't really understand, not that I wanted to, at the moment. The boyfriend was fading fast. His physical body occupied Summer's attention, but her heart was now elsewhere. I was sure Summer and I would make it in the end, but all I could do was pray and keep sending letters. I found some beautiful postcards of the Old City that I knew she'd like. Only the best would do. It was that simple.

My stepmother's clan arrived in force to play a charade with the government. The land was needed for an extension of the highway and for many years the inspectors came and went, looking for proof that would allow evictions. The lights were always turned on at night. I could see them glowing from below. But it was all a charade. Nobody lived in Motza anymore. It was a long-lost world that was fading fast. It was an oasis of tranquillity in a sea of impermanent madness. The inspectors came and played their own charade. I was amused by the false promises they made. It was all a dance of ghostly husks and withered mud rats. I was the silent observer watching this prolonged death of Eden.

Not far from where I slept, archeologists were feverishly digging up Odyssean logs from the days of the First Temple. They were all on a scavenging hunt. The government had given the crazed diggers the green light to salvage and worm the earth before the new highway covered it with asphalt and auto exhaust. It was all a twilight kind of thing with a grapey sunset feeling hovering lazily in the air. I could hear the angels weep. The dry bones of the valley screamed. YAHWEH WAS ABOUT TO MAKE ANOTHER JUDGMENT.

I stocked up on some food in the open markets. The cucumbers were crisp and delicious. The tomatoes sweet and exotic. I was in the Middle East and it was a new adventure. The sights and sounds seemed very far away from Central Europe. It all felt like a dream. A fresh new one that I didn't care to wake from. I was gazing into my past. The old newspapers and magazines rekindled a gold mine of memories and secret symbols. It had been the hipless seventies of my painful adolescence. America and the world were having a terrible hangover. War and oil dominated the newsprint. Watergate was smoking up the land like a

smelly cigar while tank battles raged and sputtered here in the second vortex. I was cooking at an army base in the desert, when the Commie hordes entered Saigon and JAWS came out the week Summer was born. I was a tail-boomer. I had watched the fun only on TV and then gone into exile here in the Holy Land. Summer was a tail-buster. She was not a member of Generation X. She had been born when I was out of the country; and somehow miraculously escaped being turned into a cynic. Summer was not a “realist” like her bratty older cohorts and she was not an “idealist” like my elder boomer brethren. We had this very snazzy balance and a good karma. I looked at the fading past and smiled. It hadn't been that bad after all.

THE SECOND VORTEX AS SEEN FROM OUTER SPACE:

This is a dangerous place. Like the rest of the world the quality of life is dropping, while these Israeli creatures run faster and faster to earn less and less. The peculiar safety net of the Israeli vortex inhabitants is slowly beginning to disappear. The elder generation is graying while the young and over-educated can't find work. The Third Wave is hitting hard here too. Fast food and old-age homes are doing a roaring business. There is no job security in this transition scrunch. The global cyber-trend continues as political debate becomes sillier and sillier. Most labor is obsolete. Purchasing power is down while production is up. The lost world of the Second Wave haunts this second vortex. Islamic fundamentalism is offering a BLACK SOLUTION to the WHITE STRESS PROBLEM. It has been discovered by our computers that the closer the inhabitants of a vortex live to its center, the worse the STRESS FLIP becomes. STRESS FLIP: a rapid alternation between BLACK and WHITE STRESS. The faster the alternation the more schizophrenic human behavior gets. The slower the alternation, the more neurotic; and the repression of the cycle often leads to more a extreme blow-up later. It's called MANIC DEPRESSION.

THE FACTS ON THE GROUND:

Dad had made the right call in the late Seventies to get out of here. Why he came here in the first place is a mystery. His body now lies in state here at Givat Shaul, but his eldest son lives in the land of the brave and the home of the free. He also just had his glasses repaired.

I went back to the Old City to get some Jordanian dinars. I also bought a kaffiyah. I had lost my beautiful Mexican scarf somewhere between Bratislava and Budapest. I was kinda hip to hit the holy sights. So I started with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It was dank and crowded. Whether Jesus really died here wasn't all that clear. The sweet smell of incense coated the Crusader walls of the church. Priest gangs fought for turf inside the sacred compartment; and gluttonous crowds lined up for a poke into "The Place" of impoverished crucifixion. It was all good fun. I escaped the crowds and lost myself inside the narrow alleys and secret tunnels of the Old City. I loved this.

I stumbled into an exhibit of war. I saw how fifty-five Jews had held off the Jordanian hordes for weeks and weeks until they were overwhelmed in a Jewish Alamo kind of glory. But it was at the Wailing Wall that I finally hit pay-dirt. I began doing a puja right next to these hypnotized Hassids. They were Black Hats and enemies of all vortex rivals, you know. Just at that moment, the muezzins began to call the Muslim faithful to their afternoon prayers. Soon the church bells began to ring. It was ONE BIG PARTY! I left my body. I could feel the bliss waves, but was not sure of their origin in this crazed and wondrous cacophony. But everybody was jumping to the music. I made my offering to ALL JEWS here.

I was on a roll. I floated into the Kidron Valley and up the Mount of Olives to the Church of Gethsemane. I felt a strange inner peace here. I saw zillions of tombstones. Jerusalem was under a cloudy haze bewitching and beautiful. It was here that my Dad took me as a young child to savor my first trip abroad. I visited Mary's tomb and walked up the Via Delorosa. I did another puja on Temple Mount. The great Golden Mosque with its meteor underbelly was the sight of my offering to ALL ARABS. I could see Israeli soldiers running around the courtyard in search of hidden demons. There was a befuddled look on their faces. This was peace? No? I flashed past the mysterious signs of nowhere. And I moved!

SATURN AS SEEN FROM JERUSALEM:

Only Saturn has those spell-binding rings; the most spectacular ornament in the solar system. These rings are composed for the most part from rocks of ice, the size of grapefruits or basketballs. The rocks

were once swept together and then flattened out into a snow-white, glittering sweep of ribbon long, long ago. Saturn also has quite a few moons, each having a dense atmosphere thick with gassy clouds. And Saturn is also the lightest planet in the solar system; it would float on water if it could. One can see on Saturday nights dozens of young faces with their throaty voices screaming, “Yaah! Yaah! We won! We won!” Such are the peculiar life forms emanating from this giant spinning top.

⊕ THE GIANT SPINNING TOP:

I finally found Dad’s grave and decided to say good-bye to him with one last puja. This time there would be no interference. It was time to get clear with Dad. In this dark and solitary environment, I placed candles all around his grave. I shielded them with rocks to prevent the wind from blowing them out. I walked up the stairs and looked at the scene from above. I heard the 23rd psalm in my head:

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil.”

Dad’s little ship now had a compass to help navigate through the bardo. The little ship glowed in the cold night air. The grave now seemed to move and float. I was happy. I said good-bye to Dad and walked down the side of the busy freeway leading to Motza. It was dangerous and spooky. It was my final test. I had been on the road for two months now, but it felt like ages. I slept all day to prevent further overload. I looked at photos of all the luscious dakinis. These angels had saved my life, time and time again. I looked at a photo of Summer and was completely filled with bliss and wonder.

My mind had been working overtime. White Stress was stalking me. I now just wanted to get to India and be silent. But I had one last pilgrimage to make. So I boarded a bliss bus to the Galilee. I was off to Safed, the ancient Jewish capital of the holy Kabbalah. The bus passed Jericho on the way up. The town looked dumpy and suspicious. The Palestinian flags hung limply and weather-beaten in the desert afternoon. The pull-out was imminent. Nobody seemed to care. The harsh and haunting landscape of the Judean desert was worth the ride alone, but more new wonders awaited me in Safed. Here the air was pure

and the great Zaddiks lived on forever. I felt at home in this strong energy. The Jewish bodhisattvahs rained down their blessings on me, as I poured out my offerings to them. The Black Hats kept their distance from the crazy American. I felt a strong connection here both with Dad and with Summer. They were close to my heart now and I felt very, very happy.

I walked all around the cute little artist lanes that Safed indulged in. It was here that the Greats converged. I communed and reveled in the Ha'ari Synagogue. Two wrathful brothers acted as obnoxious protectors here and shooed away a group of school girls, cursing their chatter and zooming in on me, the weird American. I skipped quickly by the Ahuhab Synagogue, keeping one step ahead of the female brats and their armed and bored escorts. I found the study room where Rabbi Caro talked to the Meggid, the holy presence. I struck gold here and meditated in the bliss-filled courtyard. The energy was good. I moved onto the ancient cemetery. All the heavies were here. It was puja-time! Ha'ari, Cordova, Caro, and Halevi, princes of the Zaddik pantheon all lay buried here, but still very much alive. Little black hats flocked to the graves chanting along with their grizzly bearded teachers. Sublime and surreal feelings hit me. I offered all I could at the tombs. The Zaddiks were smiling down on me.

The silent rolling hills and clear blue skies made me forget all my troubles. I took a plunge in the ice-cold mikvah bath fed constantly by a nearby spring. Crazies with locks of wild hair sang nearby in mindless ecstasy. I began to hysterically laugh and felt strangely uplifted, as I shivered and shook my nude body in this spiritual freeway, where everybody was driving at least a feverish ninety.

I pattered around another old synagogue which legend said once housed terrible demons, but had since been pacified by the local Jewish exorcists. The high spiritual flying resumed at Mount Meron where I made offerings to the great writer of the Zohar, Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai. The crazies were there too, temporarily exchanging their black hats for white ones as they blasted candles with prayers and left rocks and scraps of paper with written requests for salvation and possible enlightenment. I scribbled my name and Summer's on the tomb of this Jewish giant. Thousands had scribbled before me, here in the twilight zone of the celestial pomegranates.

But where was he? An old man sat near the falafel kiosk and asked

me if I wanted a blessing. I coldly turned him down and felt instant pangs of regret and remorse. I sat miserably like an emotional cripple. Had I missed my chance for salvation? The old man looked dirty and unshaven, snot dribbled down his nose and onto his gray shaggy beard. I looked at him from the corner of my eye in excited anticipation. The old man walked up to me. "What time is it?" he asked. "Five o'clock," I answered. The old man walked away. My spirits plummeted. The old man came back. "Do you want a blessing?" This time I didn't hesitate and said YES! "Are you married?" The old man quickly asked. "No," I said. The old man stuck his head into a prayer-book and rattled off his blessings. He then fished out of his pocket a red cord and wrapped it around my neck. He smiled and walked off. I felt light-headed and ran after him to give him some money. He took it graciously and disappeared. But we met up again at the bus stop as we boarded the bus to Haifa. My mysterious benefactor vanished into the rear of the bus. "Who is that old guy?" I asked the bus driver. "Oh, he comes here every day," he answered in a disinterested tone.

The wind blew at a furious clip, entering through the open windows, and slapping me repeatedly in the face. I had made offerings in Rila to Bulgaria, and at Delphi to the Greeks, but here a strange turn of events had occurred. I knew at that moment that I would soon have a wife. I could not explain this rationally to myself. I also knew it would not be an "ordinary" kind of wife. Not by a long shot. The wondrous and miraculous feeling that was showering me had something to do with the old man. Rabbi Bar-Yochai had made a personal visit today. I was not laughing, I was getting hysterical as the bus lurched around the sharp hairpins of this mountain paradise.

I transferred at Haifa to another bus bound for Jerusalem. I was wrapping things up in my mind. Jordan now loomed and after that INDIA at last! The vanishing bumpers of late-night traffic serenaded me all the way back to my step-uncle's apartment. He invited me for a swim, but we just talked in the van. "Oh, it used to be one person worked, and a whole family was fed. Now everybody works and barely any money is made," my step-uncle groaned. I remained silent. I had become a celebrity by my visit to Safed. My aura was glowing now. "When my father died, I lost my bearings," my step-uncle busily continued. "Now I have to think for myself." I remained silent. My step-

uncle then asked. "Did you see any angels?" I was dumb-struck by this question. "Yes, I did," I remarked innocently.

I wanted to take a trip to the Dead Sea. This was my final blessing run in Israel. I nagged the bus driver to tell me when to get off at Qumran. The Judean desert was a vast sea of orange nothingness that swallowed everything in its path, and made the whole Universe of the spiritual traveler seem crazy and cock-eyed and extremely strange. The Essene ruins at Qumran were small in comparison to this big celestial vastness, but I cranked away and felt nothing but resistance here. The locals hated my blessings and screamed at me to GET OUT OF HERE! I bumped into a numbed-out Canadian dentist who was on a pilgrimage of angst deep inside this desert unfriendliness. He treated me to a Mexican dinner in Jerusalem. I discovered my dentist buddy was fighting his ex-wife for custody of his children. His pockets were full of money and he was a half-Jew like me. I appreciated my newly found friend's company. I was no longer in limbo. My stepmother's relatives were from Iraq and had NO CONCEPT about what a YOPI was. They refused to help me get to the border. My "relatives" were scared of the Arabs. They hated them and an emotional numbness could be detected in their disorganized, but polite behavior.

I was finally rescued by a young guy who lived on the other side of the prefab. He was a young red-haired Jew who worked for my step-uncle when he "felt like it." I noticed he looked a lot like Harpo Marx with his wild cumulus hair and big hook-nose. His name was Avi and he liked to argue, to assume the worst scenario for every eventuality. "Don't go to cemeteries. It's strictly forbidden," he cautioned. "Why?" I asked. "Because it is," he countered. "Don't go to the Old City," he further warned. "Why?" I stupidly inquired. "Because they may kill you," Avi matter-of-factly announced. "You wanna get outa here?" he asked. "Don't rely on these jerks. They're DISORGANIZED." I was beginning to worry about the run to the border. Once across it was easy. Buses to Amman took off hourly. Only the craziness of second vortex politics could produce the following tedious itinerary. Three different vehicles and two different crossings just to cover a half-hour ride from where I stood.

Avi finally persuaded a friend to take me to the Old City next morning. The guy wanted thirty dollars for a ten-minute ride. I told him to

fuck off and got the ride for only ten bucks. I began to despise the Israelis all over again. Their tedious hair-splitting and sordid unsaintliness was wearing thin. But Avi was a saint. He lifted my heavy bags and ran across the congested highway, almost getting hit in the process, so he could hook up with his buddy. We eventually got to the Old City in good time. I asked Avi what he thought about Middle East politics. "Ah, you know, they discharged me dishonorably from the army. I just didn't want to go to Lebanon," he muttered. Avi's stock suddenly skyrocketed. This guy wasn't so bad after all, I thought to myself.

I now had this metal carriage for my bags. My step-uncle had "lent" it to me. It was sturdier than the baby carriage I had bought in Prague, but harder to maneuver. I heaved and pushed like a madman. Avi said good-bye and I was escorted to Jericho by Arabs. The radio in the taxi was wailing eerie Arabic music. Something I had not heard since a trip to Egypt more than a decade ago. I was now entering yet another world. I was relieved and afraid. A soft rain pitter-pattered on the roof of the taxi. We were back in the desert.

The border crossing seemed to take ages. A Palestinian I sat next to told me it was hard for Palestinians to travel anywhere now in the Arab world. "They hate us even more than the Jews," he complained. I had to leave him and the bus at the transfer station. Israeli security was everywhere. STOP! FRONTIER AHEAD! read signs in a menacing tone. An Israeli soldier looked at my papers and kept a serious poker face. The whole business was downright depressing. I prayed that my missing passport page would not be noticed. It had had an old Israeli exit marking and I had expediently ripped it out to avoid trouble with the Jordanians. But all went well. I was processed by Israeli Immigration and forced to pay a hefty departure tax. This pissed me off. I then boarded a Jordanian bus and crossed the Allenby bridge. Just about every centimeter of the Israeli side was covered with soldiers. The Jordan river itself was something of a disappointment. It looked like a muddy stream somewhat lost in this serious, but intensely comical setting. In the end I wondered what all the tight security was for. The Jordanian side of the border was pretty laid back ó almost deserted. I saw a few bored Jordanian soldiers milling around. My passport was checked and I was told I could do as I pleased. I was finally on the other side. It was time for puja with the Arabs. I caught the first mini-bus to Amman.

CHAPTER 8

JORDAN

“You goin’ to Amman?” I turned around. It was an American. “Yup,” I answered. “I’ve got a flight to India.” The American was tall and wiry. He had dark skin and blond hair and sounded confident and intelligent. “Where you go’in?” I asked. I was curious about him and wasn’t sure why. “Oh, I don’t know. I’ve been to Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and this is my third time into Jordan. I guess I’ll go back to Lebanon, I’ve got a friend there.” I sensed my new friend was an Arabophile and this turned out to be right. “Whaddya think of Israel?” I probed. “Ah, I don’t like it. It’s a police state. I was staying near the Old City and I could see the soldiers with their clubs every day, and they used them often.” I felt a strange connection to this new companion. His name was John and he felt almost like a brother. “The West has really messed up the Middle East. That’s why Iran’s a big power here. Israel holds all the cards and is playing a really rough game.

The Israelis are dictating unfair terms to the Arabs.” I didn’t feel like arguing with him. I liked John a lot and so decided to humor him. When we got to Amman, I noticed how very little paranoia I felt in the air. It felt pretty safe and I felt at home. John helped me lug my stuff as I inquired about Petra and flights to Delhi. I had changed the Amman to India flight four times in the course of this trip. Now I was doing it again. I wanted more time in Jordan.

Amman was bustling and bursting with activity. It was a city resting on hills, or jebels, as the natives called them. John and I checked into a hotel and decided to just hang out. I noticed that the Dome of the Rock was on every twenty-dinar bill, and that a huge photo of the Old City hung on the wall of the Jerusalem restaurant. That’s where John took me to eat. We helped ourselves to plenty of saffron-flavored rice and grilled chicken.

I noticed that John was not unlike my earlier self, a highly educated drifter. He had a logical and powerful mind and it was hiding a lot of emotional baggage. We talked about science. John had been a physics major. We talked about philosophy. “You have to define your terms,” John declared. “What is the mind all about?” he asked. I looked for a way to pierce his mental wall. “Well, the problem is the mind itself,” I parried. “This thing that needs to constantly define things prevents us from seeing the truth.” John was quick to lobby back a serve. “Oh, now you’re sounding like Wittgenstein, man. That guy put philosophy on top of its head. He said it was all just a meaningless game, unless you wanted to put meaning into it. I don’t agree with that. Philosophy is an important human activity. Humans need to do it.” There was a silence. I saw my opening. John’s mind was blocking his heart and I sensed a very deep and open heart across the table. I decided to let John experience the sublime through PUJA! It worked. I did a Mahakala and the next morning took off for Petra. John was calmer and he lent me his watch. Mine had broken down. It was very early morning when I plunged into the dark and deserted streets of Amman. I could hear the muezzins serenading the city with their sweet and hypnotic wails. All of this felt completely familiar.

The bus plowed through the desert highway at top speed. I was munching stale pretzels and trying to catch some sleep. The screams of babies in the front of the racing vehicle made this impossible. I was on a luxury tourist bus, the only one that left that day for this kind of trip.

From my window, the desert looked flat, barren, and forbidding. I could see Bedouin nomads camping out in the early morning heat, oblivious to me and everything else. I was going to Petra, the great lost city of the Nabateans, a mysterious race of warrior priests who had carved out of hills and cliffs a monstrous city hidden by canyons and forbidden-looking brown and orange mountains.

Petra was ALIEN. It reminded me of the Grand Canyon, Star Wars, and Lost Horizon all rolled into one big rocky complex of tombs, caves, and dizzy-looking monuments. The place was huge and covered a wide area. The mind had a hard time taking it all in. The huge “treasury” building dwarfed all who came close to it. Inside, there was nothing but emptiness, dark and uninviting. Later, in the afternoon, after the tourist hordes had departed, I walked up all the way to the “monastery,” another huge and towering cathedral-like structure. The dead silence seemed to make the stones speak. The shouts of an occasional Bedouin echoed and ricocheted off the stony walls of this vast temple of ghosts. I did a puja, but like in Qumran, the locals would have none of it. GET OUT! WE DON'T WANT YOUR BLESSINGS! This was their disappointing message. I then counted my money. I had only four hundred dollars left! I had to leave Jordan soon.

I spent the night in a comfortable hotel and almost didn't return to the ruins the next morning. A blinding windstorm hit the entire area with its frightening hints of violent doom; the wrathful holocaust ended almost as soon as it began. I taxied back down to the entrance of the complex and didn't really know what to see with the few remaining hours left to me. The bus would be heading back to Amman in the late afternoon. A young Arab who snapped my photo told me to go up to the Altar of High Sacrifice. I did so and the energies were powerful and awesome. I grunted and sweated up the steep trail, climbing higher and higher, and stopping occasionally to gaze at the vast and unfolding panorama that was Petra. I could see donkeys trailing their way below, looking as small as ants. A young Dutch mother and her two daughters had decided to take a rest slightly up ahead of me. I was dizzy and the blonde little Dutch girls were transformed into angels by my fatigued eyes. I could feel a heavy vibration in this rarefied atmosphere. It was indeed the vibration of SACRIFICE.

At the top I could see the huge slab where women and men were offered up to the faceless gods. Drainage ditches had been carved

around the sides for this bloody feast. A British couple and their tour guide decided to do a sacrificial reenactment for the cameras on my urging. Old karmic alignments were furiously rekindled as the wife lay on the sacrificial slab to be offered up. Her husband and I went into a photo frenzy with our cameras. Powerful energies were being released, and it was a strange kind of primal puja. No blood was spilled, but the intention of RELEASE was just as strong. Summer's energy surged forward and so did my Dad's. I was releasing something, but wasn't quite sure what. It was intense and brutal as it was sublime. It was Jim, and it was me. It was IT, yet again, in a new and different form.

THE ⊕ OUTER PLANETS AS SEEN FROM ⊕ PETRA:

Probably the most important fact about Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, the outermost planets in our solar system, is how far beyond our grasp they really are. Rings around Uranus were discovered completely by accident. Very little is known about them still. Uranus is fifteen times as far from the sun as Earth; Neptune, seventeen times; and Pluto is fifty times farther. Even from Uranus' orbit the sun would be no more than a bright point, one star among many. Jupiter and Saturn would be harder to see than Mercury is from Earth. The outer planets are immense satellites and much of what we know about them doesn't fit neatly together. Occasionally, wild brawling secrets and funny little mysteries can be seen flaming out from the horizon.

THE SECRETS AND THE MYSTERIES:

John helped me load my luggage into a taxi, and grinned a happy goofy good-bye. We had exchanged addresses. I was now hours away from INDIA. I felt relieved and excited. The crazy Arab cabby stopped his car to talk to some friends, who tried to grab my luggage; I screamed and the cabby just laughed. His friends then banged the sides of his vehicle as he zoomed away. I was almost hysterical. You know, to this day, I'm still not sure whether this incident was a joke, or the real thing. Arabs can be strange, VERY STRANGE. Jordanian Airways charged me this hideous amount for overweight baggage. I refused to pay it and a standoff began. As the minutes ticked by for the flight to leave, I did a furious puja. The Jordanians gave in. They wanted to compromise. I

gave them a hundred and twenty dollars. I was now down to three hundred dollars and knew big trouble lay ahead.

At least India was dirt cheap and the young Lama was waiting for me. It was a slightly reassuring thought. At the waiting gate, I met a haggard-looking American who had just flown in from New York. He was in transit to India and was booked on my flight. "Where ya goin'?" he asked me. "I'm going to North Bengal to see the Heavies," I replied. "I'm goin' to Hardiwar to see Soyasan," the American countered. "Who's he?" I inquired, more out of politeness than curiosity. "Oh, he was the first America Tulku ever to be recognized by the Tibetans, but he's no longer a monk. You know, he kinda just flaked out and got a girlfriend. He's been black-balled now." the American recounted almost absent-mindedly. My memory began to get jogged. I had heard of this guy. He was the hero of one of the Head Nun's groupies, back in the Burmese place. But now this guy was OUT. The American showed me this beat-up photo. An unshaven and spaced-out-looking young man stared at me from the scrap of dull shiny paper. This was the price of karma, I thought to myself.

Security was very tight at Amman airport. It took ages to get cleared, but I finally got on the plane. It taxied onto the runway and accelerated towards infinity with a lift and a thud. I was on my way, at last, towards the heart of my journey. I was going home where people understood me. Support and protection were waiting. More trials lay ahead, but the REAL PILGRIMAGE was now beginning. The flight took only five hours. The plane landed and I heaved a sigh of relief. I was at last on Indian soil. I could feel KALI and the Gurus extending their arms out to me. I was feeling the warm embrace of the protectors. I was finally HOME!

CHAPTER 9

NEW DELHI

INDIA! Anything was possible here. I began learning this at the airport. Procedures and lines for anything were only suggestions. You cut corners wherever you could. You made your own rules, or someone would make them for you REAL FAST. Touts were out in force. Delhi was noisy and crowded. Everything was super-cheap. The little money I had would last a long time. I was relieved. From my bus window I glimpsed the end of the world. People scurried back and forth forever, in a constant haze, which lent a subtle mystery to everything on the broad and crowded streets. The smell of smoke was everywhere. There was a Beijing feeling in the air. I could smell something ancient and primeval. I was at home in the sweet and wonderful chaos. It was annoying and mischievous. It was weird and crazy. Millions of hustlers, touts, and beggars descended on you from all directions. There was an

eternal commission racket for everything, and the unsuspecting traveler paid for all this.

At the train station, lessons in frustration were learned almost on a minute-by-minute basis. Long and slow lines for everything drained and exasperated me. Jostling and pushing were mandatory in this celestial circus. I was determined to get to Siliguri. That was my contact point in North Bengal. The young Lama would meet me at the monastery of the newly reborn Tibetan Heavy I had heard so much about in California. His name was Kalu Rinpoche. The guy from Arizona, his teacher, Jim, my black psychic friend, and even Summer had all been touched and blessed by him.

At the special tourist ticket refuge in the train station, I met a Tibetan who told me about the Big Curse and the Rebellious Regent. "This guy is nothing but trouble. A curse is following him and destroying the Kagyu," warned the Tibetan ominously. I could hear the din of chaos outside the window. It was a perpetual problem. It seemed to surge and crest like the waves of a manic ocean. "You be careful with your teacher," the Tibetan cautioned. "He's not your girlfriend. You Americans don't understand what commitment is." I looked at the Tibetan and smiled. "Don't dissipate your energy," he urged as he helped me with my bags down the dirty stairs. Then I was alone again. Young coolies attacked each other for the privilege of carrying my bags to the wrong platform. The blast-furnace heat of the day drenched me and made me irritable. I eventually hopped on the train to the old Delhi station, but the multitudes of India continued to overwhelm me. I was numb from all the dumb chaos and its constant shifting.

India brought out very extreme emotions in the voyager. The misery was intense everywhere you looked. Half-naked urchins and staring scrawny dogs were soaked in the gray and black of billions of dusty germs. I smelled the air deeply. It was oozing smoke and despair, but also an intense sweetness. My moods swung violently with crazy pendulum thrusts in this glorious playground of WHITE STRESS. This was IT. A coolie materialized out of the haze to help me navigate my ugly load through a dizzy maze of underground corridors and clanging elevators. Dark strange smells were everywhere even down here. I then checked my bags and tried to call the Old Cambodian's monastery, but the phones were useless.

In India, however, there is ALWAYS a way. Auto-rickshaw hawks

pounced on me; and with only a vague description on my part knew at least the direction of where we had to go. I was soon back on the noisy streets of New Delhi, snapping away at them with the cheap Olympus I had bought in Prague. India was a photographer's paradise. Old memories of my last trip began to float up from unknown quarters. Indeed, India was the same; she never seemed to change. There was something eternal about her. What had changed was the observer. I was no longer an arrogant and useless undergraduate. No, life had ground me down and I was wiser and more humble now.

THE STARS FROM NEW DELHI:

If we take the Big Bang as creation then one has to wonder how little the creation actually accomplished. Unlike the Biblical accounts, all the Big Bang did was make hydrogen and helium. Obviously, something has happened since. Mainly the development of stars. At some point after the primal flash had subsided, the hydrogen atoms started to clump into clouds which then crumpled into stars under the influence of gravity. Heat and pressure rose up in interstellar tides only to end up as birds, fish, and television sets.

INSIDE THE TELEVISION SET:

The Cambodian's place was a power-spot. He hadn't been there in decades, but I could still feel him around. The monastery had been a gift from old Nehru himself. I was warmly welcomed by a friendly skeleton crew who offered me tea and fruit. It was here that I did my first puja in India within the protective walls of the Old Cambodian's bliss. A Thai practitioner then read my palm. He was impressed. "You have a superb sixth sense and you are a fairly decent meditator when inspired and motivated. You also have a clear mind and will always have money for yourself and others. Long life is certain; you know how to solve problems." The Thai stopped for a moment and examined my palms with delicate care. He then continued, "Your palms are clean too. Not too many lines criss-crossing all over the place. You have no multiple conflicts in the stars." I sat relieved. But what about Summer? I mused. Her palms were karmic freeways. How would it affect us?

The Thai invited me to go to Nepal with him. I knew this was impossible. But I told him we would meet again. I took off with the auto-rickshaw driver who had been waiting patiently for me in the near-

by grass. Like a master juggler he plunged into the dark rush-hour traffic. We weaved and zigged past hundreds of near accidents, but I knew there was nothing to fear. This was all part of daily life in India. Every Indian driver seemed to know through some mysterious intuition how to avoid an instant death. The crazy traffic was a daily puja encountered every day in a million mindless ways.

Back at the old Delhi train station, I realized it was worth hiring these hungry coolies to lug my writer's burden of bags for a mere pittance. The coolies knew through telepathy how to find you and your train. My hired Sisyphian grunt was illiterate so he relied on another Indian to read the computerized passenger lists, in order to then find my "first class" compartment and get some kind of tip. First class in India just meant a bare-bones cubicle. Its only saving grace was precisely this. Other classes were noisy cattle pens of sweaty compressed humanity yangling and dangling from every door and window available. Despite all these shocks and inconveniences, my prospects looked good. I had survived my first day in India.

The thirty-six-hour train ride was timeless. India was not just a country. It was a state of mind that embraced extreme opposites. This was new. It was a white solution to WHITE STRESS. All reality was compressed and mixed into a kind of strange identity loss. What prevented everything from cracking up and dissolving was a spiritual immunity permeating through all this creation sweat. It was humming in the lush countryside with its teeming faceless multitudes. It was also the backdrop for an endless drama of seasonal cycles. Life followed death in an unavoidable rhythm, and there was daily and constant AWARENESS of this.

Throughout the journey, there was also this perpetual motion on the train with excited, peddlers hawking all kinds of goods. The constant ring of CHAI!CHAI!CHAI! was heard from the lips of the receding tea-sellers. Sweets, coffee, fruit, cigarettes, magazines, and soft-drinks floated down the aisles in an eternal parade of consumption. The traffic was NON-STOP. I started getting acquainted with my neighbors, a family of four going to Assam. I was an endless source of curiosity to them with my strange western looks and curiously forbidden manners. The Indian autumn heat forced me to strip down to my under-shirt, a new experience, as the train engine sputtered and died near Patna, halfway

to my destination.

I timidly hopped off the train to inspect the premises. I saw a dead dog lying near the tracks; its bloated body roasted gently in the sun. The dog's severed head had a strange quizzical look of sudden death misunderstood. The train started up again, and to my surprise, a photo of Summer I had been using as a bookmark almost flew out the window. I took it as an omen. SHE WAS ALL RIGHT.

A young Indian medical student befriended me and gave me a second palm-reading. The good news just kept rolling along. "Money will come easily to you and fame will quickly follow, but a big gift is coming, something quite unimaginable is on the way. The message was: I WOULD GET WHATEVER I WANTED. My mind was powerful and could attract whatever it imagined at breakneck speed. "You will live at least till you're eighty," the young student proudly announced. He too was impressed by my clean palms. My new friend stressed that crowded and congested palms indicated confusion and multiple conflicts. I thought of Summer again. The medical student wanted my address and was wowed by Summer's photo. So was the family in my compartment. Summer was passing yet another weird test, so far away from receding Prague. I too had passed another test. I had been in India just forty-eight hours and was still "sane."

CHAPTER 10

PORTH BENGAL

Late at night, I got locked into the train's toilet. It was a **rare moment of human emptiness.**

The train's clanking groans muffled my cries for help. I began to panic and imagine the worst. The steamy stench of urine and encrusted dry shit made me want to vomit. My knuckles were bruised and infected. I began to breathe deeply and wait for deliverance at the next unknown station. It came as a surprised Indian opened the door to relieve himself. He lifted the rusty bolt from the outside and we looked at each other in an exhausted and dirty sort of way. This was IT too. My first IT experience in India.

New Jalpaiguri. This was my final stop. I was in a boom town in lush Northern Bengal. The dry dust-bowl of Uttar Pradesh was now just a memory. This was a new place, caught between the steamy jungle and the towering Himalayas. The faces were darker and the bodies thinner and smaller, but the CHAOS was the same. A coolie grabbed my bags and we were off into the unknown. Just outside the station, a troop of cabbies surrounded and pounced on me and the poor exhausted coolie. Excited shouts and wild gestures swirled in the air as we haggled and swayed in search of a fair price. Finally, I settled on a short and stocky Nepali. My new friend zipped through the crowded streets of Siliguri and began the slow ascent up the mountainous road to Sonada.

We passed huge green tea plantations, vast fields of yellow wildflowers, and the usual jeep and bus traffic careening and screeching through the narrow lanes. The high elevation made me dizzy and I struggled to clear my head in this newfound heaven. The view was stunning and intoxicating. Green rust-colored hills carpeted with dancing flowers of many sizes and colors bewitched my imagination. It all felt like a dream, in this strange and enticing environment.

The Nepalis seemed to be a nation in themselves. They were short and squat and Oriental-looking; they carried immense loads on their backs. I saw across enormous vegetated ravines patchworks of agriculture on steep slopes. The cold morning sun warmed the dirty shanty homes that clung precariously to each hypnotic twist in the road. The people seemed friendly, but I could feel tension just below the surface of the smiles. The Nepalis were Gurkha warriors who knew how to fight, and political graffiti defaced the landscape with an angry regularity.

Upon arrival in Sonada, I inquired at Kalu's monastery whether the young Lama had arrived yet. No one had seen him in years. I started to worry. Without my teacher, there would be no pilgrimage to Bodgaya. Communication with the Tibetans was a confusing and frustrating exercise. Only a handful of the monks could speak passable English. Nevertheless, a young, friendly sherpa monk named Mingma was assigned to take care of my needs. Sonada was a large Kagyu monastery complex buzzing with little bee-like monks racing back and forth with gleaming angelic speed.

Four of these little tykes were drafted to haul my load; they did so without complaint. Mingma showed me my new quarters, a bare room, with a single mattress, overlooking the mountains that ringed the

monastery. I could sense that the Himalayas were now within sneaky reach. I was in a new mind-zone, but couldn't appreciate it fully. The non-stop travel was generating a mind-lag. I decided to rest and wait for the young Lama. I made a little altar and adjusted the photos of my favorite gurus with great care; they had brought me here safely and I would need their blessings and protection more than ever in the days and nights ahead. I put Summer's picture on a shelf, close to the altar. She was my new guardian angel. I would need her help too. I sat quietly and night eventually came.

THE NEBULAE AS SEEN FROM SONADA:

One could say that the Milky Way is like a single organism and that the stars within are its cells. Like cells, each star has a specific life cycle, and over that life cycle it generates materials that are released into the organism as a whole, giving it its character. This inter-stellar medium is the Milky Way's circulatory system, the most visible manifestations of which are clouds of GAS and DUST called nebulae that stream all around the galaxy. These clouds recycle the elements made by the stars and supernovae and are the raw material from which new stars systems are made. From Earth this all looks like a network of expanding and sneezing bubbles, three-dimensional ripples spreading outward through space towards the black reaches of infinity.

INSIDE THE BLACK REACHES OF INFINITY:

The nights were bone-chilling cold in Sonada. It was winter now. I went out for a walk and got lost, I felt miserable and forgotten.

Dear Guardian Angel:

I've been here only two days, but it seems like a terribly long time. Last night I peeked into the shrine-room of this strange place and saw the old body of Kalu. It was spooky, kinda weird, and terribly beautiful. It was gilded in gold and his face just kinda stared down at me as if, God knows what, maybe he was measuring me up, or something. Who knows. The next day the monks roused me out of bed and drove me down with this Spanish guy to see the new three-year-old kid. You know, the new Kalu. Well, he was kinda cute and boy did he hate having his picture taken with me. He just screamed and yelled. It was quite a scene. But this kid's got power. You can feel it, and he doesn't mind if you take a snap of him ALONE, only. Go figure it. I mean it's so weird to see this applied karma in action; it's like this physical impermanence is pretty much harnessed in a systematic way for the benefit of all sentient beings. Do you think this is too far out? I think it's pretty cool Buddhist engineering, if you want my opinion. It's like this engineering is driving and pushing this divine recycling process. Just what is a Buddha, you may ask? Well, it's like a form of life that has achieved the highest evolutionary perfection possible. A Buddha has perfect wisdom and perfect compassion. Buddhas see life as it is and want to make all other beings peaceful and happy. They are not stressed out and are not really even dead or alive. They kind of just exist beyond ALL THAT. Buddhas see everything as inter-connected and see evil as just bad habits swirling around since beginningless time. When you see THIS you're free and never separate. You feel joy and are enriched by the happiness of others. This generosity and selfless love saves lives. Do you understand me? You know, not too far away from the little guy was this other Buddha. He was really sweet and subtle, just like you. Everyone called him Shatrel Rinpoche. He gave out these little black pills which I was told to swallow for my health. It was a great blessing, I was told. This Shatrel Rinpoche also gave me a red cord to put around my neck. It was all pretty cool and I wish you were here to see it all. It's different here. It's like I'm on two different roads. There's the road ROAD with people, and cows, and cars. And there's the subtle warm freeway of the spirit which is becoming more and more important here. There's all kinds of subtle life that I'm beginning to see and feel. It's always been there, but I haven't been able to see it and feel it until now. These Buddhas

have been a big help here on this new and strange freeway. They kinda glow and guide the way on it. You know somewhere in the crazy chaos of this place I always feel you. I really do. I also lost my little red cord the old Buddha gave me.

Yours,

Grim Determination

The high altitude and bitter cold were knocking me off my feet. I also was having trouble with the culture shock. The food at the monastery was inedible and I foolishly decided to hang out for awhile in Darjeeling. DJ was a bizarre mix of Indians, Nepalis, and Tibetans rubbing and pushing each other endlessly in colorful crowded markets. DJ also had a quaint European feel to it. The British had developed DJ into an inviting and exclusive hill spa to escape the summer heat during the old colonial days. The congested alleys and bustling throngs exhausted me. I just kept moving despite the danger of imminent and personal collapse. I researched how to wire money from home and missed the last bus to Sonada. I had little money and felt terribly ill and feverish. I trekked to the youth hostel and got there just as night was falling. Through sheer will, I found it. I was rapidly losing strength from lack of food; and a thumb infection weakened and infuriated me, as I huddled in my freezing room cursing my bad fortune and preparing myself for “early death.” But it was not too be. A Japanese trekker gave me water and antibiotics, and I began to realize that I wasn’t really prepared for India. Some Indians soon showed up and sat all night playing cards. I finally turned off the switch and they got the message, but this was the beginning of a new and terribly annoying pattern. Indians basically didn’t give a FUCK about other people. I would encounter this mad behavior at the post-office, in the markets, and on the bus. India was a free-for-all. I would soon start to hate it; and learn that this attitude would get me NOWHERE.

The next morning the fever was gone. Sleep had been very deep. I felt refreshed, and I walked out onto the balcony. Then there they were like a miraculous apparition. THE HIMALAYAS! The obscuring

clouds and mist were gone. Like shining jewels, these towering homes of the gods could be seen as clear as daylight. I gasped and struggled to find words. None came. I felt totally dwarfed, and a strong and powerful feeling of respect and devotion began to fill me. YES! The mountains were GURUS. These glorious mountains had the same qualities of advanced beings. It was a combination of towering strength and blissful lightness. It generated what some would call PRESENCE. It was an elusive and paradoxical combination that was difficult to describe, but easy to feel. All the masters had this presence. It was now a genuine experience. No amount of reading about the spiritual path could substitute for this. I felt I was receiving an instant blessing. I felt rejuvenated and clear. I rushed back to the monastery and gave some wandering Americans a tour of old Kalu's bedroom. I could feel the lightness and strength here too. My appreciation was growing and my pujas were improving with this new awareness. I was beginning to understand what REAL POWER was.

I was hooked. I took a bus to Ghoom and made an exhausting climb up to tiger hill. I felt exhausted and vulnerable as I raced against the sunset in search of lodging. Suddenly, there THEY WERE AGAIN! THE HIMALAYAS! I gasped and swooned. Tangerines quenched my thirst in celebration. This was definitely IT. Nothing prepared one for this wild hit. I was completely awake. I was floating and exploring PURE PRESENCE and the wild emotions experiencing it. All the years and troubles and kicks, and now this! I made an improvised deal with a family guarding a decrepit and boarded-up tourist lodge. For fifty rupees, slightly more than a dollar and a half, I was given a large silent room and a meal. The pure silence alone was worth the money. I could at last hear myself think. I could feel my fears pounding me silly. I saw the source of all my painful yearnings ó for they were just the daily delusions of life. Angels whispered into my delirious ears. My mind could finally see how its very thoughts plagued and drained it. I took out my battered-up legal pad and tried to sort out my confusion. Where to write? What to do next? Was Summer OK? Where was the Lama? I wanted to open up new space in my mind for a new map. I could sense a new realignment subtly moving into place.

I woke up early and caught a ride with some Bengalis to the observatory. It was cold and dark. The Bengalis were a friendly lot, and one

of them invited me to Calcutta. But we were all here to see the sunrise and it was like enlightenment itself. Dawn slowly transformed the darkness into light. First a peep, and once the threshold was crossed, an expanding awareness beyond words. This was the daily teaching given by the sun, the clouds, and the mountains, but it was appreciated by only a few. I slowly walked down the mountain in triumph.

The next phase was confusing. I boarded a bus to Mirik, a hill station near the Nepal border. I wanted to pay my respects to Bokar Rinpoche, the Lama who had come to San Francisco and given me refuge. Bokar's monastery was large, but more intimate than Sonada. I was ushered in quickly to see Bokar and got a blessing and a silk scarf. I was also treated with herb pills for stomach and flu problems. Mirik was also warmer and I didn't want to leave. It was here that disaster was planted. I conceived a ridiculous plan to stay in India until the next autumn. I neither had the time nor the resources for such craziness. I had silly fantasies about meeting Summer in India. These were just that, fantasies, but I wrote a letter to my stepmother telling her I would probably miss stupid Maxim's wedding. I would pay dearly later for this slip, long after I had dropped this crazy idea.

Bokar's secretary told me the Grand Wizard and the Rebellious Regent had both broken samaya with the little boy in Tibet. To break samaya was serious business. Samaya was a personal vow to a Buddha, and to break it deluded the mind to no end. All the Grand Wizard's followers would suffer, but the innocent ones would suffer much less. They didn't know any better. I thought sadly about all those Germans, and Poles, and Hungarians, and Austrians, who had treated me so well, but were now caught up in this mess. What would really happen to them? I mulled this over silently on the way back to Darjeeling. I spent the night there and the next morning, when I returned to Sonada, Mingma ran up to me excitedly and shouted: "HEY, LAMA, HE COME!"

CHAPTER 11

BODGAYA

Lama had indeed arrived. “YOU’VE COME!”

He exclaimed. “YES!” I replied. “When are we going to Bodgaya?” I asked. “In a few days,” Lama replied tersely. Lama had a habit of clenching his teeth and almost hissing when he talked about important matters. “Please, sit down and have a cup of tea,” Lama gestured towards a chair. His deep stentorian voice was always reassuring. “How have you been?” Lama inquired. “I’ve been sick and I’m running out of money, other than that I’m OK,” I moaned. I felt like a child expecting deliverance from a long-suffering father. “I met the Rebellious Regent in Berlin,” I announced. “Oh, that man has no credibility,” Lama frowned. “Oh boy, and that Grand Wizard....” Lama’s voice trailed off into unknown corners. Lama was becoming annoyed. He got up and handed me some tea.

Lama then sat down and adjusted his robes. He was robustly built and had a strong presence about him. Lama's closely cropped hair made him look like a drill sergeant. I felt safe with him. "You know this thing with the Rebellious Regent," Lama gravely intoned, making another frown, "it all has just to do with this curse. Hundreds of years ago the previous Regent sided with the Nepalis in a struggle with the Tibetans. The Kagyu ordered twenty thousand monks to put a curse on the traitor. Can you imagine the power?" Lama raised his finger to demand attention. "The mind can do incredible things with the psychic energy at its disposal." Lama paused. "Yes!" Lama exclaimed gruffly. "All that psychic energy is now haunting us. The new Regent is creating a major disturbance. The curse has backfired and the boy in Tibet cannot come to Rumtek."

I listened to this story with rapt attention. "Vows and curses have incredible psychic energy behind them. This Hitler demon you felt in Europe made a vow to kill millions. This vow manifested because of the awesome energy behind it. This Hitler is now cooking in the hell realms, but as you know, everything is impermanent and he'll be released one day." There was a dead pause. "Karma is very intricate, the more bumi a bodhisattvah has, the more he can see into the past and future." Lama paused again. "What's a bumi?" I asked. "It's just a form of psychic memory. There are ten stages. The higher the stage, the more powerful the bumi is; of course there are other powers available," Lama smiled. "A high-ranking bodhisattvah can multiply his body and perform all kinds of miracles, but enough of this. It just inflates the ego!" Lama got up and introduced me to his mother and father. His parents smiled and shuffled off to bring soup and noodles. "Yeah, the Rebellious Regent is teaching demon stuff with the Grand Wizard, ugh!" Lama's eyes squinted in pain. I showed Lama a photo of Summer. "Why do you want a relationship with her?" Lama asked. Before I could answer, Lama interjected. "You must get clear about this woman. If it's just an attachment then there's going to be trouble. She has to take refuge and do some honest practice." There was another endless pause. "She seems to have a strong connection to Kalu," I volunteered. Lama's face lit up. "That's very good," he intoned with deep satisfaction.

The next day I sent a telegram to Summer telling her to make an offering to Kalu. I also told her I was in India at last. I then sent a telegram to my stepmother asking her for more money. I was back in

Siliguri, the Indian hungry ghost realm. I found an auto-rickshaw in the evil-smelling streets and tried to negotiate a price. The Indians were sharp operators. Often, one of them would under-bid the other competitors to bait his quarry and then demand more later, when all competitors were out of ear-shot. India was an endless struggle. I got to Salugara late at night. This was little Kalu's winter hang-out. Lama introduced me to Kalu's dad, a tall and beefy Tibetan with very dark skin. Tea and cookies were offered to me. I could hear the dying din of traffic outside. It was a hard world out there. My wretched baggage had been left at the other monastery. I was free now and protected.

Sleep was hard at Salugara. The monks got up early and started an ear-splitting chorus of mystery chants, right next to where I was sleeping. Earplugs were useless. Somehow, I survived the torture and went back to sleep. The next day all the Shampas began congregating at Salugara. Bokar arrived with his detachment of monks. Little Kalu also prepared to leave. Lama had hired three buses for his monks and after haggling with the Indian drivers, he gave the order to depart.

We were now on the road. The caravan traveled the night. Haze and smoke coated the endless horizon. We were in Bihar now, the poorest state in India. We stopped for a short break. The usual multitudes of brown and thin beings pressured and mingled with us as we ate and relieved ourselves. There was a feeling of ghosts and animals dancing together in the thick night air. I watched how Lama expertly shepherded his flock through this sweet, alien zone. The Tibetans seemed to have a strong sense of community and purpose. This was quite a contrast to the Indian mobs who seemed to thrive off endless chaos and misery. I personally felt little kinship with the Indians in Bihar. I started to listen to some Indian music on my Walkman and tried to visualize a movie in all this drag and frenzy. Every moment seemed to last a lifetime in India. The bus carrying me and Lama got a flat, and the pause in the dead night air was refreshing. I suddenly saw Summer. Her face was floating in the air and her energy was strong. She had gotten the telegram! It was a strange kind of existence here in this land of saints and con-men. Sleeping and dreaming seemed to easily intermingle with so-called waking consciousness. I felt like one of my own story-book characters floating through a private fantasy and I didn't want to wake up. It was so sweet and wombly an experience.

Just before Bodgaya, the Indian driver stopped and demanded more money. "These guys are a pain in the ass," Lama frowned. We were at the gates of the Holy Land and the Indians knew it, so they wanted their tip. With Indians the deal is NEVER closed until the very end. I didn't care. The karma was taking me home. Lama paid off the Indians and we were soon in Bodgaya!

Bodgaya. What sweet density. We all got off at Bero's place, a huge Kagyu monastery abbotted by this huge wizard Lama. I found a room and took off for THE STUPA. This was the bliss zone. This was the spot where the Buddha got enlightened. It felt strong and light like an invisible Himalaya. Doing koras, walking around the stupa, was like smoking hash, an intensely sweet high. Breathing the air of the stupa environment was better than dropping acid. All my feelings and thoughts were amplified and then blissfully released with unconditional devotion. I felt so privileged to be here and with a teacher to boot. What merit! What blessings! The density squeezed the creative juices out of me. I could feel old karmic echoes reverberate on this rare spot. I had arrived at last to the bliss fields.

The next morning I awoke coughing from a terrible nightmare. Summer seemed sick with a hideous disease. I saw her breaking up with her boyfriend. Lama played it all down. "It's just your confused thoughts being released," he explained. Lama paused for a moment. "I think it will be OK with you and her. You're not going to be a monk, so I think she'll be fine, but she should do the practice." With that Lama gave me the oral instructions for the Ngondro.

Dear Guardian Angel:

I've been here two days and it's so intense. India's a crazy place. There are a million catch-22s for doing everything. You can't even make a collect call to the folks back home. Bihar is the asshole of India. The Mafia control this place and the road to Gaya is unsafe to travel at night. It's the wild west here. I just try to enjoy this circus the best I can. India has its own way of doing things and YOU CAN'T CHANGE IT. You need to rely on the buddy system here. You need to talk to other foreigners and they need to contact their Indian friends to get anything done around here. Things sorta work and sorta don't. Today Lama told me to read every word in the Ngondro manual and to deeply reflect on the words. I mean really

reflect on them. What's Ngondro? It's a series of preliminary practices for advanced mind flying. I mean I have to do a hundred thousand prostrations! Can you believe it? Why do this crazy stuff? Well, it's like this. Having a physical body is really important. You can't do prostrations without one, but having a precious body is even more crucial. A precious body is receptive to dharma. All existence is pretty stressful, so escape from it is pretty important. Life is like an engineering problem that needs an engineering solution. The prostration phase is the first release operation after looking at the facts on the ground. You visualize bliss fields and that's kinda like turning on the navigation lights before preparing an ascent into heaven. The actual prostrations kickstart the plane's engine and kinda lift the plane up. While flying in the air you collect the bliss from the Guides. You then do prayers to descend back to Earth and when you land you have to share the bliss with all other beings. Here in Bodgaya, it's kinda like the NO STRESS capital of the world. It's the home of the arahats and bodhisattvahs. An arahat is someone who has attained freedom from ignorance and stress. These guys kinda made it to the other shore and have the option of fading away forever. A bodhisattvah just kinda hangs around until everybody's made it to the other shore. Like a captain on a sinking ship! There are human bodhisattvahs and angelic bodhisattvahs. They LOVE us and look after us all the time. To fade away or to stay? That is the question here. If you fade you get to NO STRESS. If you stay you live in VERY LOW STRESS. If you become a bodhisattvah that is. NO-STRESS of course, is beyond all BLACK and WHITE STRESS. It's tough to do. Most of us are caught in HIGH STRESS of all kinds, and things are actually much more complicated than all this. Way more. You see, there are these stages on the path to NO-STRESS and LOW STRESS. As you fly up to the heaven realms, the BLACK and WHITE STRESS gets subtler and it's easy to fool yourself you've made it! That's why a teacher is really important. They know all the traps, Angel! SUBTLE BLACK and WHITE STRESS can be even more dangerous than the GROSS STUFF. Why? Cuz it's harder to see and often more potent. Psychic tricks and subtle mind-fuck are lethal and have drastic karmic consequences. Indeed, that's what wrathful practice is for. It clears out the subtle garbage. I did four hundred prostrations today! The big three have been leading this ten-

day endless puja ever since we got here. Lama, Bokar, and Kalu seem quite a contrast to all the beggars, touts, gangsters, and soldiers hanging around the stupa here. The spaceship is like an island of bliss surrounded by this sea of really smelly sewage. Bihar has a pretty dense vibe. I spoke to my stepmother today. She didn't want to give me any extra scratch. She said: "I had to go my own way." So much for mission control! We agreed to talk again in Calcutta. I mean she doesn't even really want me to be here. I think my stepmother will come through, but I think big trouble is coming. I mean my stepmother's so unreliable in a crisis. Lama laughed and told me I was just one big baby! Everything is up and down here. It's not easy wiping off all the dust from this silly diseased mirror. I mean the choice is clear. Choose bliss or choose suffering, uh STRESS. See, all attachments lead to STRESS. They prevent you from tasting BLISS. You see, attachments are like a tricky kind of BLISS. They mimic it so well! It tastes so good! I guess for most beings it's the ONLY BLISS IN TOWN. There's nothing else to compare it with. But the first day here at the spaceship gave me a taste of the real thing! I now have something to compare fool's bliss with. This fleeting taste is just a memory now. I'm as confused as ever, but I now know I have a choice. FOOL'S GOLD or REAL GOLD? You need to be clear on this. You need to be really honest. It's a tough game. Spiritual marriage is a toughie. But I'm game. Oh, did you ever taste this thing called "tsampa"? It's roasted barley flower mixed with sweet milk tea. It really keeps you going! The Tibetans are crazy about it, but I can't stand the salt tea they sometimes wash it down with. YUK!

Yours,

Blissful Determination

Lama kept ragging on me that I was too pessimistic. He was impressed by my understanding of dharma, but told me I had to live it now. Sacrifices were needed. I had to do more prostrations. I was exhausted and was in no mood for a lecture. Lama also got pissed off about my not bowing quickly enough when Lamas passed me by. "You should have more respect," he scolded. I just withdrew into my room and sulked. I understood the stakes now. I was trying to transcend the

swing zone. Europe and the Middle East had no idea a swing zone even existed. Here in Bodgaya, this was a given. It was already being engaged. Ngondro was a HIGH STRESS practice to get to LOW STRESS. The faders and arahats, who also descended in droves here, would have none of this. It was NO STRESS or bust! But whether you were a fader or a stayer, the new riff was BLACK and WHITE STRESS in the subtle realms. Would-be angels could get stressed out too. At Auschwitz, it had all been demon stuff. IT was GROSS. Humans had already checked out. Now in Bodgaya, humans were also checking out, but taking the elevator UP. But the STRESS was still there. The initial release and freedom could fool you. The mambo beat was subtle. The Oom-ta-ta-poom-poom-ta could still fry you, if you weren't careful.

Life at "The Airport" had its ups and downs. Indians, Westerners, Theravadans, Zen guys, and Tibetans all added color to the huge Samantabhadra spectacle Lama had cooked up. Begging children would sometimes riot when offerings were passed around. My Ngondro flights also wavered and surged. I started logging my flights and charting the waves. Five hundred, seven hundred, and finally a thousand prostrations a day. That was the peak. All kinds of mental sludge poured out. I was sick a lot. My dreams frightened and exhausted me. I saw Summer's bloated corpse rotting away in the hot sun; it had a queasy blue tinge to it. I saw myself being accused in court of turning the spiritual path into a commercial art work. I WAS SELLING OUT. Silly conflicts broke out over the use of the Ngondro boards which were strewn out all around the stupa site. A bald-headed French woman wrapped herself around her coveted board and hissed at anyone who touched it. Two days later, I started developing chest pains from the constant slamming of my body against the hardwood boards. Lama told me to put a rolled up blanket on the board. I could feel his mind following me constantly. He sensed my fatigue and KNEW when I was at the stupa and when I wasn't. Diarrhea fluttered through my body and weakened me further. Thumb and toe infections plagued me like hairy ghosts as I continued my canoe trip through unknown spiritual waters. Mornings were usually better for flying than evenings. By the end of the day my energy was usually gone.

Lama was younger than I was, and his role of elder teacher was confusing at times. He watched over me like a diligent father, but also would come and hang out with me in my room, like a close buddy

laughing at my jokes and thumbing through my photo albums. Lama would always give me a short dharma talk. "Always distribute the weight of your body evenly when you dive. That way you won't hurt yourself. This is all about BASIC NATURE. Everything comes out of it, everything returns to it, and everything is in it. There's no separation," he said with a slight hiss. "Always give offerings to everybody, this will expand your mind faster and help the individual you care about more efficiently." Lama looked straight at me, anticipating a question. "You mean one tide lifts all boats?" I inquired. "Yes, something like that," he nodded slowly. "You start from the high ground, this limitless vision amplifies your compassion. It's not an easy lesson to learn," Lama mused.

Bero's monastery had all kinds of erotic frescos. The Buddha at birth looked like the curly baby Jesus. Buddha's Mom walked around bare-breasted a lot. This was a big contrast to outside where pathetic hairless dogs manged around searching for any scrap of food and dirty Bihari gamins burned plastic bottles for cheap thrills. Bodgaya was a study in extremes. Yuppie Indians adjusted their T-shirts and focused their cameras with minute care, while nearby, professional beggars took turns waiting in line for their undeserved alms. Bicycle rickshaw drivers waited like patient vultures outside the gates of Bero's place. There was no escape for me or anyone else. All I could do was puja my way out of my nasty mind-frames. Summer's photo seemed to wink at times from its cozy little corner on the altar. The blonde bomber also got in her licks. There were rumors that Nepal was lowering its visa bribes. The noise pollution in Bodgaya never let up. All signals were hopelessly garbled. Telephone calls were scratchy. Megaphones and muezzins snuffed out the holy chants, and I soon realized that the year was almost gone. The Burmese place was now Bodgaya, and Jim had been transformed into Summer.

Δ SUPERNOVAE AS SEEN FROM BODGAYA:

Events in deep space have influenced terrestrial affairs over and over again, sometimes decisively. The most common agent of these changes has been the nova: sudden amounts of explosive radiation being thrown out by a star, with supernovae being the grandest explosions of all. There have been rumors that writing and arithmetic were inspired by such stellar fireworks. The ancients had myths about a specific star-god teaching mankind how to write and count. Supernovae don't happen

often. There have been none in the Milky Way for over four hundred years. Only large stars turn into supernovae; our sun is too small for such a stellar drama, that's why supernovae are rare. Their sonic boom creates new star systems and destroys old ones. It has been calculated that supernovae occur within one hundred light years of our sun, every sixty million years. Anything that close to the epicenter of this stellar mushroom cloud could have a few problems. A refreshing fact: the rate at which species have become extinct on Earth seems to peak about every sixty million years.

Another refreshing fact: gas, insomnia, and massive chest pains continued to torture me. My mind and body were being cleaned out with spiritual DRAIN. I read up on the crazy saints who lost all awareness of their bodies. Bugs ate their flesh and many almost starved to death. Lama warned me not to be inspired by such weirdoes. "Just keep doing the prostrations, don't waste precious time," he urged. I could feel Lama's powerful mind give me a boost whenever I began to furiously flag. The practice often tasted like poison in the beginning phases, but that's because so much psychic garbage was being flushed out. Only later did the practice start to taste like nectar. And there were many nectar days when I seemed to float many miles up in the air. I let the bliss wave carry me to wherever I had to go. Miraculous recovery always followed each surrender cycle. The poison days guaranteed this.

The purification days rolled on. My stomach problems churned me and infected my spirit. Lama came to my room to check up on me. I propped myself on the corner of my bed. "How are you today?" the karmic surgeon asked. "Oh, I've done about five thousand prostrations and I think that's about it. I'm too weak to do more," I quietly complained. "Good, good," Lama intoned. "Don't waste time, do as many as you can. I used to do four thousand a day." So Lama, said as dogs began to bark outside. I dreamed that the blonde bomber's ship was sinking fast. It was Christmas and the Big Puja was finally over. "Tell me more about Tantra," I asked. "Well, there is only one peak and many paths to it. There are also all sorts of delusions on every path. Tantra is the best bargain you can have in a single lifetime. That's what the Vajrayana's about. You yourself have a profound philosophical outlook, but you must check your non-compromising ways. People have a hard time with it. Karma can be transformed, but it's tough work. Jim and the Great Dane are merely hallucinating. This happens a lot. The

Vajrayana is a tough path. You know, even the idea of karma has no meaning in the higher vajra realms. Still, Sharmapa and his clan are heading for trouble. Right now, Situ, the regent who found the new kid in Tibet, is stuck in Rumtek, trying to ease the strains of this mess. It's important for you to stick to your practice and stay out of politics. These negative vibes affect everybody on a subtle quantum level. Do you understand?" Lama then got up and slowly made his way to the door. "Rest up," he counseled in a fatherly tone.

BODGAYA ON A QUANTUM LEVEL:

Kalu, Bokar, Lama, and myself soon entered the metal enclosure surrounding the Bodhi tree: so the physical universe does not exist independent of the thought of the participator. We construct ourselves and each other. Self-organizing fields come and go. We construct our individual realities. There are an indefinite number of possible worlds. Each individual world forms all others and each individual world is connected to all others. There is no beginning. There is no end. There is only change. For all of us an indefinite number of worlds exist simultaneously. All things are possible. All things are interconnected. Most connections cannot be perceived in ordinary states of consciousness. You cannot move without influencing everything in the Universe. You cannot observe anything without changing the object and even yourself. It is even possible that just thinking about an object can change it and yourself. There is life in everything, but with varying degrees of consciousness, and time is not absolute. Neither is space. The entire Universe and all the knowledge in it is contained within each individual and each thing. Every part contains the whole and matter is light trapped by gravity. Time always flows in many directions and space is not nothingness. It's all just constant interaction between vibrational patterns. There is something other than space time, but we don't know what it is. Thought patterns and their vibrations structure all matter and light as we experience it. The mind may be a filter, psychokinesis is real, telepathy also. Light can be bent out of shape as things materialize and dematerialize over and over again. Water temperature can be changed. Metallic structures too. There is time travel and space travel and mind travel too. There can be total knowledge of others and of the present, and of the past, and of the future too. Reincarnation is a fact. Auras are a fact too. Teleportation is real. Healing with the mind too.

It's also possible to be influenced by higher levels of consciousness. Consciousness, the totality that is everything. The Universe is not contained in anything. It contains itself, and if you want something badly enough maybe the mind layer in which this something dwells will link up with your perception and appear in front of you someday just like magic. Indeed, every thought, every dream is an awareness of another reality that coexists. Individual awareness can be guided to the most harmonious of futures. Basic energy relationships just manifest concurrently throughout an indefinite number of levels of perception. We simply experience the relationships differently at different levels. When we communicate with others we are simply talking to ourselves so that old knowledge can finally re-emerge. Even reincarnation is a form of self-communication. We don't have to control or direct anything. All we have to do is to allow consciousness to find us. Then the thought becomes the experience. Actually, there is no death, only a change in awareness, just a change of cosmic address. There is only change and lots of it. We must understand the basics. When thought and experience become one, consciousness has changed. All is constructed from thought and all mind worlds interpenetrate and all we have to do is reunite ourselves with our selves. As we turn inward we will realize we directly affect all worlds and the need to take responsibility becomes important. So why are we here? We are here, really, in order to contact higher consciousness. This consciousness is called LOVE and it's the real us. And it will find us eventually and someday we won't stop smiling. And when we walk, we'll float, and the light will simply just pour out of our eyes.

BODGAYA FROM THE PEWTONIAN LEVEL:

I knew now that my mind had healed Summer, and was still healing her every second of the day and night. Our karma was very strong. I also knew that she was healing me. My dread began to ease, the tough Ngondro shuttle had landed. I would never sell my mind short again. Lama was soon leaving for parts unknown. He gave me some money for security. I decided to go out for a walk. Bodgaya, weeee! I was leaving confusion and nonsense behind. I watched the farmers push their animals in their tiny matchbox fields. I was in a First Wave time-warp. Life seemed so simple and cruel. America had too many distractions. It was hard to lead a spiritual life there. I realized now that the ancients every-

where were more advanced than our greatest scientists of today. Was there a cosmic law? The more advanced a material technology, the greater the spiritual retardation of a culture? Was that why the Tulku failure rate was so high now, since the Tibetans went into exile? Material technology demanded outward focus. It was a game of outer conquest. Spiritual technology demanded an inner focus. It was all about inner conquest. "We're living in a debased age," Lama had once said. And he was right. We were living in an age of GROSS STRESS of all kinds. The age of SUBTLE STRESS had vanished long ago. The little monks playing with their computer games were the New Wave now. I watched the farmers silently pushing their animals. These toiling beings were performing the one noble function of their time. Like a sentinel, the stupa stood and gleamed in the distance with its secret and silent promise of redemption. The haze floated lazily in the dusty streets nearby. There was a strange silence in the air and fleecy clouds hung in the skies like silent outlaws. IT had crept up on me, yet again.

Mahakala. It was time to go visit him. Lama was now taking all the monks to Mahakala's cave for one last excursion into bliss. I missed the bus and was helped by a kind and selfless Tibetan nun. We bussed through the Hong-Kong-like streets of Bodgaya and hopped off in the middle of nowhere to get to Mahakala's cave. A small boy guided the nun and me through the parched yellow wastelands. We then forded a small river. It was a timeless scene. The sun was golden and the air was a milky blue. We found ourselves walking in a desert graveyard with its sandy hot spaces and sudden biblical shade, and we could see the old cave and its dusty monastery, high up in the chocolate hills silently beckoning to us in peace. For it was here that Mahakala dwelled. It was a harsh land. The inhabitants toiled eternally in its suckling fields; to them the computer and the A-bomb were irrelevant. The dense, dark, and ancient earth was all that mattered here. Millions of beggars awaited the nun and I at the foot of the mountain. All had their hands outstretched. Their sad eyes oozed a broken kind of strange and hungry illusion. This was life in the stone-age jumble and these beggars knew it; they all were resigned to their ugly karmic guilt.

I found Lama whipping up a storm at the cave. The wrathful puja drums ceaselessly pounded the arid landscape. I sat down and felt the sweat on my brow. I went into the cave and mingled there. This was the

final coda of my private pilgrimage. I could see Lama kicking ass and releasing all kinds of greasy clinging. When it was over, Lama led the flock down the dusty steps into the mouth of the begging mobs. "Many of these beggars were once thieves," Lama explained. "That man with no arm maimed a saint," he continued. "What about people who are physically beautiful, but always sick?" I asked. "That's easy," Lama answered. "They are the kind of people who hurt you with a smile." I remained silent. I wanted to ask no more questions. The begging mobs stalked us all the way to the bus. Lama let me videotape these curious waves of humanity as they exploded and scattered to the beat of coin tosses and silly food flings. Our bus roared off leaving the mobs choking and chasing dust fumes in fields baking below the slowly fading sun.

That night millions of candles were lit at the stupa. The pilgrimage season was at an end and the whole scene reminded me of APOCALYPSE NOW. Mist and light bathed the ancient holy ruins as people milled, prayed, and chanted about. Food was distributed to all the beggars as they were gently guarded by a chain of angelic kid monks. The discipline and compassion of this little mission of mercy impressed me deeply. I followed little Kalu as he was carried around the endless maze of celestial corridors. The little holy toddler would stop and light a candle, then chant silently, only to resume the chore of lighting yet another sacred flame. I asked little Kalu for a blessing. So he blew on my mala and WHUMP! The force of the blast threw me against the wall. THIS WAS KALU! He really had come back. I asked Kalu to send Summer a blessing. He excitedly shook his head up and down. I was so thrilled. This was angel talk and it was so sweet.

The next morning it all ended. Everyone was leaving, except me. Little Kalu touched my forehead one last time as he was preparing to leave with his family. He let out a jazzy squeal and quickly cupped his hands in playful benediction. I was satisfied. He and I had finally physically bonded in this lifetime. Then it was Lama's turn to say good-bye. "Take care of yourself," he cautioned. "Watch your pockets," he added. Lama then slowly walked off into the silent haze, his assistant trailing closely behind him. Soon the buses arrived and all the monk kids noisily disappeared as well. I was now alone, sick and depressed. My spiritual family was gone and I had only a few days left to recuperate before my next ordeal. I was going to Calcutta now, and my money was almost gone.

CHAPTER 12

CALCUTTA

BLAH, BLAH, BLAH it was the new year and I had diarrhea. The Indians were turning on the music full blast. I was taking the loss of my Tibetan Family very hard. I was stuck with Rosie and Nanina, a French student of Bero's and a German dharma groupie. "It's getting worse and worse, Michael," lamented Rosie. "Ten years ago there was nothing here. Now the Indians are destroying this place," she sighed. But Rosie got me to a doctor. I was saved in the nick of time. Nanina was also sick and spent most of her time lying nude in her room. She asked me if I wanted to fuck her. I said no.

But it was Bero's appearance during his difficult time that inspired me. He was an ox of a man, beefy and huge. My head would swell and shoot sparks whenever he passed me. I followed him to the stupa and sat with him inside the giant monolith's guts; we faced a huge glowing

Buddha figure. It seemed to sit in suspended animation. All Buddhist statues pierced you with their weird trance. I began to feel light and free. I heard the Buddha speak: CHANGE YOUR LIFESTYLE. My rib-cage was smarting. I could feel Summer's subtle body. It was denser than mine. She had a lot of witchcraft behind her. "Don't get lost in a dream world with her," the Buddha warned. "Balance your energies CORRECTLY and CONSISTENTLY, RELEASE MORE!" I could hear the New Year crowds heaving and barging outside. It sounded like empty bottles rolling and clanking away. But in a strange muffled sort of way. I gazed ruefully at the floor. Memories of Bero's frescoes flooded my mind. I saw strange half-clad figures; they tied knots in their heads and had deep nasty stares; these were the wrathful Maha-siddahs, the crazy adepts Jim had so admired. I started to cry. I was disgusted with Jim and at the same time missed him terribly. Jim's weird legacy still haunted me. Summer was on my mind, too. Was she also a new sacrificial victim? Was she also a victim or just another perpetrator of the black arts? Did she abuse her powers and skid off into an illness spiral? My head began to tingle. Bero was getting up. A strange humming entered my ears. Bero was blessing me, I could feel it. Now was the time to plunge into the unknown.

I took a bus to Gaya, a miserable and ugly town, dark, intense, menacing. A medical student who had befriended me at the stupa showed me off to his roomies. These young Indians were obsessed with the dazzling mammon of the west. My Olympus camera and worn-out Walkman were minutely inspected, and I was hosted to a dinner prepared on the premises and served steaming hot. My hosts wanted visas for the promised land. I was noncommittal. I was on my way to Calcutta. My train arrived on time in Gaya. I was in desperate straits. I was running out of money in a foreign land at the very start of a brand new year. My hosts were from Uttar Pradesh and were looking for a hustle. They guided me to my cabin and left me in a Bengali world. The screech of the train pulled me back from my self-imposed trance. I was frightened and now had to face KALI. The black Madonna of India, licking the world's sins with her lethal tongue, making my movements absolutely mad.

No words, no words inside KALI'S mouth. I began hearing her

haunting refrain CHAI, CHAI, CHAI, KOFFEE, KOFFEE CHAI, CHAI, CHAI, KOFFEE, KOFFEE. I looked outside my window and saw a wall of thick haze and tropical vegetation. I could see industrial infrastructure everywhere. If Delhi was like Beijing, than Calcutta was like Shanghai. The train crawled into Howrah station. Howrah was a monster. All kinds of noise and squalor, vendors and beggars, huge lines and crowds, touts too. I was in shock. I could not afford a taxi and didn't know which bus to take, so I walked across Howrah bridge. It was mesmerizing, zillions of people and moving objects swarmed over the bridge in both directions. The smog was astonishing, like a vision from hell. The Hooghly river was barely visible. Calcutta was madness. I was inside KALI'S belly and a monster was now shaking up and down, first sideways, quick walking, sitting, then crossing its legs, then uncrossing them, then getting up and rubbing its hands, now rubbing its fly, hitching its pants, then slitting its eyes to see everything, then grabbing me by the ribs, and screaming, screaming. This was KALI'S song.

There was no money waiting for me at the bank. I had given my stepmother the wrong wiring instructions. I had to contact her and start from scratch. Money was running out and I was in a hot spot. I found lodgings at a Theravadan temple, just in time. I plunged back into the maelstrom and sent two telegrams. Then I went to visit KALI for she was the queen of Calcutta. Her face was everywhere. I found relief from the heat and noise in the unfinished subway system and zoomed down to Kaligut. Here KALI'S blood lust was satisfied. Priest touts showed me the sacrifice altar where goats were killed every morning. I poured water and flowers over a shiva lingam, a kind of stone penis, and said prayers for the family. I swished around some incense and got slammed for a donation. There was red paste on my forehead. The cry of ravens was everywhere. Beggars roamed in every corner smelling of strange purification. I thought about Brown Eyes. KALI knew how to work with the elements, with blood and water. Here I was exactly one year to the day since my final puja at the Burmese place. I could taste Summer's honeysuckle breath. The world was in turmoil. The hard-liners were gaining ground all over the world. Exotic knickknacks and fast food absorbed my attention as I walked back at night. Men pissed right on the street. Smoke was everywhere. I had survived my first day in Calcutta. KALI was laughing and taunting me, then making love to me,

she was now my consort for this nightmare part of my journey. I was really protected.

BLACK HOLES AS SEEN FROM CALCUTTA:

Black Holes arose out of pure logical deduction. General Relativity argued that objects could become so dense that nothing could escape from them, not even light. Earth would have to be squeezed into the size of an insane cherry. These dense objects have dense centers, SO DENSE that matter got pressed out of existence! Where did the matter go? Was it sucked into another Universe? Another time?

ANOTHER UNIVERSE, ANOTHER TIME:

I took a bus to Dakineshar to see THE TEMPLE of the Bengali saint. I was now on his home turf at last. The air was different here. The oppressive congestion of Calcutta was gone and I felt a strange feeling of release. This was the Bengali saint's playfield. It was impressive. Pilgrims were everywhere. I couldn't go into the main temple because non-Hindus were considered unclean. But I could feel Mother. Priests were tossing flowers to her. I walked barefoot in a trance. Mother had her ways. Ravens, sadhus, beggars, and burning ashes competed for my attention. Pilgrims bathed in the ghats. The Hooghly river was peaceful here. Suddenly, I stumbled into the INNER SANCTUM. The Bengali's saint's room was now a shrine. I gazed at his bed. The energy was dense, sweet, and uplifting.

Dear Guardian Angel:

I've been in CAL about three days now. It's a nightmare, I know, but the pollution and noise seem to hide a sweet kinda magic. There are a lot of intriguing sights here and people on the whole are very friendly. Just this morning I woke up from a troubled sleep, and I could hear these singing Sufis just outside my window. The way they coordinated their hands and faces with their hauntingly beautiful sounds and tones put me into a deliciously temporary trance. I eat all my meals on the street. It's so ridiculously cheap. What's for breakfast? Sugar-buttered toast, peanuts, mango and banana bits, and egg omelets covered with diced onions. How about lunch? Kebabs on a roll, fried noodles, and steaming white rice, with Bengali sweets for dessert. Brown sugar dumplings swimming in honey syrup LADY CANDY. Wash it down with sweet-milk tea, coconut and sugar-cane juice. All for pennies oh, how the sidewalks are teeming with life. My camera is snap, snap, snapping. Typing clerks, barbers, and shoeshine boys do a roaring business. One half of the city seems to be selling something to the other half, and vice versa. It just goes on and on people have to fend for themselves here. The government seems useless. People who can't afford bicycles become human horses here. It's colorful, fascinating, horrifying, and shocking. I went to the planetarium, but it was something of a flop. I could barely hear the narrator's voice over the crummy sound system. It was that bad, but it was also a welcome escape from the smog. It's so thick here, it's amazing. No, frightening. Almost zero visibility and it attacks you right in the nose and throat, until you start getting a terrible HEADACHE. Traffic jams are heavy too. The police try to guide this mess, but it's a free-for-all. I know there's a hidden order here, there must be. I just haven't found it yet. It's never dull here, it's suicidal here on the surface, but some weird saving grace keeps things from collapsing in this wrathful cauldron, this furnace of WHITE STRESS. The Indians go for the WHITE SOLUTION. Lenin, Queen Victoria, Ramakrishna, they're all good neighbors. ALL IS ONE. Yes, the form and the formless is the way the infinite took shape. The saints understand this well. They love to love us as they laugh and navigate through this sublime duality. I

don't care for the crowds and the guards in these realms. Their mute mouths tell me that willpower accomplishes all, and these broken tongues say that willpower is just a combination of light and dark strands of energy. NOW THIS: fuse these strands harmoniously and generate a laser. (Past regrets and future worries dilute the laser.) Concentration in the present is important. It's about discipline, it's about faith. This is so impressive: dark life shot through with light. That's what scares me about this place. Monastic types aren't welcome. Arahats can go home! Even the bodhisattvahs have a hell of a time here. The Messiah is unpopular. No, no it's a different ball game in CAL. Who wears the lonely crown here? The great adepts. The MAHASIDDAHS. They are the apocalypse pilots. They look like rebels without a cause, but they are actually living Buddhas. They are HIGH STRESS masters of LOW STRESS. They scrunch and fuse it into glowing balls of light. These maha-lunatics have found a way to live on the subtle plane as perfect Buddhas with ordinary bodies within their ordinary societies and within their old Universe. They can be women as well as men. They can be great scholars and writers, but often they look pretty ordinary. They can be kings and queens, or merchants, or farmers. Even bums! This airplane ride is not ordinary. It is IMMEDIATE. Did I tell you I got through to my stepmother at the American Consulate? Well, I did. She told me she'd send me some money. I was able to make a collect call at last. She told me none of my telegrams got through. She also couldn't send me much. Only enough to get to Nepal. She said to call her there. Frankly, I don't trust her. In these difficult days everything in my mind is just going BOOM! It's so terrible and hard. Oh, how this year seems to be releasing such powerful energies.

Yours,
Wrathful Determination

I took a bus back to Calcutta from Dakineshar. I sat in front with the bus driver and watched this madman plow and dive into the complicated roar on the streets. The sight and sound show went right through me. I was becoming a veteran now. I had mastered Calcutta by mastering myself. I hopped off in darkness and just watched. Calcutta never slept. Human activity and construction went on all the time. I was in Hades. The smoke and dust were so thick. People simply vanished into it and miraculously reappeared somewhere else. But was it really Hades? No, it was just KALI. You were inside her mouth. No retreat was possible and none was necessary. All the confused traveler had to do was come to terms with the energy of creation and destruction.

CALCUTTA FROM OUTER SPACE:

It seems that India is a freak of history. The British heaved India into the Second Wave too quickly. Uneven vertical development. No horizontal luxury. Second Wave medicine multiplied the population faster than it could provide industrial jobs. Now that the Third Wave is eliminating jobs in the industrial world, India is caught in another numbing bind. The computer reads: DOUBLE JEOPARDY. There is no work in the cities, yet First Wave millions keep on coming to Calcutta. The British brought industrial infrastructure, but also massive social and cultural dislocation to the native population. Profits failed to trickle down, while England grew rich and the natives lost demand for their traditional skills. The average wage in British Calcutta was four rupees a month. Today it is eight rupees a day. Not much improvement when you compare REAL PURCHASING POWER then and now. The British wealth drain was accompanied by DIVIDE AND RULE TACTICS and MILITARY OPPRESSION. Ringleaders of the Seapoy rebellion were tied to the mouths of cannons and sent straight to heaven's gates.

Needless, to say, the Indian psyche feels violated. This particular karma is reaping a bad harvest. As the subcontinent invades London and Birmingham, and the British start to squeeze the tits of their immigration doors, a deeper cause and effect seems to be at work. Our computers are overloading and cannot calculate this deeply concealed chain of determination.

THE FACTS ON THE GROUND IN CALCUTTA:

I walked through the streets with a sense of quiet panic. Tibet was in danger, I could feel this. The screenplay had to be written soon. But where? I was now a familiar fixture in my neighborhood. I ate and drank with the toiling locals hidden away in mysterious alleys. I had learned the lessons of emptiness in Bodgaya. Now I was being taught by KALI herself how to FUSE and TRANSMUTE energy. My own fears and confusions were being harnessed and turned into GOLD. This was the meaning of Prague and Jerusalem. I visited the Indian Museum and studied some stone maidens from exotic Kajaraho. I had visited this erotic blizzard of hidden emotion many years ago. I needed no further explanation. Every woman's womb was sacred. Every menstrual flow a holy river. Summer carried a holy temple deep within her, wherever she went. It had been violated repeatedly by two-headed monkeys and five-footed goats. I watched them on display in curiously pickled jars. These biological freaks reminded me of India. I was inside a deformed embryo of a hideous monster. Its body was far too large for its head. I was exhausted. It was sweltering hot outside. The KALI YUGA was floating silently in heavenly formaldehyde here on Sutter street. I could see Summer's new complexion. It was the color of wild roses in this new Hindu cosmology. I was the lord of a Tantric Ferris wheel. KALI danced for me with exotic grace. She had ankle bells and bare feet. Calcutta moaned and groaned under her weight. Would Calcutta survive? Only KALI knew and she wasn't telling.

I tried to find Nihar, the Bengali I met at Tiger Hill. The streets were a hopeless maze, but the taxi got me close enough to Nihar, who was surprised and delighted to see me. His house was under renovation. Nihar introduced me to his family. Nihar's son Babulal was an angry twenty-something with a polio limp and an excited heart. Babulal was out of work and looking for a break, ANY BREAK. I quickly became the main attraction in the neighborhood. Babulal introduced me to his gang. These boys played cricket on the street and laughed a lot. I felt at home. There was warm hospitality here. KALI'S children were OK.

Nihar hosted me with a kalia lunch, fish simmered in a delicious

curry. Nihar was a Marxist, but a nice one. A sad mystical glint in his eye betrayed a lost romantic. Nihar had no spiritual practice, but his soft and gentle manners resembled those of a neighborhood priest. Nihar had much to worry about. India was a freak of history. The British had squeezed her like a mango, but Muslims and other invaders had screwed her too. The confusion in Calcutta was almost suicidal. I had visions of a giant Bulgaria. But this Bulgaria had spiritual immunity. There was hope here. The STRESS was WHITE and it was GROSS, but it was LIGHT. Sofia's STRESS was BLACK, SUBTLE and HEAVY. The First Wave family was still alive and well in Calcutta and most Indian cities. The extended family was India's safety-net. Babulal's relatives all lived under one roof. Many of them were urban and sophisticated. "Cal's a tough place," echoed Babulal. "All those people you see selling food and other things pool their resources and live together in heaps inside one room. The rent is high here, you know, and you have to bribe the police and the local Mafia if you want to ply a trade on the streets. All those beggars you see on the sidewalks, they were abandoned by their children. Food is pretty cheap though." I listened to Babulal's talk with fascination. I found the Bengalis a sophisticated bunch, they were go-getters with class. Biharis were considered stupid and transparent. They just wanted money. My hosts in Gaya had all been from Uttar Pradesh. "Oh, those guys, they just want a visa," Babulal laughed. He was right. Bengalis wanted a relationship.

Life was getting tougher in CAL by the day. The population pressures were stressing out the ecology, and solutions to the mess were becoming harder and harder to find. Babulal's contemporaries had no interest in spiritual matters. I had to find a meditation partner elsewhere. Babulal's uncle was OK for this, but he was now retired. I fell asleep next to one of Babulal's gorgeous sisters. The other sister, Chumkyi, assured me sweetly, "Don't worry, treat her like YOUR own sister." I was now part of the family.

The money came through. Only two hundred dollars, but in India that was a lot. The smog was killing me, and a flu-bug brought bad memories of Berlin. I began to plot my escape. I bought a ticket to Veranasi. The Theravadan temple kicked me out and I hired a human horse to take me to Sutter street. I sat in a trance as my rickshaw-puller

skillfully navigated through the maze of alleys and crowds of spitting people. Did he do it with ESP on Sutter street? Where the prices were high and the vibes were lousy? There was no trust in this tourist toilet bowl. I felt the energies were shifting again as I browsed through the bookstores and haggled with the tape merchants. Everything here was bootlegged and cheap.

I rented a tiny cubicle and felt utterly miserable. Sutter Street was a noise trap. The Indians had to play their music FULL BLAST at ALL HOURS. It was useless talking to these people. The Indian mind tripped out on sound. It was the ONLY ESCAPE. I took a train to Bahirkhanda, a tiny hamlet lost in the boonies, an hour north from Howrah. Once there, I took a bicycle rickshaw to Horispor. This was KALI'S home off the beaten path. Here one could find the Dakatia temple. Robbers had sacrificed their human victims to KALI on this spot of ground. It was chilling to be home again. A KALI puja was in progress. The place and time felt sublime. A priest was conducting an unknown ritual and I felt happy and very close to him. Women surrounded me and kneeled on the floor. Who was this strange foreigner? Drums were banging a rhythm of snakes. A beautiful young virgin wrapped up in a colorful rainbow sari blew a conch shell. She resisted all my attempts to snap her soul. She was barefoot and moody. I fell in love with her and watched her escape with the modesty and quickness of a wild antelope. It all felt so familiar. There was release here. A new subtle alignment was taking place. The white-haired priest invited me to lunch. He spoke no English, but I felt happy and content. Here was my new father and here was his long lost son. I WAS FREE.

I returned to Calcutta's teeming masses and unconditional misery. It was a constantly new experience like none I had ever had before. This density produced saints. Their bliss was spreading throughout the big world. It was an unforgettable experience. I was being blessed even as my physical and mental health was going. Calcutta was crushing me, fucking me, licking me, and finally releasing me. I took one last bus to Howrah bridge. I wanted to stand in the middle of the vortex. To feel KALI'S hot humid breath blowing inside my lungs. The Hooghly slept in the mist. The dirty sweaty masses of humanity surged forward like an angry tidal wave. I was slowly dying. It was time to split before it was too late. KALI'S witch's brew was killing me. On the bus back to

Nihar's neighborhood, I almost lost consciousness. The sweat of the sardined passengers generated a steam-bath. KALI was screaming She was black and she was white. Her ferocious eyes glared at me. "Are you all right?" asked a hidden voice. I turned around and KALI gave me one more surprise. It was in the form of a young psychiatrist. He invited me to tea. "Oh, I can't stand this pollution," I moaned. "We Indians don't have time to worry about things like pollution. We're just struggling to get by, you know," my new friend said. He was handsome; he had dark skin, and a mischievous smile. "What do you tell your patients?" I asked. "Oh, to fall back on their families, it's the only advice I can offer them. I'm doing time in a government hospital. When I finish my studies, I'll see what to do next. May we exchange addresses?" My new friend felt sincere. I scribbled a few words on a crumpled piece of paper.

I hurried back to Nihar and said good-bye to him and his family. I was anxious to leave. The thought of staying in KALI'S mouth even one more hour was intolerable. The taxi ride to Howrah was a nightmare. The screech and howl of rush-hour traffic felt like pipe-organs going to war. The cabby stopped to pick up some passengers during a lull in this cosmic concert. I was sick and I was sweating furiously. Every inch closer to Howrah made me cry. The violent voyage over the rapids was nearing its end. We were finally on Howrah bridge! We heaved and we jerked. Screaming drivers with unlimited energy hunched over their steering wheels and searched for an opening. ANY OPENING out of the cauldron jam. KALI was laughing. She had started it all, and now she didn't want it to end! I found my train. It was ready to leave without me. I collapsed on a seat. My strength was gone. I looked at my wrist. My watch was gone. KALI had taken one last bite.

CHAPTER 13

VERANASI

I was a wreck on the train. I had a **high fever** and had **little appetite**. I lay crumpled on my bunk bed oblivious to the world, even to myself. The Dakatia energy was still wandering inside me. The old Kali priest was still trying to claim me. His little sari angel kissed me on the lips. I was delirious. An Indian businessman gave me some medicine, but it was just the prelude to another hustle. He wanted my Walkman. I refused to sell it. I asked him why India was the way it was. "Oh, everybody's into rackets here. Nothing works because **NOBODY CARES**," he calmly stated. There was a low moral index in India.

As soon as the train arrived in Veranasi, the touts attacked in full force. I knew where I wanted to go. My guidebook suggested a

Japanese establishment right next to the river. If it was Japanese it had to be clean, I reasoned, and HONEST. The touts were ready. "No it's been flooded," they sang in chorus. "No, it's ONLY for Japanese," they whooped. "No, no, it's under renovation," they cried. A Muslim on a bicycle rickshaw saw his opening. "I'll take you to the river," he urged. "You can find the Kumiko House there. Don't trust these Hindus, they all get a commission."

The Veranasi touts knew the tourists were on to them and lied by saying that their commissions were paltry. The Muslim was from Calcutta, so I felt a sense of kinship with him. All he wanted was a tip. At the river, the kid touts took the offensive. They made me march needlessly through a maze of fluttering alleys, this way and that. I hated them. They took me to their hotel. I said, "KUMIKO!" The little kids brayed and demanded a tip. They were shameless. But they finally took me to Kumiko House and it was like a dream. I had found a refuge and clean water with a Japanese twist.

Kumiko was owned by a long-bearded Bengali who reminded me of an exhausted but amiable Santa Claus. The Bengali's wife was a tall Japanese woman who spoke no English. "Konichi wa!" I stammered. "HAI!" the tall Japanese wife sharply bellowed. I was in heaven. I was given a room facing the Ganges river. It was a place with a powerful vibe. The mist and the sun played with the eternal river in a bashful sweet sort of way. Everything was gleaming. Boats drifted lazily by the sandy riverbanks. Children screamed throughout the crumbling scenery.

Everything looked and felt old. Buildings and towers hugged the western side of the snaking river; the eastern side was bare. This was Shiva's city and Mother Ganges fed the endless stream of sadhus and holy men. Her waters were for purification. I was too sick to venture out and lay weakly in bed just soaking my sins in sweat. Summer seemed very far away. I ate my Japanese food slowly. Kumiko was filled with Japanese brats too shy to talk to a Gaijin. "Some things never seem to change," I muttered to myself.

The Ganges. I took a boat ride and saw endless hordes of people bathing. Ba-be-bi-bo-bum. Wriggling like an eel, bodies being burned. Sadhus meditating, yogis doing their monkey trip. RELEASE and PURIFICATION. I was navigating through different worlds and

through my own mind. It was a twenty-four-hour proposition. My landlord Santa took me to see a madwoman. Her name was Ganga Ma. She was mourning her husband. Ganga Ma gave me a wicked grin and propped her feet on my lap. I sensed strong psychic power as she stroked my hair. It was maternal, sweet, and erotic. She was like Summer, but with higher voltage. KALI was nearby. I could feel her close by. I was introduced to a catty priest who told me Ganga Ma sometimes spaced out for days. Eating no food and saying not a word. Ganga Ma fed her priest by hand. I was repulsed by this and would not allow myself to be fed in this manner. "Your pride is your weak point," the catty priest said. "It separates you from other people, why can't you see this?"

I was introduced to Ganga Ma's daughter. She too was psychic and would go into a trance by mere mention of anything remotely spiritual. The daughter had vampire teeth and enjoyed having her hair stroked. I escaped into the alleys, but Ganga Ma followed me into my room. Her mind was aggressive and ticked off. I refused to be claimed. I soon fell asleep all caked with psychic mud. It had seeped in somehow, and when I awoke, it had solidified. A spaced-out Japanese woman made a pass at me. She was lost and had nowhere to go. She was NOT REALLY Japanese. I let her attend a puja. This Mama-san was clean and orderly like Japan, like Kumiko House. Outside, India ruled. Dirt and chaos ruled and it simply never compromised.

QUASARS AS SEEN FROM VERANASI:

Funny objects were found many years ago in space. These funny objects were found to be receding at speeds approaching the speed of light. But, it was concluded, if they really were receding at such speeds, they would necessarily be very far away, and to be so DISTANT and yet be BRIGHT ENOUGH. It looked like these stars were putting out MORE ENERGY than an entire galaxy! The number of quasars seems to grow rapidly as we look farther into space and back into time. It is argued that quasars are possibly white holes where things just expanded into existence as they popped out of these strange female orifices. Others argue that quasars have black holes in their hearts powerful enough to raise a BLACK TIDE on any star that fatally orbits nearby. The real story of these cosmic candles has probably only begun to unfold. So far there are only hints the darkest

object of all making the brightest bodies farthest away, then throwing sneaky clues about what lies in the center of the Milky Way, practically next door.

AND PRACTICALLY NEXT DOOR:

I was getting tired of the predatory nature of Veranasi's hustler population. Like swarming flies they buzzed and clung around you. I visited the Golden Temple and the Blue Mosque nearby. It was a hot zone. Soldiers had occupied Veranasi. The Muslims and Hindus were at each other's throats. It was a grease job blackened by religious bugs on a cold winter morning. I saw a child attacked by a monkey. My illness was easing now. A celebrated astronomer had said that there never had been a Big Bang and thus no BIG CRUNCH was coming. The Universe was the way it had always been with no need for a creator. WHAT AN EARTH-SHATTERING CONCLUSION! The astronomer had found religion. He was a closet Buddhist. In Calcutta, I had explored unconditional misery. KALI'S cooking pot transformed all pain into bliss. I stared at the ceiling in my room. Soft cries wafted in from the outside. The radiance of a saint was the same as that of a star, I thought to myself. The darkness of space echoed the darkness of some eternal slum misery. Black holes spewed out LIGHT. Hell holes spewed out the same deep mysterious GLOW gravity and light, misery and bliss, slavery and freedom the laws of nature and of the mindheart seemed to be the SAME. Both came together and both then transcended together. I rose from my bed and struggled to come to terms with this paradox. I heard a knock on the door. It was Santa Claus. "Sir! Would you like to rent a boat today?" he boomed in a fatherly and caring voice. "No, not today," I retreated. "Sir! Do you know that Japanese and Sanskrit are the same language?" my pushy host volunteered. My face lit up. In my mind, I could see myself shrieking and racing out of the room, possibly in hysterics. This was IT too. VERANASI!

Dear Guardian Angel:

I met this really young South African girl with the kind of bulbous forehead that usually reflects superior intelligence. She was another twenty-something feeling the brunt of The Third Wave. You know, I guess I was lucky. Us thirty-forty somethings had a taste of the Second Wave's final flowering. You know before this crazy cybernation hit like a typhoon. These twenty-somethings are total Third Wave creatures. It's so weird, you'd think in this age of rapid flux generational differences would be magnified, and they are, but on another level this doesn't seem to matter much anymore. This constant pressure to reinvent yourself and one's networks makes generational mind-sets kinda goofy and irrelevant. Here in this crazy country called India, you see the waves clashing more easily. There's just no time luxury here. No horizontal flux. It's VERTICAL FLUX all the way. But this vertical flux seems to be the wave of the future for EVERYBODY. What kinda awareness will that create? Where will the mind rest? Breakdown is highly possible. There is no guarantee of a breakthrough. I don't care what Captain Kirk says. You need to think on multiple levels now. You need to give your mind more time to rest, so it can hyper-organize. The spiritual path is a tricky one. INDIVIDUAL ACCUMULATION is critical for determining progress on the spiritual path. You can't just rush things. NO! Spiritual ego-tripping is a real danger here. Finding a good teacher is essential, NO! Critical Hah! Many seekers already want to teach! Did I tell you, I bussed over to Sarnath? Well, I did! It's the place where the Buddha gave his first sermon. There's this huge stupa there. It's huge! A stupa's this kind of chunky pillar that commemorates a holy happening. It also radiates spiritual energy. I like Sarnath. It's got this subtle peace that just creeps up on you. That is, when the Goddamn Indians aren't blaring their irritating music at three in the morning! They just don't care they just space out and they're zombies. You can't talk to them. There's no more dharma kings here. They split the scene long ago. These kings would build stupas all over the place, and give money to build monasteries. It was like lighting holy fires in the darkness. These kings were good at it. Some were worldly kings, others mystical ones, and some of these kings lived in heaven. Here is also a strange and

wonderful country called Shambala, it's somewhere secret, possibly in the sub-Arctic, where thirty-two kings exist magically, until a future technological war will usher in a new Golden Age of world freedom and enlightenment. Am I talking about the Second Coming? I don't know which way is the wind blowing?

Yours,

Apocalyptical determination

I trudged over to Lama Gosar's monastery. It was close to the big stupa. Dust and grime caked the place, but Lama was roused out of his sleep. I asked for a MO. The Lama breezed through his beads. My fortune hung in the balance. "You better do your prostrations. Even ten is important. Don't shoot for the moon. Keep the commitment," Lama yawned. "You'll finish your screenplay and you'll sell it, but it's the computer game that will rake in the bucks, and pay attention to the fine lines on the contract. NEXT QUESTION!" Lama exclaimed. "She's yours. Stop worrying about it. Both of you are bonded by karma. You have the same outlook on life. She's your spiritual wife and she's got VERY STRONG FEELING for you. I can also feel a third party here. Don't worry about it. He's been out of the picture for many months. Take your time. Don't make any hasty decisions. Anything else?" Lama asked. "Will I get into Tibet?" æ nervously inquired. You could hear a pin drop in the room. "Yes, but I don't know when." Lama responded. "But, if you can get to Kailas, you'll earn a lot of merit." Lama yawned and offered some tea. He was a squat dark sort of fellow. Totally humble in his demeanor. "I'm just a simple monk," he declared.

Poor India, suffering from vertical flux. The first two waves were "impure" here. You had poor peasants with TV. You had poor peasants with stereo. THEY WERE SOUND FREAKS! They made me anti-Indian and I hated myself for this. My eyes were red and swollen. The Tibetans descended in swarms to pray for world peace at Sarnath. The furious waves were rushing beneath the shell of the planet and its bottomless depths underneath. I could feel my mind unfurling and flying and hissing at incredible speeds across the groaning subcontinent I was lost in. There seemed to be NOBODY at the wheel. All creation was unwinding into me. Flashing shadows of hungry ghosts vibrated all over the walls of the stupa. There was no escaping it. I resigned myself to all.

The rains began to fall on Veranasi. The alleyways of Godalia turned into rivers of mud. I was still groggy from the antibiotics. Even in the rain the beggars, money-changers, pimps, and touts assaulted you. They haggled, they pleaded, THEY NEVER SETTLED. My rickshaw tailgated a truck carrying a corpse. It was a thin one wrapped

up like a hero sandwich. It was a creepy overcast day with dark mourning skies and a depressing pitter-patter of shocking circumstances. Veranasi was a hassle. Pure and simple.

I couldn't really understand RAGA. It was a strange WHITE KINDA MUSIC. It floated and lifted itself from the depths of some mysterious form of pious suspension. Raga stretched a single color of musical tone, exploring its redness, or its blueness thoroughly like a long hypnotic meditation. It was different from Western music which was BLACK and CLAMPY and MULTI-COLORED. Mozart the king of WHITE STRESS would have been a BLACK MUSICIAN in India. The Blacks in America with their WHITE JAZZ were the closest equivalent to RAGA in the Western hemisphere. It was all very strange.

It was time to go back to SILLY-GURI. It was time to leave INDIA at last. I sat with Santa Claus in his living room. I could hear the chatter of the satellite television. A major earthquake had hit LA. I felt a quiver of doom. "Why do the Indians play their music so loud?" I complained. "Oh, Sir! It is a Muslim custom. The Muslims injured us. Why does America support the Muslims? They are your enemies! Why doesn't your country support Hindus? I will tell you in one word: O-I-L!" Santa was pleased with his tirade.

I said good-bye and walked into a disaster at Mogulsarai. The crazy conductors gave me the wrong platform instructions and I missed my train for North Bengal. My mind went CRASH! I walked into the dispatcher's room and started cursing at the confused Indians. I could see the rats scurry back and forth in deep fear of the ugly American. Three hours later, I was on the next train to New Jalpaiguri. It was also late by four hours. We passed Bihar again. It was all quite familiar now, the grinding poverty, the intense heat, and the downcast sullen population. It was dreary. I felt completely lost in this dry and forsaken Mafia world. A boy pulled up in front of my window and lifted his shirt to reveal a swollen belly covered with flaky scabs. I threw him some coins and calmly munched on some peanuts. Yes, New Delhi seemed like centuries away now. All the novelty had worn off. I was trying to escape India.

The train arrived in New Jalpaiguri in the middle of the night. I had no choice but to spend precious rupees on a miserable room near the train station. The next morning I was in Siliguri with a new idea.

Why not go to Sikkim? It was close by and it promised more and better kicks. The Kagyupa capital was in Rumtek, and I wanted to talk to the Lama who had found the little boy in Tibet. It sounded like an adventure worth having. I hurried over to little Kalu's monastery in Salugara and saw heavy and enormous military traffic, on the ground and in the air, on my way there. THE CHINESE WERE CLOSE BY. Indian jets screamed viciously through the excited skies as my rickshaw driver relieved himself in the bushes. The end of the Cold War seemed to have gone unnoticed here. I could feel Summer's energy shifting and fading. Danger was now just around the corner. Eurasia was preparing a final examination and I knew I had to pass it.

CHAPTER 14

SIKKIM

I was pissed off. I trudged up to Sonada and the monks were dense. They couldn't speak a word of English and wouldn't hand over my luggage. Mingma and the rest of the crew were down at Salugara with little Kalu. It also took a few days to get a permit for Sikkim. Siliguri was booming. Tons of refugees from Bangladesh crawled over the town like hungry locusts. There was pushing and shoving, drooling and slobbering in the streets. Nepalis were stuffing in from the north. Dacca was opening the flood-gates from the south. India had to cover the check. I smirked and I chuckled, TAKE THAT INDIA! I met an American who knew Jim; word was he was last sighted in Seattle with the Dalai Lama; the karmic

wind was giving a twist. Lama was somewhere in Bhutan. But Siliguri blues ultimately led to Sikkim.

The bus ride through the Sikkimese countryside was beautiful. I saw lush hills and turquoise rivers, and tons of monkeys were rocking wildly on the road. It was like a fantasy. The views were awesome and unspoiled. The Indians had not yet wrecked the place. But it was only a matter of time. Despite the rivers of red tape and comical security measures, SIKKIM was OPENING UP. This small dot on the map was remote no more. I had the old Tibet feeling. I was a pioneer once again: 1984 had led to 1994. The bus arrived at Gangtok quite late and I was stranded. Rumtek would have to wait until the next day. Gangtok was expensive. It really wasn't part of India, despite the fact that it was no longer "an independent kingdom." I could see the Indian military choppers whizzing in the distance. The Indians had grabbed Sikkim. Nearby, THE CHINESE waited.

I checked into a hotel and waited for dawn. The next morning the air was pure and crystal clear and no loud music could be heard. It was then that I saw her, the guru mountain KANCHENJUNGA! She was very near now and her lungs breathed me in. I was in yabyum with the most powerful consort yet; and on the roof of the world too. My puja continued at Enchey monastery nearby, the home of a flying Lama. Wrathful murals were oozing multi-headed demons that seemed to jump right out into the pristine environment, for this was Sikkim, another world where the ethnic stew of the Himalayas cooked all day and all night, and the old animist ways were still strong. A young Tamang kid named Lakpa did a Michael Jackson impersonation for me ó for Lakpa was COOL and he was a forgotten orphan here in the dream-zone of Buddhist rock an' roll. This was Vajrayana, but it wasn't Tibetan. The Tamangs, the Lepchas, and the Bhutias performed their own versions of bodhisattvah MTV here. I began to DIG IT.

Rumtek. The Kagyu capital in exile was next on my list of HAD TO. I shared a cab with two Germans and a French guy. One of the Germans was a beautiful blonde dakini. Her name was Ursula. She had picked up the Buddhist scent, but didn't really know what to do with it. Ursula asked me a lot of questions, and she was dressed in black, the color of Mahakala. I could see Ursula's blue golden eyes gleam with a

mysterious care and concern, but she lost her nerve and decided to leave Rumtek after half an hour. I flashed an excited snap and kissed her good-bye in a pious frenzy. I then waited. It was time to see Situ.

Situ had a lot of good humor. He asked me what I thought about the Indians. "I'd like to kill them all," I confessed. Situ laughed. "That's because you expect them to be like Americans. Here's your chance to practice patience and compassion," he remarked. I groaned that I couldn't do four-thousand prostrations like Lama. Situ laughed again, "Oh, just do as many prostrations as you can; don't try to compete with the Tibetans. We're prostration machines, you know." I then popped the big question. "Is the Rebellious Regent out of the game?" Situ paused and smiled. "It's up to him, he can always ask our boy in Tibet to forgive him." I really felt queasy after I ended my audience with Situ. The Kagyu struggle was rapidly becoming a silly Vatican civil war with rival popes yelling "Whoeee!" and all kinds of peoples scrambling for position. The Rebellious regent had bought off the Indians and blocked the holy kid's enthronement in Rumtek. Situ had the Dalai Lama's blessing and the support of all the other lineage heads. But it was basically a stalemate. There was a desperate feeling in Rumtek. Situ was not in full control. Karmapa's throne sat empty while an India film crew shot this corny love movie on the monastery grounds, without Situ's permission. Kagyu politics was turning Rumtek into a horny circus and this was the final insult.

Down the road an older monastery could be seen. I checked it out. I found some monks furiously doing a puja for someone who had recently died. The dead man was being guided through the wild rapids of the BARDO, the transition zone between this life and the next. It was a time to trammel through with jura, a dry rice treat. All the monks scattered it about and chewed on the stuff. I was offered a bag of it and I walked out to look at the mountains nearby. They were breath-taking as they hung in the mists like silent thunderclaps.

I then took off for Podang. It was here that the REAL SIKKIM popped out and yelled hello! All was magic. The mountains and gorges seemed to float in the air; they were drenched with ephemeral haze. Podang felt familiar. It was like home. I could feel sacred energy emanating from some hidden source. I began to follow it and walked up a steep and narrow path which led to the local monastery. I was hungry and exhausted. I had only thirty dollars to spare for all of Sikkim. When

I arrived I almost collapsed. A young monk named Tenzung offered me dinner and a hardwood bed. I was grateful. I was on a Sikkim marathon. Podang's murals blew me away. Wrathful demons danced acid-head nightmares under dim and sinister lights. Brilliant mandalas depicting ALL KINDS OF STRESS screamed out demanding their Benzedrine fix. Uppers and downers were on sale, here on Podang's walls and ceilings. I continued moving from East to West.

THE GALAXIES FROM PODANG:

There are billions of galaxies. This insight must rank as one of the greatest discoveries of all time. Our galaxy alone holds a hundred billion suns in a volume that takes one hundred thousand light years to cross. The real story is that the Universe is over-flowing with galaxies, about one hundred billion of them, in a volume that takes seventeen billion years to cross. These numbers are basically meaningless and they hide a huge mystery: the farther out one looks, the faster all the galaxies seem to be fleeing from the Milky Way! A queer equation thus appears. To find the route back to an unknown origin LOOK UP AND OUT, to the oldest light coming from the youngest galaxies. And I saw GOD and HE was a SHE with dark red hair.

THE DARK RED HAIR:

The road to Gezing was treacherous. My bus was floating on top of the world. There was little margin for error on the narrow lanes hugging the mountain passes. WE WERE VERY HIGH UP and the drop down into the bottomless canyons was VERY VERY LONG. The bus rattled and heaved its way forward. I marveled at the bus driver; he seemed to avoid near accidents through some kind of hidden telepathy. I was so dizzy with fatigue, with nausea, I flipped my hips and flapped my butt, as I tried hopelessly to stretch out on the back seat of the quaking bus. Eventually, we arrived in West Sikkim.

I spent the night at Gezing. Gezing was the pit stop for journeys back to Bengal and up to North-Western Sikkim, which was out of bounds to foreigners. Indian soldiers were everywhere here. They milled aimlessly about, looking for things to do with their spare time. I ignored them. Pemagyantse monastery was next on the list. I found it covered in secret mist and the monks were an unfriendly lot, but persistence paid off. Pema's murals were outstanding. I sneaked snap after snap like a

morphine addict. IT WAS OFFICIALLY FORBIDDEN. There was KUNTOZHANGPO embracing his cosmic consort KUNTOZHAGMO. The brilliant blue and white of the sacred yabyum dazzled my eyes. A stream of sunlight illuminated the entire wall. I snapped, and thought to myself that this was what Prague had been all about. I KNEW it now. It had all been one weird spiritual masterpiece. I saw a huge wooden model of the UNIVERSE, over ten feet high, in the same room. Rainbows, demons, and angels jostled one another for my attention. All the yabyum statues were stunning. Huge fangs, protruding eyes, and skull crowns glorified a SELFLESS LOVE. I could only feel ó but not describe. I was now inside a demonic Khajuraho that pummeled the senses and left you with a sweet chill in the bones. This was the Buddhist mushroom trip I had heard so much about. I was consuming Vajra peyote and little else. I slept only a few hours a day and ate sparingly. I was on a high and the punishing pace of this WHITE kind of life left me now perpetually in a god-like trance. But there was more.

Dear Guardian Angel:

What a trip Sikkim is! It's a BLUR. It's a shining jewel. I've been here almost a week. I've been trying to see as much as possible, and I just keep MOVING, MOVING, MOVING as if a fast-forward button is stuck and can't be turned off. I feel like a pioneer visiting this wild place. It's so remote and so beautiful. Just yesterday, I went to this place called Tashiding; and you know, just getting there was pretty wild. The Rangit river followed my bus all along this scenic route; and it was like a silk-screen painting, misty and bloodshot. I could see all kinds of trees and mountains dressed in weird psychedelic clothes with a sparkling turquoise snake of a river weaving its way slowly below them. When I got to Tashiding, I had to climb these endless stairs leading to the monastery; and when I got there it was locked. This cranky school-teacher with a crag face reluctantly took me in. You could say I forced myself on him. I was pissed off and he didn't want a scene. I got dinner and slept on the floor. The school-teacher was kinda sore when he saw my texts on the "bed." "They must be five inches above the ground, MINIMUM!" he scoffed. But Tashiding's pretty cool. The views are spectacular; and there's a dense tranquillity here. For breakfast, I got this weird ginseng tea with no sugar. The teacher's kids walked in and waved incense all over the room. They were STOKED! I never did see the monastery. I saw a monk finally, but he seemed too busy to show me around. I guess it's all this WHITE STRESS Sikkim's getting zapped with lately. Everybody in Gangtok is trying to buy guns. Too many Nepalis and Indians are flooding into the place. I mean you wouldn't believe it; before the Indians came in and starting pumping tons of bucks into this place, cardamom seeds were the biggest thing going here. Now Sikkim is an armed camp. It's a constant problem, this WHITE STRESS. China, Japan, India all these countries had to find some kinda solution to this WHITE STRESS PROBLEM. It was usually BLACK. I mean the US has fought three wars in Asia and the Tibetans have been hit with an Auschwitz. The Cambodians too. It's pretty gross. But, I know they're here. WHO? The Cosmic Bodhisattvahs! Yeah, I can feel them watching over this place. They're like these super angels that can do all kinds of trippy things like manifest, at will, in all kinds of celestial realms. I mean, when they're in these

heavens, they can use this vantage point to expand the range of their compassion and to intensify their powers of emanation. Why? So they can help US better, that's why! These heavens are just planes of more subtle matter. The mind can embrace more distance here. It can amplify its power and enjoy more BLISS. In these planes, these super angels can sprout multiple and even boundless arms in order to help all kinds of beings. Also multiple eyes to see more, and multiple faces to be more, to more and more beings. Super angels can even take on human form. I saw one in Podang. This monk who was real nice to me introduced me to his teacher. He was this quiet guy who never came out of his room. Nobody even really knew who he was. But it's these unknown cats who keep the traditions of the lineage alive. They are the true bodhisattvas. I'm running out of money; and I'm trying to cover a lot of ground fast here. I can't believe such a small place has so much to offer, but you know the old saying, good things come in small packages! It's a trip!

Yours,

Tripped-out Determination

I got back on the main road and stopped to eat at Legship, a small market town on the way to Bengal. The little Sikkimese kids were delighted to see me. They took me by the hand and playfully ran around, jumping up and down. There was no fear here yet, in this virgin land. A young mother was cleaning rice outside a teahouse. She was gorgeous, and when she saw me we instantly made this bond. The young mother's hair was dark and braided, her oriental face radiant and luscious. I asked for some tea and she fixed me a cup. We looked at each other with an intense curiosity. But I felt weak and paralyzed by her beauty. So much so I forgot to take a snap. A loss of nerve I still curse myself for. Who was this goddess? Her blue skirt went down to her knees; her open blouse revealed a glamorous neck hidden behind a necklace of stylish coils, all piled up into this sexy heap. They accented and showcased her chest, which was a sheer delight to look at. The young mother's eyes followed me as I sat down. But I was watching her too; and she knew this. I looked at her gold earrings, and nose-ring. It

was all so exotic.

I decided to escape, by foot to Khandro Sangpuk, the site of a hot-spring next to a cave, claimed to be sacred to all the Buddhists in this land. There was a small corkscrew tunnel at the entrance of this cave and I was told it was for purification. The hapless pilgrim started at the bottom and slowly weaved and twisted his body up to an opening on the other side. It was excruciating. I rotated my body like a crazy mad snake and popped out. At last! This was the great Karmic Helix Jim and I had talked so much about, and I was now experiencing it in a new way. You just rubbed and rubbed against life until you shined. This was the story of enlightenment.

It was here that I met the Bhutanese. They offered me millet wine with eggs. The Bhutanese also ate red rice and liked putting cheese on their noodles. Hot sauce was popular too. I could see that the Bhutanese I met were well educated. They knew how to play the game, alright. **THEY KEPT EVERYBODY OUT.** They played the Chinese off against the Indians. The Bhutanese king was also a fan of **BLACK STRESS**, the light and fluffy kind. He ordered his subjects not to wear western dress in public, and there was no television station in the country. Was Bhutan expertly surfing the geopolitical waves? It seemed so. The Bhutanese informed me that the king supported the little boy in Tibet. I even learned from my hosts that little Kalu had actually been born in Bhutan. My newly found friends also told me that it was hard for foreigners to visit Bhutan without a lot of cash, but they invited me anyway, and promised to research the matter.

The loud music that I hated so much finally caught up with me and almost ruined my visit. Some Sikkimese brats pounded away all night, and in the morning I was a wreck. I cursed and retreated towards the river bank, and I stared at it swirls and endless eddies pulsed endlessly forward and downward the more I concentrated the more this chaos simply retreated down to a deeper level somewhere somehow this flux ultimately ended and a clear calm pool took over this was the essence of Buddhism the mind was a restless river caught in a trap of its own making there was more and there was something beyond this only few ever experienced my entire life had been a journey into this process. What difference did it make after all?

I hitched a ride on a truck to Jortang. This was the border crossing.

There were no jeeps going to Bengal that day, so I decided to cross the border by foot and hitch some more. I was back in Bengal and I found myself in another Universe. I waited near a cluster of small wooden huts for five hours and finally caught a truck that took me two-thirds of the way to where I wanted to go: DARJEELING. It was a race against the sun. I was in Ghurka country. Bandits controlled the roads by night. The truck slowly chugged past the many tea plantations which seemed to be scattered as far as the eye could see. I rode in back with some mischievous brats who were thrilled at sharing a ride with a crazy foreigner. In each village that we passed, the faded slogans of these demons could be seen peeling away and laughing in the wind. The black demons and the red demons were fighting for control inside the wave flux. My memories slid back to Berlin. Now this mess was being replayed all over again, here in the Himalayas. The ugly demons were everywhere. Their black swastikas and red hammers disturbed and aggravated the land. The old dark shadows of an earlier madness had not yet disappeared, even in our own time. Now all was violence and I could hear the demons sleeping. I could feel their dreaming. I got off the truck and started walking fast, stuffing sugared rice balls into my mouth. I walked desperately and furiously. The Gurkhas were watching me closely. Few foreigners ventured out this far on foot, and NEVER as dusk fell. I cursed, I sweated, I screamed the demons were following me. I was in an anxious trance and nothing was going to stop me from reaching freedom.

Suddenly, like a mirage, Darjeeling popped up. JACKPOT! JACKPOT! I could hear the angels cry. The demons beat a hasty retreat. I strode into Darjeeling just as night began to fall. The Sikkim marathon was finally over. I had survived. I celebrated with a shave, my first in two months. I then crashed out in the dingy youth hostel, the same one with the killer view of the Himalayas. The view that had so lulled me into this frenzy so many old eons ago. Now my body was crumpled on a bed. I woke up the next day completely refreshed. I rubbed my eyes. Yes, the acid trip was over and I was back in DJ! A killer fog then stalked me all the way as I stumbled back to Sonada.

CHAPTER 15

KATHMANDU

It was time to retrieve my luggage with its promise of eternal burden. I met a French Lama who revealed to me the secret history of the Kagyu war. The entire war revolved around the tricky question of what was a Tulku? “Well, a Tulku can be many things you know,” the French Lama said. “Tulkus don’t need a lineage, but can start them with the right blessings; and Tulkus can be recognized, but not necessarily enthroned. Some have even been enthroned without being recognized! And don’t forget that Tulkus can take on various aspects of a great saint, but not necessarily be the saint himself.” I scratched my head. “Are you confused?” the French Lama asked. “Just a little,” I retorted. The French Lama continued: “After the Rebellious Regent’s treachery, hundreds of years ago, his red hat was

buried under the ground and his lineage was terminated. But the Regent just kept coming back. He was never recognized and shuffled into a lonely corner. With the exile, the Regent was recognized once more, officially. But the curse, the curse” The French Lama trailed off. “The curse was under-estimated. Now, we have a war.” We both sat in silence. It was cold outside. Fog covered the hills surrounding the monastery. All was gloom. I could see a prayer flag fluttering silently in the wind. It seemed to whisper to me, to warn me about many unknowns that were coming to a head.

The French Lama aided me in talking to the Tibetans; and I was soon on my way back to Salugara loaded with luggage. I found a bus going to Siliguri and it left me off at the crossroads, just outside town. Maxim had sent two letters to me, both were identical. He was pissed off. My stepmother had told him I wasn’t coming back for his wedding. “The Buddha can kiss my ass,” he defiantly announced. I just sighed. The insanity of the family was now reaching India. I thought about the bodhisattvahs and how they could branch out their attributes into different people. I had abandoned my Jewish protectors by embracing Buddhism and could expect no help from the family. The great Jewish bodhisattvahs had helped me enormously in Central Europe and Israel, however. Now they were saying to me, “You’re on different turf, RELY ON THE LOCALS!”

In Siliguri, I was forced to argue in the dark with the rickshaw drivers. The old ploy of under-bidding was used by the most astute one and I had to pay him off later, far away from any sign of civilization. But I got to Salugara. NEPAL was now on the horizon. Lama was back and he gave me some extra money. “You may need it,” he knowingly said. Lama also asked me about Situ. “How’s he holding up?” he curiously inquired. “Oh, he’s OK,” I answered. Lama then said. “It’s a mess, I know. The Regent has broken his vows and we have underestimated the curse. But in his heart of hearts, he knows that he’s wrong.” There were now rumors that a rival boy would soon be recognized in New Delhi. The whole thing was getting terribly complicated.

I let Lama read Maxim’s letter. “Well, you know he’s just demanding attention. You Americans” Lama shook his head and laughed. “You Americans are taught to be completely self-reliant from birth. You don’t know how to compromise.” Lama was smiling. “And you know, your brother shouldn’t curse the Buddha, he’ll lose merit.” I asked Lama

about harnessing the subtle energies for long life and psychic power. Lama rubbed his chin and softly spoke, "What's the point of all this, if there's no bodhicitta?" Lama paused, but only for a second. "What's the point in trying to get ahead of the other guy in some kind of silly spiritual Olympics if you're not going to help him later on?" There was dead silence in the room. "That's not dharma." Lama finally uttered. I realized he was right.

It was time to cross the border, but my final moments in India were just more slapstick comedy. I crossed the border without getting my passport stamped. The Nepalis sent me back, but let me keep my luggage at the passport control office. The Indians seemed annoyed that I was bothering them at all and took their time filling out all the necessary forms. A young Nepali hustler helped me change money and guided me to the bus for Kathmandu, but I refused to board it. I wanted my luggage inside the bus with me. The Nepali demanded I pay double. I stood my ground and the Nepali gave in. The young hustler got no commission and stalked off in a huff. I was in Kakarbhitta, a dusty and ugly border town heaped with scattered energies swirling under a brown halo of careless abandon. Nepal was different. Nothing seemed to matter here much. A young English kid sat next to me and became totally absorbed by my dharma babble. As we talked, our bus zoomed past the flat open space of the Terai plains. The road was horrible, and the ride soon became a feat of unhappy endurance. Day surrendered to night, and the bus stopped to let all the passengers have a piss break. We were in the middle of nowhere. It was magnificent. The pitch black darkness swallowed up everything for miles. High up in the cold night sky, the stars twinkled and wept. I had a bad feeling in my gut. We arrived in Kathmandu the next morning.

KATHMANDU. There was a soft and slow stress to this place. Dusty haze clung to the city; there were wide boulevards filled with touts and beggars. A dirty modernizing look reminded me of Mexico here, and India too. But the psychic dislocation seemed worse here than in India. Nepali culture was rapidly going down the tubes. WHITE STRESS on the surface hid a subtle tension simmering just below. It was like walking around the rim of a volcano. The English kid guided me to the Thamel tourist ghetto, where we checked into rooms in one

of the millions of empty hotels that had sprouted over the years to satisfy the hordes of foreign invaders flooding the country. Now the demand had dropped. Red tape and high visa fees and bribes had dampened enthusiasm for travel in the Third Vortex; and a vortex Nepal was. A very dangerous one. Nepal lay sausaged between China and India, the giants of Asia. Nepal was more expensive than these giants, but also more convenient. Thamel had everything for a price. I was at the crossroads now. I walked to Swyambu. I was in a bad mood. The psychic overload was sneaking up on me. I had only fifty dollars in my pocket. Outside the gilded Thamel ghetto tons of garbage floated insecurely in the nearby river. Animals rummaged in the filth; everybody looked miserable and poor in this high poverty zone. What was going to happen here? What was going to happen to me? Kathmandu stunk and seemed on the verge of revolution. The Black Demons of Gurkha land had their echoes here. The demon gangs were in the streets jostling for power, for the best BLACK SOLUTION.

Up on Swyambu hill, I surveyed the scene and it was a SCENE. I was in the middle of another vortex. This was HINBULAND. Nepal was a weird flux and mix of everything. It was a true testing ground for pilgrims of all stripes and colors. There was black magic in the air, and a scattered feeling seemed to persist inside me and in all the people around me. We were all leading tragic lives.

GALAXY CLUSTERS AS SEEN FROM KATHMANDU:

Scanning the hierarchy of size in the Universe, from planet to solar system to galaxy, one keeps expecting to encounter some object LARGE ENOUGH to dominate all external influences, a cosmic individual in complete control of its fate, but not even our galaxy is independent and self-sufficient. There are about two dozen galaxies associated with the Milky Way in a small galaxy cluster called the "The Local Group." The only one larger than the Milky Way, Andromeda, with its three-hundred billion stars, travels on the other side of the cluster, about a million light years away. Andromeda and the Milky Way make up seventy percent of the local group's mass; the other members of this group are small fish by comparison. But a great many galaxies exist in even LARGER CLUSTERS and these societies of galaxies affect each other

quite intimately as they fuse into larger and larger clusters. Super galaxies and super clusters surely must be the cosmic individuals mentioned earlier. But a thickening has been detected, a great circle that looks like an equator of a gravitational field that operates on the level of associations of the super clusters, clusters of clusters of clusters like a raving maniac hurling around houses and dodging posts.

INSIDE THE RAVING MANIAC:

“I’m sorry, Mr. Finberg, but your stepmother refuses to talk to you on the phone.” The embassy official looked at me with a mixture of sympathy and motherly confusion. “Mr. Finberg, are you all right?” I stood listlessly; my blood had turned into ice water. “She said she doesn’t have any money. Would you like the State Department to try calling her we can” I was in a daze. My stepmother had finally gone insane. She had stabbed me in the back and I was stranded in a hell-hole with forty dollars. Tibet was lost, IT WAS LOST! My mind was screaming. “Mr. Finberg, the call was six dollars and forty-five cents.” I looked at the embassy official; she was a tall dark Indian woman with an American accent. “Uh, can we defer payment?” I moaned weakly. “Yes, you may Mr. Finberg, please remember that Nepali visa regulations are very strict; if you don’t have money for an extension you may go to jail.” I was no longer listening; I was furious. The goddamn wedding had something to do with this. Maxim was behind this. My stepmother’s lunacy no longer was curbed by Maxim’s emergency brake. It was THIS GODDAMN WEDDING! My “Summer in India” fantasy was now coming back to haunt me and it was impossible to call anybody collect in Nepal. I had no address book. THE SCREENPLAY WAS IN DANGER. The yo-yos now were knocking down bricks in San Diego.

Dear Guardian Angel:

Well, the fools in San Diego finally did it. I have been sacrificed on the altar of family politics. I AM STRANDED HERE IN KATHMANDU. What's this place like? Oh, it's a weird and wonderful landscape. Just an hour ago I finished exploring the Durbar. It's a square filled with mythical kinda statues. It's wrathful here, but there's also magic in the air. Walt Disney would have liked this place. It's not always easy to orient yourself in this funny Malla Coca-Cola kingdom. I see masks, and I see puppets, and I see knives, big curved ones, and I see jewelry, all kinds, and I see pottery and paintings. I'm staying in this tourist ghetto hotel. It's owned by Muslim Tibetans. All kinds of strange foreigners trip around in the lobby. The reception desk is manned by two gorgeous daughters of the hotel owner. MTV is always blaring in the lobby. An English guy named Paul brought me here. He's a nice quiet guy who's into sports and wants to be a writer. He gave me some Walkman earphones. I needed them and I'm almost broke. I'm a mapper as you know, so I gave Paul a lot of maps and map-making tools. There's this American guy trying to smuggle out dogs with his French wife who speaks very good English, I mean she doesn't even have an accent. She's something of a spiritual air-head, but she's a nice person. Her name is Val and her husband, who used to play professional tennis, is named Quinn and they're trying to get into Tibet and smuggle dogs outta there, but they don't have any money, these little vortex innocents! I gave a dharma talk to an Israeli and he seemed receptive to the concept of EMPTINESS. There's so much color and complexity here in KAT. The bookstores are good, but nothing's cheap here. All kinds of restaurants are offering every kind of food imaginable, but there's this depressed feel to life here. The skies are always overcast and unfriendly. Nepali buses are no fun; they are small and over-crowded, and uncomfortable. Long journeys are a pain here. Just the other day, I went to Bodnath, the Tibetan capital of Nepal. There was this stupa there, but I was tired and in a down mood all day. I'm running out of money and I need to find a monastery quick. I have to write my screenplay. So much depends on it. I'm trying to see as much as possible before the crunch really hits. I guess you could say I'm waiting for deliverance, looking for a way out of this noise and zoo-like atmosphere. I'm not

going to let the cement-heads in San Diego stop me from exploring Nepali culture. I mean this is a NEW and POWERFUL energy field. You can feel all the dark and complex energies and just soar! This is the land of the cosmic Buddhas, the discoverers of SUCHNESS, you know, that elusive, transcendent reality in all things. The cosmic kids have investigated scientifically even their finger-tips to the utmost degree and have seen that everything just dissolves under microscopic analysis: into molecules and atoms and empty spaces, and finally into quarks or other strange possibilities. A Buddha has done the inner scientific investigation, even beyond the outer investigations of so called WESTERN scientists. A Buddha has "GONE BEYOND" all worldly appearance ó even worldly nothingness. From this immovable ground of transcendence, Buddhas emerge in purified forms to reach out to beings; and to bring them in contact with their own realities. Here in KAT there's a hill called Swyambu. Five colored Buddhas live there. One is blue and is called Akshobya; this cosmic kid transmutes hate into wisdom, then there's Vairochana, he's yellow; he transmutes delusion into mirror wisdom, and there's Ratnasambhava, who transmutes pride and greed into equality wisdom; Amitabha is the red Buddha who transmutes lust into discriminating wisdom; and finally there's green Amoghasiddhi who transmutes envy into all-accomplishing wisdom. There's also the Medicine Buddha who can express himself as a healing medicine for ailing beings. He's my favorite and I puja with him a lot. I actually made a vow to him to puja, puja, puja every day because someone I really cared about was sick. You know I'm learning so much here in my panicky despair. It's important to keep the holy centers spinning in synch and at a moderate pace. Chakra clampdown generates aging and illness. Chakra spaceout generates madness and anxiety. Most people have too much or not enough spin. BLACK and WHITE CHAKRA STRESS! It's a drag. You have to transform the sexual energy into something less draining and more powerful, but you need to dedicate this power to something higher, a higher purpose, or SUBTLE STRESS will zap you, poke you, and KILL you. The gods live in our subtle centers it is our subtleness which allows us to become potential fields of realizational awareness. Tapping this becomes a process that eventually moves us all outwardly so we can encompass all sentient beings. This subtle union of the channels and centers inside us is called Shambala. The consort is the inner yoga that blends the wrathful and peaceful deities through the

central channel. Tantra is a high stress weave. You see this UNION portrayed in all the hairy frescos found in all the remote low-stress zones. It's a fusion of wrathful vertical flux and "peaceful" horizontal flux of BLACK and WHITE STRESS. It's just two sides of the same coin that are simultaneously embraced. It's so sad what I see, all these spiritual seekers aspiring to vertical, while striving for horizontal and getting caught in between. There's a lot of PRESSURE and EXPANSION, and you need an insurance policy, like a GOOD TEACHER to explain all this. Everybody's pressuring for something, the energy's always turning and fortunes are always reversing the Greeks understood this very well. NO SYSTEM WORKS, yet the existence of this dilemma signals that SOMETHING IS AT WORK. We have a choice. What do you want to have happen? How much STRESS do you want? Look what's behind each thought and the STRESS coming out of it. This is how BLISS AWARENESS begins; seeing the STRESS and its ANTIDOTE. This is INNER RELEASE. Outer release never lasts and creates tricky karma. Work for the liberation of beings! Make a symbolic feast. Offer it up and listen to the angels. I'm waiting for word from the State Department. I have this terrible feeling in the pit of my stomach the energy in San Diego is so DENSE. It's like cement.

*Yours,
Exasperated Determination*

It was time for another magic carpet ride. This one had to be even quicker than Sikkim. I flew around the Kathmandu valley on a Durbar tour. The Mallas dumped all kinds of weird and exotic stuff in their durbars, pornographic plazas filled with day-dream monuments that seemed to silently float forever between heaven and earth; this Hinbu paradise at the end of a hard road smelled of hashish brownies and honeysuckle kisses. The Commies were blocking the road to Bhaktapur, so I went to Patan. Nepali culture was wild. It was here in this vortex that the cosmic mixer worked over-time spilling out a strange and powerful milkshake of familiar problems and magical solutions.

The Hinbu resonance was pungent. It was a world in which the clouds played with the sun and everyone hedged their bets. For here was Shiva, and Kali, and Shakyamuni, dancing to the tune of my sunshine Olympus. "Yes, yes," hissed my Nepali guide seeking some rupee scraps like a patient cobra and dispelling the clouds with his holy mantra "Yes, yes," he said. It was a dynamic WHITE MOOD. I prayed to Vairochana as I walked back to Kat. The landscape was foul. Mounds of stinking shit mixed with trash greeted me everywhere I stepped. The Nepalis living in the filthy squalor looked destitute, but were not unfriendly; and they were rarely threatening. For here was the real Nepal. Thamel was just an artificial wart on the horizon. Freak Street was dead. The old hippies were gone; they were now replaced by gourmet trekkers. Where was the king? He was gone too, hidden somewhere in the howling darkness of a corpse. The force majeure had claimed another feverish mind. Kathmandu was dying. I wept and pushed on.

Bhaktapur. It was here in the eastern valley that the synchronicities exploded. Prague was generating an eerie twist here. I waited and got relief in Bhaktapur. There was no traffic in the city center and a timeless quality jumped out from every corner. The durbar was filled with street-wise urchins begging for rupees. I gave them bread and it disappeared into endless pockets. They wanted MORE. The little imps were on the make in Pottersville. The past was less diluted here. The WHITE NOISE was soft and luscious. I was breathing a living gem. The stone elephants laughed. A great big ghostly head stared at me. There were many here. They playfully fucked around, picking butts off the streets. I was in Bhaktapur now, only in another life and in another body. And I was happy.

I caught a bus to Nagarkot and clambered onto its roof. There I met Pia. She was a young and wholesome dakini from the Southwest of England. A lively bundle of energy with a quick mind. Pia had a traveling companion inside the bus suffering from vertigo. We were alone up on the roof with all the scrambling Nepalis clinging to anything that provided support. The bus sat for an hour and finally roared to life. Pia was Summer's mysterious double, a doppelganger sent by the Guides to comfort me. Both Summer and Pia were of the same age, born in the same month, and both had half-Swedish ancestry. Both were witches. Indeed, here was the white witch Pia tempting me like the black witch in Prague. Both had occult power. Both were totally priceless and precious. It was a weird and absorbing symmetry.

"Oh, I'm such a selfish cow," laughed Pia. "I treat Nick so badly. He's taken a fancy to me and he knows I have a boyfriend." Pia was on a break, teaching English for three months in Kathmandu. She would soon be off to Scotland for her new university life. Pia was not like Summer in one important sense. She had led a normal life. Years of boarding school discipline made this dark brunette serious and frugal in her ways. And Pia did have her ways. She was a rebel. "Oh, I just get so depressed when I'm stuck in some hole with nothing to do. Take Nick for example, he's so pathetic. He'll just sit and stare at the walls until I tell him to stop. It's only when he plays his music that he seems to come alive. Maybe that's why we're still friends. I told him to come here to Nepal with me. I didn't want to be here alone. Those Indians are bloody rude. I was in transit in New Delhi and they simply stared at me. They just stared and stared. It was dreadful." Pia adjusted her long blue skirt. I could see white ivory flesh through a slit. "Oh, and I miss Tim so much," Pia lamented. "I wish he would get here soon." This non-stop chatter went on and on. The bus slowly lifted itself up through the scenic hills. We arrived in Nagarkot in the late afternoon.

It was stupendous. The Himalayas were closer than ever. I snapped and snapped not only the god mountains, but Pia. Nick was in no mood for further trekking, but Pia bullied him into coming to Sankhu with me the next morning. We trekked through some of the best scenery in the world. Rice terraces, fragrant green, guided us on our journey through the roof of the world. The snow-capped mountains were magnificent. Pia skipped ahead of us; she was lost in her private

world. "Don't you find her a bit much?" I asked Nick. "I put up with it," Nick murmured, in typically silent English desperation. "You know PIA means 'impermanence' in Pali, the ancient language of the Buddha," I revealed to Nick, in an effort to cheer him up. "Does it now?" Nick retorted. "We should tell her that."

We could see Sankhu off in the Zen mist, the sun was breaking out of the clouds. Pia and I left Nick at a cafe and began the ascent up the mountain to the Vajrayogini temple. "Do you have a girlfriend?" Pia cautiously probed. "Not exactly," I answered. "Is she beautiful?" Pia next inquired. I took out a photo of Summer and gave it to her. Pia began to gaze at it with deep absorption. "Oh, she looks so angry," Pia grimly reported. I looked at the snap. Summer was sitting on a chair, bare feet propped on a table, clasping her hands and smiling. "She looks happy," I announced. "No, she's not. I can feel her. She's a prisoner of her own beauty and she hates it." Pia was firm. "This dreadful culture we live in" Pia trailed off. "We have this image of what beauty should be and it's so hopelessly abstract." Pia was working up to something. "This 'thin' kind of beauty it's just not fair. You know, my sister didn't want to grow boobs! It's just so BAD!" Silence hit the air. I could hear Vajrayogini laughing. She was mocking Pia, tempting me. Villagers hurriedly passed us by, seemingly preoccupied with things sinister. Black magic was everywhere, soaking everything in its path. It all felt very familiar. Pia and I were halfway up the mountain, but we were also at a crossroads. It was here at the Vajrayogini temple that Sankhu became Konopiste.

Vajrayogini was waiting for us at the top of the mountain in the form of a wild sadhu who greeted us and invited us into his room. The sadhu had long matted hair and his skin was covered with white ash. He wore all kinds of beads and jewelry. But I sensed another hustler trying to score. And this hustler was a dangerous one. He showed us his ceremonial skull-cap and mixed his special powders in it. "Our new friend" was a Tantric of the Wrathful school. I could see this from all the junk he stored near his bed. Monkey skulls and candles adorned his altar. Before Pia and I could leave, the sadhu anointed our foreheads with red powder. Pia was bursting with enthusiasm. "Oh, I should bring my boyfriend here, it's so CAPITAL!" she exclaimed. While she got her headrush, I slipped out and walked over to the temple. The priest was

not too friendly, but I saw my chance and peeked through the door. I sensed something sinister. There she was! VAJRAYOGINI in all her splendor. Her statue glistened in the sunlight, SUDDENLY the priest swung the door shut. I made an offering, but the priest would not take it. The energies were getting heavy and I returned to the wild sadhu's room to fetch Pia. The wild sadhu wanted money. I gave him ten rupees. "I HAVE TO EAT!" the sadhu complained. "That's all I can give you," I said. "We have to go now," I added.

It was too late. Even as Pia and I rushed down the stairs, it came like a blast. I began feeling a migraine coming on. An un-nameable spidery heaviness began to press on my body. I struggled towards the ledge near a clump of trees and lay on my back. Pia followed me, somewhat puzzled by my behavior. I drew in deep breaths and recited a mantra for protection. Pia sat next to me. "Are you all right?" she cautiously asked. "Yeah," I hissed, teeth clenched. "Can't you feel it?" I heaved. "Feel what?" Pia asked, "IT?"

"Yes, IT!"

"I'm not sure what you mean."

"IT! IT!" I pressed my forehead against Pia's. I realized we were under psychic attack and began to act by instinct alone. Pia had the power. Her brown eyes began to glow like hot coals. Vajrayogini had been next to me all this time! I got up and Pia followed. Monkeys scattered as we hurried down the mountain.

At the bottom, we passed a small brown man who looked like a retired magician. I saw streams of gold pouring through the sky, and right above the head of this new stranger it poured right through my eyeballs and indeed right inside them; it was everywhere. I began to tingle wild all over and smell the rank, hot, and rotten energy of the wild sadhu from hair and face to feet and toes. I could hear a snoring. I opened my mouth and drew in deep breaths of sacred atmosphere. It was not air, never air, but the palpable and living emanation of Vajrayogini. Annika walked slowly next to me. "I feel so somber," she quietly intoned. Then she began to choke and weep. She began to gasp desperately and hold her hands to her throat. She sat down and began to heave in a panic. I kneeled in front of her and recited furiously more mantra, then it was over. Pia wiped the red mark off her forehead with a violent brush of the hand. "That man wasn't blessing me, he was cursing me! I can feel his breath streaming down the mountain." I was

exhausted; and was lying on the grass. “You’re a little too cavalier about all this,” I confessed. “I’m certainly not now!” Pia defended herself. “I have a healthy respect for these people, they’re dangerous.”

The sun was beginning to set and I was anxious to find Nick and get away to Bodnath. “Oh, flip!” Pia cried. “Where are my sunglasses? They belong to my mother, they’re special!” We scrounged around in the dry grass and found them. Vajrayogini was playing one last trick so that Pia could soon start growing up. We found Nick waiting patiently for us in the same cafe we left him in. There was something timeless about him; in contrast to Pia, Nick seemed like an accomplished yogi. We all hitched a ride in the back of a truck, which kept stopping for additional passengers along the way. In Nepal truck drivers are always looking for ways to earn extra money. Pia sat next to me and sighed, “You know I’m such a bad person, when I wish people ill, they actually become sick.” It was a strange feeling to be with another little fallen angel. Summer’s energy was at its weakest here. Interference from somewhere had blocked her signal; and suddenly now, Pia had shown up. I could hear Vajrayogini laughing. Her work was never done.

It was Losar, the Tibetan new year. In Bodnath, I gave Annika and Nick a tour of the great stupa. Countless pilgrims were pinwheeling around the stupa’s many levels in a mad traffic of confused celebration. “Oh, it’s so much better here,” Pia commented, with a tinge of relief. “These people are very nice.” We boarded the bus to Kathmandu. Pia kept talking non-stop like an endlessly running motor. Pia’s enthusiasm never seemed to flag, but Nick looked exhausted. “She’s not very deep,” he volunteered. When we hopped out, an unknown Nepali attempted to lift Nick’s wallet, but Nick’s ever-present vigilance prevented a minor tragedy. I could sense Vajrayogini watching us. Someone stepped on Pia’s skirt, ripping it as she attempted to get off the bus. Her long white legs were now exposed to the cold night air. I kissed Pia good-bye. “You know, I saw little skulls in your eyes up there,” Pia confided in me. She kissed me on the lips and disappeared into the unfriendly streets. I felt totally relieved.

CHAPTER 16

SWYAMBU

“I’m sorry, Mr. Finberg,” the vice-consul gravely reported to me. “The State Department had no luck with your stepmother. She would not even bring your brother to the phone. Do you have anyone else we can call?” I drew in a deep breath and silently cursed. I had no address book, but instructed the embassy to call the information operator in California and search for my friend at his office in the APPLE MAZE at Cupertino. I was no longer very optimistic. I sensed powerful forces working against me. I also knew that the struggle for survival had begun. I would have only two dollars left after paying off the hotel. I walked up to the roof and looked out towards Swyambu. I could see the hill with its white-washed stupa, the famous one with its all-seeing eyes gazing about omnipotently in all directions. Right behind the stupa was a larger hill with a monastery. This was my

last hope. I walked to the foot of the hill like a sleep-walker and began clawing my way up the side with a grim mix of iron determination and queasy fear. It was a desperate hour and all my money was gone.

Then the Guides delivered me. A young Lama and his wife greeted me at the top and told me I was welcome to stay for a month. "Calm down and write your screenplay. My porters will be waiting for you down at the foot of the hill tomorrow," the young Lama reassured me. I couldn't believe it. My luck had drastically changed, yet again, inside the vortex. I hurried on down back to the hotel, and sold some of my books to pay for the taxi. I then packed and called the embassy to leave a new phone number. It was the young Lama's, the new young Lama. He was now my new protector. The powers that be WANTED me to finish the screenplay. The next morning the porters were waiting. I led the caravan up the hill and took photos of this improbable procession. I was given a large room overlooking the city of Kathmandu. I was now above my torment. I could see the entire valley that the great god Manjushri had created in dreamlike rapidity with a quick thrust of his sword. For this was the age of miracles. My mind roared ahead and talked. I set up my altar and gave offerings to the Guides. The porters brought me a writing table. The meals were brought into my room by friendly nuns. The Young Lama also brought offerings to me. I was now beginning my final adventure in EURASIA. I knew what I had to do. AND THAT WAS TO WRITE, WRITE, WRITE. It was a glorious feeling.

I WAS THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE

Did it flow?

Yes. With its democratic equality and constancy to its nature in seeking its own level and a deep vastness in this ocean.

THE UNIVERSE AS SEEN FROM SWYAMBU:

Is it a single thing like a fish or a molecule of water? Or did it drift into existence like a sand dune, an accumulation of parts? And how will it end? As a whole, dying as we do, losing its properties and faculties all at once? Or will it slide slowly out of existence (whatever that might mean) with each galaxy discovering its own independent fate? The great

Buddhist RAP told me the Universe was OLD and that it went ROUND and ROUND. Having memory of these cycles was itself a sign of SPIRITUALITY. The lowest gods could remember forty cycles, the next grade, one thousand, and the next, one hundred thousand, until one reached the highest Buddhas who had access to millions of cycles. But what if there was something even beyond this? Hell, I just wanted to ride, man. I just had to go!

WELC⊕ME †⊕ SWYΔMBU CIRCUS

In three acts:

WITH Δ CAST ⊕F †H⊕USΔΠDS

Dear Guardian Angel:

I made it to the top of the hill, man. And now it's time to rock. There's a time squeeze, and a money squeeze, but I'm here above the valley. I'm at the center of the vortex and it's time to tap its powerful energies. There are two hills here and I'm on top of one and the other one is right down below. Imagine two lightning rods that catch and spiral the energy UP, UP, AND UP The Bonpos are down below at the foot of a dragon's tail. Yes, this is the acceleration point down on the vortex floor. We're on higher ground here in Manjushri country. I'm mapping out the five rites. I'm relearning the codes. I've got some dangerous ally-opponents and some kind of double-reversal is still ahead of me. I have this bothersome ghost; it's the loss of everything important in my life. My needs are tied to this tragic past. My desire is to create a new mandala to transmit the vision of a new Eurasia. The Cold War is over and all this global chaos is the lull before the next storm. My enemies are trying to force me back home before this mandala is finished. This is the battle in this unstable world of surge and swirl. You can find only unstable alliances here. I'm looking for a kind of self-revelation. I already know it and I simply refuse to admit to myself that this precious mandala was always inside me. It's this realization that will allow this outer mandala to be completed. My insides and my outsides harmoniz-

ing at last and achieving an indestructible unity ready for its transmission to all sentient beings. This is an alliance with unconditional love and it's rock solid. It's important to become a beacon of light in the darkness. Look how the Guides smile down on me. I'm just this frightened ego searching for new tools. See how it likes to clash with other frightened egos. This ego needs to identify with the egoless beings. This kind of identification blesses other egos without feeding them. It also protects the blesser from getting eaten up. It's a drama that leads to no drama at all. How boring, you may say, but oh, how free it is in its egolessness. With it is no "I'm in the center" kind of existence. You want power? You got it. Will the Regent see this? His curse is the ghost that haunts him. What the Rebellious Regent has to do now is transcend this curse and accept his real teacher. The driving need is freedom, the false desire being simply control. The battle-ground is the lineage. It's time for a revelation now, maybe even a double reversal. I'm waiting for this with anticipation. How do you turn egomania into egoless bliss? Can you see how both stories are overlapping now? Wow, I'm struggling to write a screenplay on top of this hill as "a greater drama" unfolds in New Delhi. I'm penniless and the Nepalis will soon be looking for me. Can you see? I'm just looking for perfect symmetry and a superior alignment. There are these PURELANDS everywhere. They're invisible to the naked eye, but can be seen by gazing into any mandala. Only then can you really reach the subtlest energy in the Universe, the strongest forces inside an atom, the farthest reaches of outer space and beyond that into other unknown dimensions, all in order to find whatever is necessary to help and liberate stressed-out beings. I now bow down to Yama, the Lord of Death! Yes, it's the big OM MANI PADME HUM! Can you see? Generosity is always more free than greed, justice more liberating than violence, tolerance more releasing than anger, and wisdom always more superior than prejudice.

*Yours,
Enlightened Determination*

A dream: I see Inge and she is trying to tell me something and I can't quite make it out as she moves her lips and silent words spill out I'm just frustrated Angela a maiden from what was once East Germany who now lives with the nuns below the hill knocks on my door for a visit and tells me she is still in shock for her travels have made her now disillusioned and she misses the simple life seen in the countryside and finds all politics mostly talk and now she has come to the conclusion that the real struggle is inside our heads so she follows Zen and is a volunteer nurse here in Nepal and she's tall and lanky like Inge but she's got blue eyes and blonde hair and unlike Inge wears a pair of glasses and has a deeper practice you know we all went on strike in those hopeful days she said and now I'm just sad and Cottbus looks so drab and Berlin looks bad while I give Angela some tea and lick her spoon

So did it flow?

But of course. The restlessness of its waves and the surface particles visiting in turn all points of its seaboard: the independence of its units: the variability of its states of sea

Why did the fool go up the hill? To curse the stupid cabby who fucked up getting there, to set up shop for a creative surge, to dream about his black and white dakinis in Prague and Bhaktapur, separated by thousands of nautical miles, to the tune of DARK SIDE OF THE MOON and THE WALL, to feel protected in a strange and wonderful something or other, to write a screenplay in five weeks, to feel the Nepalis breathing down his neck, to align and to realign, to be the man in the high castle, to produce in a limited amount of time a new mandala for a new world.

How did this dreamer plot his moves?

With a curve, the book was the slow stage of anticipatory waiting, it

was the build-up for the lift-off of the screenplay, pushing the computer game into orbit.

Where did this pilot get his inspiration?

From his consorts that Padmasambhava blessed him with.

And what happened next?

He created a life-net that had faulty nodes, that could not surpass these karmic obstacles, that triggered something bold and heavy, that spotted the slinking priest behind Annika, the young woman who gave him his boost when he needed it, it was time now to turn on the stove.

And then what happened?

The days became more structured, and a routine was developed, while mastering the code, the pujas, the rejuvenation rites, the long rest pauses, a hyper-organizing in a race against time, the discovery of a new curve, the cracking of the code, the simulations, and finally the REAL THING, competing with Hollywood's best, being a source of tremendous curiosity to the Tibetans, this strange and wonderful dream.

And then?

The warrior drew a map with many colored layers, weaving the structure, the characters, and the dialogue, then integrating the master map with the single genre maps, reading Beauty and the Beast, hearing Apple flake-out, considering selling his ticket, being warned by the vice-consul not to, seeing the bigger picture unfold, watching strange energies come in, observing the nuns taking a fancy to him, giving them soap and iodine, while being treated like royalty, getting breakfast, lunch, and tea, dinner too, in this home away from home, finding a family in an alien land.

So did he enjoy it?

Most definitely, living on top of this mountain, over-looking a magical valley, hearing the winds howl at night, feeling safe in the diamond castle, having the Guides watch over him, getting so much done so fast, by hyper-organizing full-time, enjoying the peaceful environment, having all personal logistics taken care of by the nuns, this sweet ANI feeling, experiencing every day as a lifetime, breaking image engineering codes, creating a whole new code, and mapping it out.

And did it flow?

Indeed it did, its hydrostatic quiescence in this calm; its hydrokinetic turgidity in neap and spring tides; its capacity to dissolve and hold in this new solution all soluble substances

YES, DISCOVERING THE WAVES:

TELEGRAM: The code has now been cracked! They are these revelation waves.

An inner shot: The monks sing in chorus OM MANI PADME HUM. I rotate my body in circles, I lie down on my back, press my chin to my chest and lift feet into the air. Oh, Mommy can you please take me home?

And what did the waves say?

That all drama is nothing but revelation waves, crystallizing into these three waves with the second one extended to provide a strong middle, just a slight modification of the ancient Greek theory, each wave having its own peculiar properties, kick starting, building-up, sustaining, and climaxing any given story, with dialogue acting as a damper or accelerator, providing a range of speed for the waves, silence then

amplifying the revelations after each acceleration, this new integration of systems theory and wave structure being powerful, the image engineer gasping at the thought of this, the young Lama giving him more offerings, then asking for a Parker pen.

Anything else?

Seeing a powerful vision, just letting the DNA of storytelling fall into his hands, benefiting from multiple-life accumulation, just as when the DNA of markets spilled into his lap, a blessing on the head, a curse on the lips, just *facci tutto per bene*, it was just everything for the best

And?

Seeing that the development of character was determined by skillful use of the code, now integrating the master code with the minor codes of horror, myth, science fiction, and fantasy, mixing the minors within the framework of the major, creating great screenplays, and realizing it was time for some simulation runs, testing Hollywood's best and brightest, and his own work against the code.

Was it exciting?

It was terribly exciting, sculpting the outline into shape with index cards, getting high on the blueprints, the drafts, understanding the age of multimedia as a blueprint process, then seeing blueprints for blueprints, on multiple levels, watching this as the core process for all kinds of visionary work, then planting a seed and watching it branch out, unlike enlightenment which isn't really organic, it simply being the basic nature of things, simply jumping out if you trusted it unconditionally, and wondering how to develop this unconditional trust in others

And then what happened?

A simulation phase drew near, as the real game began, the Buddhist screen-writer testing his skills against the top guns of Hollywood, feeling as if inside a computer, creating the game as he went along, participating in a weird version of monastic virtual reality, feeling it time to document this process, defining an era, thinking it wild, seeing the multiple visions, feeling the solid protection and devotion, understanding that the care and concern were REAL, having an office, an altar, a private library, and a huge room with a view, having a work-out room, doing the rejuvenation rites, getting into the yogic postures, then having three meals a day, and some tea, harnessing the energy of the Third Vortex.

TELEGRAM: THE SPIRIT-FIC CODE HAS BEEN CRACKED.

And what was that?

It was a new mandala, with theory giving way to experiment, fusing science fiction and mythical fantasy with practical and powerful concepts of Tantric Buddhist psychology, the revelation waves, the dialogue dynamics, the strata-fugue maps, all fusing into one big MEGA-THEORY of story molding, concluding it was time to try out various story molds, putting the “monk” thing on index cards, choosing the mold of choice, and pouring the creative liquid into it, then letting it cool, and realizing it was simply good fun.

Did he know where to go now?

He did.

And what else?

Learning SPIRIT-FIC’s rules, then bending them, having different kinds of spacetime reflecting many different observers, even within one

individual, then understanding how cross-cutting between different worlds mirrored the dream world of the unconscious, the collective mind ocean, then seeking this cosmic revelation, by pushing the transformational hero's journey obsessively, also learning how to manipulate episodic structure, by branching it out, then nesting it into more advanced forms, treating the audience to journeys through all kinds of multiple worlds, then encountering all these multiple opponents, and using standard science fiction, horror, and mythic fantasy to powerful effect, by allowing these worlds to converge inside the hero's mind as reflections of himself.

So what more?

The engineer discovered that SPIRIT-FIC was personal and collective simultaneously, seeing a hologramic vision, and being vague about it, then observing, that change on one level brought change on all levels, thus letting the audience be exposed to a variety of experiences, by pushing the process of involvement, of their identification beyond current known modes, and simply abandoning film for virtual reality, and letting the audience accumulate a new wisdom of the mind.

So was this REALLY new?

No, since multiple worlds within multiple mind-frames was an old invention, what was new was the transmission of this vision as a temporary and illusory phenomena, showing how an all encompassing multiplicity was simply various forms of STRESS, also showing how a turning over of symbols, rather quickly, and on multiple levels, helped accelerate a cognitive evolution, inside the ecology of mind and matter itself, all as a new form of ritual that allowed the audience to transcend its own collective mind, releasing all kinds of negative psychic energies, even as it posed as a new kind of entertainment, which subtly but surely turned into a spiritual communion, with all kinds of blessing potential.

And so in conclusion?

The Buddhist mapper realized that creating new worlds and showing off their impermanence was simply bad news for Hollywood, but really good for the spiritual awakening of beings, empowering them on multiple levels miraculously.

BRRRRRING

“Yes? Hello?”

“Is this Mr. Finberg?”

“Yes.”

“Mr. Finberg, we have some more bad news for you. Our representative at the State Department has informed us that your friend at Apple computers cannot send you the requested funds at this time. The State Department cable also emphasized that it will not repatriate you, nor make any more calls on your behalf should you sell your airline ticket.”

“I see.”

“It is my suggestion, Mr. Finberg that you leave the country as soon as possible, before your visa expires. The Nepalis will incarcerate you and our embassy will have yet another American to worry about.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Farley I’ll keep you closely informed of my future plans.”

Click.

And so did it flow?

Oh, most certainly. The slow erosions of islands and peninsulas, the persistent formation of homothetic islands and peninsulas and these down-trending promontories: its alluvial deposits; this weight and volume and density: the imperturbability in these lagoons a slow passaglia then:

OK, Angel. I lost a day of work today, the Lama’s mother tried to

boot me out, I really don't know what's going on because the young Turk isn't in the country, the mother told me that he told her I had to leave after ten days, which is a breaking of our agreement, and there's no way to know for sure whether it's a scam of the mom's or whether this is a backstab there's a lot of confusion here anyway, the Lama's wife came to the rescue and convinced the mom I should stay until her husband comes back, so I guess you can say we won this one, I was kinda wrathful, though and this probably helped, you know, I left the monastery for the first time today, my mind and body were overwhelmed by the chaos and confusion of Kathmandu, my chakras started shutting down and speeding up, and it just wasn't any fun comparing the vibes of the protection zone with the vortex pollution down below, I guess you could say monastic life is a human attempt to build a heaven on Earth, yes, where I'm living it's just the upper half of the stress-wheel, and a little ways down below, the lower realms are in control, but I understand the shock of this blow-out better now, I really was just traveling between these two very different worlds, it's NO HAL-LUCINATION, this screenplay really needs to be written in a good environment because the blessings here will protect its journey through the lower realms, and I'm getting no help at all from the home of the brave and the land of the free, so I guess I have to ask the Buddhas and protectors of Kailas and Tsurupu for assistance, You see it's their territory, and I've been having a devil of a time getting an air-ticket refund, it's just a lot of hopeless red tape, and even if there was a remote chance of a refund, I would be given just Nepali rupees, which are worthless in Tibet, Angel

LIFE IN THE LOWER REALMS:

I was in a funk and I hated it. My hair was filled with lice, the East German nurse ran her smooth fingers through my scalp and suggested I buy some anti-lice lotion. I continued on to Swyambu Hill, the gritty dirt and dust of thousands of years of worship caked the entire environment. It was like an old-fashioned movie when I arrived at the top, tourists, touts, monkeys, beggars, artisans, monks, and nuns all jostled for camera position. The monkeys, in particular, seemed to be driven by some awful grief, they attacked a begging woman, stealing her possessions amid great laughter from the milling crowds; it was a curious karma. I was in a grim mood, watching the monkeys frantically feed off

corn kernels; these small wiry creatures seemed to beg and beg for everything, some of them bearing their teeth like angry leeches.

I quickly discovered it was possible to make collect calls to Canada; the dentist in Jerusalem popped into my mind, it was worth a try. I also thought about Lindy; I had found her number in one of her papers I was carrying inside my bottomless duffel bags, it was mad. I walked back to the monastery in a listless mood. Sinister feelings were creeping up on me. The dark lice of the mind were making me angry, confused, and frightened. I felt nauseous, weak, and dizzy. My world was spiraling into oblivion. Kathmandu had poor lost sunken eyes. I could hear Tibetan monks droning atonal acoustics inside their faded temples, where it always seemed like mysterious night. I walked with anticipation through the dark corridors of these very temples, smelling the musty odors of endless incense sticks and dripping candles. I placed my forehead at the feet of the Hinbu gods, begging for good fortune; maybe they would cock their ears and rain down smiles on me. I was desperate. I met the Lama's wife at the bottom of the hill, she was a young woman, and always greeted me with a beautiful papier-m, chÈ smile. In my madness, I was actually in love with her for the few minutes our encounter lasted. She was soft and oriental, thin and well built. This was a Lhasa angel. "Oh, things, very different now," she explained to me in broken English. My Lhasa dakini was the same age as Summer, who seemed so very far away now; in mind as well as in body. A fierce thunderstorm soon began. I and the Lama's wife, and all her escorting nuns dashed for the nearest shelter as rain and lightning pounded the valley, I stumbled into my room, and in the swaying darkness felt an unimaginable softness. I was now safe once again.

JUST OBSERVING THE WAVES:

And what was the next phase?

Simulation of "Beauty and the Beast," naturally.

And what did he find?

A typical fantasy structure with few frills, no episodic encounters in different worlds, pure fantasy and no myth, just two contrasting worlds that merged with no twists, the hero's, or in this case, the heroine's ghost did not really propel the story, indeed, it was the ally-opponent who seemed to change the most.

And?

Typical fantasy elements, like inanimate objects, and a simplistic main opponent, the heroine and the beast, the only complex characters, enough stuff to make it a slightly unusual fantasy story with a riveting plot and the magic moment weakening the double-reversal, yet all this not preventing this fantasy from reaping big bucks at the box-office and being nominated for an Oscar, the second wave having an extended "B-wave" to explore the new world, thus ingratiating the audience as the new world turned friendly, and the old world turned hostile in the final climaxing rush, the new world turning friendly because the protagonists survive a common danger while aiding each other, this cross-cutting action accelerating the collision of these worlds, the tension build-up demanding this release, this magic moment fusing two alien worlds, releasing the tension, and surviving a successful simulation-run.

And what happened next?

The Buddhist engineer ran his "Little Monk" through a simulation run, finding nothing but big holes, the story completely violating the wave structure, it having a powerful start, a surprising ending, but a drifting and confused middle, lacking any build-up towards a battle, thus having little tension requiring release, the ending actually being almost anti-climactic, no really big revelation revealing itself until the end, despite it being pretty hairy, by suggesting that the world one thinks is actually the world that seems to exist, the hero revealing to the audience that the story was simply a dream, the abbot revealing himself as both the little monk's opponents, as well as his allies, then the little

monk revealing himself as the abbot, and finally the very narrator revealing himself as the little monk, hinting that the audience is him as well, the ending hitting three birds with one stone and going where Lucas and Disney have NEVER gone before.

What were the real flaws?

There being no real big revelations until the end, there being no new organic build-up, along with there being a weak desire-line, thus there being no inciting incident, the hero not really deciding on a plan, the story simply drifting, the hero then encountering all kinds of opponents and allies and getting great amounts of training, but to what end never really being clear, a confusing and drifting gauntlet, leading to a weak battle, there being talismans never used, or used too early, there being not enough complex characters that could add to a big build-up, the only character seeming to change being the unseen narrator, with the characters now needing to bounce off each other more, and in fewer worlds.

So what was the conclusion?

That the story needed drastic rewriting for success on the silver screen.

What other conclusions were then made?

That the story as it was could still pass off as an interesting New Age piece with its experimental abstract style and twisting psychological episodes, with its dream narrative and drifting wisdom, simply too slow for the Hollywood establishment, its middle needing to be re-worked, the beginning being OK, the end being spectacular, the entire work STILL being a unique story, one that explored many levels of mind with profound Buddhist psychology, the whole piece just fusing myth with fantasy in a wondrous, life-transforming manner.

Were there any final conclusions then?

Yeah, that mystical tracts lead to anti-drama, their dialogue being indirect, too playful, the ineffable being difficult to describe, it being this poor drama, with indirect dialogue often building up to simply NOTHING and leaving everything hanging in the air, there being just too much dampening.

Now this inner shot:

The nuns sing in chorus this Om Tara Tu Tare Ture Hum as I sit on my knees and press my chin to my chest. I then pull my head back, lie on the floor and press my chin to my chest again and again. I lift my hands backward. I hear an atonal chanting in my ears, it's so sublime, I see tormas everywhere and leave them alone, no telling who's living in them. The morning mist is slowly rising above this monkey hill and no telling who could be going in circles there.

And so did it flow?

Most certainly. It had this graduation of big colors in torrid and temperate and frigid zones: it had these vehicular ramifications in continental lake contained streams, and confluent ocean flowing rivers with their tributaries and transoceanic currents, gulf streams, North and South equatorial courses: it had violence in these seaquakes, water-spouts, the Artesian wells, those eruptions, torrents, eddies, freshets, spates, ground swells, watersheds and water partings, these geysers, cataracts, whirlpools, maelstroms, inundations, deluges, and cloud-bursts

AND NOW THE MONKEY CHORUS: “... AND HE KILLED HIS CHILD!”

Who did?

The Buddhist engineer, vision mapper and celluloid con-man.

And why did he do this?

Because it had no chance to grow up, there being this pressing need now to give birth to a new one.

And how did he do this ?

By putting all the characters on index cards, all the fantasy worlds, the beginning, of course, the end, all the elements being laid out, allowing for organic fusion, seeing the mess in the middle, and scanning for patterns, for these crucial symmetries and then asking those big questions:

What am I trying to say?

How to climax this plot?

So where were the worlds leading?

And how did the earlier revelations lead to the final one?

What was the big inciting incident?

And how did the opponents hinder the hero?

And how did the allies help the hero?

And how would the battle come about?

And how about the double reversal?

How did the story ballets really work together to bring
on the climax?

And what were the passageways between the worlds?

So how did the dialogue enrich the characters?

And then drive the plot?

And what was the role of the talisman?

In the big surging climax?

During the passage between the worlds?

And during the final magic moment?

So what happened next?

The questions drove the reorganization, answers then soon popped out like magic, like mathematics, making the mandala speak with a new big story, one with just greater unfolding power.

What unfolded then?

The idea of a ballet, it being a cluster of scenes, these being five color schemes for easy reference, then delineating the various worlds, the human characters now being turned into animals, all except the little monk, the old sage, and the sorceress, who now had an expanded role, she being the foil for our hero, she being the sexual epicenter, and she being connected to the butterfly, which now drove the desire-line, which was the key to the plot, which symbolized PEACE, but which symbolized POWER to the opponents, there also being these five colored worlds, reflecting the five Buddha energies, all living on Swyambu Hill, there being dream worlds in the middle, and heavy action in them as they progressively collide, as alliances are made, as different energies spill into new worlds, as revelations keep piling on top of one another, hurling the audience to the final revelation, thus uniting the final tag with the opening teaser, the new tag world being the teaser world transformed, seeing thus the new mandala's birth as terribly breath-taking.

And so what did this all really mean?

That the first and second layers were completed and then fused into one, the fugue map being half accomplished, the clues for the next two layers being hidden in the mandala, the artist being continually distracted by logistical problems, of Nepal being a struggle from the word "GO," of the yellow world introducing the narrator, the Little Monk and Belle, his birdlike side-kick, of the green world introducing, the sorceress Diamond and the first silly opponent, Higgins, emphasizing the butterfly search, propelling the story along and pushing the growing alliance into the subsequent worlds, where Yogurt the turtle is found and where the battle with the monkeys and lizards climaxes the story, with each world adding a crucial revelation, the crazy American Buddhist hitting bottom, the Lama's wife cheering him up, telling him about a mysterious telephone at another monastery, a telephone with a long-distance line, this being too good to be true, the story finally starting to crack, oh so precipitately and so mysteriously.

And really how so?

By Belle revealing the butterfly secret and Diamond's big connection to it, and also Yogurt's, their secret union somehow producing the butterfly, that transforms into the hidden sage, who then gives the final revelation, the Little Monk picking up all the components during his travels, putting them together at the end of the story and thus changing the world and our hero.

And did it flow?

Yes! It did. Its vast circumterrestrial horizontal curve, then its secrecy in springs and its latent humidity, revealed by these rhabdomantic and hydrometric instruments, and exemplified by the well, and by the hole in the wall.

It's like surfing the waves

Now a dream: I saw Summer in a provocative pose tempting me as I met her in San Francisco and confronting a ton of baggage and becoming rich and needing to hide some money quickly with Pia now admitting that Summer is the stronger of the two by dint of having suffered more and staring this death in the face mostly where she had never traveled before with circles and circles beyond any known experience and asking should we fly my love and beginning to make this comeback

With a slower passaglia

Well, you know Angel, I was able to map out the big Lama's family tree today with the help of this brat called Dorje who's always pestering me about this and everything, he's a little monk in training here and there's also this American guy from Vermont who gives me sympathy and always asks favors from me, but doesn't really lift a finger to help, yeah, he won't even share his Herald Tribunes with me, and it's like this, the father of the young Lama is the really big master, I mean he's REALY THAT BIG and he once had these two wives, uh, these consorts and

four sons, all of them Tulkus and this family also controls four monasteries in the valley, you could say it's a Buddhist dynasty, you see, what really happened here is that the brats let me in without consulting the adults, I kinda took over the third floor and became some kinda competing power and obviously they don't like this, actually they're quite pissed off and there's two heavy rockers down in the basement, this old guy and this old nun, and you can always hear them blowing away, it's so cool, these guys are all just Drikun Kagyu and you know, these people really like mixing their Mahamudra with their Dzogchen, it's just two sides of the same coin, this divine couple of golden light with no shade of gray, you see, the young Lamas previously ran the largest nunnery in Tibet and the nun presence is pretty strong here too, ah yes, the gray stuff, it's the stuff of great drama, when things are never really just black and white, you know, I kinda went down the hill to see all the final Losar rites, you know it's the Tibetan new year here and it was pretty intense with all these monks carrying this big tormo out of the temple and also this straw-man, finally burning it all to quickly pacify the ghosts and demons, well it was powerful shit and I felt dizzy, and almost blacked out, you see, the energy was just too intense, now I'm kinda unplugged and energies are rushing in and out of this opening, it's a furious pace too, the koras are now going well, and everybody's swirling around Swyambu, yet the pujas are now becoming so sweet and sublime, while doing the old rejuvenation rites, I simply left my body, the boundaries just sorta collapsed, and nothing really seemed to matter, yes, there's all these holy alignments and blissful disorienting releases, these pujas are the Dharmakaya, and the Sambogahkaya is a kind of playful tension, and of course the pain and difficult logistics are the Nirmanakaya, just simply these fluctuations of the physical variety, and you know, I don't really care for this stress, but that's the package, and all these levels are transformational, you just need to work on the highest, in order to bring salvation and clarity to the lowest, Angel, OK, you see?

And what did the image engineer do next?

Having mapped the major story ballets, the minor ones came next, the audience now needing to care about the characters, in order to receive their wisdom, thus a big layering process was discovered, deepening the story and making the multiple characters as complex as the image engineer's imagination allowed them to be, the complexity coming out in the dialogue, and the action now just being naturally progressive.

And the characters?

The Little Monk and Diamond begin to grow emotionally, thus they play off each other, like the forces of light and darkness, they simply being two sides of the same coin, all the allies and opponents occupying a gray zone, and thus adding to the complexity, by fighting and helping both sides, with gray relationships existing even within the two opposing camps, thus this layering now slipping onto the cards, with the organic flow of the story tightening and becoming logical.

So, what did this really accomplish?

The fleshing out of the minor ballets, the little monk being just one hell of a challenge, then seeing the new tourists of the world, the Poles and the Koreans, simply watching the vicious monkeys, and understanding mythic fantasy as a hero's journey through many contrasting worlds, discovering universal messages, seeing a one on one drama and building this all up to a climax, by combining two of the toughest genres in the story-telling business, even while introducing an alien "philosophy" to a western audience and discovering this not to be an easy task, just oozing elements of Alice, Star Wars, and Oz, then stealing elements for show and tell and telling the tale about these minds creating the universes they live in, and finally demonstrating how thoughts can transform negative worlds, thus feeling the Guides in them testing and watching.

And what did the engineer see on the horizon?

He saw this coding of dialogues from the original text, and discovering them to be of uneven quality, amazed that some were deep and actually profound, ultimately provocative, thus making one stop, think, and feel something DEEP inside, not knowing how much wisdom could be really grafted onto the new dramatic dashboard, deciding also how much wisdom and how much drama to balance out, realizing it to be an uneasy combo, watching ego and non-ego battling for dominance, doubting whether he had the skill and balance to find the right balance, deciding how to make an exciting movie without compromising the teachings, a deliriously difficult exercise, doing good pujas, feeling a strong body, despite the pressures the mind was under, discovering this practice taking off during these times of immense struggle, the tarot counseling that friends that would help this week.

And so did it flow?

Absolutely! Its saturation of air, this distillation of dew, the simplicity of its composition, these two constituent parts of hydrogen with one constituent part of oxygen, these healing virtues, this buoyancy in the waters of the Dead Sea, this preserving penetrativeness in these runnels, gullies, inadequate dams, the leaks on shipboard

NEXT. On the dusty road to Bodnath.

We see an exhausted American looking for a working phone, climbing onto a bus, he is going to the young Lama's half-brother, who owns a huge monastery which is quite a monster, you sorta get lost in it, the congestion is pretty bad, the American gives a sob performance in front of the Lama and some amused Russians.

AMERICAN

HELP? I need a phone with an international line.

LAMA

Why?

AMERICAN

Because I need money!

(In an exasperated tone.)

LAMA

Are you Jewish?

AMERICAN

Yes, and I also need a room for the night.

LAMA

Do you also want room service?

(Begins to laugh.)

AMERICAN

That's the way it is! Here, man. OK, it's Nepal.

The Lama's humor is beginning to grate on the American's nerves.

AMERICAN

Hey, can you please take our photo?

(As he gives his camera to one of the Russians.)

LAMA

And he says he's broke!

There's a FLASH!

and an even slower passaglia.

SHIT! Angel, these crazy Tibetans, they are so irritating, I spent the night trying to make a phone call at this high Lama's place and it turned out to be a fucking joke, I mean the phone hasn't had an international connection for years, why did this goofball lead me on? All this misco-

ordination and bullshit with the Tibetans is getting on my nerves, your hopes get dashed constantly, still the Tibetans try hard to be nice, the bodhicitta index is so low here, and they know a lack of generosity will doom their practice, the Nepalis, the Indians, and the Chinese are hopeless, also I can't stand a lot of the Westerners around this Lama, most of them have their noses hopelessly caught up in their asses, oh, did I forget to tell you, this Russian film producer gave me her card, she lives in Moscow, you know I was sleeping in this room recently vacated by some Lama and what a pig sty this guy left, it was awful, but outside his room there was a fire puja going on, and this Nakpa with flowing magician's robes was incantating and incinerating all these tormas, I feel this is all coming to some conclusion, Angel.

I'm climbing up the mountain in order to see the Guru:

My final month in Eurasia had now begun; the kitchen staff at the other place had been unfriendly. I went out and did some koras around the large stupa, I confided in the pigeons and watched the early morning weirdos plying their fortune cards, their long hair streaming to the floor. Soon, I found myself at the Gokornath reserve and struggling to get to Nagi Gumpa, this elusive jewel in the distance, where the young Lama's father lived. It wasn't an easy trip. Simply to get to the foot of the mountain required no less than three different auto-rickshaws. Then it was all uphill by foot, in the middle of a hot day.

INT. THE MASTER'S ROOM.

An exhausted and crazed American stumbles in. The Master seems to have known he was coming and allows him to listen in on a secret teaching; the other foreigners just stare suspiciously at the new intruder as this snide German guy interprets for the Master.

THE MASTER

So what is mind?

(Looks knowingly at the audience.)

SILENCE

THE MASTER

It's like open space isn't it?

SILENCE

MASTER

You can't really see it anywhere?
(With an air of authority.)

SILENCE

MASTER

But can open space really have awareness?
(The trick question.)

SILENCE

(Stubborn, stubborn.)

MASTER

No.
(So now what?)

SILENCE

MASTER

So what's mind then, really?

SILENCE

(.... is golden, especially when you don't really know the answer.)

MASTER

It's the union of emptiness and cognizance, like space and yet so unlike it

GASPS

MASTER

and with no end or beginning, really.
(Resting his hands on the table.)

A HUSHED BUZZ

MASTER

It's like looking at your face and not its reflection in the bathroom mirror.

MORE BUZZ NOW

MASTER

The fool finally finds himself so look in and not out.

BUZZ, BUZZ, BUZZ

MASTER

That's it.

(The teaching is now over.)

The American cautiously approaches the master's translator.

AMERICAN

Can Lama do a mo for me?

TRANSLATOR

He doesn't really believe in those things.

The translator then approaches the Master; they confer, and the Master beckons forward.

AMERICAN

Should I try getting into Tibet?

(This is it.)

The Master breezes through his beads

MASTER

So if you go, it's OK. If you don't, it's OK too.

Just down from the heights:

It was all over, now I was released, I was giving up the struggle. I was at the apex now; and I suddenly realized Nepal had not been in vain. My mind had made a shift. A Spaniard gave me a five-hundred rupee note, and it gleamed like gold to me, I sensed a turning point. I tried to call Canada collect one last time, and a heavy police presence hovered around Thamel, the Commies were crazed and cock-eyed as they sat on the streets. They were refusing to move. So the police scraped them off with clubs. It was simply brutal. Life in Nepal was like taking a piss. This agonizing and delightful release was a constant. The Canadian was out of town; it was hopeless. The Nepali operator had followed a strange trail of machine messages only to reach a dead-end. Tibet was lost. I wearily trudged back to the monastery across the sad landscape of Kathmandu. It was a crisp and lonely night, only a glowing moon kept me company on the long trek back to warmth and comfort and food. Yuk, Kathmandu, what were the folks really thinking back home. Had they really abandoned me?

BRRING

“Yeah, hello.”

“Is this Mr. Finberg?”

“He’s speaking “

“Yes, Mr. Finberg, this is Bill Daley, the third consul here at the embassy. Mrs. Farlep is on vacation, and I have been reviewing the cables concerning your case. The State department left several messages on Dr. Groff’s answering machine you see, and none of the calls were returned.”

“I see.”

“I strongly suggest you start planning your departure, your visa is about to expire. We’ve had many cases “

SILENCE

“Can you pay the taxi to the airport and give me something for the stop-over in Bangkok?”

“Yes, I believe we can help you there, but you must come in and fill out some forms.”

“But it’s just one hundred dollars!”

“Yes, one hundred dollars you don’t have. It’s just part of the procedure, you know.”

“Yeah, right”

“By the way, you still owe the US government six dollars and fifty-nine cents for that call to your stepmother.”

“Put it on the tab, let her pay for it!”

“So, will you be coming in soon?”

“Yeah, I’ll keep you posted.”

Click.

And so did it flow?

Yeah, it did. Its properties for cleansing, quenching, thirst and fire, nourishing vegetation, an infallibility as paradigm and paragon, its metamorphoses as vapor, a mist, this cloud, the rain, this sleet, the snow, this hail, its strength in these rigid hydrants, its variety of forms in the loughs, those bays and gulfs and blights and guts and lagoons, those atolls and archipelagos, these sounds and fjords and minches and tidal estuaries and arms of sea

Now an inner shot:

The monkeys sang in chorus: GET OUT OF HERE! Now, I rested on my hands and feet, then I lifted them up and held the position, then

I slowly brought them down. I could feel the master's protection. The revolution had begun, the deepest insights were now accessible to a beginner.

And how did this all end?

With the engineer putting the minor ballets on index cards and THE STORY CRACKING ITSELF, oh so miraculously, this being the final layer, working out the individual scenes with the dialogue, creating these mini-ballets, seeing a trend in the dialogue, the first rhythms examining only the surface layers of mind, and putting the energy to practical use, the second dialogues going into even deeper layers of mind, describing the mind polluting and cleaning itself, and finally dropping into its deepest layer, which is really no layer at all, having no confusion, being nothing, yet somehow knowing.

TELEGRAM:

LIFT-OFF! Houston, it's a lift-off! The writing astronaut has reached the escape velocity. He's in orbit.

And so how did this go?

The astronaut found flying a thrill, especially after weeks of intense preparation, the structure being so solid, the screenplay simply writing itself, allowing the astronaut some flights of humorous fancy, the birth pains not being so overwhelming, the support at the monastery being so all embracing, just fatigue being the only problem, yet slogging on, finding the best dialogue as being compressed, and output being good, performing this mass editing miracle, and reading it back and smiling, these characters coming to life, it being a good sign, the astronaut now beginning to care about them, knowing the audience will too, it being all simply great fun, then forgetting about the lousy logistics, the Lama's wife being such a great comfort to the astronaut, telling him not to worry, being told the young Lama would soon be back.

And any last thoughts?

Yes, the Buddhist engineer realized how his burdens drained the energy from his chakras, they needing to be replenished with constant puja, with the rejuvenation rites, the engineer deciding to finish off now the screenplay just a tad short of the Hollywood standard to preserve the pace of the action, always being able to add extra pages during any second draft.

TELEGRAM: The screenplay is finished! Yet the writer is too tired to feel triumphant. Simply just relieved there's one less burden now.

A dream: I saw Summer coming back and winning it all and not really knowing what to do and realizing it was all in the name of unconditional love it being the only true blessing in life

INT. The Young Lama's room.

The American sits and confronts the young Lama, his assistant refuses to leave the room as snot pours out of his nostrils. He doesn't bother to wipe his nose.

YOUNG LAMA

So how's your writing going along now?

(In a nervous tone.)

THE AMERICAN

You know, I thought we had an agreement.

(Fairly pissed off.)

YOUNG LAMA

Well, you know things change.

(Quite matter-of-factly.)

THE AMERICAN

Well, we don't do this kind of silly stuff in America.

(Smelling blood.)

YOUNG LAMA

Well, you know, it's not my fault you're broke.
(In a pretty defensive tone.)

THE AMERICAN

So can you pay my way to Tibet?
(Shifting tactics.)

YOUNG LAMA

Oh, no that would be very difficult.
(Sensing the shift in energy.)

THE AMERICAN

Then how about a visa extension?
(Grabbing whatever possible.)

YOUNG LAMA

Well, how much would that cost?

THE AMERICAN

Just five hundred rupees for five more days.
(He knows he's got it.)

YOUNG LAMA

Yes, I think that's possible.
(With a sigh of relief.)

SILENCE

YOUNG LAMA

Just come back tomorrow.

The American gets up and walks to the door, but the young Lama signals him to wait.

YOUNG LAMA

I'm glad you finished your screenplay for your financial security,

OK?

THE AMERICAN

Yeah, you know, me too.

Descending the mountain now:

There was release in the air. I fought the Nepalis for my visa extension; they wanted Polaroid pictures, I had none and started screaming, cursing in Hebrew; to the amazement of the hustlers and paper-shovers, I was saved by this American woman who didn't want the scene to continue.

Not here in the mean streets of Kathmandu. I tried to kill the squirming lice in my hair and I said good-bye to the nuns, to Dorje; and to the young Lama's wife. I gave away a lot of my belongings. The Lama's wife got a nice handbag. She was sad to see me go. Had we been simply lovers in a past-life? Who could really say? And I then said good-bye to the young Lama who bopped me on the head in good jest.

Some more thoughts:

I had been checkmated by karma. There would be no return to Tibet in 1994. The symmetry was now broken, the logistics had simply been too hairy. I was losing my second Tibetan family, now. I pondered this. I tried to remember everything I had done in my life and felt no real serious regrets. Finally, most of the money the embassy gave me was used up in Kathmandu for film developing. I was hungry for symbols of my ordeal. I also bumped into the guy from New York at the Durbar, you know, the fellow who engaged me in silly conversation at Amman airport, and it was strange. He was looking for bronze Buddhas to take back home and God knows do what with, like a messenger of closure.

I visited the Bonpo monastery; it was a strange anti-universe of misaligned energies begging and pleading in the wrong direction. The Bonpo monks going around counter-clockwise in sinister fashion. I watched the world go by on Swyambu Hill. I also said good-bye to the porters. Alas, I had no money to give them. The chatter of an American psychotherapist flooded into my taxi. I WAS GOING HOME NOW. I just stayed two nights at the Thamel tourist ghetto, taking hot showers and staring at the walls. I was in a deep trance. I could hear Vajrayogini laughing. I saw her near the slaughter-house at Dakshinkali.

It was eerie. The stench of sacrificed animals was sheer murder and these scars were always fresh, for this had been going on for years. I shuddered. The taxi got me to the airport early and the airline simply waived my excess baggage. Nobody really cared anymore. I WAS JUST LEAVING.

CHAPTER 17

LA

Bangkok was hot and humid; it blasted you the minute you descended from the plane. I slept on the floor of the transit lounge for three nights, waiting for a connecting flight. It was a tingling kind of airport Disneyland. But, I was now in the FOURTH VORTEX. It was Southeast Asia.

BRRING

“Hello?”

“Will you accept a collect call from a Mr. Finberg?”

DEAD SILENCE

“Yes, all right “

AIRPORT DIN

“I’m in Bangkok now and I’m coming home!”

SILENCE

“I think I’m in shock!”

“WELL, you know, this certainly wasn’t my idea!”

SILENCE

“But, we’re leaving for New York now “

AIRPORT DIN

“I don’t care. I want someone waiting for me at LAX, do you understand?”

Click

And did it flow?

FUCK YES! it’s solidity in glaciers, these icebergs, iceflows

I treated myself to some hot curry. Will Schindler’s List get Stevie his Oscar? What else is on cable TV? Hum, it’s just Whitewater, watching the planes go by, Asia seems to be booming here, these antsy Thai women always hovering around you as you browse around the giftshops. You know, when I arrived in Nepal, I began to miss India, and now that I’m here, I’m beginning to miss Nepal! It’s so phony this air-

conditioned feeding frenzy. I think there's something missing here.

May I have your attention please

Seoul Shit, I've landed in the FIFTH VORTEX through some accident and the Koreans here seem pretty uptight. Some kind of nuclear chicken is going on with the North. But all the signs say VISIT KOREA 94, yet things are still in a bardo phase here. The Cold War is not over and memories of juntas linger on.

And did it flow?

Perfectly! Its noxiousness, its effluvia in lacustrine marshes, pestilential fens, these faded flower-waters, these stagnant pools in the waning moon.

So, out of an airplane window:

I could see the flat stressed-out landscape of Los Angeles, I would soon be home now. For I was near the SIXTH VORTEX, and Cuba and Nicaragua were not far away. It was usually a pretty sleepy vortex, but it could occasionally provide chilling suspense. I felt this incompleteness as the lights blinked on their warnings of an approaching landing. I saw a nude Chinese girl commit suicide inside a bathtub. It was just a movie. And then the plane wheels screeched and whirred, with a THUD and this was home. And I was alone. And this too was it.

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